

You would be hard pressed to find a better example of USPSA's recent growth than the Area 6 Championship, held at the South River Gun Club near Conyers, Ga., on May 12-15. This year's Area 6 established a new attendance standard for Area Matches, registering 388 entrants, of which 367 actually participated in the match. Furthermore, the Area 6 saw many new faces at the top of the order, including one youthful IDPA crossover shooter, Daniel Horner of Suffolk, Pennsylvania. Even the sponsor list saw some changes, with Beretta U.S.A. coming in as overall match sponsor.

Max Michel Jr. has come to represent a generation of "Young Guns" within USPSA, and he made his presence felt here, surprising everyone by winning all 12 stages in Open Division, while Kay Clark Miculek won as high

lady. (See Robin Taylor's profile of Kay on page 44.)

Likewise, Shannon Smith snuck in under the radar to score a surprise win in Limited over the likes of Travis Tomasic, Taran Butler, and Blake Miguez. Renee Tyson was the top lady in Limited. Although Smith finished eighth at last year's Handgun Nationals against stiff competition, his is not yet a household name, at least not on the National level. After this win it is unlikely that he will go unnoticed in the future.

Smith started competing in USPSA matches six years ago while serving with the Army



**Beware the Horner. IDPA crossover shooter Daniel Horner shocked the field by winning Limited-10 at Area 6. This was his third USPSA event — and by the way, he's just 18 years old.**

Rangers at Fort Lewis, Washington. Smith met Rich Bitow and other USPSA members during a "paper punching" session at a local indoor range. He was soon shooting USPSA matches at various Northwest Section clubs. The people he met attracted him to the sport, but it's the competition that keeps him coming back.

Smith is not of the "shoot and scoot" school, as he now serves as Coordinator of the new Central Florida Section. He expressed his admiration for Dave Sevigny and Julie Goloski, both of whom worked stages at the Area 6. They too believe in "giving back."

Dave Sevigny, shoot-

ing the entire match on Friday, then working as a RO all of Saturday and Sunday, won Production.

He nearly matched Michel's

Open Division accomplishment

by winning 11 of the 12 stages. The only stage

he didn't win was No. 12,

"Keep It Clean," where he finished third behind Angus Hobdell

and John Flentz. Julie Goloski, who also worked the weekend as a RO, continued her dominance in Production by earning high lady honors.

Had Jerry Miculek not won Revolver Division, the assumption would be that he had broken his leg. Fortunately, that did not happen, and Miculek cruised to a win ahead of Cliff Walsh, who fired a respectable 85% of Miculek's total. No women elected to shoot the "BRT" Division.

Perhaps the biggest surprise came in Limited 10, when 18 year-old Daniel Horner of Suffolk, Pennsylvania won his major USPSA match debut. Although Horner has been shooting with his father for the past five years, the Area 6 Championship is only his third USPSA match. Most of his experience has been with IDPA, where he is the reigning National Champion in their Enhanced Service Pistol Division. Horner should be receiving his initial USPSA classification card any day now.

When asked to compare USPSA to IDPA Horner was visibly uncomfortable. It was obvious that he was concerned about adding fuel to the USPSA/IDPA debate. He finally did say that USPSA offers more freedom, and that he enjoys the freestyle shooting. He was quick to add that he has "no real preference" and will continue to participate in both disciplines.

His goals include the 2008 World Shoot, hopefully as a team member. He

**SURPRISES AT AREA 6**  
**MATCH REVEALS GROWTH, CHANGES IN USPSA**  
 STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE THOMAS, USPSA ED, L-796

has also recently become interested in shooting 3-Gun. He would like to teach shooting, and considers college as a possibility sometime in the future.

The large turnout was a hot topic of conversation during the match, with much conjecture about whether it was an anomaly or a symptom of growth. The 2004 match boasted a relatively paltry 278 compared to the 366 in this year's version. In fact, the largest 2004 Area Match, the Area 2 Championship, had 348 competitors, 19 fewer than the 2005 Area 6. Overall, 2004 Area Match participation ranged from 190 to 348, for an average of 260.

Limited and Open Divisions each accounted for about one third of the total, while the other third were scattered through the three "Factory Divisions." Of those, Production had the greatest participation with 67 (18%). Revolver had 10 competitors, and 35 shooters participated in Limited 10. In total, the match's 12 stages required a minimum of 252 rounds with 1260 possible points.

Cindy and Bill Noyes, who served as



**Sneakin' and peekin'.**  
Bob Londrigan works his magic on "See Rock City II."



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**Gilbert Perez on the move for Sigarms.**

Match Director and Chief Statistician, suggested that the match growth was due to a variety of factors. Cindy says that some shooters were using the Area 6 as a tune-up for the World Shoot in August. She also pointed out the fact

that Atlanta, of which Conyers is a suburb, is one of the easiest travel cities in America. Another factor may have been the squadding schedule, which, with the aid of the on-line self-squadding system developed by USPSA Webmaster Rob Boudrie, allowed competitors to decide for themselves whether to shoot all 12 stages in a single day or to shoot half days. Bill pointed out that “shooters are accustomed to quality in Area 6”, and that many people come to Georgia as part of their shooting routine.

