

# Wide Open Spaces

## Rocky Mountain 3-Gun 2005



STORY AND PHOTOS BY PATRICK KELLEY, TY-14401

First off, I would like to thank USPSA for this opportunity to share with you another non-affiliated match experience via the pages of Front Sight magazine.

Secondly, I'm not going to give you a match report with the standard

**WHACK!** Run-and-gunning amid the sweeping vistas of Whittington Center takes the breath away. This stage worked its way through a ruined stone building, eventually shooting down into the wooded valley below.

“shooter X on stage Y was .02 parsecs faster than shooter Z.” Not that there is nothing wrong with such reports, but I would rather earn my money persuading you to shoot the next Rocky Mountain 3-Gun.

they did! In talking with these two gentlemen they offered that without the first rate crew listed below the match's repute could have been at risk.

Steve Hulet covered duties as treasurer and keeper of the scores. Tim Ubl filled to overflowing the three separate prize tables, one each for Open, Iron/Scoped Tactical, and Heavy Metal. Web info was kept current by John Hefley, while match coordination was shared by Kim West and Monica Brockwell. Alan Samuel's FFL got a workout transferring firearms to prizewinners. Finally we have the group that may have the most control over a match's reputation, the 21 direct competitor interface personnel (ROs) who with a good attitude, knowledge and a smile kept the competitors on track and the RM3Gun ranking intact.

### HOW'S YOUR REP?

Matches live and die by the reputations given to them by competitor word of mouth and the RM3Gun is no exception. The status given to a match is usually reflected by the match director and range personnel. Since this match has a sterling reputation let me introduce you to the “reflectees.”

Blane West (match director) and Michael Field (assistant match director) are first and foremost experienced multigun competitors. Why either one would want to deal with the difficulties of running a major match instead of shooting one is beyond me, but run it

**Reaching out.** David Neth reaches out for half a dozen long-range rifle targets from under the shade of a pine tree.



## **WHAT'S UP and WHERE?**

Two hundred shooters ran, crawled, jumped, squatted, bent, tripped, slipped and thoroughly enjoyed eight stages over three beautiful (if weather-prone) days.

Over the course of the eight stages, competitors engaged paper targets ranging from 3 to 30 yards and steel targets from 13 to more than 300 yards. Many stationary clay targets were in play as were a number of selective-slug steel targets.

The match props were wonderful, especially the stage-inclusive machine gun and ammunition supplied by Alan Samuel of [www.machinegun-tours.com](http://www.machinegun-tours.com). Springfield Armory graciously donated a prop for another stage: a compact XD 9mm pistol with its frangible ammunition supplied by International Cartridge Corporation. The XD was added to the prize bounty along with many other firearms from Springfield Armory, DPMS and JP Enterprises.

The minimum expenditures of am-



**Match Winner Matt Burkett aims up the hill. Note his use of an auxilliary red-dot and a Beta-C 100-round magazine.**

the 55 square miles that comprise the NRA's Whittington Center. This venue contains some of the most panoramic and historic terra firma ever used in a shooting match!

munition, not including that supplied, would total 78 rounds for rifle, 69 for pistol, 53 shot-shells and four slugs. This was not an ammunition-intensive undertaking, but that has never been the intent of this match. What sets the RM3G match apart are its quality course design and the creative use of natural terrain. Only the Rocky Mountain 3-Gun can boast the use of

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If you have never been to the Whittington Center in Raton, N.M., this match alone is reason enough to sign up and go. The Santa Fe Trail runs through the property, as do deer, elk, turkey and bear. Ruins of buildings that may have at one time serviced wagon trail travelers now serve competitors as interesting and unique stage props. The stunning tree-covered mountains and valley vistas that make this a venue to remember gave creative energy to stage designers and provided shooters with scenic obstacles to scramble up, around and through.

This is a shooter's match: no DQ traps, no overly-complicated memory exercises. A physical match to be sure, but properly balanced with challenging scenarios and tests of shooting skill. The Rocky Mountain 3-Gun, like many of the other major non-USPSA 3-

**Bunker Battle. Shooters leapt into the bunker, seized the supplied AK-type rifle dropped by the dummy, and engaged targets, visible in the background.**



Gun matches, uses "time plus" as its scoring method. While simple for match officials to administer and easy for competitors to understand, the time plus scoring system fails to make any distinction between major and minor power factors. I for one would like all major 3-Gun matches move to the born-in-Texas "San Angelo" scoring method. This scoring format conceived by San Angelo gun club member Kelly McCoy has been well tested and received by competitors at multiple Texas 3-Gun championships, and most recently at the USPSA 3-Gun Nationals. The San Angelo scoring recognizes each firearm's power factor separately and returns the "Vis" (power) in D.V.C. (accuracy, power, speed) to the scoring triad.

The RM3G crew knows that we like to shoot, so the schedule is configured to make room for some additional shooting fun. Not shooting as well as you like? Take a break and try your hand at the cash payback Precision Rifle side match. Need something a little faster? Rent a machine gun and put a smile on your face — or on the target! Take a few minutes between stages to peruse the vendor tables or fix and re-zero your gear on the available ranges. So are you interested yet? OK, how about affordable competitor housing and RV hook-ups on the range! Would that help? You would stay on the range but don't want to drive to town for food? The El Grande Grill provided a good, economical breakfast and lunch.

