

Seminole Cup

**IN MID-FEBRUARY, TM RANCH HOSTED THE SEASON'S FIRST 'BIG BLAST'
WITH THE HONORS GOING TO MICK HOWELLS**



The first 'Big Blast' of 2003 attracted over 525 entries for the Seminole Cup Main Event at the spectacular TM Ranch in Florida. With three 100 target Pre-lim events, Five Stand, Small Gauge events, FITASC and 'side-games' to complement the 200 bird Championship, this was to be a great opening to the season. Clear to everyone was the enormous effort that had been put in by

Seminole Gun Works, the staff at TM Ranch and the many sponsors. The promise was four days of top competition.



TM RANCH CLUBHOUSE.

THREE PRE-LIMS

The Pre-lim events, three 100 target competitions that included the Phil Hughes, were each of 'championship' standard. Shot in perfect weather conditions, the variation of targets ensured that

competitors had to dig deep as their ability was questioned by target setters who had clearly decided to 'raise the bar' for this year's event.

Thursday's Pre-lim was won by Ben Brunton (95), three ahead of Runner-up Will Fennell (92) and Wendell Cherry (M1-92). Friday's Pre-lim was won by Mick Howells (92) one ahead of Runner-up Tom Mack (91) and Cory Kruse (M1-91). The Friday afternoon Phil Hughes saw Howells heading the leaderboard once again, with a solid 90, but toward the end of the day it was Wendell Cherry that was to take the honors with 91. Anthony Matarese took M1 with 90.

FITASC 100 TARGET

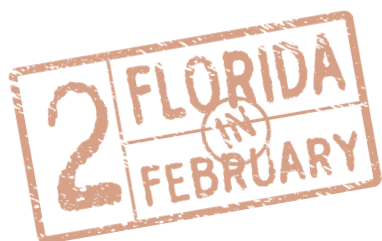
Over 250 competitors had entered the FITASC that opened up on the Wednesday and ran until Sunday. Those that opted to shoot the four layouts straight through on Wednesday certainly benefited from still weather conditions – and with Will Fennell having set the pace that day with a 90 (23, 23, 23, 21), it was to prove an uphill battle for the remainder.



WILL FENNEL ON PARCOUR 2.

The following four days saw very varied weather conditions – strong winds played havoc with the targets on Saturday putting many a competitor out of contention after their first 50 targets. At other times, perfect shooting conditions with clear blue skies saw outstanding individual performances from Craig Hill and Mike Bittmann – the only two competitors to each run a complete layout.

Come Sunday, and the final rotations, it was all over. The slimmest chance was open to a couple of competitors that would need 50 straights to tie Fennell, the anticipated Champion. Those 50's just didn't happen – and so Doug Vine's early 87 was to stand as Runner-up and Michael Nudd took M1 with 86.



FIVE STAND

Early scores on the leaderboard were also to prove decisive in the Five Stand. Wendell Cherry set the pace with 47 (25, 22) and was never headed. Stand B was a little tougher than Stand A with Jason Huf recording a strong 23/25 on 'B', but three lost targets on 'A' saw him finish on 45/50 and Runner-up. M1-M6 finished on 43, clearly illustrating the quality of Cherry's performance as this year's Five Stand Champion.

MAIN EVENT

The variety and styles of targets thrown in the three Pre-lim events earlier in the week led shooters to believe that the Saturday and Sunday Main Event targets would be cranked up a notch or two and prove to be testing – and they certainly were! Distance, speed and angles were used in abundance. Raised shooting platforms, targets over water, the use of scissor lifts and a strong mix of mini, midi, battue and rabbit



VIEW OF STATIONS 4 AND 5 ON THE ORANGE COURSE.

targets made for two top quality Championship courses.

Most of the top Masterclass competitors rated both Orange and Blue as potential 92-93 courses – but they hadn't accounted for the dramatic change of weather on the

first afternoon! Saturday started overcast with a breeze but during the day the wind picked-up considerably. By mid-afternoon the wind progressively got worse and blew in a typical Florida February rain storm. Sunday dawned bright

and breezy – but the damage was done. Those that had shot Saturday afternoon certainly had worse conditions than the alternate rotations.

Late Saturday the scoreboard told the story – Anthony Matarese 75, Dan Carlisle 71 and Will Fennell 74. Jon Kruger remarked "I can't remember the last time I shot under 80!" With the weather expected to be bright with a light breeze on Sunday, it would be an uphill battle for anyone to catch Mike Howells (86) and Joseph Carey (89) who'd shot the Blue course on Saturday.

But spare a thought for those D and E class shooters that had made the trip in keen anticipation of some competitive sport! The course would certainly have been tough enough without the windy conditions of Saturday afternoon – but with 'floaty' crossers dipping and bobbing in the wind and teal and hanging targets being blown out to 50 and 60 yards or more, the lower classes were to see their Saturday scorecards 'blown' apart



SPECTACULAR VARIETY FROM STATION TO STATION.



