

April 2007 NEWSLETTER

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LAVERT CYPHER MANHANDLES MARCH MADNESS COURSE

By Al Anglace

History often remembers those who perform with grace under fire and the sixty plus Travelers who attended the 2007 "March Madness" shoot at the Ye Old Newgate Coon Club on Sunday, March 17, won't forget what a great job the committed staff did. In lieu of a dozen inches of snow, ice, frozen clays, traps, a plow vehicle breakdown and only one day to present a safe venue for us, they pulled this monumental task off. Under such adverse conditions they could have presented an abbreviated course and let it go at that; but they didn't. Failure to produce for our Travelers shoot was just not an option and considering that they moved the shoot date up one month to accommodate our shooting calendar, we owe them big time!

It's always interesting to listen to the members rehashing the day's activities while enjoying the amenities of the Coon Club Lodge and most of our tribe realized they were a little nuts to even come out to shoot. Many came away amazed at what an enjoyable day it was and that was even before they were treated to a great hot lunch! Bouquets were being offered to the hardy comrades in arms, heroes in their own minds for braving Mother Nature's toughest test this year. Actually, I agree that maybe we were a little nuts, but I'll accept the ordination of hero's. I did hear Don Brenton remark that he always looks forward to coming to the Coon Club and that anticipation kind of dilutes a little cold and snowy conditions.

Michael Primavera thought the weather was not nearly as bad as he expected. Even when it was snowing it was still somewhat comfortable. Mike really liked the two-shot singles and the report/simo combination stations. "It is an interesting twist." I was also surprised to see that Bob Busha gave us some throwback Traveler International full-use-of-the-gun singles and mixed pairs on two stations. George Ostrander, the reigning champion, with a 2006 score of 86, said he would like all of the stations set this way. Maybe because those presentations are the only challenges left for his great shooting ability.

Speaking of shooting ability, I have been asked if we could publish all of the scores shot so as to see where an individual finished in class if he did not win an award. Although that is next to impossible, for a number of reasons, I thought it might be interesting to know the average per class:

- Class 1 – ten shooters – 75.6 average
- Class 2 – ten shooters – 74.7 average
- Class 3 – seven shooters – 60.9 average
- Class 4 – eight shooters – 53.5 average
- Class 5 – eight shooters – 44.5 average
- No class 6 shooters.

A "fifty-fifty" raffle was held to benefit the Coon Club sponsored Scholastic Clay Shooting Program. This is a terrific junior program and it was even greater when the winning ticket was held by one of our junior shooters, Michael Griffin. Their goal to attend the Nationals at San Antonio this year will take much more money than we made for them but every little bit helps.

By the time we headed out the door for the trek home, the sun was shining and reflecting off of many smiling faces. Another great day was enjoyed by all and we are in anticipation of our next venue at the Coon Club. The Coon Club hosts many open shoots throughout the year and invite the Travelers to participate.

HOA CHAMPION – Lavert Cypher 90
CLASS 1 CHAMPION – Jim Muller 84
CLASS 1 RUNNER UP – Kevin Goodspeed 78

CLASS 2 CHAMPION – Al Anglace 79
 CLASS 2 RUNNER UP – Eric Steinkraus 78
 CLASS 3 CHAMPION – John Hachmann 69
 CLASS 3 RUNNER UP – Brian Griffin 67
 CLASS 4 CHAMPION – Dave Dunn 61
 CLASS 4 RUNNER UP – Ed Ahern 59
 CLASS 5 CHAMPION – Dick Malin 53
 CLASS 5 RUNNER UP – Howard Dennis 52
 LADY CHAMPION – Amber Kirylak 38
 LADY RUNNER UP – Gwyn Grant 37
 VET. CHAMPION – George Ostrander 78
 VET. RUNNER UP – Paul Elia 76
 SR. VET. CHAMPION – Ed Moritt 75
 GUEST CHAMPION – Scott Moss 74

HOWARD BERMAN ATTENDS HIS FIRST TRAVELER SHOOT

“As a new shooter and my first shoot as a member with the Travelers, I was squaded with two longtime friends (Ron Leonardi, and Membership Chair. John Hachmann), along with two new faces (at least to me) Kevin Goodspeed and Rich Shannon, as well as guest Dennis Carr. Starting with the two and one half hour drive North, I was apprehensive about the drive, the weather, how well I’d shoot, and if I’d embarrass myself as a new competitor. Needless to say, the five or ten birds I lost due to nervousness were made up by the strong support I received from the entire squad. The old salts, Kevin and Ron, sat like angels on my shoulder giving me points on muzzle starting position and gun movement following the target.

