

# The MGM IRONMAN 3-Gun Match

By Col. Mark T. ("Two-Gun") Lisi

There are many shooting events to choose from over the course of the summer. There are state, regional, and national events that most shooters can register for and participate in. Last spring, while running the list of events inside an eight-hour-drive circle, I noted that the entry fees were beginning to exceed my ability to pay without talking to my sponsor (wife). One of the matches I eliminated was the MGM Ironman in Parma, Idaho. As luck would have it, MGM made a net call for Range Officers and my wife and I attended this shoot as worker bees. I figured that way I could check out the Ironman before shooting it.

The MGM Ironman is the baby of Mike Gibson Manufacturing in Caldwell, Idaho. As it happens, Mike Gibson Manufacturing is in the steel-target business, and the company business dovetails nicely into a 3-gun match.

This is no ordinary 3-gun event, nor is it for the faint of heart. This bad boy is all about round count and the use of all three guns in each and every stage.

The 2006 Ironman had a minimum round count of 1150 rounds in 10 shooting bays. Tennille, the Match Coordinator, reports having expended 471 pistol rounds, 453 rifle rounds, 65 slugs, 16 rounds of buckshot and 348 shotgun shells. If round count is not your thing, perhaps trigger time is: the match winner posted 36 minutes of aggregated trigger time, while the last-place finisher amassed 2 hours, 54 minutes and 30 seconds of scoreable time in the bays. THAT's getting your money's worth out of your entry fee.

The Ironman is not sanctioned by anyone other than Mike Gibson Manufacturing and MGM establishes the rules. There's considerable flexibility in bay design, rules and scoring, so it pays to pay attention. It can safely be said that few shooters will be exposed to 3-gun stages that are as exciting as the stages at the MGM. There were two stages that required the shooter to be mounted (in a pickup truck and a golf cart); a stage that had not one, but two, submachine guns (courtesy of Cavalry Arms); and a stage that required the shooter to engage 500-yard targets from a tower. Frankly, I didn't have time to visit all the stages; this shoot is all business and shooter throughput was the order of the day. The first rounds WERE downrange at

0730 and bays were often open until after 8:00 pm. Frankly, I fear that if I'd shot the staff match, I wouldn't have had the gas to perform as an RO. Weakness, perhaps, but you have know your limits...working this match was very hard work.

I drew Stage 8, "Bullets by the Mile." My reaction upon reading the stage description and looking at the bay diagram was, "I'm not smart enough to do this!" This course-of-fire takes place in a circular bay, with the shooter and RO mounted in the bed of pickup truck. The shooter has a cage that is similar to a turret, while the RO revolves around the shooter. Hmmm...a revolving 180 with three gun changes in a moving truck: this was going to be fun for the shooter and a nightmare for the RO. Entering the bay first with the shotgun (50 rounds) there were steel and clay targets inside the bay and on the outside bay walls. The second pass was

with the pistol (56 rounds). The pistol targets were identified as such and mixed in with shotgun targets. The third pass called for a transition to the rifle (48 rounds) and 10 paper targets at about 1 o'clock, then depart the bay to higher ground

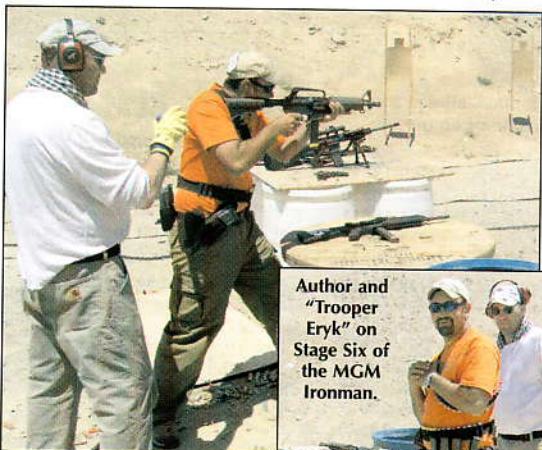
where more rifle targets (nine steel poppers/flash targets and a running paper target) had to be engaged in a stated sequence. Yes shooters, it was that complex. Alas, the running target went down and the stage was eliminated on the first day after three squads had completed it.