Whatever the reasons, the match filled early and Cindy was required to disappoint approximately 50 people who tried to register too late and were turned away.

Those who did shoot the match were treated to a great experience. “The vast majority of response has been overwhelmingly positive,” according to Bill. Comments posted to various on-line forums support Bill’s contention.



**Surprise winner Shannon Smith receiving the top Limited award from Cindy Noyes.**

was having a great time.

Although not particularly happy with his personal result, Area 6 Director Charles Bond expressed delight with the match. “This just proves that appointing the right people results in good things happening,” said Bond. “Cindy Noyes is the icing on the cake. She did a magnificent job.”

Bond added that the match growth reflects general growth for Area 6. Within the last six months the Area has added three new clubs, all of which are doing well. Bond credited hard working Section Coordinators with the new shooting opportunities in the Area.

One of the features appreciated by the competitors was that they were not required to paste targets or set steel on the majority of the stages. Credit Barbara Sumrall who brought her Atlantic Beach Police Explorers from Northern Florida to do those chores. The Explorer program provides young adults aged 14-21 with the opportunity to learn first hand about law enforcement and the skills needed to survive, both physically and emotionally, in that line of work.

The Explorers attend a scaled down version of the police academy, which they must successfully complete before being allowed to ride with police patrols as observers. In addition to observing police activity, they assist with community events and city-sponsored service programs. Sumrall’s goal “is to teach them responsibility, respect for themselves and others and to instill a good work ethic. It’s all about team



**David Olhasso sets up the shot.**

Doug Breau of Louisiana was shooting his first Area match. When he noticed me taking pictures he made a point of telling me how impressed he was with the stages, the match organization, and the people. He singled out RM Rosie Rosel as having been especially nice and helpful. Despite a problem with “velocity insufficientitis” discovered by Greg (Chronoman) Lent’s chronograph, he

work,” said Sumrall. “Even if they never become police officers they will always be friends of law enforcement and productive members of the community.”

### **Trouble in Paradise**

Of course no event lasting three days and involving this many people can get by without some complaints. In the case of the Area 6 match most of those complaints centered around closed ranges, bringing to light a generic problem common to all large, modern practical shooting matches. Cindy Noyes (MD for the 2006 A6) has announced she will abandon the “closed range” policy for next year, but the underlying issue of walk-through times and complexity deserves some discussion.

“Freestyle” has always been an important hallmark of our sport, and one that separates us from all other shooting sports. The past couple of rule books have interpreted freestyle to mean “shoot ‘em as you see ‘em”, which has had the effect of, in the words of one top competitor, “taking the shooting boxes off the ground and putting them in walls.” That redefini-



**Blake Miguez in action.**

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tion has greatly increased the attractiveness of practical shooting for many people. It has, however, had the unintended consequence of making some stages much too complicated for the average competitor to understand and plan-out within the five-minute walk-through period — especially in those matches featuring large (more than 10 people) squads.

Increasing walk-through times can have a serious negative impact on match schedules. At the Area 6, for example, shooting began at 8:00 am and

didn't end until 7:00 pm or later. Twelve squads visited each stage on each of the full shooting days. Had the match added five minutes to each walk-through it would have added an hour to the shooting day. Twelve-hour match days are tough on competitors and staff.

Part of the solution may be the practice adopted by the National Championships over the past few years. Shooters are allowed to visit the stages during specified times prior to the match, and during down times dur-

ing the match, as long as they don't disturb any of the arrays. Range Officers will allow squads arriving on a stage to turn in their score sheets, and then look at the setup. However, that was not the procedure at the Area 6. No one was allowed to view stages prior to the official walk-through, which resulted in problems for the competitors on some stages.

A prime example of that problem occurred on Stage 7, "See Rock City II." The stage featured a segmented wall with the panels positioned at different angles. Each panel had a port, though the sizes, shapes and position of the ports varied. Targets were spread across the range and most offered a view of the complete target from only one position. Most targets could be engaged from other positions, but presented only the upper panel. To add some complication, the targets were set at an estimated range of 25 yards or more yards.

The result was something of a memory course. It was difficult to determine which targets were visible from which ports to avoid skipping some and reengaging others. A five-minute playtime did not provide enough time for many of us to visualize layout and develop an effective plan. Only listening to Stu Williams' explanation of how to shoot the stage saved our squad from disaster.

Despite the amount of space devoted to the issue here, it was not enough of a problem to detract from an outstanding event filled with wonderfully evil stages. The shooting problems were varied, many demanding accuracy, and several offering a variety of solutions. The match involved a lot of strategy as well as shooting ability.

The practice in Area 6 is to award the Championship match to clubs for two consecutive years, which means that it will return to South River in 2006, probably with Cindy Noyes again at the helm. Based on the misfortune of the 50 people for whom there was no room this year, you need to start planning now to avoid that fate next year.





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