

THE BIGGEST LITTLE SHOOT-OUT IN TEXAS!

STEVE FISCHER REPORTS FROM THE BROWNING BRILEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Without question, the State of Texas is a pretty big place – and Texan's pride themselves in doing things on a large scale! An excellent example of this would be the American Shooting Centers in Houston. Simply stated, it's huge! The complex literally sprawls over a major portion of George Bush Park on the Buffalo Bayou, west of downtown Houston. Home to the Browning Briley World Championship each year, the ground offers the shooter just about every type of shooting available – not only the shotgun games of Sporting, Trap, Skeet, and 5-Stand, but also rifle and pistol ranges.

This true 'Shooting Center' sprawls over some of the flattest ground in Texas – so how do you make a Sporting course challenging and interesting over frying pan flat land? Easy. You build a bunch of towers, use the sides of the rifle range berms and get creative. Next, you enlist the

services of experts in the art of setting targets, such as Englishmen Dave Peckham and son Shaun, and Mike McAlpine from the NSCA Shooting School. McAlpine set the targets on the preliminary course, while Shaun put up four great FITASC Parcours. Dave set the two Main Event courses. The 5-Stand, games, side by side and sub-gauge events were set by ASC staff.

Sporting Clays has grown and matured into something quite different from where we started twelve or fifteen years ago, and over these past few years the shooters have also progressed in skill and sophistication, looking for ever more creative and interesting presentations in tournament

targets. Such was the case, and such were the presentations at this year's tournament.

PRE-LIM DETAILS

I often use the preliminary event as a sort of weather vane, which gives some pretty good indicators on what to expect for targets in the coming Main Event. It was obvious from the start that this Pre-lim was more than just a hastily thrown together practice course. The presentations were interesting and definitely had a bit of an edge to them. It became quite clear, early on, that this course would not be hammered by one or more of the 'big guns', and that a 97 just wasn't there. This proved to be the case, with only nine shooters putting up a score of 90 or better – with the top gun score a three-way tie at 93

by Doug Vine, Mick Howells and Craig Hill.

The targets were first rate, and very entertaining for the 292 shooters who entered this Pre-lim. However, I was surprised to find that only first places received awards in the Concurrents for this event. Awards to third place would have certainly been appreciated by the recipients and I hope the management will consider this next year. After all, this is considered to be a major tournament, and anyone receiving a second or third place against this size of the field would be proud to display a runner-up or even a third place award.

The Ladies top gun was Janet Tausch (84) followed by Cindy Barton (81) of Shooterspagetx.com and DeeAnn Massey (78). The Juniors Concurrent has talent too deep for words – it's somewhat scary and quite awesome to see some of these youngster's shoot, knocking the sox off just about





MIKE O'BRIEN AND BRANDON POWELL BATTLING IT OUT ON THE MAKE-A-BREAK.

anyone and not having yet tasted their first (legal) beer! Ahhh, for the young eyes and rattlesnake reflexes possessed by these kids! Cole Storey whipped up a fine 91 with Brandon Powell second (86) and Mike O'Brien one back (85). The really 'little guys' in Sub-junior are also quite a show to see. Stephen Murray posted a fine 78, with Leon Tan second (74) and Joey Bolton third (67).

Another tough Concurrent to be in is the Veteran bunch. These guys have been around for a while and can be very competitive against all comers. Jerome Holden put up an excellent 86 for first with John Meitzen second (83) and Vance Barnes and Steve Fischer tied in third spot (82). Cesar Athes nailed first Super-Veteran with 83, while Gary McStay and the venerable Bob Brister tied for two and three spot at 77.

COMPETITIVE FITASC

Everyone was keeping one eye on the weather as the Main Event and the 100 bird FITASC began on

Saturday. It had been overcast and mild for the Pre-lim and the weather man had predicted that we were bound to get wet at sometime over the weekend – which turned out to be some misty rain on Sunday.

The FITASC Parcours were laid out in two's, with Parcours one and two at the west end of the Skeet and Trap fields, and Parcours three and four at the east end, just past the 5-Stand. Shaun Peckham gave us some memorable presentations and a good mixture of distance and speed that one has come to expect on a competition Parcour – rabbits, battues, midis and standards were all offered, and often looked easier than they actually were.

W. Ray Newman from the Super-Veterans Team USA shot the FITASC event early in the week and found his new Perazzi and FITASC working well together by posting what would prove to be the second highest score of the meet. He did it in style as well, by running the first Parcour and posting a 23 on the second, and

then putting up a 20-23 on Parcours three and four, for a brilliantly shot score of 91!

There were a couple of shots that gave just about everyone fits! Parcour four had a not too tall but very fast tower type crosser thrown from a crane hoisted about 35 or 40 feet in the air. It was sent in a shallow down-hill trajectory with a good bit of speed on it, and many shooters failed to find the handle on this hummer! Parcour two's 'B' bird crosser, a midi at about 45 or 50 yards, climbed just above a line of trees, and then dipped into them some 80 yards or so later. Another zinger that claimed a multitude of victims!

