

OFTEN IN ERROR,  
NEVER IN DOUBT  
BY BRUCE BUCK

# THE SPRING SOUTHERN SIDE BY SIDE



Some sporting clays shoots are so good that they just keep you coming back for more. This was my 11th year attending Bill Kempfer's Spring Classic Southern Side by Side Exposition at Deep River Sporting Clays in Sanford, NC. His Deep River range has been open for 30 years and he has been holding this shoot for 20 years. Every year it seems that it can't get better, but it does. Attendance was certainly good with over 600 event entrants

and more than 2500 people coming through the gates to watch the shooting and check out the exhibitions.

The ideal shoot should really have two parts. First is well presented sporting clays targets on an attractively laid out course which shows imagination, but not perversity. Secondly is a plethora of gun vendors who will happily sell you a gun that may change your luck and help you shoot better. Considering the way I

shoot, I am particularly drawn to the latter. There is so much hope in new gear. Add to those two parts, the fact that this shoot and exhibition centers around the classic side-by-side shotgun and you have the complete package.

Most of us are all so used to shooting sporting clays with modern O/Us and autos that the idea of playing the game with antique side-by-sides is something new. How could old guns with funny barrels and an extra trigger ever shoot as well as the latest and greatest sporters? Well, let me tell you, in the right hands the old stuff

does just fine. You have to see it to believe it and the place to do that is certainly Deep River's Spring Classic.

And you can sure shoot as much as you want to. Over the April 25th – 28th Thursday through Sunday event you could shoot in events for pump guns, muzzle loaders, black powder, Parker vs L. C. Smith, Griffin & Howe small gauge 16, 20, 28, 410 contests, Wingshooting Adventures 10 gauge, Robin Hollow Outfitters 24 gauge, Sturm Ruger 32 gauge, Connecticut Shotguns 10, 12, 16, 20, 28, 410 and



GAUGE-SPECIFIC STATIONS



MANY LADIES ENTERED

finally the Atkins, Grant and Lang any gauge main championship. There were 36 separate events in all.

If you want to play everything, you'll need a few guns. A pump gun, muzzle loader, black powder, and SxSs in 10, 12, 16, 20, 28, 24, 32 and 410 gauges. Plus, most competitions had different classes for hammer and hammerless guns, so you can just about double your requirements. You should be able to cover all the bases with just under 20 guns. Of course, no one actually has all those guns or shoots all the events, but you get the idea. This is just the place for that 32 gauge hammer gun you have over the mantelpiece. Of course, not all the SxS guns used

were old or odd. There were plenty of modern ones too. If it had the barrels set up the "right way", you could shoot it in an event.

For the shoot, Deep River used a woodsy sporting course and a couple of compak fields. The sporting course was in a convenient large loop. Stations were generally divided between the larger gauges where longer birds were thrown and the smaller ones where the targets were a bit closer. Kempffer said that the woods course was set by Tim Parker and that the goal was to keep the targets "birdy". I'll say this for them, not too many of those birds went straight. Everything seemed to hook, curve, plunge or soar. Not only was it

challenging, but it was immensely entertaining. The idea behind this shoot was to have fun and they sure gave you the chance to do just that. It was priced fairly too. The typical preliminary event ran 48 birds at a cost of \$55 per event, while the main event was 80 targets for a \$80.

The compak sporting targets were generally longer and were used for the shoot-offs. Rick Hemmingway set those, and he certainly knows what he is doing. He runs the Back Woods Quail Club in Georgetown, SC where the fall version of the Southern Side-by-Side is held every year.

One of the most popular shoots is the duel between Parker gun owners and those who shoot the L. C. Smiths. They have matches in both hammer gun and hammerless. Spectators really crowded around the compak fields to watch these guys duke it out. This time, the Parker gunners emerged victorious in the hammerless gun contest, but the L. C. Smith shooters won the hammer gun contest. The Atkins, Grant & Lang Main Event was shot on Sunday and was well attended with over 100 entrants.

