



# Eddy Brown Memorial Metal Match 2008

BY ROBIN TAYLOR, FRONT SIGHT STAFF

ing several shooters to compete in the match for very little cost. Many were grateful not to have to dig quite so deep for ammo – and for a chance to try the new load at the same time. For at least one of the competitors I met, it made shooting centerfire possible.

## RIMFIRE OPPORTUNITY = GROWTH

Shortly after Sahlberg affiliated with SCSA, he started to get phone calls from Washington-based rimfire specialists like Mike Gallion, encouraging him to open his normally centerfire-only match to rimfire guns. Sahlberg agreed, and soon had a healthy contingent of .22 drivers registered on top of his regular crowd.

**E**ddy Brown brought Steel Challenge shooting to the Pacific Northwest and Canada, acting as a kind of extra-extra-large Johnny Appleseed with pink-handled raceguns. It's only fitting that the match named in his memory should become one of the first matches in the Pacific Northwest to affiliate with the Steel Challenge Shooting Association following its purchase by USPSA earlier this year.

I've shot the Eddy Brown match for years, covering it in these pages first in 2001. It's known for a jovial, low-key atmosphere, in keeping with the way Eddy would have run it. The stages include older Steel Challenge designs like "Zig-Zag," alongside current stand-bys like "5 To Go."

Exchanging the relatively slow "Outer Limits" for the crazy-fast "Zig Zag" means the combined times don't compare to those shot on the current mix of stages, which suits Match Director Bill Sahlberg just fine.

"It's a memorial match to remember Eddy," he points out. "That's the main focus – along with having a good time. The older stages are part of that."

Held in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, behind beautiful Lake Fernan, the match traditionally welcomes about 50 people from three states (Washington, Idaho, Montana) plus southern British Columbia. This year the match got bumped out of its traditional early-July time slot by the MGM Ironman, forcing the organizers to re-schedule for

Wayne Schoonmaker pounding the steel.

July 26-27. A schedule change often hurts attendance, but not this year. A few days before the first shot was fired, registrations were cut off at 54, with the understanding that a few more might show up on match day. When another dozen showed up the morning of the match, guns in hand, they made the 2008 Eddy Brown Memorial Metal Match the largest held to date.

SPEER/ATK contributed heavily to the match, donating several thousand rounds of their new Blazer Brass ammunition. Sahlberg made this available to anyone who wanted to use it, allow-



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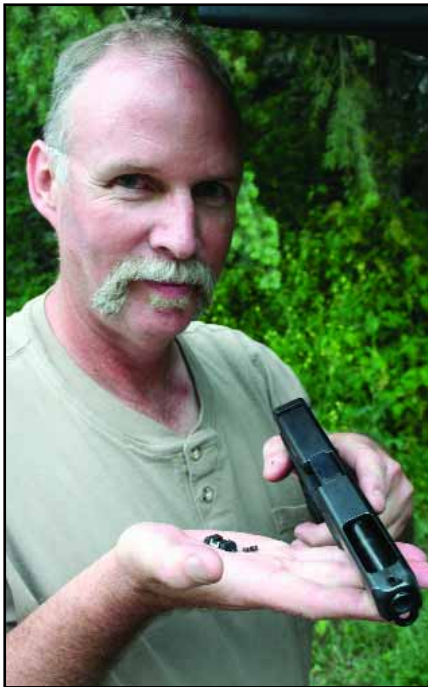
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The man with no sights. Patrick Kelley tore the sights off his Glock halfway through the match and went into "Zen Master" mode. He shocked us by making up enough ground to finish 2nd Limited!

Since the Steel Challenge portion of the Eddy Brown happens on one day, this is traditionally a pick-your-gun affair. By opening the match to rimfires, a number of centerfire shooters were able to bring their kids, shooting sub-caliber conversion kits, Buckmarks, and the ever-popular Ruger autoloaders. On my squad alone, Rick and Becky Schoonmaker brought their children Ryder and Kira. Mark Carbon brought his two young sons (Bryce and Riley) as well. The young Carbons didn't shoot for score, but shot a stage or two as time permitted. Finding so many young shooters on the field was a big surprise compared to previous years!

Sahlberg's success with the rimfire crowd has him considering expanding the match to include a time slot just for rimfires. If he does, I predict he'll see a lot of shooters opting to shoot rimfire in addition to their usual centerfire division. He'll see more people (the rimfire specialists and juniors he saw in 2008) along with more entries per person, greatly expanding the match.

Adam Sahlberg surprised us all with how well his Open Division pistol-shooting skills had survived his recent 14-month tour in Iraq. Sahlberg bested the centerfire crowd by almost four seconds (including the formidable Frank Cook, Corey Troftbrugen, and Adam's brother Luke). On the Limited side of the coin, Patrick Kelley and I maintained a running comedy of errors, each giving the lead to the other until we eventually succumbed to Adam McIntosh. At one point Kelley became so frustrated with his inability to concentrate on aligning a new fiber-optic front sight that he whipped out a pair of pliers and RIPPED THE SIGHTS OFF THE GUN. Shooting a now-sightless Glock 34, Kelley says he had "a number of Zen master moments" on Zig Zag and other close-range stages, winning a stage and clawing his way up to second Limited. But Zen or no, it wasn't enough to beat McIntosh, who jovially ribbed Kelley and me about it that night over dinner at a local restaurant.

Prizes at the Eddy Brown are given away by lottery, but the big plaques with Eddy's picture on it went home with Sahlberg and McIntosh.

### SHOOTOFF

One of the things that makes the Eddy Brown stand out in my book has always been the shootoffs. The match management has followed different schemes, but there's always a big chunk of man-on-man excitement on Sunday morning following the main match.

This year the menu included shootoffs for Open, Limited, Auto Shotgun, and Pump Shotgun. If you shot all the divisions (as Kelley did) it was a boatload of shooting – including a knockoff of an old favorite man-on-man course, the "Pepsi Challenge." (The shooter must knock down a certain number of steel targets, then engage a can of soda on a stand at about 40 yards.) If you try this one at home, just remember to use club soda – flavored soft drinks attract wildlife, especially bees.

Sahlberg's crew experimented with



Mary Hutter overcame full-bore .40 recoil to finish well in Ladies' category. 9mm, anyone?

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**Respect Rimfire.** The big lesson of the Eddy Brown centered on rimfire. Lots of kids showed up to compete alongside their parents and a few rimfire specialists. Odds are rimfire will double the size of the match in 2009.

a new man-on-man elimination system that ended up producing some very strange results, but other than that, the match ran smoothly – doubly so when you consider it ran at 40 percent above its normal maximum capacity.

I spoke with several of the competitors afterward, including Kelley, who volunteered that even though he's a "shotgun guy," he'd prefer to leave the shotguns at home, keeping the match focused on pistol.

"It's just too much," he says.

Change is in the wind for the 2009 Eddy Brown, changes that will bring a lot more shooting opportunity. If Sahlberg opts to open Friday afternoon or Sunday morning for rimfire competition, the match will look much different (and be much bigger) than it did in 2008. Keep an eye on the Spokane Practical Pistol League website ([www.sppl.us](http://www.sppl.us)) for details.

Eddy's memory is indeed well-remembered in this part of Idaho. It's an honor to him, and to his long-standing friend Bill. See you there next year!



After watching him win in Idaho, I saw Mike Gallion again at the Steel Challenge. His unorthodox stance helps him overcome extremely poor vision. That's a carbon-fiber barrel on his race-tuned High Standard .22.

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