As the scores began to come in, many of the top guns had opted to shoot the FITASC event over Saturday and Sunday, and the suspense was drawn out like a good mystery novel, with everyone waiting for the final postings to see who would be at the top of the leader board. Those who had put up some good scores in the mid and high eighties felt the anxiety of waiting to see if their

score would stand up. One of the last to hit the scoreboard was that of Doug Vine, who's fantastic score of 93 (25,24,24,20) would prove to be the HOA putting him in the Champion's spot. Wendell Cherry managed to tie Newman's 91 for Master first and Mick Howells would take Master third, one back on 90.

In the fairer sex Concurrent, Lady champion went to Vicky Ash (69) from a tie with Cindy Barton who claimed second and one bird back at 68 was third placed Janet Tausch. Obviously, a very tight race and well fought. In the Juniors, Cory Kruse, up to the challenge, squeaked by Gebben Miles 89 to 88, with Gregg Wolf third at 86. The Veterans Concurrent Champion went to Gene Sherrod (83) with Gonzalo Vargas and Ron Honefenger tied at 82 for second and third. Super-Vet's was a runaway with Newman's electric 91. John Digiglia claimed second honors at 78, with Team USA member Troy Peak in third spot (73). Credit is due and well deserved to Shaun Peckham for the creativity and entertainment value of his four Parcours, presented over such flat terrain. He worked the ground, foliage and tree lines well, and made much out of very little.

MAIN EVENT

Saturday morning, the Main Event found 376 competitors ready to do battle, split between the Red and Blue Course. These two courses greeted the challengers with what would prove to be some nicely balanced difficulty levels, with only a couple of targets difference at best. Overcast skies filled with the bland colors of grays, whites and blues made target visibility more than a normal challenge.

Dave Peckham made the targets more than challenging and

he did it without eye games, overly short windows, or targets with extreme distance. What he did do was present us with problems. Which target should I take first? Is that target really hooking, curving and moving away at the same time? He also threw a bountiful supply of chondelles and rabbits, with very few targets that could be considered 'gimmies'. You had to pay attention to every target, as a loss of concentration or sloppiness would surely result in a lost target.

Aiding him was the overly abundant supply of towers available – providing going away shots, dropping shots and high crossing shots. There were several rabbit presentations – and a couple were at a considerable distance coupled with plenty of speed. Truly a pair of exciting and fun courses.

Now I don't know if maybe some weird kinship to the Crown or British heritage had any influence on the outcome of this shoot, but the results were definitely flavored with the U.K. Mick Howells became the 2003 Browning Briley Champion with a score of 185 (95-90) with Doug Vine Runner-up at 184 (90-94). The event awarded down 5 places in each class and Concurrents. The top five Masters were Will Fennell (183), Scott Robertson (182),

Gregg Wolf (181), Terry O'Neil (180) and Federico Del Toro (180). The Ladies were led by Champion DeeAnn Massey's strong 167, followed by Sandi Faison (155), Cathy Tomberlin (154), Cindy Barton (151) and Janet Tausch (150).

The amazing Sub-Juniors was won by Stephen Murray's very consistent 158 (79-79) followed by the equally consistent shooting of runner-up Aaron Daab who also posted a 158 (78-80). Leon Tan followed third at 147, with Logan Gaskins fourth at 144. Fifth place went to Joey Bolton, in with a 141.

The Junior Concurrent HOA was Sheldon Benge at 176, with Brandon Powell second one back at 175 and Cole Storey (171) third. Connor Oman was fourth (170) followed by Mike O'Brien (163). Super Vet was led by Bill Ray's 154 and second place went to Gary McStay on 152. Dan Floeck took third with a 151, with W. Ray Newman fourth with 150. The fifth spot was filled at 149 by Bob Brister. Jerome Holden headed the Veteran's (174), with Mark Kiddie second (172) and John Meitzen and Steve Fischer tied for third and fourth (169), with the familiar name of Mike Hampton (yep, THAT Mike Hampton!) fifth (167).

The general consensus of



MIKE HOWELLS, MAIN EVENT HOA.



RIGHT: DOUG VINE, MAIN EVENT RUNNER-UP AND FITASC CHAMP.



RIGHT: JEROME HOLDEN, MAIN EVENT AND PRE-LIM VETERAN CHAMP.



RIGHT: CORY KRUSE, JUNIOR CHAMP FITASC.



LEFT: VICKY ASH, FITASC LADY CHAMP.



RIGHT: SHELDON BENGE, MAIN EVENT JUNIOR CHAMP.

opinion was that this was the best Browning Briley Championship to date! Excellent targets, mostly pretty good weather – if you don't count the misty rain on Sunday – lot's of drawing prizes and a superb Saturday banquet. Did I mention that the menu for the banquet was Alaskan King Crab legs with drawn butter giant prawns with cocktail sauce, corn on the cob, boiled potatoes, salad, drinks and cheese cake for dessert? Absolutely excellent!

The brand new pavilion housed the banquet and awards ceremony, and the new upstairs restaurant served delicious burgers, chicken, fries and drinks each day for lunch. Also available for lunch and snacks was a great BBQ vendor at the main clubhouse serving delicious ribs and chicken.

The ASC staff were friendly and well trained and the scoring was excellent – supplied by Bruce Herring and the Southeastern Illinois College crew. Lois Lessing, processed the scores and as usual, led the way in speed and accuracy for processing the big blasts and their scoring needs.

It honestly doesn't get much better than this in a major tournament, and for those of you who have never attended this shoot, you might just want to put it on your list of 'need to be there' shoots for next year. You won't be disappointed!