I thought I was fortunate and had a leg up in getting acclimated to the Travelers as I have joined with two close friends as members; after this shoot I am confident that had I joined as a walk-in off the street, I would have enjoyed the same warm friendly and supportive reception from any squad I was assigned to. The Travelers are truly a down-to-earth friendly and open family of shooters who made me feel at ease from check-in till the end of the awards ceremony. I am very pleased and proud to have become a member of such a supportive group of people. Additionally, having my friend John Hachmann win his class was an extra bonus!

NEWBIE JOINS THE TRAVELERS

By Jeff Hunter

My introduction to Sporting Clays started in the late 90's at Deep River Sporting Clays in Sanford, North Carolina. I didn't realize it then, but I was extremely lucky to have a great shooting facility open to the public within 20 minutes of my home.

Moving to Connecticut in 2000 opened my eyes to the very different world of shooting in the North East. While there were lots of places to shoot, the majority were private clubs with high membership fees. That's even if you can get on their waiting list! I settled into a routine of Wallingford Rod & Gun's public fun shoots, Orvis Sandanona, and Mid-Hudson Sporting Grounds.

It was a Summer day in 2005 that I met John and Olive Lawlor on the course at Mid-Hudson. We struck up a conversation and discovered we were fellow Wiltonians. They told me about a group of shooters called the Connecticut Travelers and if I was interested would take my name and number. I figured why not, so John placed my name on the waiting list. The concept of the Travelers appealed to me because it would give me access to private clubs that I wouldn't have otherwise.

I officially became a Connecticut Traveler in January 2006, but due to scheduling conflicts didn't get to my first shoot until March of that year. Not knowing what to expect, I pulled into the lot at Mid-Hudson and was quite surprised at the 50 or so cars already there.

Upon entering, the nicest bearded fellow greeted me and said “You look like you're lost.” “A new guy”, I replied.

Al then took me around and showed me the ropes of signing up, and most importantly, where the donuts were. He then introduced me to my squad mates: Brian Griffin, Mike Griffin, and George Ostrander. My first impression was the targets were more difficult than usual, but maybe it was just because I was shooting with a new group. When I left that day, I thought this was a really great group of people that made me feel welcome and I looked forward to the next time I could shoot with them.

When the April RELOAD came in, I immediately signed up for the “Tax Time Revolt”. Having first visited the Coon Club the previous month, I knew Joe Gimelli set a mean course. That day turned into what I like to call the “Noah's Ark 2006” due to the constant downpour during the competition. Despite the weather, I met fellow Travelers Steve Rice and Ed Przybyski and had a great time shooting with them. This was the first time I heard the degree of difficulty described as “Traveler tough”.

The summertime was very busy and I couldn't get out on Sundays. By August, I missed my Traveler companions and was determined to get to a couple more shoots before my membership was up. I'd been in the club for nine months and still hadn't been to any new clubs! October and December changed that trend. The Small Gauge Championships at Fairfield County Fish & Game Protective Association was one of the finest shoots I've ever had the pleasure of participating in. The weather was perfect and the course was very challenging. Perhaps that 50 yard straight away was a stretch for the pea shooters, but overall, the targets were very fair.

My first year wrapped up at the Dick Losee Memorial Christmas Party & Shoot at Mid-County Rod & Gun Club. What can be said about the Annual Christmas shoot that hasn't been said before? It is most definitely the crown jewel of the Travelers calendar. Let's just say a two day fast is on the agenda before this year's Christmas shoot!

