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2018 USPSA / CHEELY CUSTOM GUNWORKS AREA 5 MATCH

BY ROY NEAL, TY47197

What do you get when you combine a facility with 15 dedicated pistol bays, lots of sunshine, dedicated match staff and a long list of top competitors? The answer is the 2018 USPSA Area 5 match hosted by the Brooklyn Sportsman Club of Brooklyn, Michigan. In 2017, a dedicated group of enthusiasts led by Match Director Walt Paegel and his wife Svetlana decided to take on the task of hosting the Michigan Sectional and the Area 5 match. This year, sanity took over and the group "only" had to worry about the Area match. I know what a thankless job this is, and I think Walt has aged 10 years over the past two. Keep that in mind when you see the staff at your next big match; the show doesn't go on without a

Match Director who can take the idea from concept to the event going as planned in the matchbook, and can recruit talented staff to come, donate their time and work the match. We have all been at matches where staffing issues have caused problems; it was nice to see many of the Nationals staff here, where many of the stage CROs were actually RMs. This year the only problem was one RO being having to be carried from the range suffering from heatstroke. Thankfully, this was minor when compared to last year's incident where an RO caught a ricocheting bullet from steel in the chest. Please remember to thank the staff at the next match for volunteering their time to make sure you have good time.

For those who have not visited BrooklynSportsman club, it is located in

the Irish Hills of Southeast Michigan where the hills are gentle and mostly made of sand. This makes for a different feel to the bays' surfaces, and competitors notice it with their feet. Not as fine as the sand at Rio Salado, Arizona, it can clump up due to the moisture here, and is not sun-baked. This gives competitors excellent traction, so some of our great athletic shooters put up some impressive times. This year was no exception, as 344 competitors, including 20 GMs and 40 Master-class shooters rose to the challenge to see who would be named Area 5 Champions.

To accommodate that many competitors, Walt put together an impressive schedule where most shot on a two-day format. The staff shot Thursday and the first competitors started on Friday, which was also the day that competitors who wanted to could shoot the match in one day. I took advantage of this and had the pleasure of shooting with some good friends. It made for a long day, but this year's match went much smoother than last, where I was literally the last shooter on the range, shooting an all steel stage in the waning sunlight. This year we had dry bays with lots of sunlight in order to see our sights; the only real complaint was the heat. It got hotter as the match progressed, with Sunday shooters dealing with temperatures in the mid 90's. Compared to the alternative of shooting in the rain with bagged targets, though, I think all the shooters would gladly take some higher temperatures. Some backups did occur on the upper ranges where the courses were smaller in round count, allowing the squads to get through them more quickly, but once they were down in the lower ranges, everything flowed pretty evenly. Managing this many competitors over this much space can sometime seem like herding cats, but Walt managed to do it with grace and a smile on his face. Maybe he was just thinking of the next couple years as a 'retired' Match Director. Hmmmm.....

The stages were an upgrade from last year's effort, a better challenge to the competitor's expertise. That is not a slight to the match and the designers; balancing the desire of the stage designers who can throw 12 moving targets and a backup unloaded start into a stage along with the staff to actually build



Mason Lane

it is the challenge. There were large field courses, medium field courses, small field courses and even a dreaded standards-type medium course. I was encouraged to see the match use more hard cover and no-shoot targets while giving many shooters the option of shooting targets from a distance or running closer and trying to shoot faster on them. The all steel stage (#5) did make some shooters go through more ammo than many thought it might. Due to the distance the competitor had to cover, it was also the longest stage to complete. The lowest time was 27 seconds, but for those of us who took a bit longer, it seemed like eternity out there. The match did have a classifier-type stage, as they ran the much-used classifier Can You Count as a stage with a simple variation; the second string part of each string was done strong hand only and then weak hand only. High hit factors on this stage were still in the high 13's, with top shooters completing it in the low seven-second range. It is impressive to see some of our top competitors display their skills on demand. Even if you were not on that stage, you could hear the difference in that stage versus any of the others near it.

One of the more interesting stages was Stage #12 called Crazy 8, a simple left array of three targets behind a left partial wall and three targets behind a right partial wall; then in front of you was a wall with two small alleyways through it and a forward shooting area. Once you moved into the forward shooting area, four poppers, two open paper targets and two hard cover partial targets demanded 12 more rounds to finish.

Depending on your division capacity, this meant some creative stage planning. The Open, Carry Optics and Limited Division shooters just shot the front six targets and reloaded on the way through the skinny alleyways to finish up the remaining 12 shots: the fun was watching Single Stack and Production shooters come up with ways to minimize movement and extra reloads by taking the far open paper targets through the alleyways, thus allowing them to finish on the steel poppers from the forward position.

