



AN EXCITING CHANGE OF PACE

MIKE O'BRIEN ABOUT
TO PASTE A BUNKER
STRAIGHT AWAY.

STEVE FISCHER TRIES BUNKER TRAP

Well, here we are, with the 2004 shooting season behind us – and a fine one it truly was! So many excellent tournaments are now permanently logged into the record books and the memories likewise logged into our thoughts for review and replay whenever we wish. For most shooters, the year's end for all intents and purposes is the National Championships in mid-September, with the coming of fall and winter shifting our interests from clays to wings and game, or perhaps the many other winter sports available. The sporting guns get a good cleaning and oiling along with a rest until the snow and cold once again gives way to the

first warmer breezes of spring.

But wait a minute! In that few weeks between the Nationals and the year's end, there was still some good shooting to be found particularly if Mr. Ringneck or Mr. Mallard, or the bigger game, wasn't your cup of tea. One such opportunity came along that allowed me to discover a fast paced and exciting clays game that although I had heard about before, had never really experienced in its proper form. Bunker trap. Now, those who know me also know that generally speaking, trap shooting has a place on my things to do list somewhere between having a colonoscopy and a root canal. Not that I have a single thing against trap shooters or their game, it's just that on the rare occasions that I participate, by the second 25

targets I usually find myself thinking about what I had for lunch last Thursday, or wondering why Fox Mulder never got really chummy with that luscious partner of his, Scully, on the X-Files. By now you understand my problem. I find the game Boor-ing! Well, that dilemma came to a screeching halt when I called pull on my first bunker trap target at Gator Trap and Skeet Club in Gainesville, Florida. I was soon to learn that FITASC isn't the only tough game out there.

The game is pretty straight forward, although fast, furious and very tough. You get 25 targets, and because of the speed at which they are presented, are allowed two shots per target. Without getting too technical and detailed, these hot rod targets are thrown to a

distance of over 70 yards and in excess of 60 miles per hour. Each shooting position will receive targets that go straight away from the shooter, and also angle to the left of center, and to the right of center. This angle can be as much as 90 degrees, and if that isn't enough, the height at which the target is thrown oscillates randomly – so you are never sure quite just where the target will go.

The layout is similar to a standard trap field in that there are 5 positions equidistance apart, and are about 17 yards from the 'bunker', as it is called, which houses 15 separate machines. Banks of three machines are located in the bunker in front of each of the five shooting positions and are computer controlled to give each shooter the same

number of angle and straight away shots. Like Compak Sporting, six shooters make up a full squad, with the sixth man standing behind the shooter on position 1. After making his shot on station 1, the next shooter has but 10 seconds to call for and shoot his target, and so on. Differing from the standard trap game, after one shot the shooter moves to the next station, rather than receiving five targets on the station. There is no trapper pushing a button in this game. A directional microphone is positioned on each of the five stations and is controlled by the computer to release the target on the shooters call and then open the mike on the next station, ready for the next shooters call. Another hitch in this maddening game which also adds to the difficulty is that the reaction time between the call 'pull' and the target release is absolutely instantaneous. I mean that the target is long gone when the first sound of the 'P' in the word pull is spoken! Combining all these things together – speed, instantaneous target release and the constant moving after each shot and you can see why the difficulty level is quite a few notches above that of the standard trap game.

I will probably never forget my first target. It was half way to the ground and almost out of sight before I could even react to the

angle of the target, the speed and the fact that it came out like a bat out of – well you know what I mean. It was a miss, and one of many until I started to get the hang of it. Those first 25 targets were also plagued by some warped clays that curved like a chandelle, so getting the second shot off if you missed the first one was really tricky.

After that horrible and humbling first round, the targets were changed to some bios that at least flew straight! I hit a total of 6 targets that first round and walked away talking to myself and thinking that I could not remember ever shooting that low a score on any trap or skeet field. My bruised feelings were somewhat relieved when I saw that the high score from the other shooters was only about 13! Things thankfully got better with the change of targets, and by the second day and the second 100 targets, I managed to put up 23, 19, 17, and 21.

Bunker trap, also known as International Trap, is an Olympic sport like its sister game of International Skeet, and both are decidedly very challenging and difficult games. Add in the fact that there are very few places in the entire country that offer this game and one can readily see the difficulty in finding suitable practice for those who may have aspirations of one day competing at the Olympics. Wobble trap was

invented to try and duplicate at least some resemblance to the target flight of the full 15 machine bunker, although it failed in my opinion because the speed and angles are just not the same as the real deal. Currently there are about 20 locations that offer true



bunker trap. A complete listing of the locations can be found at the USA Shooting web site: www.usashooting.com.

If you are fortunate enough to have one of these 20 layouts nearby, you might give it a go. It is frustrating, very tough, yet still quite fun if you like shooting hard and fast targets. They tell me that Olympic Double Trap is shot from this same bunker set-up. I didn't get a chance to try the doubles, but the thought of two of these screaming rockets in the air at the same time boggles my already over taxed mind. Maybe next time! ■

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