



BY ARON BRIGHT, A51967

In the event this article gets to be long, and you don't have time to read it all, here is the short version – this is a great match in every respect; if you missed it, you really missed out. The Battle for the North Coast was only in its second year, but it was so well run and organized that one would think it had been around for a long time.

The Crooked Creek Conservation Club was the host range. During lunch on Saturday I chatted with Bud Connolly, a trustee of the conservation club, a contributor to the

match and CRO on Stage 1. The club house was built in 1964, and is well maintained; according to Bud, the club has been running USPSA club matches since the early 1990's or late 1980's. Situated on 350 acres of land, it supports a number of outdoor activities, including dog training, fishing, trap and skeet, USPSA, and rifle shooting. There is a primitive campground on the property, so shooters for the match were welcome to bring their campers.

The match had a number of sponsors; Match Sponsor Champion Precision

Firearms donated a custom-built 2011 pistol, which was won by a delighted B class Open competitor, Ben Tarrier. A few of the sponsors, such as Clenzoil Coda Evolution, spoke at the shooters' meeting about their company and products that were available, and the folks from Viktor's Legacy were on hand with tools to lend to shooters with gun issues. Having someone on hand to help deal with broken guns and allowing sponsors to say a few words were nice touches for the match.

My son Royce and I arrived as the staff



Bretton Rebol

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STAGE 1 - **TEAM TUFF**

STAGE 2 - **CLENZOIL**

STAGE 3 - **VIKTOR'S LEGACY**

STAGE 4 - **CENTER MASS AMMUNITION**

STAGE 5 - **RED HILL TACTICAL**

STAGE 6 - **HIPERFIRE**

STAGE 7 - **3I HOLSTERS**

STAGE 8 - **XS SIGHTS**

STAGE 9 - **SPRINGER PRECISION & CODA EVOLUTION**

STAGE 10 - **FIN, FEATHER & FUR OUTFITTERS**

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distance was well-used. The shooter was not forced to go to every single corner or position in order engage targets. Small steel and a few swinging targets were utilized to force the shooter to be focused on the sights. I was excited prior to the match, and after walking the stages the excitement had grown.

During our inspection of stages we ran into range master Paul Hernandez. I asked Paul for his opinion; he said that he had been very impressed with the organization and management of the match in its initial year, and that everything about this match had grown better for year two. The club did not have many major match experienced ROs locally, but the veterans in the area and some other experienced ROs were on hand to lend experience and expertise. Two of the ten NROI instructors were also on hand for the match, working stages with less experienced staff members. Paul told me this club was made up of dedicated people trying to do their very best. After a couple of days on the scene I have to say he was right. This group of people put on a great match.

The match consisted of ten stages and a required round count of 262 rounds. It rained lightly for a couple of hours Saturday

was shooting the last couple of stages. After over six hours in the car, we were ready to walk the stages, printouts in hand; we did not have a plan for every stage, and the plans we had all changed. The stages were great, well-constructed with viable options on every stage. It was obvious that no effort had been spared. This was to be Royce's first major match, and he was looking forward to it. He has a problem paying attention and frequently fails to engage all the targets on a stage if it's more complicated than El Prez, so our primary goal was safe gun-handling,

good accuracy, and engaging all the targets. I felt like the first two goals would be achieved, but I had my doubts on the last one.

Walking the stages did not allay my fear. There were many opportunities to blow by a target on these stages. By the end of our walk, I had respect for the unnamed stage designer – these stages were shooting contests, and they allowed options based on skill level and division. The shooter would have multiple views on many targets; the stages used no-shoots and hard cover to force tight shots in the narrow bays, and in the wider bays,

morning, and then it rained heavily for a half hour or so. Lightning shut the match down for a short time; the rain stopped just before lunch, then the sun came out and the heat came up. The weather conditions for half our match were suboptimal, yet it went on and was fun to shoot. We finished shooting on Saturday ahead of schedule.

The weather was beyond the control of the staff as it always is, but the staff reaction to the weather was stellar. Bretton Rebol, the match director, had planned for the weather, and the slick conditions in the grass shooting bays was dealt with in a more than acceptable fashion with mulch piles used inside the shooting areas to firm up the footing and provide safe shooting conditions. The staff on each bay used buckets of mulch to fight off slick and muddy conditions in the shooting areas, while bales of hay were on hand to help reduce muddy conditions outside the shooting area. I was impressed that mud was anticipated and not just something the shooters would have to tolerate. Nothing about this match lacked in the planning, construction and execution. It was Grand Master effort all around.

Scott Beebe, the section coordinator for the Northern Ohio Section, was on hand for the match. It was refreshing to see a section coordinator so involved with the match in his section; he was the chief stage designer for the match and performed very well in that role. After having walked the stages and



shot half of them, I asked him about his stage design philosophy. He told me he did not like to have many three- and four-target arrays in a match, and that the goal was to present as many options as possible. Scott said another goal is to make it a shooting contest, to have a mix of challenges in the match, and allow the best shooters to win. As I was listening to Scott talk about what he was trying to do with the match, I decided he had pulled it off. Paul Hernandez told me he feels that Scott is among the best stage designers in the nation; that is pretty elite company, and Scott fits in well.

My favorite stage was Morgan's Raid, named after Confederate General John Hunt Morgan's failed cavalry raid into Indiana and Ohio in June and July of 1863. Morgan's Raid was a 30-round stage consisting of 12 paper targets, four mini-poppers and two full-size

poppers, starting feet on the marks in the middle of the stage against the rear fault line. This stage looked straightforward on paper and it looked straightforward on the ground; however, the five required shooting positions gave multiple views of several targets, and the shooting positions severely limited the view of other targets. The number of shooters who failed to shoot targets was considerable; the number of shooters who got to a position and looked for targets that were not visible from that position was staggering. This stage required a strong plan in order to do well, just the way it should be. Stage planning is part of this game. There were a couple of opportunities to shoot on the move with this stage on both paper targets and some of the steel. A couple of us on our squad chose to do that and it paid off.