One of the funniest moments happened when the staff was shooting on Thursday. One of the competitors who shall remain nameless to protect the guilty shot Stage 8 named Mad Max with a creative thought in mind. The stage was shaped like the sideways letter L with each competitor starting in the middle of the stage. In order to shoot all the targets, you had to go backwards to the closest targets to the front of the bay, and you had to go all the way to the right end to see the last targets through a port. The challenge on this stage was the center portion where you had to shoot some targets through a low port. Since all the bays were built on soft sand, this was not a big deal for many, as they could take a knee and shoot the targets, or just squat low as all the top competitors did. Our creative superhero thought that he would run and shoot the targets to the far right, then run diagonally backwards to engage the front targets on the move going forward and then end up at the center low port as his last position. As he was going towards that low port he attempted to pull

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Gary Nash

a baseball move and slide into second base so that he would be on his left side facing the port and shoot the remaining targets.

Remember when I said that the sand was a bit soft? Our fearless competitor ended up stopping about two feet short of the port, looking like a baserunner stopping short of the bag at second base with the shortstop having the ball in his glove just waiting on him to drag himself over to get tagged. After dragging himself over to finish shooting the targets, his CRO partner ran forward and made the call for everyone to hear by loudly calling him "Out!" Ah, the joys of trying to pull a stunt and having it be an epic failure with folks getting a chance to watch. Thankfully, our hero took the good natured ribbing in fine spirit and laughed about it with me as he told me his version of the story, not aware that his squad mates had sold him out to me earlier in the day as they knew I was writing this article.

In the end, glory was won, honor was achieved and some folks actually went away happy with their scores. Carry Optics made a splash this year, with 42 participants all chasing Hwansik Kim. He laid a beating on the field, but since he does it with grace and a smile, it didn't seem so bad. Akai Custom's Luigi Li finished second and right behind him was one of my favorite names in the shooting sports, RePete Briggs. I just wish I could have gotten a chance to meet Pete to

congratulate him on a creative nickname for his son.

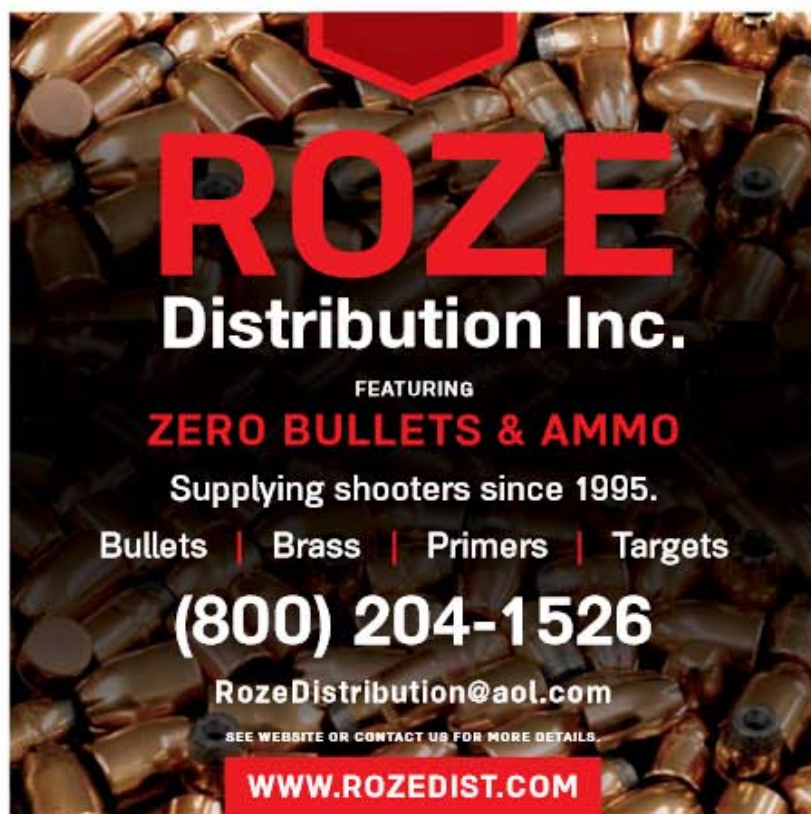
Limited Division saw the closest battle as Glock's Shane Coley won the Division by less than a percentage point over my second favorite name in the shooting sports, John Browning of the US Army AMU. Akai Custom's own Michael Gnyra finished a few percentage points back in third place. This division was not as highly populated as I thought it would be, with only 72 entries. Production, Carry Optics and Single Stack in this area are pulling in shooters, as typically Limited has had around 100 competitors. Still, the talent has not gotten any less, with six Grand Masters and eight Masters providing tons of competition here for those wanting to get in touch with their inner hoser.