Today, I find myself scheduling things around the third Sunday of the month. Even on non-Traveler weekends, I'll meet a fellow Traveler on the Skeet field or meet the Long Island contingent to shoot some Sporting Clays. I joined the Travelers in order to shoot on some pretty exclusive courses. In the process, though, I met some really friendly people and gained some regular shooting companions.

WHAT THE PROS KNOW ABOUT THIS GAME THAT YOU DON'T

By Phil Steinkraus

This ought to be a pretty simple game: We view the target. We enter the box, load the gun, call for the target and hopefully break it. Why then aren't we breaking them all one hundred percent of the time? Because there are an awful lot of variables that come into play in this processed mind!@#\$\$% of clayshooting, the foremost being the flawed instrument of clay target destruction we call ourselves. That's right friends, I'll wager that it isn't your gun, ammunition, shooting glasses or clothing, that's primarily holding you back (professionals regularly prove this by winning with borrowed equipment.) The piece of sporting hardware we fight our biggest battle against is ourselves. I won't even start in on eyesight, hand-eye coordination, reflexes, athleticism or talent—most of us are sufficiently lacking in these so as to never worry about being mentioned in the same sentence as George Digweed. Now that we've accepted that the top slot is filled and will be for the foreseeable future, that doesn't mean we can't thoroughly enjoy ourselves by engaging in the endless struggle to be the best version of our shooter selves we can be.

What the high class competitive shooter knows that the rest of us don't is how to minimize the variables of this game regardless of whether they're shooting a Travelers event or the US Open. It is, after all, the little surprises that most often catch us out and make us miss and anything we can do to reduce or eliminate these surprises gets us a bigger number at the bottom of the score card. The truth is the pro

specializes in finding an edge and exploiting it to their fullest advantage. Every time you lose to one of these guys by a target or two, I can assure you they purchased that winning margin with the currency of blood, sweat, tears and time: They reached into their bag of tricks and produced the HOA score employing one of the methods I'll list below.

1) SURVEY THE PRESENTATION- People love to talk about target reading and figuring out what the course designer was trying for, but it's rare indeed that you ever see a shooter do anything but blab on to their squad-mates about this angle or that optical illusion. Can you see where the targets are coming from? Are the traps visible or do you need a visual aid in the form of a landmark to help you pick up the birds. When you mark the target against the background, do you notice any variation of trajectory? Does it fly the same way every time or is the wind playing with it? Are the pulls the trapper gives same every time or are some slower than others? Can you get near enough to the traps to identify exactly what the target is doing on its flight path? Often we badly misread the angle and lead on a target because we misjudge the target's trajectory. Finally, so often we get the line wrong. We're over or under, because we couldn't get a true read on the line of the bird. My wife showed me that we've all got a straight edge attached to our guns in the form of a rib. If you want a read on the true target line, just hold up your rib and superimpose that big ruler over the flight path.

2) ALWAYS VIEW A PAIR BEFORE YOU SHOOT: So often the lead shooter has already seen another squad shoot the station and feels they don't want to waste any more time to see another pair before they shoot. How often have you seen the lead shooter on a given squad suddenly be surprised by a presentation? It happens all the time and many top shooters regard the lead-off stations to be inherently weakest because they don't get to learn from another shooter's mistake before they get in the box. For this reason, always take advantage of the view pair and if it's a true pair, be certain to look at it twice with an eye toward taking a different target first each time.

B) BE SELFISH IN THE BOX—THIS IS YOUR TIME: Why would anyone ever call for a target when they aren't really ready to shoot? You see it all the time though, and I usually put it down to the shooter not wanting to appear discourteous to others on the squad by taking too much time. The best professionals I've seen take all the time they please, insist on quiet from the squad when they're in the box and often seem engaged both in visualizing in their minds eye the desired motion to break the target as well as cultivating and imposing positive thoughts into their psyche before they call for the target. That may sound like mouthful of malarkey, but it boils down to *never call for the target on a negative thought*. If the last thought running through your mind before you pulled the trigger was "Gee, I could miss this," then you probably will.

