

THE UK US MASTERS

PARCOURS DE CHASSE AT ITS BEST SAYS **STEVE FISCHER**



There's just something about Minnesota that I like. Since my home State of Michigan and Minnesota are quite similar in outward appearances – trees and lakes and countryside farms covered with corn, wheat, peas or some other summer crop – I guess it just reminds me a lot of my youth and the many pleasant summer days spent in similar surroundings. Mind you, I conveniently left out any reference to a visit in say, mid-February, when the snow just might be approaching my belt line and the temperatures well below freezing! (Also similar to Michigan in that respect.)

Call it 'selective recall', if you will, but ever since my first trip to Minnesota for one of the Pan Am

FITASC events, and later again for the US Open, I've looked forward to a return visit – and the 2003 UK/US Masters was just the ticket. This would also mean another visit to the beautiful Minnesota Horse and Hunt Club, the host for this event of 200 FITASC targets and 200 Sporting targets in the added Challenge Cup event.

PECKHAM'S IN TOWN

Of particular interest was the fact that Dave Peckham and son Jamie had made the trip from the U.K. to set the targets for this event. Having experienced Mr Peckham's targets before, most recently at last year's US Open, all of us were primed and ready for

another dose of his tricky and challenging presentations. The Peckham family set true championship target presentations and we were not to be disappointed! The layouts were on virgin ground over some of the more scenic terrain on the club's vast property. One layout would feature rolling hills while others would be in wooded areas with high tree lines. Still another would be over one of the many ponds on the ground, with a couple of growing corn fields the recipient of the other layouts.

It is very evident that Peckham truly enjoys setting targets and spends considerable effort on them in an attempt to deceive, trick, beat or otherwise outwit the

shooter. He loves to throw chondels and 'looong' battues, as well as a sneaky little signature target in the form of a crosser about mid-range without speed. It looks like it would need at least two feet of lead, when one foot is more than enough! A miss in front for the unsuspecting shooter who didn't look closely enough is the result. Long crossing shots are also in his repertoire – and he is not afraid to use them, and with some speed as well!

Tournament shooting abounds in mid-summer, and it seems that every weekend there's a major 'Big Blast' somewhere. Perhaps this is the reason that there was less than a stellar turnout for this year's UK/US Masters. With the World

FITASC, the World English, the National FITASC and the US Open all within a six week window, time and money constraints would be a likely reason for missing some of the premier targets of the season.

Minnesota and the weather worked together beautifully this year, giving the shooters some warm summer days without rain or other bothersome distractions – aside from a few mosquitos. The competition began on Thursday with a Pre-lim Sporting event followed by another on Friday and 5-Stand practice – a great warm up for the competitors for the coming weekend.

Only about 35 competitors shot the Thursday Pre-lim, with 'Mr Hot Streak' himself, Cory Kruse, putting another notch on his belt with an outstanding 96 for HOA. T.Wannebo took Runner-up with 92 and Master 1 through 3 found John Hargrave, Brandon Powell and Gregg Wolf tied up on 91. Chuck Hearn won the Veterans (74) and Gus McFaddin's 74 topped the

Super Veterans. Brandon Powell took top Junior (91).

Friday's Pre-lim found Cory Kruse totally in charge once again with HOA honors at 94. I tried real hard to catch him, but my 91 was only good for Runner-up and Veteran HOA. Scott Nelson and his Krieghoff topped the Masters with a well shot 90, with Gregg Wolf second (90) and Brandon Powell third Master and Junior HOA (89). Super-Veterans went to W. Ray Newman (80) and Dr. Paula Benbow topped the Ladies with a fine 85.

THE MAIN EVENT

Several of our British friends stayed over from the previous week's World FITASC to participate in the UK/US Masters event, keeping us honest and giving credence to this international competition. With eight Parcour to shoot over three days, it is always tough to predict who is in line for a win, as the

degree of difficulty on each Parcour is often different. Initially, the scores each day only reflect which Parcour might be easier or harder than the others. Nevertheless, when 24's and 25's show up on the score board, if nothing else, it shows that someone, or several someone's, are having a good day!