Limited 10 really had a downturn this year with only five shooters. Many times you will see many Canadian competitors compete in this division, as their Standard Division gear and regulated magazine capacity play right into L10; not so this year, as new shooter Jon Galusha won the division over everyone's favorite Super Senior competitor in the state, Daniel Olshefski. Rounding out the top three was Scott Miller, who also is a senior and LE as well. This is a tough division to sell to members who can play with high cap magazines in most states. I understand why the division is still in play but we shall see how long it stays if the participation just isn't there.

Open Division saw current reigning National Champion Cody Baker of Akai Custom Guns dominate the division. That is taking nothing away from the talented field of Open shooters here, just a statement of how well Cody shot for this match. Talking with him on Friday as he followed my squad, he was also fun to listen to as he and Eddie Garcia talked about shooting all these targets on the move, this steel from way over here and then finishing up with those targets from that spot. Sure, it sounds easy, right? Well, hats off to Cody, because he did it! Christian Sailer beat out five other Grand Masters for second place and John Vlieger rounded out the top three; the difference between third to sixth places was about one percentage point per place. With 14 Master-class shooters in this division, a total of 84 dedicated souls made for a nice showing for this match. Top Junior Shooter Clement Ho (normally referred to as Mini Ho by those who know him) shot a good match, ending up at 73 percent of the national champ. Wait until the kid fills out and really takes an interest in this game!

Production Division had the most entries, with 105 who got to see the US Army's AMU member Jacob Hetherington put down all those vying for this title. Mason Lane finished second, with former National Champion Alex Gutt finishing close in third place. Six Grand Masters and 14 Masters made a challenging field of competitors. Top Lady Competitor, Glock's own Ashley Rheuark, finished just out of the top 10 and at 79 percent of the division winner. Production is typically the biggest division at local matches in Michigan. Looking at the types of guns that the winners used was interesting; many were CZs of various models, and the Tangfoglio versions. Fifth place and top Master class was taken by Ken Chang using a Glock 34, so it is still possible to run a polymer gun and shoot well, giving us mere mortals all hope for the future.

Single Stack Division was better attended this year with 33 hearty souls battling it out in skinny gun competition. This division had the honor of being the one in which USPSA President Mike Foley decided to compete; he shot on the squad ahead of me and graciously chatted with anyone who wanted a moment



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of his time at the match, including myself. Liming Qu came out and had himself quite a match, winning the division. Second to fourth places all finished at 95 percent and change, showing that every second and point counts; when the smoke cleared, it was Tom Lloyd in second place and Chris Chamberlin in third. Seven out of the top 10 shot minor in 9mm, including the top four. I am always fascinated by the decisions of shooters in this division as they jockey for time and points by choosing major/minor for each competition, bringing both sets of gear with them and deciding on which to use after walking the stages and seeing if there is any advantage to one versus the other.

Those folks who enjoy suffering and pain, otherwise known as Revolver Division, had only four competitors brave enough to shoot with one of those roundy-round things. Grand Master Alex Bakken won the division over Chris Aust, with Mike Shaw a distant third place. Seeing a stage littered with moon clips after a revolver shooter gets finished reminds us of their commitment – so bravo to these dedicated souls who do make it look pretty easy to shoot stages with revolvers.

When I talked about the match with Walt afterwards, he was passionate about mentioning the hard-working staff and his crew of folks who built the match, such as Mike Berrara and Ken Lane, Sr. He also emphasized that many generous sponsors made this match possible, such as Cheely Custom Gunworks, who provided a beautiful raffle gun for the match and actually shot the match; Springfield Armory, Leapers/UTG brand (with five employees who shot the match), EMG Custom Guns, Spencer Race Guns (whose entire crew participated) and many others. (See the Facebook page for the entire list of sponsors, thank them.) Finally, Walt wanted to publicly thank his wife Svetlana for all her hard work (even when she came down with a staph infection the week of the match, she still worked it) and for putting up with him – smart man.

If you are ever in the Southeast Michigan area and are looking for a nice place to shoot a match, look up the contact information for Brooklyn Sportsman Club on the USPSA website, and talk to Walt about attending a match. You will be glad you did! ☀