2) HAVE THE RIGHT GEAR: The professional carries everything they might need with them everywhere they go. That means a first-rate rain suit you know you can shoot well in and not some half-assed Wal-Mart special you picked up this morning--ditto for boots.

B) How many events do you think have been won shooting a miscellaneous mix of seven or eight different brands of ammunition. So many duffers I talk to insist it really doesn't matter what they shoot. I've never met a top shooter who felt this way and most are adamant about shooting the same ammo all the time (up until 9/11 many were flying to away shoots with flats of ammo stuffed into their luggage.)

C) Top quality shooting glasses aren't that expensive compared to what we spend on this sport overall and yet so many shooters appear on the course with unsuitable sunglasses or just one pair of proper eyewear . Top shooters have multiple lenses and frames with them so if that cloud edges this way they can immediately switch to a set of clear lenses. Hats, shoes, gloves and gunslips. They are all the tools of the trade for the professional and yet I see so many weekenders who forget what they really need for that day

or just make due with some sub-par piece of equipment. If the right gear will keep you comfortable and shooting well when other's aren't, ultimately giving you that extra target or two, it sounds to me like you've just found an edge.

3) **KNOW THE RULES:** I'm probably as guilty here as the next guy, as I regularly peruse the rules but have yet to commit them to memory. Knowing the rules has certainly saved me on more than one occasion. The truth is most referees are poorly paid or volunteer help. Maybe they shoot maybe they don't, but when you come right down to it, they probably don't care one way or the other whether you break the target or not. If you know the call--chapter and verse--and can even produce the scripture itself, well then you've got him. You shoot all the time--he doesn't--so it behooves you to know the rules because it might just give you an edge someday: A bad call in your favor is a gift from God. A bad call against you can always be fought with the rulebook and overturned.

4) **WORK THE REF:** This is a slippery slope at best because half the trick here is knowing when to push your luck and question a call, but I can confidently report to you the top pros do this all the time. Granted if your last name was on the cover of a magazine last month, you're more likely to get quick remedial action than if it's Mudd but the truth is if they think there's even a possibility they hit a target, most pros will press the ref on it. Ideally they'll have a hand-picked squad to back them up on it. Then it all becomes a numbers game. If the famous shooter quizzes six different refs on six different target calls and he only gets given one or two of them, then he's just quite possibly produced the day's winning margin from his bag of tricks. The same holds true for funny flying targets. If the pro misses and the target looked at all funny, he'll plead a "no bird" to the ref and might just get it. Most top shooters will demand that hits and misses be called verbally by the ref and they'll check the card to confirm the score as they exit the box (I've seen more than one bored, dim-witted girlfriend screw this up royally, and even witnessed a French referee in Europe intentionally try to cheat a former British world Champion out of three or four targets on a FITASC Parcour by mismarking the card.) The pro takes nothing for granted and always verifies their score.

5) **FOCUS ON THE JOB AT HAND:** How many of us are really so important that we need to carry a cell phone or blackberry with us even when we shoot? That call from the office or your wife is exactly the sort of distraction that can make us goose egg a whole station (such fond memories of summers past, Ben Slome!) When you are on the course in competition mode, keep your head in the game and your mind focused. A little socializing is fine provided you don't become so preoccupied that it ruins your game. If you want to see someone totally absorbed, just try to strike up a friendly conversation with George Digweed while he's on the course. He's developed a reputation for standoffishness in the extreme because it helps preserve his game by keeping him focused.

6) **KNOW YOUR GAME AND SELF DIAGNOSE IT:** If you can shoot pretty well, have done the homework and put your time in (I'm talking years here, not months) then you ought to have a fairly good idea of what you're doing right or wrong at any given time on the course. What I'm suggesting is you probably have a better idea of what's wrong with the misses you're making than anyone else and you should probably listen to that little voice inside your head that's telling you what adjustments to make. Unfortunately too many duffers consider themselves world-class coaches-in-waiting (even though they've never broken 80 in competition) and they're only too willing to impart their hard-won wisdom to you when you find yourself flailing your way toward the big zero. My best advice is to listen to yourself first and politely tell that voice over your shoulder, thanks but no thanks. Option two is to turn to a shooting buddy for advice. If you've shot together a lot, they'll know your game well and may have some surprisingly astute insights into your game and what you're doing right or wrong. The important thing is to be both choosy and consistent with whom you consult. You don't take shooting lessons from just

anyone so why should you listen to some yahoo tell you you're a mile behind when you're in fact a mile in front and he can't simply believe you actually know what a nine foot lead looks like!