FAST TRAP TARGET ON BLUE COURSE.



ALL THE WAY FROM ALASKA CAME THESE SUB JUNIORS (L TO R): TODD PULIS, TRAVIS HILL, (STEVE TUCKER - COACH), MATT HUGHES AND MICHAEL WEAVER.

and their incentive for Sunday's round badly dented. Of the 50 D class competitors, only four shot a combined Saturday and Sunday score of over 120/200 and 25 (half of the class) shot under 100/200. Among the 37 E class competitors, two shot 120/200 or more and 20 competitors (over half of the class) shot 100/200 or less. Clearly the debate as to how much the competitors in the lower classes 'enjoyed themselves' will go on for some time.

The reality is that the ability of shooters in all classes is significantly improving year on year – and Championship courses should reflect that improvement. It's also true to say that 'hard' or 'easy', most courses will throw up the same in-form winners in each class. In the case of this competition, the balance of 'technical' and 'feel good' targets was probably about right, but that fine balance was lost because of high winds on Saturday and a stiff breeze on Sunday – and for no other reason.

Two consistent rounds each of 86 on Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon was, in the end, good enough to see Mike Howells



SEMINOLE OVERALL CHAMPION FOR 2003 WAS MICK HOWELLS WITH A SCORE OF 172/200.

take HOA (172), one target clear of Joseph Carey (R/U) with Gary Phillips taking M1 (169). Jeff Davis put together two great rounds of 87 and 81 to take AA1, 13 targets ahead of Daniel Schindler (155) with visiting Brit, A.J. Smith, in third place (153).

A class was a tighter affair with George Bush (146) beating Ruel Chung (145) and Vernon Day (145). Don Henning (B1) and Robert Boyd (C1) both won their respective classes on 142 while James Sinnott (D1-136) and Robert Johnson (E1-130) decisively took their class honors.

Three targets clear of a strong field of Ladies, Diane Nelson won her Concurrent on 147; Aaron Daab won Sub Juniors (136) and Brandon Powell's win (163) in Juniors by 14 targets was particularly impressive. Schindler added the Veteran's honors to his AA2 and Frank Fulton won the Super Veterans (150).

Despite the atrocious conditions on Saturday afternoon, the weather on Sunday was breezy but spectacular. Though the

'competitive' element to the overall competition had been lost because of Saturday's badly effected scores, both courses shot well on the second day – with the feel good factor returning for most competitors. By 7pm, and after prize-giving, the ground fell quiet with only the staff remaining to take down the various courses. For many of the competitors, the long trip home remained – while for others their destination was SCI for the Caribbean Cup! (Full report from SCI next issue.)



A FINAL WORD – THANKS SHEREEN!

FIVE STAND COMPETITION

HOA	Wendell Cherry	47
R/U	Jason Huf	45
M1	Tom Mack	43
AA1	A.J. Smith	42
A1	James Wilde	42
B1	David Diringier	37
C1	Christian Pfeil	36
D1	James Sinnott	38
E1	Matthew Canale	30
L	Diane Nelson	38
V	A.J. Smith	42
SV	Vic Ameye	38
SJ	Leon Tan	34
J	Brett Dorak	43

FITASC

HOA	Will Fennell	90
R/U	Doug Vine	87
M1	Michael Nudd	86
AA1	A.J. Smith	85
A1	Jack Cassidy	79
B1	Gordon Bulla	76
C1	Sean O'Meara	67
D1	Craig Sommerfeld	55
E1	John Landry	61
L	Callie Moss	73
V	A.J. Smith	85
SV	Fred Abbott	77
J	Brandon Powell	85

SEMINOLE CUP MAIN EVENT

HOA	Mick Howells	172
R/U	Joseph Carey	171
M1	Gary Phillips	169
M2	Doug Vine	169
M3	Craig Hill	168
AA1	Jeff Davis	168
AA2	Daniel Schindler	155
AA3	A.J. Smith	153
A1	George Bush	146
A2	Ruel Chung	145
A3	Vernon Day	145
B1	Don Henning	142
B2	Chris Ford	140
B3	Mike Solomey	134
C1	Robert Boyd	142
C2	Aaron Himrod	139
C3	Charles Dolan	137
D1	James Sinnott	136
D2	Randy Johnson	132
D3	George Stephan	124
E1	Robert Johnson	130
E2	Hunter Guy	120
E3	Patrick O'Donnell	118
L	Diane Nelson	147
SJ	Aaron Daab	136
J	Brandon Powell	163
V	Daniel Schindler	155
SV	Frank Fulton	150