

Superstition Mountain Mystery 3-Gun

Dan Furbee's Dream Now The Top "Outlaw" 3-Gun Nationwide

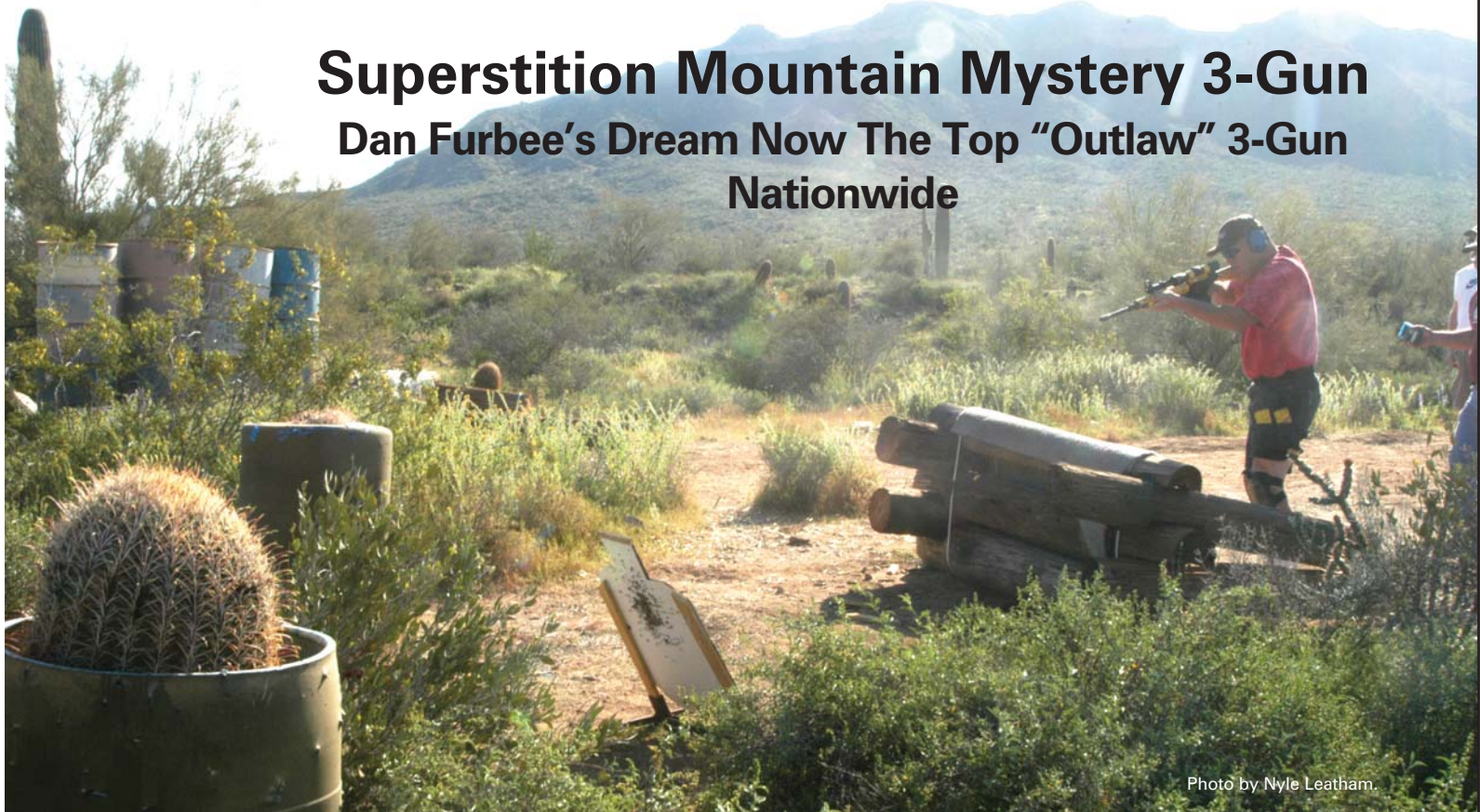


Photo by Nyle Leatham.

