



The World Sporting Championship

A REPORT BY **MICHAEL BRUNTON** AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY **DON BRUNT**

TWO WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN THE SPACE OF FOUR WEEKS! CLOSE ON THE HEELS OF THE LATE JULY FITASC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN THE US CAME THE WORLD SPORTING CHAMPIONSHIP, HELD 19-20TH AUGUST AT SOMERLEY ESTATE IN ENGLAND.



The World Sporting Championship alternates between the US and England. The 2006 event was held at the Somerley Estate in the south of England by kind permission of Lord Normanton and sponsored by Tarmac. Targets for each of the 100 bird 14 station Red and Blue courses were set by World Champion, Richard Faulds.

The Blue course was set up along a central ride that snaked it's way through forestry, while the Red course offered more open terrain for stations 1 to 3, 7 and 8, that delivered greater target variety.

Clearly Faulds had put a great deal of hard work into his course design – first visiting the venue back in February – and the degree of difficulty was about right for such a blue ribbon event.

The spectacular views and terrain may well have been a double-edged sword for Faulds, in that both courses were among woodland that probably constrained target variety. Red course included three battues, one rabbit and four midis while the Blue course included

two rabbits – one at only 20 ft on station 9 – three battues and four midis, leaving an emphasis on quartering presentations.

Most shooters found it difficult to build good scores on either course – the CPSA rotation system of two flights and double squads on each station per course per day just doesn't work. Hold ups were inevitable and on the first flights of the first day significant breakdowns with delays of an hour on some stations saw competitors taking up to five hours to complete 100 targets. Concentrating and maintaining focus was no easy task that first morning.

By Saturday afternoon – and on through Sunday – breakdowns and delays were minimized and the event ran smoothly, though hold ups on certain stations was still evident. Both courses had a cluster of three pair stations (Red 12, 13, 13A and 1 and Blue 22, 23 and 24) that saw shooters move through quickly but then bottleneck on the next four pair station – and with double squadding the result was back-ups of four squads or more.



AT LEFT, LONG HOLD UPS DID NOT MAKE IT EASY TO HOLD CONCENTRATION AND FOCUS. ABOVE: ANTHONY MATARESE JNR – ANOTHER TARGET AWAY!



DAY ONE

Despite the breakdowns and delays of the first morning, each course demanded that competitors were on their top game. Angles were deceptive, the majority of targets were fast and, when among the trees, the selection of the right break point was essential.

George Digweed's 93 was matched by Mark Marshall after day one – the only competitors from a field of 672 that broke the 90 barrier. Bill McGuire (88) was the top scoring American. "I was four or five light but tomorrow's another day" said McGuire. Cory



PLEASANT WEEKEND WEATHER SAW COMPETITORS RELAXING BEFORE AND AFTER SHOOTING.

Kruse (76) was still suffering from an eye injury, Rick Camuglia (80), Wendell Cherry (82) and Anthony Matarese Jnr (86) had been tied up in heavy delays that took the edge off their game.

In the concurrents Diane Nelson was in fourth equal at the half way point, Chris McClelland (84) and Brad Belcher (81) were second and fourth in the Juniors, and Jack Concannon (83) was second equal in the Veterans.

In the team events the seniors were in second place, the Ladies (D. Nelson, J. Tausch and A. Hafley) were in third, the Juniors (B. Belcher, C. McClelland and H. Johnson) were in second place, three targets adrift, and the Veterans (J. Cantey, J. Concannon and B. Ney) were 17 targets ahead of the field.

DAY TWO

Sunday dawned dull and overcast – and was to remain so until early evening when the sun broke through to shine on the Super Final.

The majority of American shooters were on the second rotation on Red course and it was another 3½ hour session grinding out the best score possible. A lost target here or there over 14 stations took its toll – making Digweed's second day score of 95 for 188 the more impressive.

While no seniors made the podium,

individual American medal winners from the concurrents included Chris McClelland (165 - Junior Silver), Brad Belcher (163 - Junior Bronze), Jack Concannon (166 - Veteran Gold) and Diane Nelson (147 - Ladies Bronze).

Particularly proud of his gold medal performance was 63 year-old Jack Concannon from Delaware on his first trip to the UK. "We don't see many of these target types in the US but they were challenging and I am extremely pleased to have topped the Veterans. As to what made these targets



CORY KRUSE. HIS PERFORMANCE WAS BELOW PAR AS HE CONTINUED TO SUFFER WITH AN EYE INJURY.

different from those back home, I would say at least 25 per cent of the targets had substantially more speed than we usually see. I've never seen a driven target before! I was thrilled to only drop one but I know a lot of the team struggled on that station. Maybe 10 birds were further out than we would normally see. It wasn't that they were further out under speed, they were just further out! Even so, there were so many good targets on the course, even though they beat us up a bit, but we all enjoyed the event and that's what the game is all about."

In the team events, the Seniors took Silver (20 targets behind England), the Ladies won Bronze (five targets behind Sweden and one

target adrift of England) and both the Juniors and Veterans won Gold.

The six man Super Final got under way at about 6.45pm on the lawns of Somerley House. A good crowd remained to see Digweed convincingly take his 15th World title (Sporting and FITASC) with Ben Husthwaite Runner-up.

Sadly there was no American interests in the Super Final. Thoughts had already turned to the long trip home and more delays at Gatwick and Heathrow as competitors moved their guns through airports currently on critical terrorist alert. Life is sure to be that much easier at the Nationals later this month! ■



GEORGE DIGWEED, 2006 WORLD SPORTING CHAMPION, ENJOYS A CHAMPAGNE CELEBRATION.



US JUNIOR TEAM GOLD MEDAL WINNERS.



US LADIES TEAM (BRONZE MEDAL) FLANKED BY LORD NORMANTON.



US VETERAN TEAM GOLD MEDAL. JACK CONCANNON (L) ALSO WON VETERAN GOLD.