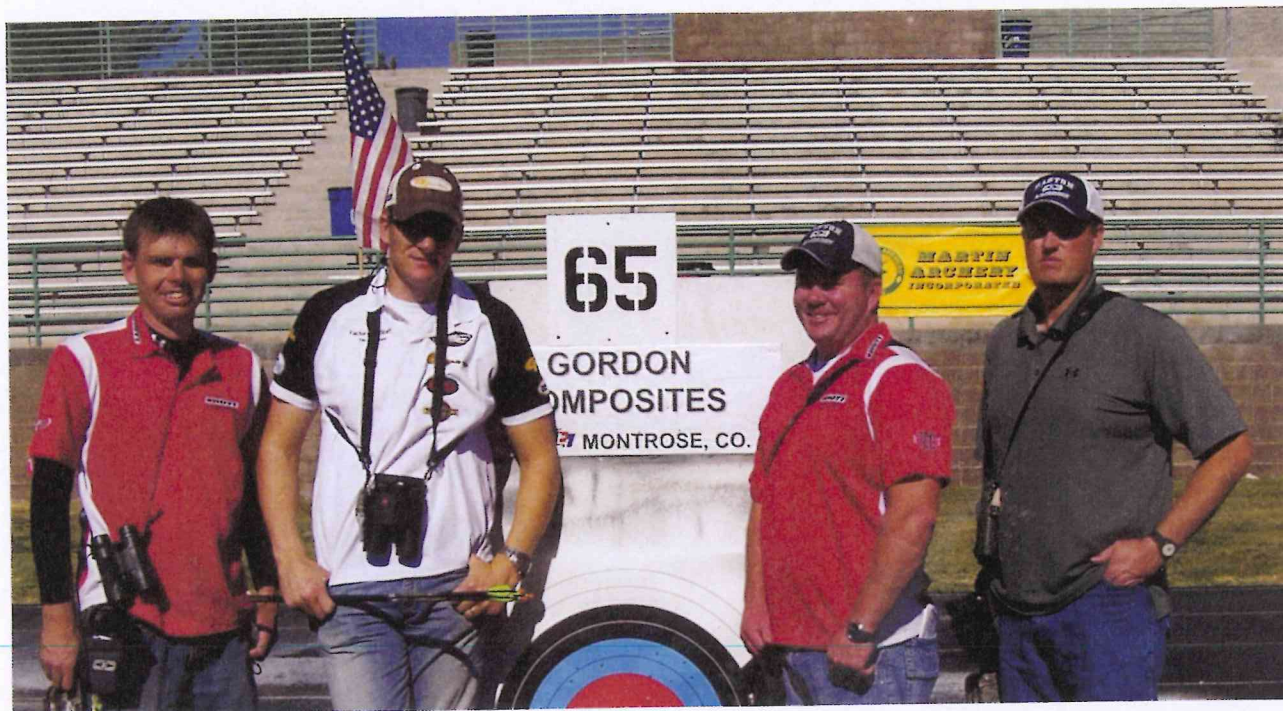


# “AND LET THE GAMES BEGIN!”

## The Big Sky Open – Mesquite

By Tootie Brabec



Top Freestyle Men

What do you remember best about Mesquite, Nevada? Games, lots of games inside and out, but a good deal of sports are played there as well and if you are a target archer, you have to think Big Sky Open!

The fourth annual Big Sky in Mesquite brought yet another merry-go-round of shooting locations in which the city of Mesquite is infamous. This time, (after a last-minute change – again!) the event was held on the football field of the Virgin Valley High School.

Most memorable was the first event in 2006 when the archers shot in beautiful, calm 85-degree weather. Second most memorable was last year when the wind was so strong it practically knocked the archers off their feet. Not fun by a long shot! But this year goes back to the first. The archers who came to Mesquite out of the cold and snow had a great time basking in the calm 89-degree weather, the games Mesquite has to offer and to just enjoy shooting. Getting to see old friends (such as Marion DeBusk, Martin Archery Rep and retired Hoyt Rep, Jack Head) was a bonus. It was already a great weekend!

For a second time, the tournament was held over Halloween. The archers were in full spirit of the timing by turning out somewhat in costume to signify their enthusiasm in shooting and the fun of “looking scary”!

Friday is the day set aside for the annual “GoForIt” Clay pigeon shoot. Last

year, we were ready to give this up, but the archers didn’t want this event to go away. After some deliberation, we decided to keep one day for the “GoForIt” and then added another event to further prove their skills and hopefully add some excitement!

The “GoForIt” gives the archers an opportunity to acclimate and warm-up for the regular competition beginning Saturday morning. The clay pigeons are definitely a favorite with the participants and is no longer an intimidation factor as they once were. Records verify this fact. Don Snipes and Tony Harbaugh shot high enough to win the Championship category. Three Colorado guys won the Flights: Tony Mansfield, Kevin Lane and Scott Meineke, respectively. Unfortunately, perfect scores were not attainable, so no Club50Pins were awarded. Darn!!

