

10th “Steamboat Challenge” NRA Action Pistol Championship

Submitted by Andy Rayland, Match Director



SFC Walter Johnson of the US Army Marksmanship Unit from Fort Moore, GA shooting from the prone position on the Practical Course at the "Steamboat Challenge" NRA Action Pistol Championship in Cheyenne, WY (Photo courtesy of Milo Gladstein, WY Tribune Eagle)

“Steamboat Challenge” NRA Action Pistol Regional and Wyoming State Championship was conducted over the weekend of August 16, 17 and 18 at the Otto Road Shooting Range in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

In its 10th year, “Steamboat” attracted 46 competitors from across the US and overseas to the high plains of southeast Wyoming for a weekend of NRA Action Pistol shooting. The match pays homage to Steamboat, a Wyoming bred bucking horse from over 100 years ago, known as one of the first star “animal athletes” of the early 20th Century and is the state symbol of Wyoming.

The Otto Road Shooting Range is at elevation of 6,800 feet and located 8 miles west of Cheyenne, the State Capitol. The combination of altitude, variable weather conditions, and some random courses of fire provide unique challenges to the competitors and that's why many of them make repeat visits to the Cowboy State each August.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation has designated August as “National Shooting Sports Month” and the NRA sponsored an “NRA Day” during the match weekend to celebrate and appreciate our precious Second Amendment rights. In the spirit of the month, we hosted four new shooters who never competed in Action Pistol. We were pleased to have three-time Grand Senior Bianchi Cup Champion John Sanders from Fall Church, VA in attendance and he personally accompanied the new competitors through the course and ensured they had a safe and enjoyable experience.

The match weekend started on Friday with the 2-gun aggregate match. Competitors entering this match must shoot a different type of gun on the same course of fire that they would shoot on Saturday’s Regional contest. The scores for Friday and Saturday are combined and there is an award for the shooter with the high score for the Rimfire/Centerfire and for Centerfire aggregate categories. The high rimfire/centerfire aggregate award went to Walter Johnson of the US Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU) and high centerfire/centerfire award went to Anthony Heinauer of the AMU.

Saturday was the Regional Match featuring the traditional four events of NRA Action Pistol: The Barricade, The Moving Target, The Practical and The Falling Plates. These courses were designed by the late Ray Chapman (first world champion of combat pistol in 1975) and renowned holster maker, competitive shooter and retired Army National Guard Major General John Bianchi. Having “stood the



Bridger Steege shooting the moving target event

test of time” since the first Bianchi Cup in 1979, the courses offer the shooter a unique blend of Precision Pistol, Practical Shooting, and Police Pistol Combat without unduly favoring or handicapping any one discipline. Over the years, NRA Action Pistol has created many specialized and unique equipment modifications as the top shooters aim for perfection. The top scores in the Open Division are usually decided by the X-Count. Notwithstanding the specialization, there are Divisions in

this enjoyable shooting sport where excellent scores can be fired with a stock production pistol such as a Glock, some spare magazines and a commonly available Kydex holster.



Walter Johnson, US Army Marksmanship Unit firing the Barricade event

Regional Winners

Regional Champion	Anthony Heinauer	Opelika, AL	1920-174X
1 st Metallic Sights	Ryan Franks	Ellerslie, GA	1914-162X
1 st Production Optic	Simon Golob	Kearney, MO	1902-145X
1 st Production	Adam Kovatch	Ethridge, MT	1792-115X



Regional Champion Anthony Heinauer, US Army Marksmanship Unit



Top Woman in Regional and State Match - Julie Golob, Kearney, MO score 1890-141X and 1593-100X

Sunday was the Wyoming State match and the “Battle for the Buckles” - custom western belt buckles for the top three shooters and a custom belt buckle for the top shooter in the special revolver only side match. Unique to this match are the two traditional events fired - in this match the moving target modified and the falling plates. The other two are unknown until after the Saturday shooters meeting. A ‘spinning wheel’ was used to randomly select the other two events which are in the NRA rulebook but not often fired in Regional or State level matches. This year the two events were “Los Alamitos” and “International Rapid Fire (Modified)” (IRF). Since the Paris Olympics were recently concluded and IRF is an Olympic medal event it was a welcome addition to the State match program. Action Pistol IRF differs slightly from the Olympic course requiring the shooter to draw and use a freestyle two hand hold. 30 shots are fired from 25 meters under variable time limits with



WY State Champion Bridger Steege, Cheyenne, WY

a maximum possible score of 300-30X. The targets used have narrow scoring rings and the consensus from the competitors was that IRF was a difficult enterprise and decided the match. So, for the state match there were 168 shots fired and a maximum possible score of 1680-168X. The special revolver only match allowed fans of the wheel gun another opportunity to excel on the State course of fire with one caveat – it was “standing only” with use of the prone position prohibited. Some excellent scores were fired with special recognition to Simon Golob of Kearney, MO firing a perfect 480-48X on the Falling Plates event with a production S&W K-38 revolver. The State Champion was 17-year-old Junior shooter Bridger Steege of Cheyenne, WY firing a score of 1647-119X (98%). Bridger had the high score in IRF with a 271-6X, fired a near perfect 476-30X on the Moving Target, and “Clean” scores on the Los Alamitos and Falling Plate events. He also won the Junior Championship at this years CMP Bianchi Cup in Columbia, MO so he continued his winning ways - only this time it was in his home State.

State Winners

Wyoming State Champion	Bridger Steege	Cheyenne, WY	1647-119X
2 nd Place	Walter Johnson	Pine Mountain, GA	1638-121X
3 rd Place	Benito Martinez	Albuquerque, NM	1637-121X
Revolver Match	Nigel Gordon	Frisco, TX	1573-67X

Steamboat is powered by our volunteers who donate their time over the weekend to keep range operations moving along such as scoring, changing targets, and range safety officers and lunch and beverages. A big tip of the hat to our supporters and sponsors Otto Rd Shooting Range, King Ranch Co LLC, Sierra Bullets, Zero Bullets and Ammunition, Burris Optics, Redding Reloading Equipment, Hunters HD Gold Shooting

Glasses, Starline Brass, Hi-Viz Sighting Systems and Molly's Custom Silver. Without volunteers and sponsors there is no match. And finally, thank you to all the competitors who travelled from four points of the compass to come and compete. Next years Steamboat is on the calendar for the weekend of August 16 & 17, 2025. See you in 'Ol Cheyenne!