

Claythorne Lodge once again stepped up to the plate and delivered another smash hit by hosting the 2006 U.S. Open at their beautiful facility just outside of Columbus, Kansas. Claythorne and Columbus are generally – and most affectionately – referred to as “you can’t get there from here, Kansas.” The closest you can get to the ground by air is about 50 to 100 miles, depending whether you land in Joplin, Missouri, or maybe Tulsa, Oklahoma.

In this heart land region of the U.S., raising corn, wheat and general farming is the major industry and most of the towns and cities in this area are generally small and friendly – reminiscent of times gone by for many of us who live in the faster paced world of the modern metropolis. Nevertheless, shooters from four corners of the U.S. came to test their skills against their peers over 200 Main Event sporting targets, as

THE 2006 US

IT DOESN'T GET MUCH BETTER THAN THIS SAYS **STEVE FISCHER**

well as eight additional 100 target competitions of Compak, FITASC, .410-20 and 28 gauge, side by side, pump gun and the customary Pre-Lim Freedom Cup. An additional full practice course was provided, featuring a new clay target counting system by Neil Chadwick called ‘TargetKey’. It counted the number of targets thrown and at the end of the round the operator billed the shooter accordingly. I am sure we will be seeing and hearing much more about this innovative system in the near future.

Along with a complete practice course, there were several practice stands at a variety of locations, with some near the main clubhouse and some near the courses entrances, showing that much thought had gone into the logistics of handling such a large number of competitors. Transportation to the various courses and events was provided by tractor-pulled

**THE 2006 U.S.
OPEN CHAMPION,
WENDELL CHERRY.**



OPEN

**TITLE SPONSOR
BERETTA USA'S TRAILER.**



VENDOR'S ROW WAS OVERFLOWING WITH A VARIETY OF DISPLAYS OF INTEREST, ALONG WITH GUNSMITHS, STOCK MAKERS, CLOTHING, JEWELRY, AS WELL AS HEARING AND EYE PROTECTION.

having sufficient food and drink vendors, plenty of warm-up layouts, games and the hundreds of other details necessary were covered darned near perfectly. Even a brief but potentially dangerous thunder and lightning storm that came through Sunday morning was dealt with quickly by suspending shooting early enough to get the shooters out of harm's way and then back on the courses after it passed. By mid afternoon the Main Event was back on time and FITASC was less than one hour behind.

Vendor's row was overflowing with a variety of displays of interest, along with gunsmiths, stock makers, clothing, jewelry, as well as hearing and eye protection. The food court featured several local cookery's and offered everything from breakfast sandwiches to barbequed ribs, pulled pork, a large variety of drinks and even home made ice cream. Budweiser had their portable beer trailer for after shooting whistle wetting and Appleton Rum once again hosted an open bar social on Friday night with free rum drinks for all.

GETTING STARTED

With the extensive land available at Claythorne almost all of the events – including the three Main Event courses – were laid out on virgin ground providing a level playing field for all. Shooting began early in the week with 371 competitors entered for the FITASC event. The Parcours were set 'old style' and were laid out on portions of Claythorne's unused sporting courses. Because of the number



STATION 12 ON THE WHITE COURSE WAS BUT ONE OF THE MANY BEAUTIFUL STANDS OVER WATER.

A GREAT TRUE PAIR ON THE WHITE COURSE.



wagons to get the shooters to their respective events on time. A game area was located behind the main clubhouse and featured several Make-A-Break daily events, as well as several long shot type games for those who wanted to test their skill and possibly win a few bucks in the process.

Now this wasn't Claythorne's 'first rodeo' as the saying goes, evidenced by the way the entire event ran as smoothly as this writer has ever seen. Their motto seemed to be 'be prepared' and that they were. In an event of this size, getting over one thousand shooters through all the events,

of entries and the limitations of available time per day, this event started on Tuesday to accommodate all who wished to enter.

The Compak Sporting event was on four layouts alternating each layout with either six or eight machines. Five hundred and sixty shooters, about half the total attendance, competed in this event. Six hundred and thirty shooters entered the Freedom Cup Pre-lim and 1,015 entries filled the Main Red, White, and Blue courses. Depending on whom you spoke to, either the White or the Blue course was the hardest, with the Red course almost unanimously voted as the most user friendly.

Most shooters from the upper classes concurred that the Main Event was a bit on the soft side for a US Open – the usual comment being that there was very little ‘wiggle room’ if you missed any of the softer

in third, fourth, and fifth by Gregg Wolf, Scott Robertson and Gary Greenway all tied up at 92.

