

MICHAEL BRUNTON AND
RICHARD RAWLINGSON *REPORT FROM*
THE WORLD FITASC CHAMPIONSHIP AT
SOUTHERN COUNTIES SHOOTING
GROUND IN ENGLAND

FAULTS ON TOP OF THE WORLD



Four days of blazing sunshine, 200 targets and 645 competitors from more than 20 nations – but only one winner. That’s the story of the 2005 World FITASC Championship in a nutshell. Once again the cream rose to the top, with arguably the three best shooters in the world today filling the medal places as Great Britain staged the World Championship in mid-July.

And a massive task it was for the Southern Counties Shooting Ground team and their invited course setters, with eight Parcours to be built on virgin ground surrounding the main facility in southern England.

Young American star Gregg Wolf was back in Europe to defend the title he won at Signes, France, last year, but there were plenty of serious contenders for the crown in a truly international field. Also, with eight layouts to shoot, nothing would be clear until well into the final day. With the weather set fair it would be a true run race.

What was clear at the end of the first day was that we would have a



very crowded leader board. All the talk before the shoot had been about making the targets accessible to all, and that reflected in the scores. Ben Husthwaite topped the charts with 49/50, but over 40 shooters were on 45 or better and no fewer than 200 had shot 40 or more. With so little separation, it was already clear that winning the title would be all about eliminating unforced errors. The big shock was the sight of George Digweed languishing in 87th place after a catastrophic 19 on the Eley layout on the first day. He said later that he had been mentally gearing up for typically tough British-style targets and had been caught out by the lack of speed and distance, missing several targets in front. It left him with a mountain to climb if he were to fulfil his ambition to add to his haul of seven titles with a first win on home soil.

HALF WAY

At the end of day two, things were no less crowded at the top, although few would have predicted that Martin Doughty's name would be first on the list. Fine shot that he is, Doughty is not renowned as a FITASC specialist, but three consecutive 24s to go with his opening 22 left him a shot clear of the chasing pack on 94. Ben



L TO R: WILL FENNELL, RANDY TRAVALIA AND OUR OWN BEN BRUNTON.

Husthwaite opened day two with 24 but slipped back to joint second after an uncharacteristic 20 on the Beretta layout. It was a cosmopolitan top ten – alongside Ben was Jean-Marie Coutant of France, with countryman Charles Bardou one behind and Australia's Chris Brown and America's Andy Duffy (91) in close attendance in 7th. Steve Nelson (90) was 11th and Cory Kruse (89) 16th. Russia's Sergei Aleksandrov shot the best score of the day - 49 to be right in it. Local knowledge was proving useful for Pete Dennett, tucked in alongside Richard Faulds on 92 in 4th.

Georgie Jones (87) had opened up a three shot lead over Russia's Inna Aleksandrov in the Ladies with Diane Nelson (76-8th) the only US team member in the top 10. Elsewhere in the concurrents, US shooters were up to half a dozen targets off the pace. Hub Johnson (81-16th) was seven targets off Darren Moon in the Juniors, Joe Cantey (87-3rd) was doing well in the Veterans and Dick Phillips and

Tom Sebring were 7th= in the Super Veterans on 74.

At half way the national team placings were not encouraging – the US Seniors were outside the top five, US Ladies were 4th, US Juniors were 5th, US Veterans were holding their own in 2nd and US Super Veterans were 4th. There was plenty of work still to be done!

TARGET OVERVIEW

The eight Parcours were laid over some of the most beautiful terrain in southern England. Several were set in a deep and wide bowl of farmland, with targets set flying over the horizon as well as across, up and down the hillsides. Several Parcours were set with the pegs working their way down slopes with the seemingly endless horizon's spectacular view as a background. It was quite evident that much thought and effort had gone into each layout to provide the shooter with the maximum enjoyment that one would expect for a world-class competition.

THE BIG SHOCK WAS THE SIGHT OF GEORGE DIGWEED LANGUISHING IN 87TH PLACE AFTER A CATASTROPHIC 19 ON THE ELEY LAYOUT. HE SAID LATER THAT HE HAD BEEN MENTALLY GEARING UP FOR TYPICALLY TOUGH BRITISH-STYLE TARGETS AND HAD BEEN CAUGHT OUT BY THE LACK OF SPEED AND DISTANCE.



With targets set by Dave and Jamie Peckham, Keith Rowe, Mo Parsons and Dave Feidler, the degree of difficulty was just about spot on – there were no ridiculously long shots or super-short window shots on any layout. Some were on the tougher side, such as the Hull, SIS, Browning and Eley Parcours, yet they did not resort to pressing the shooter with distance, relying more on speed and finesse to take the difficulty level up a notch or two. The Krieghoff layout was a particular favorite. It featured a long rabbit on peg one, coming from behind and below the shooter’s left shoulder and far down the hill at about 40 yards, a raffale crossing midi from left to right at about 40 yards on peg two, a runnable peg three, and a seemingly easy uphill flopper on peg four that needed more lead than it looked as it floated up hill, dropping softly with a slight right to left twist at the end of its flight. It looked easy but was missed frequently – much to the surprise of the shooters who thought it was a ‘cupcake’ shot.

Laporte, Beretta, and Blaser layouts were thought by many to be a bit easier than the others as they featured some shots that were closer in distance, but none of these layouts were laden with ‘gimmies’. You had to work and pay attention – or you missed. Just that simple.