By PATRICK KELLEY, TY-14401

The most successful 3-Gun matches have a high degree of shooter recognition and match format flavor. The MGM Ironman's high round count format tests equipment endurance and mental dexterity. The DPMS Tri-gun Challenge approaches prize table Utopia. The North Carolina Tactical attracts hard-core 3-Gun athletes. The Rocky Mountain 3-Gun offers a natural terrain format with an emphasis on rifles-at-range. The Superstition Mountain Mystery 3-Gun's intense course designs, elaborate props, and smooth-running scoring system have made it the de facto Nationals for 3-Gunners everywhere. In light of the current 3-Gun rules debate within USPSA, what better match to find its way into Front Sight?

2005 marked the 10th anniversary of the "SMM3G," and for this competitor it qualified as a near perfect 10. Dan Furbee and crew left nothing to chance. 298 competitors were greeted by fair and friendly, stage-dedicated ROs that kept the match running very close to schedule. This year Furbee somehow managed to convince

Mother Nature herself to cooperate, offering up beautiful weather each day. Typically, the stages were well-designed and constructed. Props on many stages were on par with a world-class pistol event. Among these was the helicopter fuselage complete with 50 cal. Browning machine gun seen on the recent Area 2 Front Sight cover photo. Other notable props were the detailed mock ship and dock, and the urban-camouflaged automobile. A moving rifle target bit a few competitors on stage 2, as well as the multiple bobbars and swingers on other stages for both clay and paper. "Freestyle" was the word of the day and was most certainly evidenced by the many different ways competitors approached the four multi-gun and six single-gun stages.

Stage designs ran a wide gamut, but all had a "practical" flair.

Stage 2, "Chris' Revenge," rang the bell of practicality loudest with the following direct quote from the course book: "This stage represents a very real-life scenario that oc-

curred just minutes from the range at the home of Bob and Barb LaMarca. While at home alone, their son, Chris, was held at gunpoint. The attacker had orders to "shoot him when we're done." All of Chris' shooting "practice" allowed him to think clearly and react intelligently. The attackers were apprehended and are now in prison after attempting to rob the LaMarcas of all of their guns and equipment. Practical shooting is more than just a sport. It's life preparation."

The competitor began face down



Photo by Nyle Leatham.

In The Multi-Gun Rules Debate, the Furbees (Dan and Sarah receiving gift, above) and the LaMarcas are well respected.

on the floor with fingers interlaced behind head. At the signal the shooter engaged the designated “knife target,” retrieved their pistol from a spring loaded drawer and engaged nine pistol targets in the shoot house en route to the staged rifle. Placing the pistol in the designated box (either unloaded or with safety applied), the shooter put the rifle into action on the remaining 13 paper targets including the self-activated rifle mover. Stage winners by division: (Open) M. Voigt, (Tactical) D. Neth (scope), B. Cooley (iron), (Heavy Metal) J. Miculek.

Every year the SMM3G offers up something interesting in terms of prop design. “Prisoner Transfer” started covering a “prisoner” with the rifle. On signal the shooter engaged 10 rifle targets ranging from 5 to 15 yards that were made tougher-than-you-might-think due the use of hard cover and course layout. After rendering safe and leaving the rifle behind, the shooter retrieved a loaded shotgun and engaged

14 shotgun targets of both steel and clay. Shooters were fascinated with the use of a US popper mounted in the center of a spring loaded steel door. Used as a scoring target as well as the door activator, when shot this popper opened the way to the last shooting area for pistol at the end of a hall. Here the shooter drew his pistol to end this stage with eight pistol targets complete with two fast swingers. Stage winners by division: (Open) M. Burkett, (Tactical) M. Hanish (scope), K. Miller (iron), (Heavy Metal) K. Neal (auto), P. Kelley (pump).