The colored targets are enticing. It isn’t only the art of shooting archery, but the setup as well. Looking over the field of staggered targets in V-Formation, there is a sense of welcome home to competitors and spectators alike. The tapestry of archers in one place where onlookers can watch the competition and enjoy the excitement of this sport is undefined. Those wearing T-shirts embossed with “THIS IS LIVIN” say it all.

Mesquite is a sleepy town, so when the whistle blows for the competition to begin, it doesn’t pierce the air until 9 am. No one is in a hurry; Saturday is a day of shootin’. So after 20 ends on the colored

targets, those who shot best were labeled the leaders. On the board, it showed Reo Wilde/ID, Jamie VanNatta/OH, Bob Carroll/AZ, Don Snipes/NV, Matt Bassett/ID, and Debbie Krienke/NV had earned their spots in the Championship Divisions. Some by a few points, others by a bunch. Ownership of their respective divisions was Lana Lynde/ND and Tammy Bredy/NM. Leading the Sr. Flight Men was Bill Rucker/CO; Men’s Flight leader was Craig Christiansen/UT; Women’s Flight leader was Seneca Francis/UT. Sure, the first day was the first day, but envisioned was the second and could they hang in there to exceed their scores and be the final winners? Don’t fast forward just yet, is more to come!

Anticipation for the new scheduled round was reaching its peak for the coordinators of the Big Sky as they waited to introduce their version of a “Shoot-Down”. Sponsors who came together for the new event were Play Off’s Pizzeria, the Golden West Café & Casino (both Mesquite businesses) and Winners Choice Custom Bowstrings of Oregon, guaranteeing money for the overall winners.

The participating archers started out shooting clay pigeons from the 10-yard line and progressed in increments of five yards as the archers who failed to hit the clays eliminated themselves. First one to leave the competition was Lynn Walters in the Championship arena. By the time this division reached the 40-yard marker, five





**Classic Women's Competition**



**Flight Women's Competition**

more archers were eliminated. In the Flights, Mike Kiser was the first to go at 25 yards. Did pressure play a part in this? Donovan Campbell and Monte Clark survived the 25, but fell at 30. Four more archers played until 40 yards was their demise. In for a pinch, in for a pound, Lindsay Christensen and David Miller were pinched at the 45. After that six more archers bit the dust.

At this point, seven remained in the Flights. This is where five more eliminated themselves giving way to Benton Christensen and Kris Weaver who was the only woman left competing with the guys for the Flight money. The



**Men Freestyle Limited Championship Competitors**

50-yard line played out and in the Championship Division, three more archers failed to pass the test and were eliminated while the remaining three (Don Snipes, J.T. Taylor and Tim Gillingham) were definitely hanging in there for the purse!

Now was the time for the 55-yard line. Too soon, 55 yards ended the competition and left the spectators stunned!

Everyone had anticipated a long afternoon and was certain the standing archers would go to 80 yards and beyond in their quest to break the clay pigeons. Not so! Kris Weaver was really strong in breaking the clays, one shot at a