It certainly wasn't all about shooting. There was a lot of socializing. Shoots like this give

you the chance to track down a lot of your old shooting friends that you don't get to see very often. Friday night there was a cocktail party with heavy hors d'oeuvres for all the exhibitors. During the shooting days, Deep River served home-cooked luncheons and also had several food vendors' catering trucks for those who wanted to try something else. You certainly didn't run out of chow. Saturday night was a giant pig roast for everyone. They had a country band playing which made that barbecued porker taste all the better. Before the shooting started Sunday morning there was a most



MORRIS BAKER'S WINCHESTER 1901 10 GAUGE



SCOTT MCGHEE, KNIFE MAKER



PURDEYS ALL IN A ROW

shotguns, just waiting for you to put your fingerprints all over them. Prices ranged from modest to stratospheric. I saw a large number of British, Continental and American high-end guns, some into the six figures. Let me see... buy a gun or buy a house.

You could also watch engravers at work, buy shooting clothing or shooting related jewelry, check out the latest gun books and magazines, buy hunting paintings or sign up for wingshooting trips. And with so many gun vendors there, you could get your own gun appraised or your new gun fitted.

welcome service on the Deep River grounds by the Reverend Charlie Brooks from Winchester Wesleyan Church.

And then there were the exhibitors. There were four huge tents full of 70 businesses ready and able to provide you with just about anything shotgun-related. Although the emphasis of the gun dealers was on side-by-sides, there were certainly plenty of O/Us, autos and pumps to keep even the most jaded gungel content. The new Longthornes from England were particularly interesting with their O/U barrels and ribs being machined together entirely from a single piece of steel. There were thousands and thousands of

But I had a mission. A year or two ago, I was talked out of my last SxS and desperately needed a replacement. The gun would be used for some quail hunting, but more for fun sporting clays and matches such as this one. I wanted, no, needed, a 30" 28 gauge SxS. The barrel length would give me a little bit of stability up front, while the gauge would garner me some sympathy from those who don't know just how efficient a 28 is. When I hit something, I'd be a hero. When I missed, I'd rate condolences. Couldn't lose.

Finding one was a challenge. Long 28 gauge SxSs aren't all that common. I also wanted a modern gun as, with sporting targets



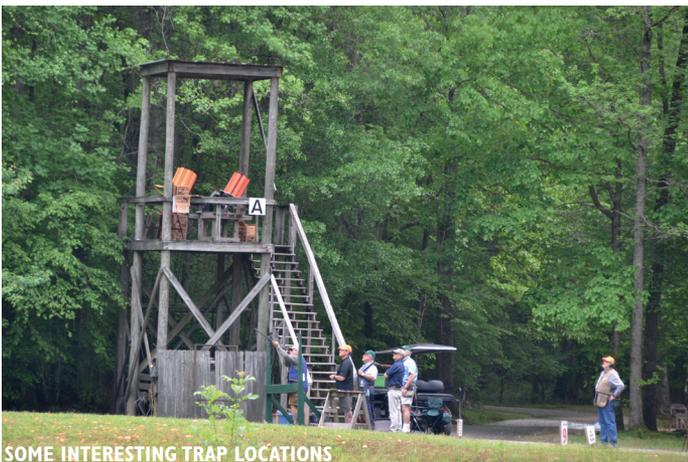
PRICEY PURDEY

involved, I was going to shoot the heck out of it. Unlike my betters, I'm not a collector. I'm a shooter. Something newish from Italy or Turkey might just fill the bill. With racks and racks of guns to work through, it is almost a matter of luck to find what I was looking for. But I did. It was a lightly used Turkish Dickinson Plantation grade 30" 28 gauge double trigger English stocked SxS which felt great when I waved it around and the price was in my range. The nice thing about buying a used gun is that you can shoot it before you buy it. And Deep River had just such a modest two trap test area where I could give it a try. It shot where I looked, so I wrote the

check. Since I'll shoot it far more at sporting than I ever will at quail, and since this model is still in production, if there is enough interest it might make a good review down the road.

Next year Deep River will again hold the Spring Southern SxS Classic. If you see a guy with a 28 gauge in one hand and a camera and voice recorder in the other, say hello to the Technoid. See you there. That's all for now. Boots off. Beer open. Put those boots down side by side. ■

*Got a question or a comment?  
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SOME INTERESTING TRAP LOCATIONS



WOODY ALLEY SHOT