Stage 5, “Taliban Tunnels,” started at a terrain-raised bunker, shotgun in

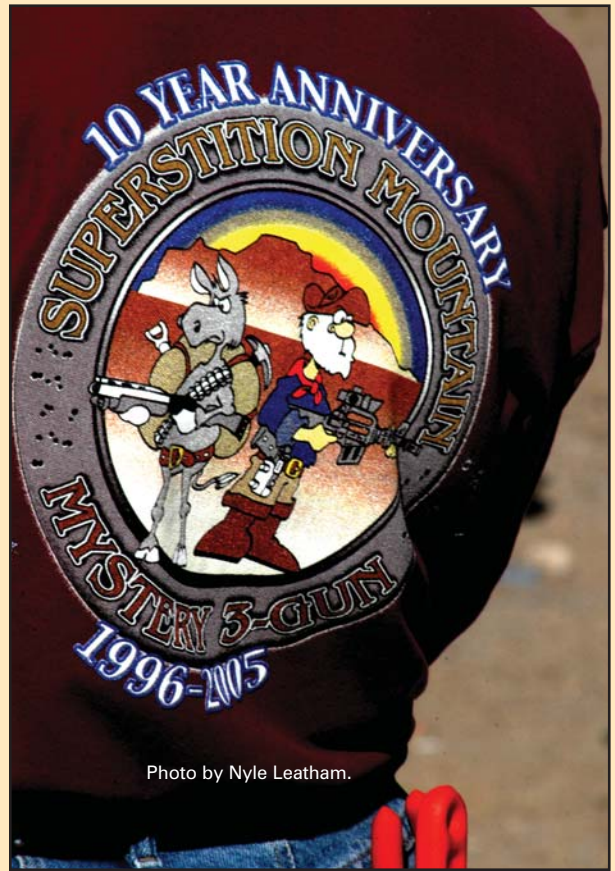


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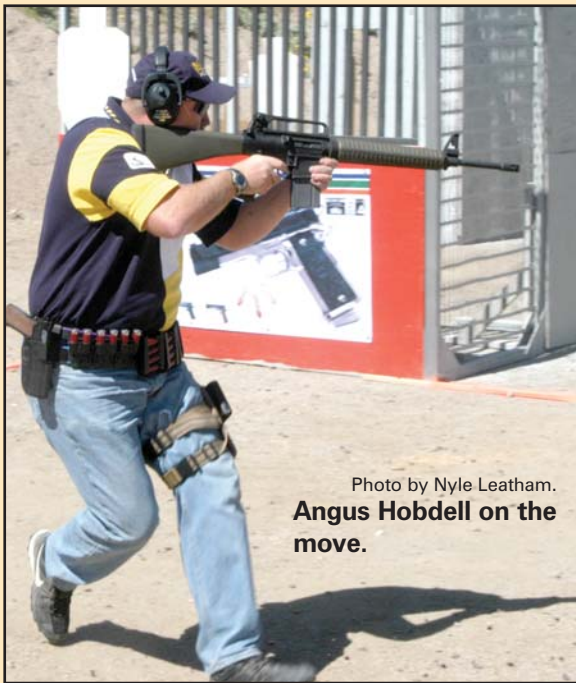


Photo by Nyle Leatham.
Angus Hobdell on the move.

hand. The shooter engaged six slug targets and 15 shot targets as they became visible. Between the bunker and the last targets, a downhill section separated the shooter from a spider tunnel. This prop included various ports holding steel and clays. At the end, three steel gongs awaited the emerging competitor, who engaged them with the remaining slugs. I witnessed at least five different ammo management strategies on this stage from the 13 people in my squad alone! "Freestyle" was the name of the game at this match. Note to self: Remember to shoot ALL of the targets before you unload and show clear! Stage winner by division: (Open) V. Kryuchin, (Tactical) Butler, (Heavy Metal) K. Neal (auto), R. Wright (pump).

I have often felt that many 3-Gun match directors forget that rifles enjoy control over distance. Stage 6, "Boarding Party" and Stage 7, "Amphibious Assault" both allowed my Heavy Metal rifle to loosen its long legs. Target presentation was greatly enhanced with the use of white sheet goods (plastic, canvas, etc.) placed behind the steel targets allowing this old iron sight shooter to make short work of the LaRue targets at 250-plus yards and put the flags of capitulation up quickly on the MGM swinger and others. Again, the world-class props and offi-

ciating made these stages a real treat for the competitor. I must at this point mention that Stage 7 more than just bit last year's champion, Heavy Metalist Blane West. It fractured two bones in his left leg! The stage had very well-assembled log bunkers, one of which caught Blane's foot, twisting it in the process. Not only did this injury fail to stop Blane from completing the stage, after he duct-taped himself back together, he soldiered on to finish fifth in Heavy Metal! Stage 6 winner by division: (Open) M. Burkett, (Tactical) T. Butler (scope), K. Miller (iron), (Heavy Metal) P. Kelley.