7) NEVER LOOK AT THE SCOREBOARD BEFORE YOU SHOOT: I'm sure there are plenty top level shooters who will disagree with this, but I think introducing the numbers game before you've even started shooting is nothing short of mental masturbation. Most of us can't shoot to a score if we have to and knowing what everyone else shot isn't going to help you off to a good start and may actually hurt your confidence and intimidate you. Wouldn't it both be simpler and healthier for you to just go out and shoot as well as you can with a clear head? It is for this exact reason that I believe that most of us, when we find ourselves in a shoot-off situation, would do best to shoot first, given the choice.

8) IT'S NOT THE GUN: No matter how hard we try to resist, humans are naturally slaves to fashion. In some primordial way, we retain a pack mentality in terms of what we wear and what we shoot. Show up to the US Open in Master class shooting a Belgian Browning, a Winchester 101 or a Remington 3200 and I dare say you'd have the rest of your squad taking up a collection to purchase you a firearm worthy of your talents. The gun is simply your tool, the hammer with which you drive the nail. There are no extra targets added to your score for beauty or barrel length and many is the journeyman competitor who never regained their form after they moved up to something better and sold "Old Bessie." Fads come and go--that's the very lifeblood of the gun dealer, but if you've got a gun you can afford, that you get on with and doesn't beat you to death, why would you ever part with it? "The pro shoots a state-of-the art set-up, why shouldn't I?", I hear you ask. What the pro knows that you don't is that his gun and gunsmithing is free and yours isn't. If he discovers in three months that that 36-inch Perazzi he was experimenting with works better in theory than in practice, he simply sends it back and he's not out a dime. You, on the other hand, have invested time, money and bragging rights into your firestick. You told all your buddies six months ago you'd skin them alive with it and now it's time to out up or shut up. Like an investor riding a losing stock into the ground, most of us will live in a continual state of denial (I just need time to get used to it) or worse, double-down in the form up making additional mods or restocking instead of doing the rational thing and going back to a gun we know we can shoot well. The pro knows so much about setting up a gun--with enough time and custom work, they can make virtually anything shoot for them. Most of us set up a new gun once in a blue moon and there are so many variables to get right that only a fool would willingly want to do it on a regular bases. The old line goes "Beware the man who only shoots one gun." Implying that he must shoot it well. Sure the pros change guns but usually only when they're being paid to: Top shooters can switch guns and still win. We probably can't.

9) KILL EVERY SKEET AND TRAP TARGET ON THE COURSE—With a handfull of exceptions, nearly every gun club I've ever been to has a skeet field, a trap field or most likely both. If you can become proficient at those two games, you've probably mastered half of the shots you'll need to be a sporting clays shooter. Many is the time I've seen someone on a tear only to flush away a good score because they shot a two on the improvised skeet or trap field stations. I won't stoop to naming names here (Eddie Moritt!) but it's so absurd to witness that it would make you laugh out loud were it not so devastating to the poor soul in the box. The pro shooter is well rounded and competent in all disciplines and can kill low eight from a FITASC mount all day long if need be. I always say, the scorecard doesn't care if you ran the station with the 50-yard crosser or shot a two on the ten-yard floater. This is a game of math and numbers and the pro gains the edge by killing everything that's readily killable, every time and then shooting the hard stuff competently. Own the easy stuff and you'll have an edge on everyone else too.

"In shooting, as in most other sports, stance, footwork and poise of the body are all married together to blend into one smooth action. Above all, the balance and poise of the body must be firm and comfortable with the weight supported evenly on both legs.... The toes of the feet should be about nine inches apart,

although this distance will of course vary slightly with the general build of the individual. But, generally speaking, it is better to take too narrow a stance than too wide a one."