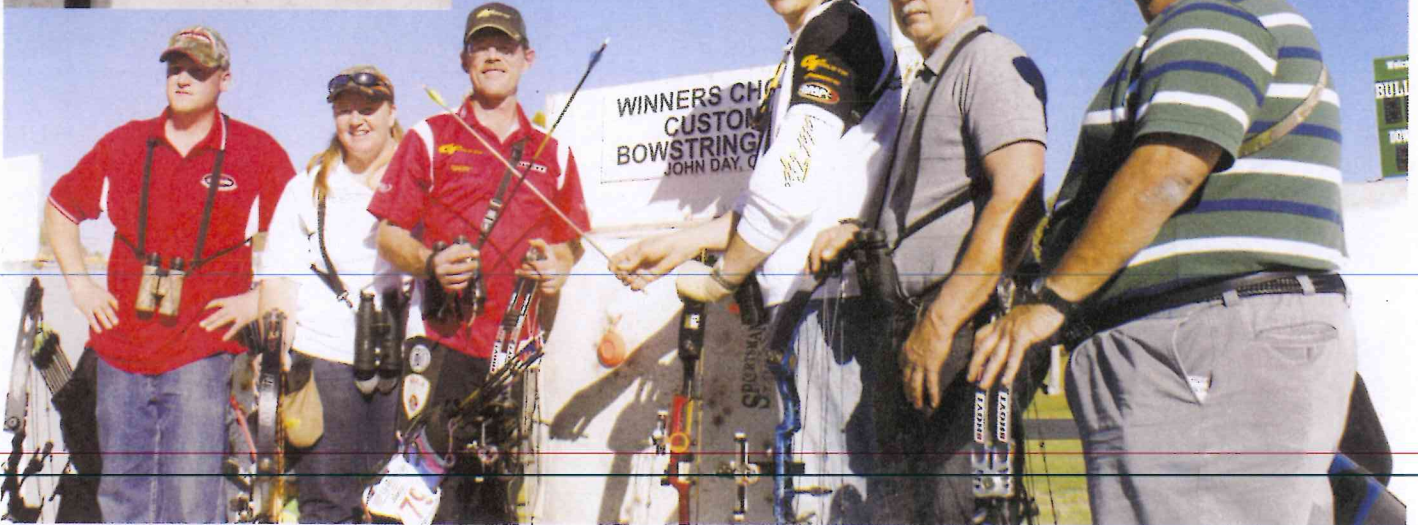


**Senior Men gather for a photo**





**"Shoot-Down" Winners of the Big Sky Open (l-r) LeRoy Brown, Kris Weaver, Benton Christensen (flights): Tim Gillingham, J.T. Taylor, Donald Snipes (championship) Photos by Mike McDonald**



time! Benton won a \$100 for 1<sup>st</sup>, while Lady Weaver claimed second. Good job, Kris! Every female watching was really rooting for you! LeRoy Brown, feeling a bit down over missing the 50 still managed to come in third.

In the Championship division, three were still embedded in the competition at the 55-yard line: Tim Gillingham, J.T. Taylor and Don Snipes. While Gillingham connected (and won a cool \$200), Snipes and Taylor missed leaving the two of them to have a shoot-off to determine placement. Taylor came in 2nd.

The "Shoot-Down" was definitely an exciting event. For those who watched and those who shot, the sound of breaking clays, up and down the line, was picture-proof of their skills to break any target the archers laid in their sights. Thanks to all who participated. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to the special sponsors for helping with this event.

Saturday evening, awards for the "GoForIt" and "Shoot-Down" was presented at Play Off's. The contest for best "Face Painting" went to Mike McDonald (our referee) who dressed as a scarecrow. While some thought he escaped from the Wizard Of Oz set, privately I thought he looked like my mother! Sorry, Mike! It was really great to see the children of the archers all dressed up in their Halloween costumes who came to Trick-or-Treat Mesquite. What a night!

Sunday, final round of competition brought a few upsets in several areas,

but Reo Wilde remained in first and won the Men's Championship. VanNatta owns the Big Sky Open in the Womens Championship Division; the title has been hers since the inception of the Mesquite Big Sky Open. Wilde and VanNatta both shoot for Hoyt. This was the first win at Mesquite for Reo as well as a first for Bob Carroll/AZ (MFSL) and Don Snipes/NV (MSr.FS). Gary Cowart/UT (MBHFS) came back to win after a two years, upsetting Matt Bassett's score from the previous day.

Three lovely ladies competed in the Womens Classic Division: Melanie DeBusk/WY, Debbie Krienke/NV and Lynn Walters/CO. Melanie settled down with her shooting and managed to overtake Debbie to win the title that had been Lynn's for a number of years. This was a back-to-back win for Melanie as she also won Grand Junction in June.

Jim Murdock/UT shot six points higher than Saturday's leader, Bill Rucker and won the Sr. Men's Flights. Men's Flight Winners were (Flt 1) Benton Christensen; (Flt 2) Tony Mansfield; (Flt 3) Scott Meineke. Seneca Francis won the Womens Flights.

Again, Congratulations to all the winners and a BIG thank you to our sponsors of this event: Hoyt/UT; Martin Archery/WA; Specialty Archery Products/IA; Sure-Loc Archery Products/IN; Jake's Archery/UT; Winners Choice Custom Bowstrings/OR; and US Archer Magazine/AZ. Also, thank you to our Bale Sponsors

for helping us with the tournament: Carter's Enterprises/ID; BCY/CT; Necaise & Son Masonry/Ut; Play Off's/NV; Golden West Restaurant & Casino/NV; Oasis Gun Club/NV; CasaBlanca Hotel & Casino/NV; Virgin River Hotel & Casino/NV, Los Cazadores Restaurant/NV. Thank you, Mesquite Lions Club for concessions and the Grand Mesa Bowmen, our signature club for the Big Sky Open.

If you are going to put on a tournament, you definitely want people who are skilled and seasoned in doing this. Thank you to all who helped put the Big Sky Open together: Referees McDonald and Mark Cell; Ann & Myron Peters; Jeff & Linda Cell; Bylna McDonald, Tony Mansfield, Mike Kiser and Randy Brabec.

The Cell brothers once held the title of "Archery Endurance" in the Guinness' World Book of records, but that is a whole other story! However, bringing in Mark to help Ref for the first time has encouraged him to break out his bow again!

While Wyomingites, Ted Walton and Mike Hoover basked in the sunshine for three days, they were particularly worried about their flight home from Vegas as Wyoming was basking in a very nice blizzard. They must have made it home okay, as nothing was heard from them and if they did not, Vegas just became richer from their layover. Ha!

See you next year in Mesquite! It will be in November, but date and location, as of this writing, is still undetermined. ©