Stage 9, "Assault in Fallujah" started you off flying a mock helicopter, with both feet and both hands on the controls. The shooter "drew" his shotgun and flattened steel targets, thus triggering swinging clays that drew the shooter through a required 100 degrees of muzzle movement. Placing your shotgun down safely you picked up your rifle while exiting and making your way through the Fallujain stronghold. Again, contact distance rifle targets combined with well-placed hard cover and swinging paper targets made this course a challenge for all. Stage winner by division: (Open) J. Darst, (Tactical) D. Neth (scope), B. Cooley (iron), (Heavy Metal) K. Neal.

Stage 10, "Eddie and the Cruiser Defense" was an opportunity to really "game" a stage, and with that opportunity many of us gamed ourselves right out of the running for top stage placement. Four optional MGM popper-activated clays were worth three seconds off your time. Most of my squad forewent the optional clays in order to save the slow shotgun reloading process, but that was the wrong thing to do! One member of our group, Open shooter Robert Johnson put the stage away 10 seconds faster, engaging all the targets including the time sub-

tracting clays! This was not just an Open division phenomenon as we watched Tactical division winner Kurt Miller clean the course without the aid of mechanical speed-loaders! I understand Kurt will be producing a DVD soon to cover his super-fast method of reloading, among many other shotgun

Selected IMA Rules Used at Superstition Mountain 3-Gun

9. Scoring
 - 9.1 Scoring per stage will be straight time with bonus for accuracy.
 - 9.1.1 Any IPSC cardboard target, designated as a "shoot" target must have either one (1) "A" hit OR two (2) hits anywhere inside the scoring perforations on the target (i.e. minimum 2 "D" hits) to avoid a penalty.
 - 9.1.2 Example of scoring and penalties on paper targets:
 - a. One "A" zone hit = no penalty
 - b. Two hits in any combination "B, C or D" = no penalty
 - c. One B, C or D hit only = 5 second penalty
 - d. No hits on target but target was engaged = 10 second penalty
 - e. Target Not Engaged (TNE) = 10 second penalty for not making the minimum two hits anywhere on the target plus 5 seconds, per target, for the TNE PROCEDURAL for a total penalty of 15 seconds per target added to time.
 - 9.1.3 Paper targets used in the match may be IPSC (old style), the new IPSC "Classic", SOF, or IDPA Targets
 - 9.1.4 Designated "No Shoot" targets that are hit will incur a 5 second penalty for each hit.
 - 9.1.5 Knock down style targets (i.e. poppers) must fall to score. Poppers will be calibrated to "minor" with a 9mm pistol shooting factory ammunition.
 - 9.1.6 Frangible targets must break to score. (One BB hole is a break.)
 - 9.1.7 Swinging style rifle targets must be struck solid enough to cause the hidden "flash card" to be visible to the R.O. R.O. may call hits. (NEW)
 - 9.1.8 Failure to engage a frangible, knock down or swinging style target will result in a 15-second penalty. (10 sec. for not making the hit and 5 sec. TNE.) (NEW)
 - 9.1.9 Engaging a frangible, knock-down or swinging style target but not breaking it, knocking it down or causing the target to react will result in a 10 second penalty per target.
 - 9.1.10 Procedural penalties, 5 seconds per shot, may be assessed for failing to follow the stage directions as written in the stage description.
 - 9.1.11 Procedural penalties, 5 seconds, may be assessed for failing to follow stage procedures. (NEW)
 - 9.1.12 Stage Not Fired (SNF) penalty, 500 seconds per stage not fired. (NEW)
 - 9.1.13 Maximum penalty time for any stage (including target penalties) is 500 seconds.
 - 9.2 Stage Points
 - 9.2.1 First Place (lowest time) for each stage, in each class, will receive 100 points; Second Place and below will figure points on a percentage basis of the 100 from 1st Place. Rifle stages will score Tactical Iron sighted and Tactical Scoped rifles separately. Non-rifle stages will have all Tactical Class shooters competing together.

skills and strategies. Stage winner by division: (Open) M. Burkett, (Tactical) K. Miller, (Heavy Metal) K. Neal.