If there was any suggestion for improvement to this event, it would have been to shorten up several of the longer walks, either to the pegs or out to the pickup points for the ride back to headquarters. It was quite warm for the entire four days and as the game grows older, so do many of the competitors who found some of the long walks up hills over rough ground quite hard – especially when wearing a few extra pounds, or sporting knees and backs that have seen better days. Nevertheless, the event ran like a Swiss watch (if you ignore a few stumbles at the awards ceremony) and the targets were some of the best seen in a World competition.



L TO R: CORY KRUSE, ANTHONY MATARESE JR., WENDELL CHERRY AND CURTIS ANDERSON.

THE LONG HAUL

The great feature of major FITASC championships is that they are marathons – not sprints. Maintaining form and concentration over four days is something that comes with experience. The great shooters also know how to build through the week and Richard Faulds



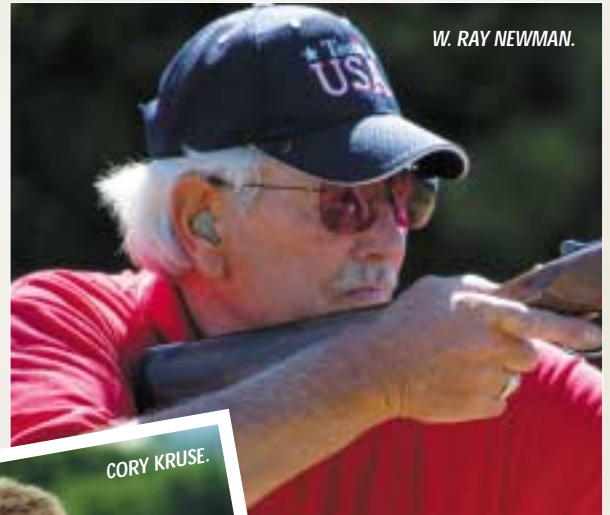
certainly found another gear as the competition went into the weekend. With 24 and 25 straight on day three he leaped into the outright lead on 141, just one ahead of Husthwaite. The big movers on the Saturday were Steve Nutbeam (25/23) and, ominously, Digweed who, with a couple of 24s, had made up 83 places since the first day!

There had been significant moves too in all the concurrents, with the British hopefuls toppled from top spot in all four. Georgie Jones had a disappointing 35 to slip back into the bronze position in Ladies, Italy's Katusca Spada, the defending champion, taking over the lead. Kate Brown had put herself back in with a medal chance with 41.

In the Junior battle, Hungary's rising star Andres Szerdahelyi stormed into the lead with a 45 for 132 that left Darren Moon and GB team mate Michael Simpson seven shots adrift and in need of a sensational last day. In the Veteran class John Bidwell and Barry Simpson now trailed Joe Cantey by one and Steve Fischer was moving up the leaderbaord. Tony Ball had a bad day to leave Tony Joannides the nearest rival to Holland's Hans Oosteveen in the Super Veterans.



CASEY ATKINSON.



W. RAY NEWMAN.



CORY KRUSE.



STEVE FISCHER.



BOB HAYNES.



HUB JOHNSON.



DIANE NELSON.



JEAN BLAIR.

IN THE NATIONAL TEAM RACE, THE US TEAMS WERE PLACED 5TH IN THE SENIORS, 4TH IN THE LADIES, 2ND IN THE VETERANS, 2ND IN THE SUPER VETERANS AND 5TH IN THE JUNIORS. BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD – READY FOR THE NEXT STOP WHEN THE WORLD FITASC CHAMPIONSHIP BANDWAGON MOVES ON TO SOUTH AFRICA.



And so the final day dawned. Southern Counties sizzled once again and so did the scoring. Of the main contenders, Faulds certainly seemed to have the easier run in, with the Blaser and Beretta layouts to shoot, while Husthwaite's final two layout were among the stiffer tests. When another 25 went up against Faulds' name to Ben's 23 it seemed as good as over. A final 24 confirmed that Faulds could put the World trophy alongside the European title he won in Cyprus. His 98 over the final two days was true world class.

For Husthwaite there would not even be the consolation of silver. In an effort of sheer will, as much as shooting ability, Digweed shot 50 straight on his final two layouts to snatch second place and give Britain a clean sweep of the medals. He too had shot 98 over the second half of the competition and was philosophical afterwards. "They set this shoot to be won on 184 and I've beaten that by two and still lost by four targets. 190 is a brilliant score and Faulds has beaten me fair and square. That 19 on day one has cost me, but then without it I might not have attacked layouts like Hull as I did. I

could have sat back and tried to defend a score and not got where I did. I'm satisfied that I did everything I could over these last two days. It wasn't good enough – but that's sport."

CLEAN SWEEP FOR TEAM GB

The final day turned into a golden one in more ways than one for Great Britain – only the Junior gold medal left the country. For US shooters it had been a disappointing four days – with no individual in the top 20 of the Senior race. It was left to the concurrents to uphold the honors with Paula Moore taking 8th= in the Ladies, W. Ray Newman was 5th= in the Super-Veterans and Steve Fischer took the Veteran bronze medal after a shoot-off.

In the National team race, the US teams were placed 5th in the Seniors, 4th in the Ladies, 2nd in the Veterans, 2nd in the Super Veterans and 5th in the Juniors. Back to the drawing board – ready for the next stop when the World FITASC Championship bandwagon moves on to pastures new. ■



INSET TOP L TO R: ANDY DUFFY AND STEVE NUTBEAM. ABOVE L TO R: DICK PHILLIPS, BOB OLIVER AND MIKE BITTMANN WITH JOE CANTEY IN THE FOREGROUND. BELOW: SUPER-VETERAN MEDAL WINNERS.

