

MARK BROWNLEE REPORTS FROM CLAYTHORNE LODGE

From 1963 to 1974 a monstrous digging machine nicknamed Big Brutus, technically the Bucyrus-Erie model 1850B electric shovel, was engulfing huge bites of earth out of the plains of Southeast Kansas searching for precious coal. Brutus did his work long before sporting clays was known in the United States, but every clay shooter in the country owes him a debt of gratitude!

Brutus, all 16 stories and 11 million pounds, now stands idle as a tourist attraction but the huge pits and spoil mounds he left behind now appear as a natural lake and hill countryside and are part of one of the best sporting clays courses and hunting preserves in the World.

This transformation came about in 1991 when Sam and Frieda Lancaster bought the property and built the first sporting course in 1992. Since then Claythorne Lodge has become known and respected as a premier clay shooting destination. Few grounds share their exceptional tournament resumé which includes the US Open in 2000, the World FITASC Championship in 2003 and a second US Open in 2006. In addition, Claythorne holds regular registered shoots including their signature White Flyer Cup, Freedom Cup and Columbus Cup.

The second weekend of October (7th-9th) saw Claythorne hosting the 2011 National FITASC. The weather was picture perfect warm days and cool nights with a tint of orange and yellow in the

trees. There was plenty of shooting available over the long weekend including a 100 target Pre-lim, the 100 target Columbus Cup, a 50 target Super Sporting and 20, 28 and .410 small bore events.

The sporting events were on the farm like setting of flat land with forests scattered about beginning at the quaint intersection of Quail Road and Pheasant run. The Columbus Cup attracted 144 shooters with young Abel Spire leading the way with 95, followed by Gebben Miles on 94 and Wendell Cherry with 92. Class honors went to Grant Gerty (AA - 82), Bryan Johnson (A - 82), Darleen Roberts (B - 81), Don Barksdale (C - 76) and Brad Riley (D - 76).



SAM AND FRIEDA LANCASTER.

2011 NATIONAL FITASC

PARCOUR 4.



TARGET SETTERS, BRENT FLEMING AND NEIL CHADWICK.

FITASC

FITASC is my favorite discipline and Claythorne is one of the best places to pursue it. This is partially because of the terrain, but mostly because of the people Claythorne gathers to put on an event – and here we had some of the best. Neil Chadwick has a long standing history of setting targets at Claythorne and it shows. He's able to use the area to utmost advantage. It can be tricky to set targets on the same ground repeatedly, but Chadwick does a great job finding ways to entertain the shooters. Brent Fleming and son Andrew brought along many of their GP traps and assisted by doing everything that needs to be done – setting the sporting events along with Sam Lancaster.

Many others worked the long hours needed to make everything tick like a swiss watch, including Manager, Jake Keely, Scott Williams, the head US FITASC referee and all the other great Claythorne referees. It's remarkable that another of the best places to shoot in the country, Flint Oak, is less than two hours away and FO Manager, Jeff Oakes, sent over Josh Reed and Ethan Remil to contribute manpower.

The Layouts

The National FITASC was 8 traditional old style Parcours and

PARCOUR 1.



PARCOUR 6.



PARCOUR 7.



PAULA MOORE IN ACTION.

Parcour 1 was on a high ridge with the water 40 feet below and low land 60 yards across the lake. All the water layouts had quartering and crossing clays below your feet, some close, some not so close!

thanks to Brutus, six were around water – only Parcours 3 and 5 were 'landlocked'. Parcour 1 was on a high ridge with the water 40 feet below and low land 60 yards across the lake. All the water layouts had quartering and crossing clays below your feet, some close, some not so close! Low hold points were essential – get this wrong on some layouts and you were cooked.

Parcour 2 was almost landlocked but featured a small pond in the middle of the layout. It was very straight-able but the surprising combinations caused many rushed first shots. The high left to right climbing midi fooled many. From peg 3 you could tell it didn't want quite as much lead as many had given it from pegs 1 and 2.

No water on Parcour 3 – but it had two of my favorite targets, a monster left to right arching battue at about 50-60 yards (beautiful) and a low R-L presentation hugging and rising up the ridge about 40 yards out.

Parcour 4 was a beauty – standing on a point with the lake forming an L shape below. Peg 2 required a climb to a lovely spot on a mound under a tree. The incomer from far across the lake and below was testing and the big L-R black 90 looked perfect against the sky.

After several layouts I was hoping for a rabbit – and found two, one on

the ground and one as a great long looper on Parcour 5. At peg 1 the bunny was quartering down the ridge toward the shooter at about 10 yards. Boy, does a bunny that close freak people out! It's amazing how fast the apparent speed looks at that distance. It's an illusion, but with a powerful effect on the shooter's movement – many rabbits escaped the pattern.

Parcour 6 was above a wide but shallow channel, mostly dry, but leading into the lake on the left. A nice L-R going away quartering from below and a long crossing clay from in the wood, crossing over the lake, were highlights.

If I had to choose, I'd say Parcour 7 and 8 were my favorites. Parcour 7 was at the end of a pond with just really nice targets – good distance and plenty of time to shoot. Parcour 8 was the best, first because the pond is nestled in a bowl with the ridge all

from Florida was A2 and Lisa Sowell captured A3. In other classes the winners were Brian Thompson (B – 145), Had Deane (C – 144) and James Hipsky (D – 119). In the Juniors, Abel Spire prevailed over Hunter Milligan, both on 179. Lisa Sowel (149) took Ladies. John Woolley (179) won Veterans and Ronald Shafer (169) took Super Veterans.

For complete score details visit: www.claythornelodge.com ■

Mark Brownlee coaches mental and physical skills development for the clay target sports worldwide.

Private instruction, cyber coaching and workshops are available. To discover the secrets of great Human Performance, contact Mark at: mbsportpsych@yahoo.com (Tel: 816.489.5855).



ABOVE: ABEL SPIRE, WILL FENNEL, GEBBEN MILES AND WENDELL CHERRY (2011 NATIONAL FITASC CHAMPION).

around (very pretty) and second, there were really great targets – including a rabbit down below, running from the bushes out over a hump and into the lake. Good fun.

The Results

After the smoke cleared, Wendell Cherry is the 2011 National FITASC Champion (183). Gebben Miles took runner-up on 182. Will Fennell and Tom Ruck had a great shoot-off for M1 with Fennell (180) prevailing. Abel Spire landed M3 with 179.

Grant Gerety had a great weekend taking AA1 (164) with Missouri's David Blum at AA2 and Joe Wolf AA3. A Class went to Bryan Johnson (159), Angel Ramos

LISA SOWELL – LADIES WINNER.