There was one pretty significant hard lean on the stage in order to see target number eight, but the rest of the stage could be shot with your feet solidly and comfortably under you. The four small poppers were in a line on the front right-hand corner of the stage, but the shooter's view of them was broken up by a set of barrels. The shooter could have chosen a few different plans for shooting this stage, but I think there was a single best order of shooting positions, regardless of division. Had I been shooting Limited rather than Limited 10 I would have been more aggressive and shot one more steel and one more paper target on the move, but my fear of missing the steel and having a standing reload made me take the more conservative path. Stage 9 was a fun stage that allowed some good ole run-and-gun, but a stage plan was required and the stage was not hosey at all.





The match staff that I asked all said that Stage Five and Stage 10 were their favorites. Stage 10, Pontiac's Rebellion, was named after the war launched in 1763 by a loose confederation of Indians in the Great Lakes region, led by Chief Pontiac of the Ottawas, who were unhappy about British policies following the French and Indian War.

Pontiac's Rebellion was 32-round field course that included 14 paper targets and four small poppers. This was very long and narrow stage, forcing the shooters to cover 30 yards or so with their feet. There were five required positions to engage 30 of the required shots on the stage. The remaining target, number 11, had to be engaged from a sixth position, but there were at least two places where that target could be engaged, the closer one a hard lean to see the target.

There were two shooting ports on opposite ends of the stage, with a second shoot position approximately four feet from each port. The shooting area proceeded up

range from the center stage start position on the left, and down range on the right. The shooter had to be very aware of keeping the gun inside the 180. At the start signal, many shooters stepped forward to the fault line and engaged the two targets that were on the far left side of the stage but only visible from a small spot in the middle of the shooting area. These two targets were straddled by a no-shoot that required very accurate shooting from a precise location, and good muzzle discipline as well due to the targets' location near the 180. The troublesome Target 11 could not be engaged from this spot, but it could be engaged a step or two to the left. Target 11 could also be engaged further to the left without the hard lean, but that added six or seven yards to a shot that was already nearly 20 yards. It could not be shot from the two other required positions on the left-hand side of the stage. Good shooters engaged Target 11 from different positions, and even now I am not sure which place was the best

way to engage it.

All the shooters I watched went to the left and shot that side of the stage before moving to the far right side to finish. There were 12 rounds required from the two positions on the left side of the stage; some of those could be shot from either position and some had to be shot from only one position. If the shooters were not paying attention, they would miss a target or shoot some targets extra times.

The far right side of the stage required two final positions following a long run. The first position required two paper targets and two more small steel. The first target that appeared as the shooter came into the position was an upside-down, no-shoot-protected head shot, exactly the kind of target that most of us do not want to enter a position on, ever, and particularly after a long run. The final position was three close targets through a very narrow port that made the port nearly two positions itself. This very tough technical stage was dreamed up by an evil genius; it was survival of the fittest in Pontiac's Rebellion.

Stage 5, Tecumseh's War, was also named after an Indian War that took place in the Great Lakes region, this time between 1811 and 1813. Tecumseh was also the leader of an Indian Confederation that included more than his own Shawnee tribe. As we know, both of these Indian wars did not work out for the Indians.

Stage 5 was a 30-round stage that included 14 paper targets, one of which was a swinger target that did not disappear, and two full-size poppers. Stage 5 included four different ports; the shooter had to engage targets through three of those ports, and had the option of using the fourth port. The start position was hands on marks which were located on either side of the port that was furthest up range. (Stage 5 had been a part of the match last year but was dropped due to a technicality, so the staff tweaked the stage and brought it back this year.) This stage was a lot of fun to shoot and was worthy of a second chance.

The port at the start position would be used to engage only one target, low to the ground and sitting at a 30-degree angle. The shooters could draw into that target or move



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to the left and engage a hard cover target and shoot through the port on the way back. They then turned left and proceeded up range to the next port on the left-hand wall, but a skunk target had to be engaged prior to the second port. At the second port, they could then engage two more targets through the port or engage a set of double-stacked targets on the right side of the stage, one of them upside-down and only a head box.

The front portion of the stage was limited on options, but the second half was all options. There were only two required positions at the rear of the stage, but there were two optional positions. A swinger and two steel and three other targets could be shot from the same position; two of the static targets that could be shot from the swinger position could also be shot from two other shooting positions further to the left, the shooter having to go to the extreme left side to finish the stage. A number of shooters engaged targets more than once moving across the back of the stage; some of them retreated to a port to re-engage the same target, because they were lost in the optional positions. You really needed a plan here, and the skill to execute that plan. Stage 5 was a clear example of how a well-designed stage could be placed in a fairly small and narrow bay and yet be fun to shoot. Because of solid stage design, accuracy was needed on this stage. It used hard cover and no-shoots very effectively, making using the front sight necessary.

As I spoke with Bretton Rebol, the match director, his pride in the match and his staff was clear. This match started with a vision some five years ago; they planned, they constructed bays, gathered a core group of workers, and held an RO and a CRO course. Bretton and crew have come together and put a quality match on the ground – twice. Congratulations, crew, on a job well done!

Battle for the North Coast will be back next year; the word is getting out on the quality of the match, and the number of shooters enjoying the match is growing. If you are looking to shoot a quality match next year I recommend this one. It might be wise to sign up early, as this match will fill to capacity. Battle for the North Coast III will be back at the Crooked Creek Conservation Club August 28th through the 30th, 2020. Hope to see you on the range! ■

PHOTOS BY ARON BRIGHT, A51967.