

Multigun Nationals '08

The Battle In Bayou Country

By DAVE THOMAS, USPSA ED



One hundred eighteen multigunners gathered at the Clark Range near Princeton, La., the first weekend of October for the 2008 Multigun National Championship Match. Unlike past Multigun events fired in the dusty climes of Las Vegas, or the sands of Reno, Nev., this year's challenge came to the home range of Jerry and Kay Miculek, unquestionably the nation's top shooting couple. After so many matches in the West, it would be easy to mistake USPSA Multigun as "a West Coast thing," but the Nation's top 3-Gunners come from all across the country.

USPSA's Area 4 is particularly strong in Multigun, with the Miculeks leading the charge. Wayne Miller and Ken Hicks have been the go-to guys for big pistol matches in Area 4 for years, so it was natural that they should get the nod to be co-match directors. Shooters were greeted by great weather (a blessing), a convenient venue, and 12 excellent stages presenting a full

Jessie Abbate in action.

range of firearm-appropriate tests. For creature comforts, the nearby cities of Bossier City and Shreveport provided a wonderful variety of restaurants and ample entertainment opportunities to occupy competitors and their families while not shooting.

Over the next three days, Jerry Miculek added another bead to his long string of 3-Gun and Multigun National Championships by holding off Chris Tilley and Michael Voigt by margins of 25 and 27 points respectively. This is Miculek's third win in the past four years. Kay Miculek kept the rest of the Open Division victory celebrations in the house by finishing first among women.

Tactical Division has become the most popular of the Multigun choices with 66 entrants this year. Tactical Division applies Limited Division equipment rules to pistol and shotgun (no optics, rifle comps limited in size) but allows a single optical sight on the rifle. Taran Butler has dominated in Tactical Division in recent years, and continued to do so here, finishing nearly 77 points ahead of Keith Garcia and 80 points ahead of Phil Strader. Jessie Abbatte capped her amazing year with yet another national ladies championship.

Bruce Piatt, Kelly Neal, and Ted Puente, all past champions, duked it out in Limited Division, finally finishing in that order. Limited is the most



Phil Strader on one of several pistol phases.



Open Ladies' Champion Kay Miculek works her way through the trees (above) while Ken Skeeters chronos a competitor's rifle.



challenging of Divisions given the need to engage targets at 300-plus yards with open sights. It takes wondrous skill supplemented by excellent vision to not only hit the targets but to do so quickly. No women competed in Limited Division.

Fall in Louisiana is an interesting time of year weather-wise. Chances are it will be hot and humid, but there is the possibility of a big wind. Fortunately the match took place after Messrs. Gustav and Ike had roared out of the gulf coast and exhausted themselves across the American Midwest. Unfortunately, the residual effects were still being felt.

"We lost some competitors and staff to the hurricanes," said Co-Match Director Wayne Miller. Fortunately, "lost" in this instance only meant that some USPSA members were forced to stay home to care for families, homes, and businesses. For those people and thousands of others, the storms will not be quickly forgotten.

The reduced numbers of both groups were noticeable during the match, which attracted competitors from as far away as Finland. The 12 stages

were adequately staffed, but without any extra people. (At times Miller and Co-Match Director Ken Hicks doubled as stats runners.)

Stage design was widely praised with a number of interesting tests for all firearm types, though some felt that the Multigun theme went a bit too far with only two of the 12 stages devoted



Don Golembieski ditching his shotgun at one of the exchange points.



Some days you're the bat, other days you're the ball. Chris Tilley takes a pair of folding pliers to his AR-15.

to a single gun. That was a minor issue given the pure fun presented by such innovations as a mover with four 8-inch plates instead of paper targets, and "classic" targets appearing and disappearing very rapidly one after the other in a straight line. The Clark Range offers a combination of short pistol bays and a long, open rifle line. Course designers made the most of both, employing those wild swingers in the pistol bays, and stretching the long-

range targets out to 300 yards or more.

The first of those devilish delights was found on stage 10, "Finish Your Plate," designed by Co-Match Director Miller. Competitors engaged the first eight IPSC targets, four left and four right, with a rifle while moving down a center shooting area. They exchanged the rifle for a shotgun and engaged eight poppers before abandoning it and drawing a pistol. Two more poppers sat on either side of the slider apparatus, which was hidden by vision barriers to the left and the right. The right side barrier had a horizontal port about four inches high running the length of the barrier. Knocking down either popper released the slider that carried four

8-inch steel plates. The slider came into view from behind the left side vision barrier and slid rapidly down toward the right-side barrier, disappearing from view. Those who failed to successfully engage the plates before the slider reached the end of its travel were forced to shoot them through the 4-inch slot or take the miss.

Stage eight, "Ying or Yang," was a pistol/shotgun (slug) stage designed by Frank Thompson. Frank worked the match as a CRO on a different stage, probably to protect himself from the wrath of shooters. Shooters began this



Billy Abbate mowing down targets with a Saiga shotgun. Note the transparent magazine.

stage by plucking their shotgun from a table and engaging six Classic targets with slugs, then racing ahead toward a pressure pad, disposing of the shotgun and drawing their pistol on the way. Touching the pressure pad released three Classic targets and two no-shoots that became visible very quickly, in sequence. The first two targets and both no-shoots disappeared but the fourth remained visible at rest.

Early USPSA Multigun national matches were a serious challenge for range officers whose only experience was with pistol. That is still an issue for some, but the knowledge gap is closing quickly with the introduction of a Multigun NROI module. To ensure that the officiating was accurate and consistent, Range Master and NROI Instructor Carl Schmidt conducted a class for the staff the day before the match. That made for a daunting schedule, but was well worth the effort.

USPSA Multigun competition provides a great test of a variety of skills not addressed in a pistol-only match. Plan to stretch yourself in 2009 with Multigun. (The 2009 match date and venue will be announced soon on the web site and in this magazine.) You'll be glad you did.



The Victors:

Tactical Men

- | | |
|-----------------|---------|
| 1. Taran Butler | 1279.94 |
| 2. Keith G. | 1203.01 |
| 3. Phil Strader | 1198.71 |

Tactical Women

- | | |
|-------------------|--------|
| 1. Jessie Abbate | 841.65 |
| 2. Denise Johnson | 605.53 |
| 3. Vicki C. | 529.15 |

Open Men

- | | |
|------------------|---------|
| 1. Jerry Miculek | 1278.00 |
| 2. Chris Tilley | 1253.62 |
| 3. Michael Voigt | 1251.47 |

Open Women

- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| 1. Kay Miculek | 857.65 |
| 2. Deborah Cheek | 674.38 |