

EVENT REPORT: EUROPEAN RIMFIRE BENCHREST CHAMPIONSHIPS



UK Benchresters ventured to Italy for sun, shooting and some surprising successes. **CARL BOSWELL** reports from the Lapua European Rimfire Benchrest Championships

WHEN IN MILAN...

THE SUN had beaten down, the mosquitoes bitten and the wind rushed on the shooting line; the 2007 Euro Rimfire Benchrest Championships were over and I can safely say that we all had a good time. The venue was TSN Milano in Italy and the country was in the middle of a heat wave. My thanks to the club, its president and Carlo Caricato for organising the event and being such gracious and helpful hosts. An event like this takes a lot of time, effort and money, and we need to say a special thanks to Lapua for sponsoring test ammunition for shooters. Lastly, but by no means least, may I say a big thanks to all of the countries that sent competitors. We had around 90 shooters from across Europe, including Poland, Belgium, UK, Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic and Germany.

The UK team, which comprised eight adults and two juniors, did well, picking up a number of medals for first juniors and first ladies, with two bronzes in the adult section and team silver in the 10.5lb section. The UK team members were: Jim Andrews, (myself), Roman Boswell (Junior), Andy Dubreuil, Brian Kelly, Debbie Perkins, Christine Stockham (Junior), Ken Stockham, Kirsten Tulloch and Rich Williams. Italy did well on home ground, picking up most of the gold medals as they are excellent shots and have rimfire benchrest sussed out. We are years behind them in terms of equipment, resources, training and sponsorship. The Czech team also did exceptionally well as, like the UK, they are relatively new to rimfire benchrest, managing to pick up two silver medals in the individual and a bronze in the team awards.

The equipment was second to none as there were many customised rifles, rests and equipment. I even saw an Anschütz rifle with a six o'clock firing pin that worked, which was exciting. I hope to have more on this in a later article.

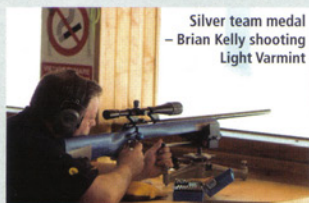
Most of the highly-customised equipment was of Italian manufacture, as they have been doing rimfire benchrest since the 1970s. I managed to do a few interviews while I was in Milan. There is a

The UK team did themselves proud



great deal of history behind this sport in Italy and seeing is really believing. Further pictures of the event can be found on the UKBR22 website in the gallery section – www.benchrest22.org

The venue was amazing and TSN Milano has really got an excellent facility. The range we were at had 78 lanes for 50m shooting. This extended to about the same for air and rimfire pistol and again for full bore pistol – this is where the local police train as well. We have come a long way in this sport and this event is the pinnacle of the success we have had in Europe; shooting in a number of international events in posts and head-to-head events.



Silver team medal – Brian Kelly shooting Light Varmint

Pat Phelps, the founding member of the UKBR22, would agree that this growth has been rapid and sometimes faster than we can keep pace with.

As with the 2006 UK Championships, the wind was not kind to us over the four days and everyone's scores suffered. The wind moved all over the place, twitching in every direction within the blink of an eye. Sudden gusts must have been between 9-11mph, enough to move the bullet several rings from where intended. Every team said the same thing on the two practice days, and I was told afterwards that Milan is a one of the more difficult ranges to shoot at in Italy. Are these excuses? Not really, as we were all in the same conditions and the experience probably made us better shooters. All events, bar the Air Rifle Unlimited B class, were shot at a distance of 50m using the standard UKBR22 target. This is a standard size within Europe, Australia and parts of the USA, as the ring sizes on the diagram are the same (although target design may be different). The Air Rifle benchrest was shot at 25yd using the standard UKBR22 design for that distance. In terms of medals, the UK

achieved bronze in the Light Varmint (10.5lb) section and the Unlimited section. The latter match scores also contribute to the World Postal, which I will report on once all other parts of the world have finished their matches.

Despite the wind, we managed to pull off some good results, with awards that followed. The junior team did well with Roman and Christine getting a few junior titles and Christine team silver in the adult section with Brian Kelly, Kirsten Tulloch and myself in reserve. Kirsten Tulloch and Debbie Perkins also achieved golds in the 10.5lb and Unlimited classes for first ladies. We would like more women and juniors shooting rimfire benchrest and the World Championships will hopefully see this.

2008 World Championships

One thing we are looking for at the moment is members and potential members to make up teams for the World Championships in July 2008 (the proposed venue is Pisa). We hope to take a UK team of at least three that can shoot in the Air Rifle BR and at least three that can shoot International Sporter sections, as well as the teams we already have for the 10.5lb and unlimited sections. So have a think about this, as there are members and potential members out there that are good enough. Now is the time to start planning and with this in mind we do need to seek further sponsorship for our UK team, in relationship to equipment, training and possibly travel costs for the event next year. We would like to thank Eley for sponsoring the T-shirts this year, but we will need more, as one T-shirt for three hot days was not conducive to the health of those around us. One thing I found surprising was the number of teams that had excellent sponsorship in place, as most countries support their shooters quite substantially in an event like this.

The World Championships will see many European countries represented, but also teams from the USA, Australia, South Africa and possibly a contingent from Russia. For full details of the rules, weight classes, equipment and details of the postal league summer and winter seasons, you can go to the UKBR22 website and/or email us via the contacts area of the website www.benchrest22.org



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