

The 2009 U.S. Field-Target National Championships

By Ron Robinson

In its short four-year history, founder and club president Scott York has taken the Yegua Airgun Club in Somerville, Texas from not-so-immaculate conception to national-caliber field-target venue. This jovial Teddy-bear of a man is a perpetual motion machine as pertains moving the club forward; in spite of admitted organizational handicaps. His contagious energy motivated the membership into muddling through the obstacles of hosting a national championship event. Now Scott and the Yegua membership can revel in the accolades heaped by over 90 competitors that made the 2009 U.S. Field-Target National Championships such a memorable success.

Having included air-pistol field-target competition in our monthly matches for a few years, I recognized a perfect opportunity to include pistol field-target competition in the 2009 field-target National Championships. Ever amenable to interesting fun-shoots, Scott agreed to a pistol field-target side-shoot; however, a PFT *side-shoot* would not satiate my designs. In the discussion that followed, when the question of seeking the blessing of AAFTA arose, I pointed out that:

- 1) Apparently AAFTA has never expressed any interest in pistol field-target,
- 2) Our club has been THE driving force in promoting PFT in the U.S., and
- 3) If WE decide to include pistol field-target in the 2009 U.S. Field-Target National Championships as a championship competition...
- 4) Then, the Pistol Field-Target **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS** it will be!

At that, the Yegua membership being a relatively logically-minded bunch (when sober), nary an objection was voiced. A Pistol Field-Target National Championship it would be... with a National Champion trophy an' ever-thang! Woووو... hoooo!

Just as I was thinking, “that wasn’t too difficult”, it dawned on me that one Pistol Field-Target National Champion trophy is one too few. There must be *two* National Champion trophies; Scope-Pistol National Champ and Iron-Sight National Champ.

A bit more difficult proposal to sell, I prevailed through *liberal* application of inarguable logic. “You simply **cannot discriminate** against iron-sight pistol shooters at the Pistol Field-Target National Championships”. That sealed the deal! Besides rewarding championship trophies in traditional air-**rifle** classes of PCP, International, Hunter and Spring-Piston classes, Yegua Airgun Club would award 2009 National Champion trophies in both Iron-Sight class and Scope-Pistol classes.

Held on October 16-18, Nats was three days of airgun fun and serious competition. Limited to a maximum of 90 shooters, the rifle field-target championship was the main draw; however all attendees were welcome to participate in any of the other events that included the pistol FT championship match, non-championship pistol and rifle silhouette matches, and the infamous Daisy Red Ryder BB Gun Speed Shoot. By the time the dust settled and the results were tallied, there were a lot of worn-out airgunners from several states in the U.S., as well as Canada and Puerto Rico.

The rifle field-target championship was contested over two days on two challenging, sixty-shot courses; for a 120/120 possible aggregate. As testimony to the dedication of Yegua club president Scott York, when a call went out that duck decoys were blocking shots at the field-targets in the pond, with no hesitation whatsoever, Scott dove into the muck *fully-clothed* to correct the problem. That selfless act would later haunt him; a shaving cut becoming infected enough to require medical attention!

Harold Rushton became the National Field-Target Champion in the PCP rifle class, virtue of his excellent score of 117/120. Harold used a USFT rifle equipped with a 35X Leupold Comp scope. Doug Miller won the shoot-off for second place in PCP class with a 115/120, shot with an FWB P70 topped with a Nikko-Sterling 10-50X, relegating Greg Suave to third place. Greg shot a ZM Steyr LG100, also wearing 10-50X Nikko-Sterling optics.

Hunter class rules allow scopes of any magnification that can (and must be) set to no more than 12X while competing in Hunter class; as well as some pretty exotic, competition-specific rifles. Charles Garvey piloted his 10-50X Nikko scoped USFT from a shooting bucket and bi-pod to prevail in Hunter class for the National Champion trophy. Charles' fine score of 101/120 edged out Ron Robinson's 99/120, shot with a Chinese AR2079 rifle sporting a Korean 4-12X Simmons Pro-Air scope. One of only two Hunter class shooters not to utilize a bucket or bi-pod, Ron's day-one score of 52/60 also proved the high one-day Hunter score of the weekend. Kelly Kennedy captured the third place Hunter trophy, also piloting a USFT. Kelley's gun was equipped with a Hawke Optics Sidewinder 30 scope.



Author's Chinese rifle & Korean scope proved more capable than imagined, winning second place Hunter Class and posting the high one-day Hunter score of the week-end. First and third places went to USFT's.