There doesn't seem to be any shortage of talent in the Sub-Junior and Junior concurrents with some of these kids putting up scores that compete with the top Masters. A good example would be Jacob Callahan. His score of 93 in Juniors was the same as Master 1st. Second placed Matt Treece and third placed Travis Mears, tied on 90, were amongst the six highest scores of the event!

In the Sub-Juniors the top three shooters – Casey Lynch, Abel Spire and Justin Fox – fell in place one behind the other shooting scores of 87,86, and 85 respectively. In the Veteran's concurrent, Gary Greenway, currently on a red hot streak, topped the field with a fine 92, three

THE TARGETS WERE FAIR AND MODERATE IN DIFFICULTY – BUT FUN. NO SERIOUS PRESSURE FROM ANY STATION BUT ENOUGH OF A CHALLENGE TO KEEP YOU ON YOUR TOES LEST YOU WALK AWAY A TARGET OR TWO SHORT.

presentations. There was no place to pick up a target or two on more difficult stations. That said, the courses were challenging enough for the majority and entertaining to shoot. Each course offered a wide selection as to style of targets presented and the terrain was utilized well, with shots over water, under your feet, up in the air and all very visible for the most part.

THE FREEDOM CUP

This Pre-lim event was very popular and served well as a warm up for the real deal with awards five deep in class and three deep in the concurrents. The targets were fair and moderate in difficulty – but fun. No serious pressure from any station but enough of a challenge to keep you on your toes lest you walk away a target or two short. Curtis Mauldin (96) put on an excellent performance, taking HOA with Anthony Matarese Jr and Rick Mein two behind. In Master class, Jacob Callahan took top spot, tied with Tony Rivera (93) followed

ahead of Mike Aloisio (89) and Richard McCready (88) in third spot. Super-Veteran Gene Sherrod (88) was followed home by John Farrell (87) and Ron Shafer (85). Diane Sorantino (88) took the Ladies honors, followed by DeeAnn Massey (87) and Ashleigh Hafley (85). (We extend our heartiest congratulations to Diane Sorantino for being selected to the NSCA Hall Of Fame this year).

ON TO THE COMPAK EVENT

Mixed reviews seem to be prevalent for this game as of late. The problem seems to be the game itself, in that it is having a tough time getting accepted by the shooters in general. For one, promotion of this game has been lacking from the very beginning of its addition to the list of NSCA registered events. Because of this, many shooters do not have a solid understanding of the rules or the differences from the tried and true 5-stand game. Add in the complication of incomplete squadding and the pace and flow



of the game is lost and becomes somewhat confusing – not only for the shooters, but for the score keepers, trying to keep track of each shooter’s score on a decidedly complicated score sheet. Another notable complaint results from continually bombarding the shooter with true pairs on every layout – based on the supposed reasoning of speeding up the game. This lack of variety in presentations is becoming detrimental to the game’s acceptance. It is certainly frustrating to the shooter, especially when report pairs as well as more than one single target on a station are acceptable in the rules. Most shooters enter side events such as Compak Sporting to have fun and to be entertained between shooting the courses of the Main Event. With too much work and frustration and too little fun and entertainment, the average competitor will pass it by the next time. Food for thought.

Now, back to the action! Compak layouts one and two were pretty straight forward and several 25 straights were recorded on both. Layout 3 stepped up the difficulty level a notch with a very close right to left chandelle crosser that breezed quickly by the shooting stands no more than a few feet away and 10 feet off the ground! Layout 4 continued with a



ANXIOUS DAD TOMMY BROWNING WATCHES OVER HIS DAUGHTER’S SHOULDER.

VENDORS GALORE SHOWED UP FOR THIS EVENT!

slightly elevated difficulty level, with only one 25 straight recorded.

Wendell Cherry added this event to his growing list of HOA wins with a superb score of 24-25-24-24=97. Runner-up, Brandon Powell, was three back at 94. In Master class, Travis Mears (94) took top spot with Steve Nelson (92) second after a great start of two back to back straights.

FITASC ADVENTURE

The target setting expertise and experience of Neil Chadwick were well in evidence over four Parcours. The balance of presentations was excellent. Parcour one featured a semi-long crosser from right to left that showed up on each station, and a nasty rising target that changed from a quartering easy pick off from peg one to a formidable long shot from peg two.

Parcour two had a great

chandelle rabbit, left to right, that with its speed and distance was quite easy to miss. Also included was a straight away trap shot low and fast from peg two – it eluded many a shooter’s best attempts to get on this one quickly.

