

# Washington's Steel Challenge



Mike Gibson of Mike Gibson Manufacturing tears into "Smoke and Hope" at the Washington State Steel Challenge Championship.

BY ROBIN TAYLOR, USPSA STAFF, TY-19724

Washington, Oregon, and northern Idaho have a history of steel target competitions. With the added visibility brought by USPSA's recent purchase of the Steel Challenge Shooting Association (SCSA), Northwest steel shooters are fired up, spinning off new matches, and looking forward to a first-of-its-kind Northwest



Travis Gibson waiting his turn to shoot. He would finish 13th overall.

Regional this fall. It's a Northwest microcosm of what SCSA is seeing nationwide — more activity, more organization, and lots more enthusiasm.

Patrick Kelley's Washington State Steel Challenge Championship is the first new match out of the gate for the Northwest crowd, drawing 64 competitors to Ephrata, Wash., (home of Carl Carbon's Multi-Gun matches).

I've shot steel in the Northwest for a while, faithfully attending the Eddy Brown Memorial Metal Match in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, almost every year since its inception in 2001. Looking at the crowd, I could see the state title had raised the competitive bar, bringing in the formidable Chuck Anderson, plus Carl Carbon, Tom Kettells, Joe DeSimone, and a host of other well-known local shots, including Pat Kelley himself (2007 Eddy Brown champ), packing a custom-built Springfield 1911 in 9mm.

Kelley's match came about on short notice, taking advantage of a hole in the shooting calendar left by the cancelled Idaho USPSA Championship. Despite this, sponsors flocked to the Steel Challenge ban-

ner. MGM invested for the long term, donating all the steel for the match in exchange for three years of top billing as the match sponsor. Behind them Lone Wolf Distributing bought in big, providing 14 engraved trophy knives, and giving away a barrel and the complete Open-division Glock 22 upper featured in *Front Sight* a few issues back. This last went to the fastest Glock-shooting competitor on "Smoke and Hope" — which turned out to be Chuck Anderson, shooting an SJC Open Division G17.

Out of the blue, Glock bought in as well, sending a gift certificate for one of their pistols. Glock frequently sponsors USPSA and Steel Challenge events, but Kelley tells me this came as a happy shock, since he had not solicited Glock at all.

The total value of this unplanned

## The Victors:

- |                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Chuck Anderson (Open)        | 113.49 |
| 2. Scott LeRoux (Open)          | 116.48 |
| 3. Robin Taylor (Limited)       | 120.39 |
| 4. Everett Mastrich (Open, Sr.) | 120.97 |
| 5. Carl Carbon (Limited)        | 121.31 |
| 6. James Austin (Limited, Revo) | 121.44 |

prize table was never calculated, but with a gun, an upper, a comped barrel, several custom knives, and dozens of smaller prizes all going out to a crowd of just 64 people, the pickings were good.

### **MATCH DAY:**

Kelley had e-mailed all the competitors a week in advance, warning them to expect unusually hot weather. Sure enough, May 17 dawned clear, climbing into the mid-90s and creating snowmelt-driven flooding in the mountain passes and rivers. Thankfully, the match was prepared with shade tents and water available on every stage. Eastern Washington exists as a farming region thanks to irrigation supplied by the Columbia River. Without it, the land is dotted with sagebrush and tumbleweeds – think Arizona, only not as hot. The host club put out a free lunch for the competitors and guests (make-it-yourself cold cut sandwiches, fried chicken, potato salad, cookies, and more), so as everyone finished their fourth stage, they trickled back into the air-conditioned clubhouse to eat and socialize.

In order to complete the match in one day, Kelley opted to offer only two divisions: Open and Limited. Special recognition was given to revolver shooters (roughly 15 percent used revolvers), plus awards were offered for the top lady, junior, senior, and first and second law enforcement. That last was particularly welcome news to the eight-man squad of officers who opted to shoot the match in full duty gear, retention holsters and all!

Out on the stages, the “pressure” of this being a by-the-book State Championships seemed to take a toll. Kelley told me shooters were taking themselves very seriously, pushing to save every tenth, and often losing whole seconds as a result. Adding the heat and glare turned this into a contest of control, not speed.

Chuck Anderson and Everett Mastrich came north from Oregon, looking to compete and gather ideas for the aforementioned Northwest regional

planned for their range (Albany, Ore.) Sept. 26-28.

“There’s a lot of good shooters here,” said Anderson. “We wanted to support Pat, and get a chance to do more steel shooting, now that USPSA owns it.”

Anderson would eventually come out on top, three seconds ahead of Scott LeRoux, with Mastrich taking fourth place overall. (Yours truly managed third overall and top Limited.)

I asked Mastrich about how he felt the match went.

“Overall it ran pretty well,” said Mastrich. “I’d say it’s a success.”

“I loved it,” beamed top revolver competitor James Austin. “Good match!”

Where Kelley’s event was a two-day, one-day affair for 60-plus, Mastrich’s regional will run for three days, include all the SCSA divisions, and run following an NSSF “First Shots” outreach. That’s a major step forward for

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Kelley’s match relied heavily on the talents of Karen Kelley and Susan Carbon, teamed with Carbons’ two daughters zooming out to get scorecards on their motorbikes. According to them, the large amount of typing (five scores per stage per person, happening much faster than a USPSA event) made doing stats much more difficult than a typical USPSA match. If you’re planning a similar event, allocate extra resources to stats to ease the burden in this critical area!

the normally low-profile Northwest steel set, and another indication of what’s happening in this corner of the world.

Kelley is already looking forward to next year, and talking about having a second, fall event, perhaps as a warm-up to the regional. If you’re looking to try your hand at Steel Challenge, I can’t think of a better way to get your feet wet. Keep an eye on the match calendar (page 78 and at [www.steelchallenge.com](http://www.steelchallenge.com)) and tell the Kelleys you heard about their match in *Front Sight!*





**targetbarn.com**  
Phone: 419-829-2242  
Fax: 419-829-2107

## Quality IPSC Targets

*And a whole lot more!*

- ♦ Range Timers, Chrono's & Accessories from **Competitive Edge Dynamics**
- ♦ Pocket Pro & Pocket Pro II Range Timers from **Competition Electronics**
- ♦ Rifle, Pistol, and Silhouette Police Targets from **National Target Company**
- ♦ Professional Range Bags, Brass Pouches, Pistol Sleeves from **Target Barn**
- ♦ Jacketed Bullets 9MM, 38 Super, 40 S&W, 45 from **Zero Bullet Company**

Visit our new website for monthly specials!  
[www.targetbarn.com](http://www.targetbarn.com)

**NOW IN STOCK**

GLOCK parts and accessories from many companies in stock for immediate delivery

Hi Capacity magazines, holsters, sights, grips, 3-1/2 # trigger connectors, frame plugs, magazine extensions, ext. slide releases, etc.

**Your full-line, full-time target supplier!**  
**Serving Shooters for 26 Years**

PO Box 352454, Toledo, Ohio 43635-2454  
We Accept MasterCard, VISA & COD