

# CHUNK GUN, TEXAS STYLE

by Ken Springs



**Texans are known for doing things with a little twist to it.** The traditional Chunk Gun match can be intense. The fear that one errant shot could blow your game, compounded by the time constraints, has plagued this match since its inception.

Down here in Texas, a newly formed muzzle loader club, Greenwood Longrifles looked for a way to publicize their matches. There were a few State matches back in 1985. Chunk gun matches were being revived and articles published in *Muzzle Blasts* about the Alvin York shoot in Tennessee, a match hosted by Allen Coon, and one hosted by Bill Large. The club contacted these guys and got information on how they ran their matches, etc. and decided to give it a try. We combined all the information available and decided on a very liberal set of rules (that allowed bench rifles) in order to attract the largest crowd possible.

Someone suggested a state Chunk Gun match, but "Let's make it interesting!"

First of all, we issued 30 targets and your score was your best 10, one shot per target. Allowing the shooter to find his group before hanging any targets would definitely tighten up the scores.

Be sure to change the relay time to 10 minutes. With 30 targets available, the match would have to be much longer. We extend the match from Friday noon to Sunday noon. Wow, 19 hours to shoot 30 targets! You could sit out a few relays to cool off, have a snack, and visit with friends.

The rifle could be either flint or percussion ignition, a traditional hunting or traditional target type, able to accept a ramrod, with no limit as to weight or caliber, but no false muzzles. Iron sights were a requirement, adjustable sights like on commercially available factory rifles were permitted. We wanted the new shooter with a factory rifle to feel like he could compete. Most of the old timers bring a back-up rifle; several of us have rifles we bring as loaners in case of an emergency.

The match would be still shot in the prone position with the muzzle of the rifle rested over the chunk. Kneeling or sitting behind the chunk was not allowed. The chunk could be any round, square, or rectangular block of wood that is of a size suitable to use. Padding was allowed to protect the rifle, but not raise the muzzle. (Author's note; Lots of washcloths have been sacrificed to protect these rifles.) To the present date, not much has changed, except for the appearance of few nice custom "Bevel Brother Style" chunks.

The competitor could turn in as

many targets as they liked. All targets are checked to confirm that the shooter's info is correct, and sorted by day. This is important because there are three "Best shots of the day" plaques to be awarded, one will be held back as "Best Shot of the Match". Records show that the best shot recorded was .007" by one of our founding members, Butch Caudle. We measured that one three times, checking zero on the calipers, picking up the overlays, and remeasuring. We got the same number every time!

Scores are measured from X center to round ball center with a digital micrometer to 3 places. All shots are entered into a massive spreadsheet with macros imbedded to calculate the final scores. We are fortunate to have two Professional Engineers as part of our staff; they do an awesome job of scoring 300+ targets every year and sorting the targets by shooters (You get all your targets back with their scores after the Awards Meeting.)

Paper spotters are allowed and could be of any size, shape, or color but not reflective. The spotters could be pinned, glued, stapled, or taped to the target the way the competitor wishes. No limits to the spotter design. Personally, I like a 2 3/4 inch black square on a white background, but I saw a shooter take the match using the NMLRA 6-bull as his spotter.

The shooter could use any ground cover to lie on. Sleeping bags, blankets, tarps (waterproof), foam "pool type" floaties, and carpet were allowed. Bring a beach umbrella; Texas sun can be tough in April, if it's not raining!

The target distance was set at 48 feet due to the constraints dictated by a berm at 50 yards. Wind flags are allowed, spotting scopes, and supervising / coaching junior shooters recommended.

In the beginning, the rules were simple. Bring "any gun" with iron sights and shoot it over a chunk! Most people shot their light weight off hand rifles. The bench guns dominated. The bench guns were more stable and easier to shoot in the prone position verses the traditional style rifle.

