

Ft. Benning 3 Gun

On Dec. 5-7th, the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit graciously hosted the 4th Annual Ft. Benning 3 Gun Challenge. The match was a 3 gun event requiring the use of the rifle, pistol and shotgun. The match recognized 5 equipment divisions: Tactical Optical rifle (with 177 competitors), Tactical Iron Sighted Rifle (with 14 competitors), Open (with 20 competitors), Heavy Metal (with 9 competitors) and Trooper (with 11 competitors). The match consisted of eight stages, seven of which were scenario based and the eighth, a pistol standards. Each stage also recognized a Medal of Honor recipient in an oftentimes stirred reading of the citation awarding the soldier's or Marine's heroism. Medal of Honor winners recognized included Audie Murphy, Master Sergeant Gary Gordon, Sergeant First Class Randy Shugart, and Sergeant First Class Paul Smith. It was a humbling experience to hear of these servicemen's heroism and sacrifice for our great nation.

The match had a new scoring system which is somewhat different from the previous system. The new scoring system favors accuracy more than the old "2 hits anywhere equals a neutralized target" system. The new system, named the "Horner system" after Andrew Horner, is more akin to IDPA style scoring in that hits outside the A zone add time to one's final score. Scoring is still based on the time plus penalties model but penalties for less accurate shots are now added. Paper targets still require 2 hits (except in the Heavy Metal division). A "C" hit added .5 seconds and "D" hits added 1.5 seconds to one's overall time. Targets over 100 yards were subject to increased penalties if not hit or engaged, reflecting the more challenging nature of those targets. Stage value would also increase if more than one gun was used. One gun stages were worth 100 points, two gun stages were worth 125 and the one three gun stage was worth 150 points.

The match was well run and organized reflecting the AMU's increasing experience in managing a complex three gun event. The prize table was simply phenomenal.

The stages were quite good and can be visited at www.danielhorner.com. Stage 1 was a 20 round fixed timed event in which the shooter had to carefully gauge whether or not to attempt to go for smaller but higher point value targets or stick with easy but less valuable targets. Stage 2 was a shotgun/pistol combination stage which required the shooter to engage nine shotgun targets through a low port. Most shooters opted for prone but a few including the fastest opted for some quite contorted sitting/kneeling positions to keep from going prone. Stage 3 was a clever shotgun stage which required the shooter to carefully strategize target engagement as the shooter had to manage both slug and shot shell and started in the middle of the stage. Stage 4 was a rifle/pistol combination involving some challenging offhand shots from the accursed bridge. Stage 5 was a short range rifle "hoser" stage that had the novelty of starting with a shot from a M203 grenade launcher. Stage 6 was another rifle/pistol combination stage mimicking a POW scenario. This stage began with the shooter engaging a charging paper target with a captured AK47 on full auto! Stage 7 was really the crown jewel of the match. It was a shotgun/rifle/pistol "semi-surprise" stage starting from the back of a Bradley fighting vehicle. The stage began with 14 shotgun targets, including one of the more challenging Texas stars that I have ever shot. The shooter transitioned to the rifle, engaged 6 close range rifle targets and then six

steel targets at about 125 yards. Then the shooter transitioned to the pistol and entered a trench system which contained nine pistol targets. The stage ended with a plate rack after about 75 yards of running through the trench. The semi-surprise? Just before the walkthrough, smoke grenades were tossed into the trench system making it nearly impossible to mark the location of the pistol targets. Stage 7 was simply a fantastic 3 gun stage. The match ended with Stage 8, a rifle stage which was held on the sniper school range. Stage 8 had shots from 1 yard to 415 yards away! Shots past 75 yards were taken from a simulated roof which lead to a great deal of stress as shooters clung on to the edge trying to engage some pretty technical rifle shots.

I ended up winning the Tactical Scoped rifle division. Now for the technical talk, I used a DSA and JP Enterprises rifle with an 18 inch 1 in 8 twist barrel topped with Bennie Cooley Comp. The optic was a Leupold Mark IV 1.5-5X MR/T scope with a circle dot reticle. The ammunition were handloaded 69 grain Nosler hollowpoint match bullets loaded to about 2850 fps. My shotgun was a Benelli M1 tuned by Triangle Shooting Sports. It has a 21 inch barrel with interchangeable Briley chokes. It has a fantastic XS Express sight mounted to the rib. As for the pistol, I was privileged enough to borrow Angus Hobdell's personal CZ75 Tactical Sport 9mm which the CZ Custom Shop has been "experimenting" with. The pistol is reliable, accurate and has a great trigger. In particular, I really like the sight radius of the 5.4 in barrel. The pistol has been lightened from the standard Tactical Sport configuration by removing some of the dust cover. It points well and shoots fast! My success was a direct result of some accurate and fast pistol shooting to make up for some less than spectacular shotgun shooting!

Thanks to the Army and the AMU in particular for hosting such a world class event. This has become THE 3 gun event to attend. And thanks to CZ (and Angus!) for the support and equipment which enabled me to win this event!

Sincerely,

Kelly Neal