The match is officially over, but you still want to shoot? No problem. Ear-

lier in the day your buddies signed you up for the 3-man team shoot, so while the scores are being tabulated you hit the firing line and thrill the crowd with your skills and maybe score some cash!

### **ON TO THE FINISH!**

The RM3G, following the USPSA guidelines on equipment recognizes three divisions: Open, Tactical, (with Limited and Scoped rifle scored separately and then combined) and He-Man (a.k.a. Heavy Metal).

The top five of 36 Open competitors were 5th Russell Kruse, 4th Jake Kempton (former Gunsmith for Accuracy Speaks and now of JP fame), 3rd Gene Ragulsky (race cars and race guns and current L.E.), 2nd Don Bednorz (his drivers license may say he is a senior but his performance speaks otherwise), and Open Champion Matt Burkett (has won every 3-Gun match entered short of the USPSA Nationals).

Fifth among the 128 in Tactical was Gunsite instructor Steve Hendricks. Fourth was Kurt Miller (he too had the enviable every match entered win streak going). Third was Tony Holmes. Second Kelly Neal (USPSA 3 Gun Nationals Limited champion), and Tactical Champion goes to young Daniel Horner!

He-Man's 30 competitors were led by 5th Mike Dowd, 4th Garrett Hawkins, 3rd Phillip Brodahl, 2nd Tate Moots (long range maestro and Law enforcement officer), and He-Man Champion Patrick Kelley (yours truly).

### **The Ladies of 3-Gun.**

Top Open Joni Mahoney (an active competitor with her husband Chuck)

Top Tactical Denise Pearman (a very hard working and fun Range Officer!)

Top He-Man (this is why it should be Heavy Metal!) Joyce Spurlin

### **NRA, Industry Support**

Year after year this match has earned the financial support of many of the premier firearms and accessory manufacturers as well as the support of

the NRA. The NRA has repeatedly extended great courtesy in hosting this non-NRA event. The member-owned Whittington Center is a comprehensive and impressive multi-use facility capable of hosting major tournaments in nearly all disciplines concurrently! As such it is booked solid nearly year round. The NRA's support cannot be

overemphasized.

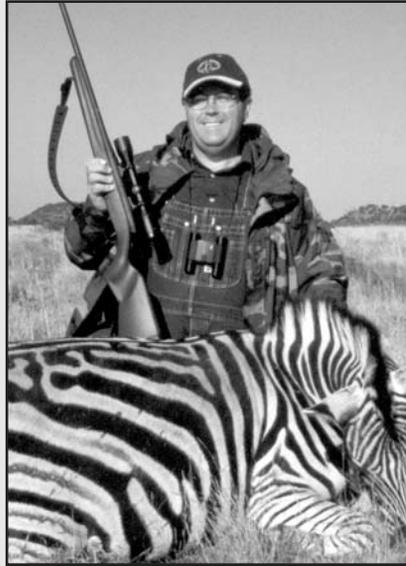
I would be remiss in my duties if I did not list the generous sponsors of the 2005 Rocky Mountain 3 Gun. JP Enterprises, DPMS, Trijicon, , Springfield Armory, Cavalry Arms R & R Racing, Matt Burkett, NC, Gunsite, Saber Defence, Arredondo Acces-

sories, SV, Brownells, Grams Engineering, DSA, 3GUNGEAR.com, Blackhawk, LaRue, Tac-Pro, XS Sight Systems, Mid-South Tactical Network, Ameetec Arms, Blackwater, International Cartridge Corp., Montana Gold Bullet, MGM Targets, Diamondback Tactical, ACE, Surefire, Caspian, Sierra, STI, Carroll Targets, Viking Tactics, Black Hills Ammunition, Zero Bullets, CMC, Rugged Gear, and Universal Shooting Academy.

2006 is shaping up to be one of the busiest 3-Gun seasons ever, and the Rocky Mountain 3-Gun should be on your short list of must-attend major 3-Gun championships in the United States. I know I will be there and I hope that this report will persuade you to be there too!

### Left The Range: Larry Bullock

Few people have given back to the sport like Larry Bullock. Larry served USPSA as an Area Director, match director, and sponsor for many years. At the 2005 Handgun Nationals Larry was the guy driving around on the 4-wheeler sweating and handing out ice-cold water for free to anyone that wanted it — all out of generosity and love for the game. Larry at heart was a true Grand Master for giving back to the game that he so loved. He would sponsor refreshments at his favorite matches, including being a vendor sponsor at nationals. He volunteered to staff a lot of matches, and his business efforts brought unique products to the 3-Gun game. Larry started shooting years ago, and took annual hunting trips to Africa for the last 19 years. On his way home from the last one on Nov. 12, tragedy struck and took Larry from us. Larry is survived by his parents, wife, and two children. The "Abby and Grace Bullock Scholarship Fund" has been set up for his children at the Bank of Missouri, 700 Southwest Blvd. P.O. Box 600, Jefferson City, MO 65102-9930. The account number is 0144784. Contact Mary Wilson at (573) 634-0840.



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