Right off the bat, Cory Kruse and the UK's A.J. "Smoker" Smith were looking pretty good, as were fellow countrymen John Hargrave and John Woolley. Junior shooter Brandon Powell was also well in contention. In fact, the Brits and the American Juniors have been dominating many of the big shoots this season and seven of the top eight scores were shot by either the Brits or our Juniors!

By Sunday's final two Parcour, the results were far more predictable, and the end result was A.J. Smith's 173 giving him his second win in as many weeks, just edging out Cory Kruse (172) and



BRANDON POWELL 1ST MASTER IN THE UK/US MASTERS FITASC.



A VERY RELAXED CORY KRUSE (ON REAR OF CART) WITH COLE STOREY (LEFT) AND GREGG WOLF (RIGHT).



SCOTT NELSON IN THE BOX AND READY.



L TO R FITASC HONORS: JOHN HARGRAVE (3RD), A.J. SMITH (HOA) AND CORY KRUSE (2ND).



TOP: LADY FITASC SECOND, DR. PAULA BENBOW WITH DAVE AND JAMIE PECKHAM.
BELOW: C CLASS FITASC HONORS WENT TO, L TO R: SEAMUS CULHANE, TINA SMITH AND ALLEN MURPHY.



HOA VETERAN OF THE UK/US MASTERS WAS OUR VERY OWN STEVE FISCHER.

fellow Brit John Hargrave 171. Brandon Powell topped Master Class at 170 with Gregg Wolf and

John Woolley second and third (169). Lady first found Jessica Kent (138) two ahead of second placed Dr. Paula Benbow (136). Junior, Cole Storey, shot a fine 161 for top gun with Matt Tatum second (132). The Super-Veterans found W. Ray Newman's 151 and Rollie Reinke's 134 in the top two spots. My 158 was good enough for HOA Veteran, with Steve Willhite in second place (145).

CHALLENGE CUP

Despite the less than expected numbers, the Challenge Cup

Sporting targets were without doubt some of the best of the year! The Peckham's proved that their skills are not limited to FITASC style targets and presented us with some well thought out and imaginative Sporting targets – equal to those of the previous years U.S. Open. Most of the targets for this 200 bird event were inside the magical 40 yard line and many in or around 30 yards, yet some of the presentations required the shooter to take the target where the setter wanted and not where the shooter would have preferred to take the shot. A bush just happens to be right at the kill spot, or perhaps a change in the direction of the target's flight line would make the shooter either shoot too quick or wait too long, making what looked to be a fairly straight forward shot turn into something different than expected. Mixing target speeds on report pairs would also create some different than expected break points. One station had a quartering shot following the downward contour of a hill, and although the lead wasn't more than two feet, many shooters missed it over the top – not reading the subtle downward slope of the target's path.

As the final results began to take shape Sunday afternoon,



RUNNER-UP AND HOA OF THE CHALLENGE CUP, L TO R: GREGG WOLF AND CORY KRUSE.

Peckham set up for any possible shoot-offs on a station right in front of the clubhouse. B class shooters John Marsh and Nate Peterson would be shooting off for first and second in class, tied at 141, with yes, once again, Cory Kruse and Gregg Wolf for HOA and Runner-up at 176, and A.J. Smith and myself to determine first Master and HOA Veteran from our 171 tie.

There was a wicked left to right crosser at about 45 yards, with a fast going away shot at about the same, from right to left. As A.J. and I looked at the targets we laughingly discussed the possibility of looking like a pair of complete idiots if we didn't hit at least a couple of these monster shoot-off targets – with more truth in that possibility than we would have liked to admit! Thankfully, our reputations remain unscathed, and A.J. took Master First and I the Veteran HOA while John Marsh and Nate Peterson finished one-two in B class, and the Champion was once again Cory Kruse with a fine performance and score of 176 leaving Gregg Wolf as RU.

Randy Travalia and the Minnesota Horse and Hunt Club did an outstanding job of presenting this double-header tournament. The low turnout did not hamper or change in any way the warm, friendly atmosphere always present on this premier ground. Triggers, the excellent restaurant on the ground provided superb lunches and food for the Saturday banquet and the score keeping was provided by both the local staff and the excellent services of the Southern Illinois College students under the supervision of Chuck Hearn.

Hopefully, this year's low attendance will not discourage the future of this excellent shoot – and perhaps a better positioning in the tournament trail will bring more shooters to this excellent International event.