



NRA
SPORTS



SSAA leads Aussie charge at **Bianchi 2006**

by Gary Fleetwood

US law enforcement officer Bruce Piatt is the new NRA Bianchi Cup winner for 2006, having succeeded in wresting the crown from long time champion Doug Koenig. Bruce showed early on at the practice range that 2006 may be his year, and with a lot of support from spectators and fellow competitors, he made it to the winner's podium by the end of the match.

The 2006 competition was held at the lush facility of the Green Valley Rifle and Pistol Club, with able assistance from a dedicated group of professional volunteers, range officers and NRA staff.

The SSAA Australian Pistol Team consisted of Victorian Tom Whitehead and two New South Wales Action Match identities Craig Ginger and Alan Harriman, both from the Blacktown Pistol Club. Tom Whitehead consolidated his impressive record of handgun competition results with an outstanding performance that not only gave him several personal awards, but assisted the SSAA team to a great result for Bianchi 2006. Using a Smith & Wesson Model 686 with a Tasco PDP3 sight, the veteran Australian succeeded in winning Top Revolver, coming second in the International Competitor Award and first Master in Open Class. Tom's S&W 686 was customised by Peter Muscat, and when combined with the Hellweg 2631 open-front competition holster and a vast pool of competition experience, the results were a bonus for the SSAA in what is the toughest handgun match in the world.

"The hardest stage was at 15m on the



The 2006 Bianchi Cup Champion Bruce Piatt (left) with the SSAA Action Match team, Tom Whitehead, Craig Ginger and Alan Harriman.

moving target. I had great difficulty in overcoming the mental distractions that were playing in my head," Tom said after the match. "I find the event quite draining in that there is no room at all for error, and with the high standard set by most international competitors, the pressure is on to get it right first time."

Most competitors fought against both the fatigue brought on by warm days with a high humidity and a high pollen level, which contributed to making their presence on the range at times somewhat miserable.

Well-known NSW shooter Craig Ginger

was pleased with a consistent effort throughout the four stages of the competition. Craig's 9mm STI performed flawlessly using a diet of factory ammunition. "I have tried factory ammo this year and the results leading up to Bianchi convinced me to give it a go at this event. I was satisfied with my results and was delighted that the SSAA team did so well, and I look forward to the World Titles in Sydney later this year."

Alan Harriman was not happy with his results on the mover, and at all distances on this difficult stage found problems with concentration due to a severe throat infec-



Alan Harriman tackles the unforgiving plates ending with a score of 47 from a possible 48.



Craig Ginger on the Barricade event. There was a lot of media interest in the Australian competitors.



tion that eventually saw him being taken to a local hospital for a check-up. "It was the worst I have felt in all the years I have been shooting, and, as luck would have it, the illness came along right in the middle of the world's most prestigious handgun event. My STI in .38 Super performed well this year and I was satisfied that my reloads are meet-

Minister for Justice and Customs Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison wishes the SSAA Australian Pistol Team good luck for Bianchi 2006.

ing my expectations."

The presentation evening was well attended, and in the usual NRA professional manner, the vast array of prizes, trophies

and awards was disseminated among the winners and those that came close.

The support by industry is a highlight of this event and it continues to make Bianchi one of the events worth competing in. All Australian handgun owners can look towards Action Match as a means to involve themselves in international competition and the SSAA's commitment to international handgun competition grows stronger each year.

Thanks to our sponsor Grycol International and Smith & Wesson. ●

For a free SSAA DVD of the 2006 NRA Bianchi Cup email bianchi@ssaa.org.au with your postal address.

Team event

SSAA Team

1st Civilian category
3rd place in Teams outright

Tom Whitehead

1st Master in Open Class
1st High revolver
2nd International Award

The full results can be found at www.nrahq.org/compete/nationalchampion.asp