The SMM3G was spectacular, but to understand it better, we should take a minute to cover rules and scoring. This match was run under the International Multi-gun Association (IMGA) rules with modifications (I have yet to see the IMGA rules used without modifications). Those rules establish a "time plus" scoring system, and define the configuration of tactical (iron), tactical (scope), heavy metal (pump and auto), and open division firearms. The safety and conduct rules are taken directly from the IPSC and USPSA rule books, with some modifications (such as allowing a competitor to abandon a loaded, on-safe firearm). The equipment changes are relatively minor, but "time plus" scoring bears explanation (see shaded sidebar on previous page).

"Over the years we have gone through an evolution of scoring systems," says Furbee. ". . .The scoring

system was developed by me and my staff, and the computer program to use this simple process was created by Barbara LaMarca. For two years we tried to use USPSA "Easy Score" and when using several guns on a single stage with different kinds of targets it simply does not work. So we use our own, simple system. Anybody can do it with a calculator."

The "time plus" scoring method as used by the LaMarcas brings with it an architectural change to the way each stage is scored – changing the model to one quite different from the all-shots-count-equally model used by USPSA. The term "time plus scoring" is misleading, as the match is NOT scored like a Steel Challenge event with the lowest aggregate time giving the match win. Instead, all stages are worth 100 points. Again, all STAGES are worth 100 points. Individual round counts don't matter. The fastest time



Photo by Patrick Kelley.

Tactical HOA Kurt Miller dusts a flying clay.

(after applying penalties) for the division gets 100 points, and all the remaining times are scored as a percentage of that fastest time.

As we dig into some examples, we should discover that IMGA rules place a premium on accuracy over speed.

SUPERSTITION MTN continued on page 55.



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MOUNTAIN continued from page 40.

**High hit factor example # 1:
The El Prez**

USPA: Shooter "A" wins the stage with 60 points / 5 seconds = 12 hit factor = 100 % = 60 stage points

Shooter "B" shoots one second slower = 60 points / 6 seconds = 10 hit factor = 83.33% = 49.9 stage points.

Shooter "C" throws a miss = 45 points (miss penalty and missing 5 points for lost "A" hit) / 5 seconds = 9 hit factor = 75% = 45 points

IMGA: Shooter "A" Wins with a 5 second time = 100% = 100 stage points.

Shooter "B" is one second slower with a 6 second time = 83.33% = 83.33 stage points.

Shooter "C" with a miss gets 5 seconds raw time + 5 seconds for a miss = 10 seconds = 50% = 50 stage points.

Notice the severe penalty for a miss on short courses. In the USPSA model, Shooter C loses just 15 out of 60 possible match points (25% of the possible points). In the IMA model, shooter C loses 50 out of 100 (50% of the possible points).



Photo by Nyle Leatham.
OPEN SESAME! Check out the nifty use of a U.S. Popper as a door activator! See it on video at www.multigun.com.

Without the miss penalties, the percentages are pretty much the same, but when you factor a miss into a small stage, IMGA places a heavy emphasis on accuracy. It also completely eliminates any reference to major/minor scoring. Eliminating major/minor does great things as far as simplifying the scoring software, but it effectively eliminates "major" caliber hardware from the game.

Now let's look at a field course:

**High hit factor example # 2:
A 200-point Field Course:**

USPSA: Shooter "A" = 200 points / 50 seconds = 4 hit factor = 100% = 200 stage points.

Shooter "B" at 5 seconds slower = 200 points / 55 seconds = 3.63 hit factor = 90.9% = 181.8 stage points

Shooter "C" with a miss = 185 / 50 seconds = 3.7 hit factor = 92.5% = 185 stage points.

IMGA: Shooter "A" 50 seconds = 100% = 100 stage points

Shooter "B" again 5 seconds slower = 55 seconds = 90.9% = 90.9 stage points.

Shooter "C" with a miss = 50 seconds (raw time) + 5 seconds = 55 seconds = 90.9% = 90.9 stage points.