Parcour three changed terrain and was located on the edge of a large pond. It featured an excellent long crosser midi on the opposite side of the pond, high and just above the tree line at around 50 yards, screaming from left to right, finally dropping into the pond at a spray and pray distance if you waited too long. A straight up and down rabbit target bit many a shooter at about 40 yards from the first peg position. Peg two brought the rabbit teal shot closer, with the midi crosser still a long ways away on the other side of the pond. Particularly difficult was a very, fast and low, slightly quartering, right to left target that eventually dropped into the ground like a

stone. On my squad it was only hit once – Neil is probably still grinning over this one! Parcour four was a personal favorite with an entertaining combination of long and visible high crossers, a chandelle rabbit and a good mix of shots. It was a fun layout with every opportunity given to the shooter to do well – as evidenced by the number of scores of 22 to 24.

FITASC Champion Curtis Mauldin shot a very steady 24-23-24-23=94 for top honors, with Runner-up Anthony Matarese Jr just behind with 92. Master class winner was Albert Bogetti Jr (91) with second through fifth place all tied up at 90 with Brandon Powell, Will Fennell, Wendell Cherry, and Cory Kruse. Concurrent winners were W. Ray Newman (SV-83), Bob Davis (V-85), Brandon Powell (J-90) and Diane Sorantino (L-78).

THE MAIN EVENT

In concert with the Memorial Day Weekend celebration, the three courses proudly honored our national colors of Red, White, and Blue, making up 200 targets. As always, difficulty – like beauty – is in the eyes of the beholder and opinions varied as to which of the three courses was the most

challenging. Some thought the White with its more open terrain and longer crossing shots was the hardest, while others thought the Blue had more technical presentations. Most shooters felt Red to be quite user friendly.

Overall, this event was probably a few targets easier than would have been expected for a U.S. Open, but the presentations were entertaining yet challenging enough to put pressure on the likely winner – “*He who makes the fewest mistakes wins!*”

The ‘he’ who made the fewest mistakes and became the 2006 U.S. Open Champion was Wendell Cherry, shooting a superb combination score of 65-64-64=193. His undoubted ability, combined with incredible focus and dogged determination, helped him win yet another major championship to be added to his long list of accomplishments this season. Runner-up went to Scott Robertson (190) while New Jersey top gun, Anthony Matarese Jr, took the second Runner-up spot one target off at 189.

FANTASTIC EVENT

Overall, Claythorne Lodge did nothing short of a fantastic job of



detail. I am sure this 2006 U.S. Open will be long remembered and the participants certainly thank Claythorne and the many sponsors for making this event one of the best ever! Well Done! ■

DIANE SORANTINO SWEEP THE FOUR LADY CONCURRENTS OF COMPAK, FITASC, THE FREEDOM CUP AND THE MAIN EVENT.

FITASC CHAMPION CURTIS MAULDIN WITH RUNNER-UP ANTHONY MATARESE JR.

hosting this prestigious event. Most shooters will never know just how much time, effort and hard work goes into putting on an event of this size or the thousands of man hours spent on its preparation. Claythorne’s long experience in hosting such events was evident everywhere – down to the smallest

US OPEN – MAIN EVENT		
CH	WENDELL CHERRY	193
1ST RU	SCOT ROBERTSON	190
2ND RU	ANTHONY MATARESE JR	189
M1	TOMMY BROWNING	189
M2	DOUG VINE	189
M3	BOBBY FOWLER	188
AA1	TYLER C MAH	175
AA2	DAVID L MILLER	168
AA3	MATTHEW ZERBE	167
A1	BRANDON BARTEL	168
A2	DOUGLAS HAYNES	165
A3	LUKE TAYLOR	164
B1	TAYLOR SET DUHON	162
B2	NICHOLAS LEPORE	161
B3	SHAWN LAUGHLIN	160
C1	GREGORY LE GARDNER	162
C2	KAYLE BROWNING	154
C3	KOLBY HOLMES	154
D1	JACK MATTOX	153
D2	DAVID L WINANS	149
D3	CHAD JENSEN	142
E1	WILLIAM C NIELSEN	155
E2	LYNNE GREEN	139
E3	DEBBY NEIL	137
L1	DIANE M SORANTINO	172
L2	DEBORAH E WALL	165
L3	DR PAULA L BENBOW	165
SJ1	DAVID RADULOVICH	170
SJ2	ABEL SPIRE	164
SJ3	J WILLIAM HENDERSON	164
J1	JACOB CALLAHAN	186
J2	MATT TREECE	183
J3	HUB JOHNSON	181
V1	MIKE BITTMANN	179
V2	TIM MURPHY	178
V3	GARY GREENWAY	178
SV1	EDWARD P COUTURE	170
SV2	GENE A SHERROD	170
SV3	W RAY NEWMAN	168

SEVERAL CRANES SUPPLIED THE LONG HIGH TARGETS AT THE GAMES AREA.