Leo Duran overcame a SIX-SHOT deficit after day one to win Spring-Piston class with a phenomenal day two score of 55/60! Leo's 101/120 aggregate, shot with his 40X Leupold Comp equipped Whiscombe JW70 proved two points better than Kevin Yee's 99/120. Kevin shot an Air Arms TX200 sporting an *ever-popular* 10-50X Nikko-Sterling. Roz Sumpter used a Whiscombe JW50 with a 6-24X Bushnell scope to capture third-place with a score of 90/120. Interestingly enough, both Hunter and Spring-Piston

classes were won with scores of 101/120, and second place in both classes shot scores of 99/120.

Paul Cray captured his FOURTH U.S. National Championship in winning the 2009 International class. Paul's impressive 109/120 was posted with a Steyr LG110, again equipped with a 10-50X Nikko-Sterling scope. Ray Appelles took second place in International class with his 35X Leupold Comp equipped Crosman Marauder Match and a score of 103/109. David Slade used a Theoben Rapid Mk 2 (imagine that) and Bausch & Lomb 6-24X scope to post a 101/120 for third place.

Raschel York's score of 101/120 proved good enough for High Lady, fired with a Steyr LG110 wearing a 10-50X BSA scope. Hans Appelles also shot 101/120 with his 35X Leupold Comp equipped Crosman Marauder Match to claim the High Senior trophy.

The pistol field-target event featured a 42 shot course that included six off-hand shots. Ray Appelles shot a fine 40/42 with his prototype Crosman PCP pistol topped with a 3-12X Centerpoint scope, to capture National Champion from the field of 25 Scope-Pistol shooters. A tie for second place (with 39/42) was decided by shoot-off, with Mike Vredenburg prevailing over Charles Garvey. Mike and Charles both used FX Rancheros; Mike's topped with a 4.5-14X Burris, and Charles' with a Bushnell Elite 6500.

A three-way tie for fourth through sixth places (with scores of 38/42) was decided by the most exciting shoot-off ever staged. All three shooters connected with their first three shoot-off shots, at which time Match Director Bobby Roberts reduced the size of the kill-zones. After all three shooters dropped those targets twice more, now five successful shots (each) into the three-way shoot-off, Bobby again reduced the kill-zone sizes. The difficulty rating at that point DOUBLE the highest rating on the Troyer scale, Ron Robinson missed his next shot with his 1950's vintage Montgomery Wards Hawthorne Crosman 180 pistol (conversion). Rod Bradley missed his next shot, but Anthony Inocentes connected; consequently Anthony nabbed the fourth place trophy, Rod took home the fifth-place trophy, and Ron Robinson gets to tell the tale. All witnesses agree it was the most exciting shoot-off ever, requiring a total of TWENTY shots and difficulty factors more than twice the highest Troyer rating to decide.

Seven shooters contested the Iron-Sight Pistol FT championship on the same course as the Scope-Pistol shooters. Due to the extreme difficulty of discerning kill-zones in the mottled and failing light of the wooded setting, two Iron-Sight shooters DNF'ed. Though non-magnifying red-dot scopes were allowed to compete in iron-sight class, after discovering most of the Iron-Sight class shooters had used open sights, Ron Robinson declared his red-dot an unfair advantage, disqualified himself, and mailed the National Champion trophy he won to Doug Vinson. Doug's score of 10/42 with his Steyr LP50 was the best posted with iron sights, one point better than Bill Day managed with his FX Ranchero. Ron's self-disqualification was well-justified, as his red-dot score was higher than all other iron-sight scores combined.



Ron Robinson won the trophy with a red-dot equipped Falcon Raptor (right), but felt Doug Vinson the real Iron-Sight Champion and forwarded the prize to its rightful owner (left).

Many of the 90+ competitors contested several non-championship fun matches over the week-end. Charles Garvey nabbed first place, Scope-Pistol in the pistol silhouette fun match with his FX Ranchero; Ron Robinson won the Iron Sight class. Bill Motl won the rifle silhouette match with his Daystate Huntsman. Eric Branch captured his second Daisy Red Ryder BB Gun Speed-Shoot title, by edging Ron Robinson out of a second Daisy Red Ryder BB Gun Speed-Shoot title! More results and details of 2009 Nats can be seen at www.aafat.org or www.yeguafielddtarget.com .

Bordering on airgun over-dose, The 2009 U.S. Field-Target National Championships proved a full week-end of fun and competition that left even the most hard-core of airgunners completely “shot out”. Not least among the exhausted were the Yegua Airgun Club members that put so much time and effort into hosting 2009 Nats. Speaking for at least one such, I venture to say the long trip from Texas for 2010 Nationals in Maryland should be a cake-walk compared to hosting such an event as was 2009 Nats. More information on the 2010 U.S. Field-Target National Championships can be seen at www.aafta.org

Y'all come... ya' hear?