In both examples, missing carries a greater penalty in IMA scoring, while a difference in time

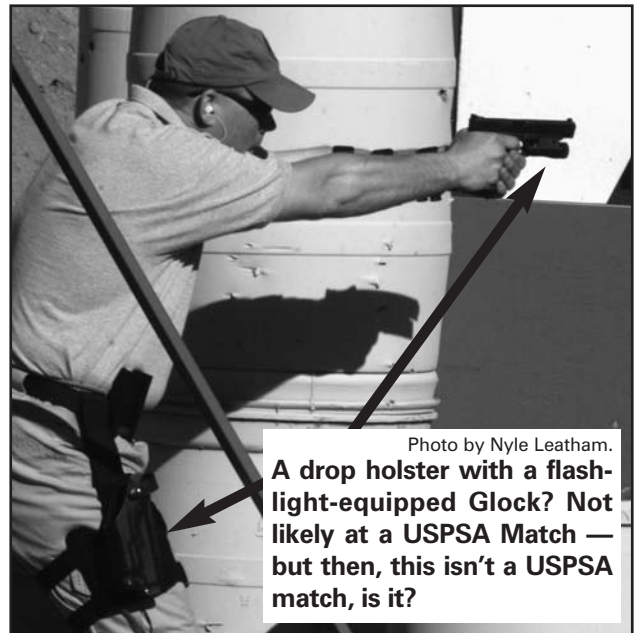


Photo by Nyle Leatham.
A drop holster with a flashlight-equipped Glock? Not likely at a USPSA Match — but then, this isn't a USPSA match, is it?

fares equally in the percentage. The severity of that penalty changes on an IMA field course because: 1. The gross time is larger, thinning out the effect of the time-based penalty, and 2. Even though there are a lot of shots involved, the field course is worth the same 100 points as the El Prez. Again this illustrates the change in philosophy: each STAGE is weighted the same at 100 points, so all IMGA stages are equally important.

The pros and cons of the two systems bear thinking out. In the examples above, the IMGA rules apply a 50-point penalty for a miss on a speed shoot, but the same miss on a field course is only worth 10. Likewise, the USPSA rules place a heavy emphasis on field courses. If you can win the field courses decisively, short speed shoots become *almost* irrelevant.

So we have some differences in rules and scoring, but what makes this match and other "outlaw" 3-Gun matches so popular? Why don't they all come in under the USPSA flag?

I did an informal poll of some of the more active 3-Gun competitors at the SMM3G. All respondents are current USPSA members, and all had strong opinions. This is the digested result:

USPSA 3-Gun Nationals has a less-than-stellar reputation. Past stage

SMM3G

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designs have included shooter traps and safety concerns. USPSA 3-Gun scoring is too slow and barely workable as demonstrated in previous Nationals. USPSA needs to adopt Heavy Metal as a stand-alone division. USPSA is on the right track working toward multi-gun stages but needs to address major and minor power factors on multi-gun stages and Comstock scoring. Eliminate speed-unloading!

Oddly enough, while the competitors I polled had complaints about USPSA's 3-Gun program, their shooting experiences at "outlaw" 3-Gun events relied heavily on the experiences, traditions, and rules-based understandings of USPSA.

For example, let me point out something we all take for granted at non-USPSA sanctioned matches: The Rules of Fair Chase.

What?

Without quoting page and paragraph, what happens at the Super Slobovia Tactical 3-Gun when a drop turner fails to drop or turn? Oh yeah, you know, Range Equipment Failure and you get a reshoot, right? Well, not so fast. This \$550 entry fee, half-way across the world, half-million-dollar-prize table match is NOT sanctioned, approved, or even run under USPSA or IPSC rules! So what rules ARE you going to quote when the RO looks at you blankly and says, "Timer's running!" Lucky for you the benevolent match director was at one time a certified range officer and will follow the "known standard." The known standard is USPSA.

I think USPSA is behind the curve in 3-Gunning and "they/we" know it! Let's continue to work with our elected representatives (we are well served in Area 1 by Bruce Gary) to get on with the business of developing a scoring program that serves the needs of the match director as well as the competitor. Can we accomplish this and offer a unified set of rules that will bring most of the 3-Gun matches into the USPSA fold while holding on to the "V" in D.V.C? That is up to us!

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