The 2nd year, the rules were tweaked a little. No false muzzles, no Olympic style sights, the gun had to have a functional ramrod and no sealed ignitions! There were a few more chunk guns built and ready for the shoot. Cant bars were allowed if they were an integral part of the stock. Bench guns had been pretty well phased out. I've been told that moving a 25# rifle from the ground and lugging it back to the loading bench was tough! More traditional style rifles were now competing against traditional style rifles. The globe type front sights (with a post insert) were allowed.



Prize Table 2018



**Katie shoots my Pedersoli.**

Everybody got a copy of the match rules in their target packet.

What has evolved is a laid back, enjoyable weekend long match. Locals scheduled vacation on Friday to help set up the range, pick their spot, and get a jump on the game. Saturday's session ended at 5PM and everyone was invited to a huge dinner (Bar-b-que, beans, potato salad, sweet tea). Many of our ladies bring some awesome desserts!

Sunday morning is the shooters last chance to improve their scores. Shooters stop their match to help out a competitor in need. The attitude that most of us have is that we are really competing against our own best score. Suggestions are freely given to new shooters to help them along.

The biggest evolution was the growth of the shooting skills of the competitors. Everyone began to learn and understand how to shoot the prone position, develop a system they liked that made it easier to acquiring a repeatable sight picture. Scores with the lighter traditional style rifles really began to get competitive. Everybody felt they had a chance to compete and win!

Learning to read the shooting conditions becomes a factor. Wind, sun, heat shimmer, and variable lighting due to clouds came into play. As our shooters aged, we changed the match date from the last weekend in June (often 100 deg F, 100% humidity) to the first weekend in April (easily 20 deg cooler, but occasional rains).

Typically, a shooter sets up his target with his preferred sighter and begins establishing their group. Once they like what they see, they will begin sliding the target behind the established group. Most shooters will shoot one target per relay although some will shoot two. Targets are collected each day for scoring. Scores are kept confidential until the awards program on Sunday afternoon.

This is a blanket match and everyone brings something for the table. Greenwood Longrifles sweetens the pot with items and we have several corporate sponsors who donate to the match. Best score gets first choice of the stacks of prizes. Recently we have noticed a new phenomenon as match winners chose their prizes, they would "pay forward" from their stack, items that they already own or could not use. It sweetens the prize table for the new shooters at the higher end of the score sheet. I know several shooters went home with 3# of Schuetzen FFF last year.



**My X Center plaques 2017**

There is a "For Sale" rack where shooters can buy, sell, or trade rifles. Some nice rifles have changed hands over the years. One of our shooters showed up with an actual "Sgt. York" match winning rifle last year and won the match with it (The inspection stickers were still on the stock). We have an amateur jeweler that shoots the matches with a rifle he literally

picked up in pieces out of a 5 gal. bucket and rebuilt. He's done some work on several of my rifles. He makes custom inlays from German silver that are amazing!

Greenwood Gun Club is located in Brazoria County, Texas. It is a private gun club with a closed membership of around 2,000 members. It is absolutely one of the finest ranges in the state. There always a waiting list to join it. The club offers restricted memberships to Law Enforcement Officers that have to qualify annually with their firearms. The Coast Guard from Galveston to Corpus Christi also use our range for practice and their annual qualifications. Disabled Veterans are welcome and also get a discounted membership.

There are many very active junior shooters' programs available to participate in. The Junior Service Rifle team competes at Camp Perry every year and are very successful. Traditional and Compound archery competition for juniors is very popular. The Shotgun range has a junior league that competes weekly. The club also participates in the Texas Hunter's Safety courses and has recently offered NRA Range Officer certification classes.

**The Texas Chunk Gun Championship 2020 is our 35th anniversary for this competition. It will be held on April 3rd 4th, 5th**

**Match time: Friday, 12 noon-6PM**

**Saturday, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm**

**Saturday evening meal served 6:00 pm under the big oak tree. All shooters and their families are invited.**

**Match time-Sunday, is 8:00 am - 12:00 noon. Awards @ 1:00 pm Sunday**

**For more information, contact me @ kennethsprings@ sbcglobal.net.**

**See you on the line! MB**