

Edmond sharpshooter excels on the international scene

By Ed Godfrey
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It's been a phenomenal year for Edmond marksman Kurt Miller.

In June, the 47-year-old geologist won the prestigious Nordic Rifle Championships in Denmark. And last week he returned from Greece where he claimed the silver medal in the equally-esteemed European Shotgun Championships.

Miller was one of four Americans competing in the European Shotgun Championships, held every three years. More than 350 elite shooters representing 74 countries competed in the event, sanctioned by the International Practical Shooters Conference.

In the European Shotgun Championships, Miller shot 450 rounds of ammunition in 21 different stages, finishing second only to a shooter from Finland.

For more than a decade, Miller has been competing nationally in three-gun matches — contests where a shooter's skills are tested in pistol, rifle and shotgun. The European Shotgun Championships and Nordic Rifle Championships are like a shotgun or rifle-only phase of three-gunning.



Both speed and accuracy are essential in such timed-event shooting sports. In three-gun matches, shooters must run through mazes and hit targets of different, sizes, shapes and distances with each gun.

"The basic thing you are testing is how fast you can shoot, how accurate you can shoot and how fast you can run and get it done," Miller said.

"In a typical scenario, you are faced with anywhere from 15 to 35 targets, and some will be specified as either a pistol target or a rifle target. You start with your pistol holstered and a beeper goes off and you run through an obstacle course, real similar to what you see in cowboy shooting.

"They tell you what targets you are expected to shoot and with which gun. It's never a set course of fire. We have targets scattered everywhere. It's not uncommon to have real close range targets that you shoot with your pistol, then sit your pistol down and shoot a 300-yard target with your rifle.

"That's what makes it fun. You got to keep thinking ahead about what you are going to be doing next and at the same time be able to think about your shooting as you are shooting."

Miller's pistols and rifles are built specifically for competition shooting by his sponsors. His 12-gauge Benelli semi-automatic shotgun also is heavily modified for action shooting.

"We have beveled out the bottom of it so it doesn't snag you when you are loading it, because loading is large part of what we do," he said. "It only holds 11 rounds but we will be shooting at a stage that has 28 targets. You have to constantly keep stuffing shells in it. Anything that snags or grabs you is a bad thing."

Three-gun matches are governed by the United States Practical Shooting Association, which has been sanctioning national pistol championships for decades in the United States. But the three-gun matches are growing in popularity, said Miller, who won the 1999 world three-gunning championship match in Las Vegas, Nev.

But there are more and better shooters in the sport now.

"There used to be only one big match," Miller said. "Now, gosh, there are at least six major matches that will have more than 200 shooters per match. It's at least three times as big as it used to be."

Just this year, Miller and Glen Harrison of Yukon started a three-gunning division of the Oklahoma City Gun Club. Three-gun matches are now held every third Saturday of the month at the Oklahoma City Gun Club's shooting range near Arcadia.

Miller became an accomplished shooter at an early age, learning how to shoot from his father, an Ordnance Officer in the Korean War.

"He liked shooting and always hunted," Miller said of his father. "Since he had guns around the house, he made sure my brother and I would be safe with a gun, and he thought the best way to do that was to take us out and let us shoot."

"My brother and I have been shooting since we were 6 or 7 years old and have always enjoyed it. In high school, we were on a high school rifle squad together."

A longtime action pistol shooter, Miller entered his first three-gun match in 1995.

He consistently scores in the top three at three-gun matches nationwide, including winning the Arkansas and Texas state championships in 2004 and 2005.