

SPACE CITY CHALLENGE – 2001 by Penny Riggs (A32341) and Karl Rehn (A9640)

*“Houston, do you copy?”*

Houston: “Shooters are ready. Stand by. 10, 9, 8.... beep!”

*“Houston! Houston, we have.... an Armadillo!”*

In a galaxy far away, deep in the Texas South Section and a few light-milliseconds from NASA’s LB Johnson Space Center, a 2001 Space Oddity materialized. Intergalactic battles raged from stage to stage as 197 competitors took on aliens, death stars, robots and giant space armadillos. Earthlings delighted in a spectacular, warm, sunny weekend following an unusually cold, wet, spring that saw numerous rained-out matches.

Traditionally, the annual section championship is a popular event that fills up quickly, and this year was no exception. The Space Oddity was hosted by the Bay Area Practical Shooters at the PSC Shooting Club. As usual, this was a great match put on by shooters for shooters. Stage designs were selected from those submitted by competitors. Despite temporary range restrictions that hindered the match’s typical run-n-gun style, the use of creative props and procedures made even the simplest stages fun and challenging. Kudos to Rangemaster Bill Haggard, Match Director & Section Coordinator Debbie Peek, and Assistant Match Directors Tom Neal and David Peek for a job well done. Also, Charlie Card, Debbie Neal, Patti Leslie, and Tim Freeman worked hard in the Stat Shack and got results out in record time. Special thanks are due to Match Sponsors Brazos Custom Gunworks and Briley Manufacturing for their generosity.

Open match winner Rob Walsh sent the competition into the next solar system, defeating second place finisher, Army team shooter Max Michel Jr., by nearly 15 percent! Defending champion Adam Popplewell finished third in Open Class. Walsh started out “slowly,” placing second behind Popplewell and Steve Dennis on Stages 1 and 2, respectively. Stage 1 (Galaxy Quest) was sponsored by STI and featured ten IPSC targets partially hidden by multiple walls. Each galactic warrior-mechanic engaged targets after dropping a lug wrench from any contorted position he or she desired.

Stage 2, sponsored by KR Training, was a triumphant “Return to Space Station Alpha” for Open-Class Top Woman Renee Tyson as she scooted through the Cooper Airlock, somehow evading both aliens and penalties to engage 13 IPSC targets and 4 poppers hidden behind walls, barricades, and pesky no-shoots. The woman’s title went down to the wire as the lead changed hands five times during the eight-stage match. At the end of the first day, Tyson was ahead of Tonda Gilfillan by just over two match points, but Gilfillan came back strong on Stage 1 to take the lead again. Renee must have been inspired by the friendly aliens that set designer Mary Hartzell had scattered about the stage, as she finished 8<sup>th</sup> overall on the stage to win the match. Donna Selman finished as Top Woman in Limited Class.

Most shooters were happy to say “See Ya Later Darth Vader” on Reloading Equipment Specialists’ Stage Three, a 34-round course shot through five ports, two of which seemed to be just inches off the ground. On this stage, Rob Walsh took the lead for good in Open Class. Spectators suspected that Rob’s body had been overtaken by aliens as he blasted through the stage in 15.39 seconds. Adam Popplewell was faster at 15.08 but had 20 points in penalties. Amazingly, only three other competitors posted times below 20 seconds.

In Limited Class, Dick Burkhardt challenged defending Limited Champion Joe Boone. Boone led most of the way, but Burkhardt posed a threat, gaining match points on Boone at Stage 4 (The Death Star; sponsored by Clark Custom Guns). Inspired by bad science fiction movies, this stage had swingers, turners, no-shoots, US poppers, and Terry Ashton’s famous Texas Star. Burkhardt made a final push, winning Stage 5 (Houston we have an Armadillo). Designed & RO’d by Limited 10 match winner Jim Nelson, and sponsored by Tom’s Sporting Goods, Stage 5 began with the shooter placing a hand on a computer mouse while viewing prize coordinator Larry Harrison’s website. The timer was activated by the shooter, who then retrieved gun and magazines from desk drawer and engaged targets around one side of the computer, did a mandatory reload, then engaged remaining targets.

Stages 6 (Mission Improbable) and 7 (Mars Madness) were two speed shoots, set up side-by-side. Both featured 3 arrays of targets and 3 shooting positions, with mandatory reloads required as the shooter moved between positions. Mission Improbable, sponsored by Vandenberg Custom, had a waist-high barrel at each shooting position, and the barrels were far enough apart that shooters either had to stay in a low squat and duck-walk between barrels, or get up and down from kneeling to change positions. Match sponsor Bob Londrigan of Brazos Valley Gunworks won Stage 6. Mars Madness, sponsored by Leck's Guns, was deceptively simple. The shooter faced 9 partial targets in three arrays, standing behind a 3-step staircase. On the buzzer, draw and step up, shoot one array, reload, step up, shoot another array, reload, step up, shoot the last array. It sounded simple, but between the partial targets and the stage procedure many shooters found the stage was indeed maddening. Adam Poplewell was the "stair master," winning this stage.

Stage 8 (Alien Anguish; sponsored by Montana Gold Bullets) was supervised by then-candidate Area 4 director, Ken Hicks, who performed most of his RO duties from a beach chair, while encouraging shooters to vote "for the other guy" in the Area 4 election. (Ken ran unopposed for Area 4 director and we wish him the best in his upcoming term.). This speed shoot was a "you've got to be kidding!" stage with 3 full targets set about 10 feet from the shooter, down at ground level. Starting with both knees on the ground, the shooter was to draw and fire 2 shots at each target, then repeat the same drill for the second string. Rob Walsh used his superhuman powers to vaporize the competition and wrap up the match. He shot both strings down 5 points with a combined time of only 3.12 seconds. Despite Dick Burkhardt's win on Stage 5, Joe Boone hung on to the lead for the match win in Limited, and David Weers finished third. Also, Scott Caylor finished first in Production Division, with Michael Popinski finishing first among Revolver shooters.

The match wrapped up with the prize drawings and awarding of trophies to match, division and class winners, as well as appreciation plaques to the sponsors. Photos taken by Match Photographer Donnie Presutti can be seen at [http://www.gatorguns.com/space\\_city\\_challenge\\_2001.htm](http://www.gatorguns.com/space_city_challenge_2001.htm) and additional photos from the match are at <http://www.krtraining.com/IPSC/MATCHES/2001/space2001/SpaceCity01.html>. According to match organizers, the 2002 match will return to the run and gun format that it's been known for with 4-5 field courses in a 6-stage match. Hope to see you all there April 20-21!