

The 200 Yard Muzzleloading Cross-stick Match

by Mike Evock

I really enjoy shooting cross-stick matches. They are probably my favorite category of competitive shooting. On my first visit to the Nationals in 1979, I shot a 50-4X on the Jim Bridger match. Doc Arnold was the first person I saw after I shot it (Doc was a regular shooter at Liberty Township Muzzleloaders in Pennsylvania). I was bubbling with excitement when I told him. Doc smiled and said, "That's pretty good. You just might place with that score." When I left later in the week there were four 50-4X's. I ended up with a third place, but I was pretty tickled with that Blackinton third place medal.

This story culminates 32 years and a lot of cross-stick matches later at the Blue Mountain Muzzleloading Club in Shartlesville, Pennsylvania. They have a 200 yard cross-stick match every August. It is 14 pound limit, any metallic sights, round ball, reentry match. The August shoot lasts for two days, so there is ample time to shoot as many cards as you want.

I entered this match in 2007 because I had all my other matches finished and still had time on the last day of the shoot. I did not do well. I was using my Tennessee flintlock that a friend of mine built it for me in back 1979. It's a .45 cal. with a 40" Douglas barrel with fixed open sights. I use 60 grains of 3F powder, Teflon patching cut at the muzzle and a .454 round ball. It has a Doc Haddaway lock (I'm always looking for Haddaway locks and parts by the way).

When I shot the match, I picked a spot about 4'(+/-) over the bull and touched her off. The wind at 200 yards is a real thrill. I think I shot in the high teens or the low twenties. So during the next year I experimented at my buddies' range (Dave & Oscar Moore). I came up with this little trick. I really got this idea back in the 1960's from reading about Elmer Keith shooting the .45 cal. Colt pistols at long ranges. My hold at 200 yards goes like this:

1. Line the top of the back sight on the bottom of the front sight where the front sight meets the barrel. This is the variable; you might have to place it higher or lower.



2. Put the top of the front sight on the spot you want to hit.

Simple. I have shot in the mid 40's with this trick.

Anyway, in 2008 I shot a not-so-good score (low 40's) and went on to other matches. Then I saw the prize put up by Uncle Lee, who sponsored the match. Besides the trophy with the cast bronze buffalo and the Blackinton medals, each place got Volume 1 of *The Buffalo Hunters Encyclopedia*. I re-entered. I don't know how many times I re-entered, but I eventually shot a 44 and took third place. I read the *Buffalo Encyclopedia* from cover to cover.

In 2009 the prize was another book. It looked pretty good, so still using my Tennessee flintlock, I re-entered 4 times or so and once again took third place with about the same score.

In 2010 I got serious and built an under hammer rifle. There is a story here in that John Arrowood and I were loading and talking two years before about light bench rifles. I said I would love to find an inch and an eighth Douglas barrel in .45 cal. John, rather nonchalantly said, "I have one - never been fired." Problem was, he didn't want to sell for cash but would trade. Alas, I had nothing to trade. The next

year we were at the loading bench and John and another shooter I really didn't know were talking about a nice curly ash plank. The fellow wanted a hundred bucks for the plank. John said he was cash poor at that point in time. Faster than lickity split I asked John if he would trade the ash plank for the inch and an eighth Douglas and he said, "Sure." Luckily I had the money stashed in my wallet and bought the plank sight unseen. The next day the other fellow brought the plank, John brought the barrel and the trade was made.

Now back to 2010. I bought an under hammer action from Muzzleloader Builder's Supply, got to work and built the rifle. It weighs 13.5 pounds. I had adjustable open sights on it that year. I used 90 grains of 3F powder, Teflon patching (made by John Arrowood) cut at the muzzle and a .454 cal. round ball. On my second target I shot a 46. I had a 10 and a 9 at one o'clock that looked like a figure 8. Then I shot a 10 and a 9 at 3 o'clock that looked like a figure 8. Then I shot an 8 at 4 o'clock just to give the other guys a chance. I was in first place until the next to the last relay on Sunday afternoon when Mel Hartranft shot a 46 with a tighter

8 (Mel holds the record in the 200 yard cross-stick with 49-2X). I had one more relay but managed to throw my third shot, so I finished in second place. Still I was pretty happy with that.

Finally in 2011, I shot my bench and other cross-stick matches on Saturday and started the 200 yard cross-stick match Sunday morning. I had a Redfield Olympic front sight and a Redfield Olympic back sight on the rifle. Well about 11:00 a.m. I shot a nice 46-1X and was in first place. So I re-entered two more times and hung the targets just in

case anybody shot a better score. I didn't bother putting up a sighter. Well late in the day, Randy Kuhns had a good target going with 3 shots in it. So I fired up that under hammer. The first shot was a 10, but the second was a 6, so that card was done. I thought, "Well, I'll shoot the other card and see what happens."

John Arrowood was sitting behind me at a really good spotting scope. I loaded, sat down, checked the wind, sighted with both eyes open and touched her off.

John said, rather nonchalantly, "Don't look. You're alright."

So I loaded, sat down, both eyes open, the wind's good, sights good, bang.

John said, rather unconcernedly, "Don't look. You're still alright."

I thought, "OK, what the heck."

After the third shot, John said, with a little thought, "You're still OK."

I didn't even ask about the 4th and 5th shots. To this day, I have no idea in what order I shot them, but there were two X's, one 10 and two 9's. I shot a 48-2X. That took first place. I couldn't get my hat on for two days!

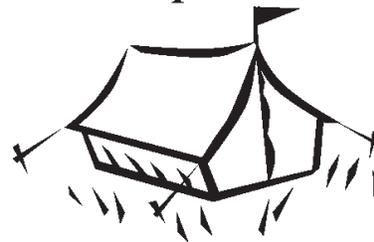
If you haven't ever shot a cross-stick match give it a try. You just might get the bug like I did! **MB**



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