*Robert Churchill, Game shooting
1955, London, Michael Joseph*

CONTACTING THE TRAVELERS...

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Guide Book advertising and other questions contact Dick Orenstein at email oren@umich.edu or call 203-226-5251.

Past issues of *Reload!* are available online at www.ShotgunReport.com.

- - - 2007 CTSCA SHOOTING CALENDAR - - -

APR. 22 – “TAX TIME REVOLT” – Ten Mile River Preserve – Dover Plains, NY

MAY. 19 & 20 – “20th Anniversary 300” –Tamarack Preserve, Millbrook, NY; Ten Mile River Preserve, Dover Plains, NY. (third venue to be announced).

JUN. 24 – 2007 SPORTING CLAYS CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS, Mid Hudson Sporting Grounds

JUL.15 – “SUMMERTIME, SUMMERTIME” Orvis/Sandanona, Millbrook, NY

AUG. 10, 11 & 12 – GREAT EASTERN LOBSTER CLASSIC, Addieville East Farm, Mapleville, RI

SEPT. 16 – “SEPTEMBERSCHUTZENFEST” Millbrook Rod & Gun Club

OCT. 5, 6 & 7 – Fall Tour, Rhode Island Area Clubs

OCT.21 – SMALL GAUGE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS, Fairfield County Fish & Game, Monroe, CT

NOV. 18 – “SALUTE THE COLORS” Ye Old Newgate Coon Club, Norfolk, CT

DEC. 16 – DICK LOSEE MEMORIAL SHOOT / X-MAS PARTY, Mid County Rod & Gun Club

- - - OTHER 2007 SHOOT OF INTEREST - - -

Always call ahead to confirm.

May 6th 2007 - FCF&GPA NSCA Registered Fun Shoot

Saturday May 12 – Boy Scouts of America Benefit Sporting Clays Classic – Old Newgate Coon Club, Norfolk, CT. Reservations: 800 414-2433 or 860 289-6669 ext 258. FAX: 860 290-8860.

June 10th 2007 - FCF&GPA Annual FITASC 100 Bird Shoot

Saturday August 4th - FCF&GPA 2007 The Crucible

Aug. 19th – Friends of NRA Sporting Shoot – Mid Hudson Sporting Grounds, New Paltz, NY. Contact David Wohlbach at htbear23@verizon.net.

Aug.25 & 26 2007 FCF&GPA Connecticut State Shoot. For information contact Dom Uliano Email, dombklab@charter.net or 203-526-0352

THE UPCOMING *CTTRAVELERS* MONTHLY SHOOT

**“TAX TIME REVOLT”
Ten Mile River Preserve
266 Berkshire Road**

Dover Plains, NY**Sunday, April 22, 2007****A SUPBERB VENUE MANAGED BY OUR OLD FRIEND GARY HALL, ALONG
WITH A MOST CAPABLE PROFESSIONAL STAFF!**

Registration and continental breakfast opens at 8:30 AM.

Member entry fee: \$70.00. Guests fee \$85.00.

Registration and Continental Breakfast opens at 8:30 AM.

DIRECTIONS: from the junction of Rte. 84 West and Rte.684 at the CT/NY State line, turn right onto NY Route 22 North. Take Route 22 through Pawling and into Dover Plains center. At the traffic light turn right onto Mill Street and continue to the 4 way stop sign. Turn right onto Limeklin Road and continue 1 _ miles to Berkshire Hill Road. Turn left onto Berkshire Hill Road and continue .6 mile to "Y" (Ten Mile River sign) bear right and the club is .6 mile on the right.

From the North, take Route 22 South to the light in Dover Plains. Take left onto Mill Street and continue to the 4 way stop sign. Turn right onto Limekiln Road and continue approx. 1 _ miles to Berkshire Hill Road. Turn left onto Berkshire Hill Road and go .6 mile to "Y" (Ten Mile River sign) and bear right. Club is .6 mile on right. Club phone: 845 877-3560.

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO CTSCA AND MAIL WITH YOUR RESERVATION TO:
CTSCA, 91 Park Lane Road, New Milford, CT. 06776**