I wasn't off the work hook yet. I was reassigned to Stage 6, "Betcha

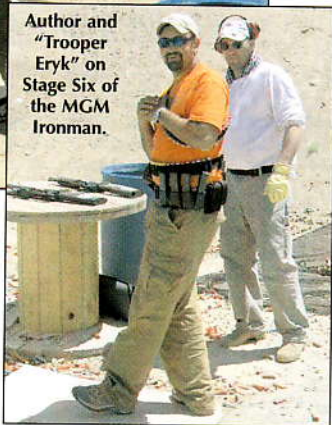
Didn't Practice This, Either." This stage was set up in a narrow bay about 70 yards deep. There were eight silhouette targets arrayed down the left side and six more at the end (70 yards downrange) of the bay with only the "upper facial panel" (Did I get the PC lingo right here?) for score, two 70-yard slug targets, three plate racks between 12 and 35 yards, a spinner at about 12 yards and the final silhouette at about five yards.

Stage directions were as follows: Shooters start in box A with all guns (9mm SMG, 32 rounds; .45 SMG, 30 rounds; pistol, 20 rounds; rifle, 28 rounds; and shotgun, 4 slugs, 20 shot loads) loaded and placed on the table. At the start signal,

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Author and "Trooper Eryk" on Stage Six of the MGM Ironman.



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with the 9mm SMG, shoot the plate rack and empty the magazine into Target One; with the .45 SMG, make the spinner rotate; shoot all steel targets with the pistol; shoot all paper rifle targets with the rifle; and engage the paper shotgun targets with slugs, shoot all steel targets with shot loads, and get one rotation out of the spinner.

It was a busy stage.

Of interest on this stage was the third plate rack. It was placed about 35 yards from Box A and was a profound shooting challenge for most shooters. It also gave most shotguns with Cylinder or Improved Cylinder chokes and 7.5 shot a difficult time. Most successful shooters had tighter chokes and coarser shot. Double-ought buckshot worked very well on the long plates.

The MGM Ironman is one of the few matches where shooters can compete in the "Trooper" Class. Boys and girls, this is not for the weak in body or spirit. This is an old-school, hard-way shooter classification. I don't know that I even fully understand all of the Trooper Class rules, but they revolve around carrying lots of weight. Cavalry Arms sponsored the Trooper Class and fielded a team of troopers, and Task Force Gibson (MGM) also shot in the Trooper Class.

Troopers must carry all weapons and ammunition from the start point to each shooting bay. Guns and ammo are in addition to a prescribed

fighting load (food, water, tools, first-aid supplies, etc.) in a 40-pound pack. Troopers must be completely self sufficient; that is to say they must carry everything required to shoot the entire match, because once the shooting starts, if a Trooper does not have a particular item, it can't be used. I watched Mike Gibson unsuccessfully grub for a discarded slug on Stage 6.

If you feel the need to test your mettle, then sign up to shoot Trooper Class at the MGM next year. As I recall, the Trooper-Class winner received a Springfield Armory M1A as a trophy. This class redefines the term "Heavy Metal."

Caveat! As you consider your need to tackle the Ironman, you need to be aware of Task Force Montana. Given the proximity of Montana to Idaho, there was an entire squad of shooters from the Big Sky. The boys and girls from the Big Sky can shoot, too! Pull your hat down tight at the Ironman.

This is the mother of all 3-gun shoots. I'll shoot it next year. I'm sort of an old-school shooter and think that the Heavy Metal Class with iron sights will work for me. However, I fear that I'm past my wear-a-helmet-and-carry-a-heavy-load-on-my-back period. As I recall, it wasn't that much fun when I HAD to do it. If you like 3-gun and a high round count, this is the match for you. Well-done, MGM!