



A Grand Affair

2024 Opening Ceremonies

//// by jacque snellenberger

Walking into the grandstand area on Monday, August 5th for the 125th Grand American was a site to behold. Fried chicken, ham sandwiches, veggies and fruit were served while the Blue and Gray team members signed the posters. The tent was packed as they all waited for the

opening ceremonies to begin. Opening Ceremonies began with Lynn Gipson announcing the dignitaries of Sparta which included Terri Bryant-Illinois Senator, Natalie Finnie-Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Skip Klinger-WSRC Executive Director, Brad Mayberry-SCRC

Fireworks & Fun

Trap Manager, Jason Schlimme-Sparta Mayor, Cody Rheinecker-Sparta City Manager, Bobby Klausing-Sparta City Commissioner, and David Holder-Randolph County Commissioner. The 2024 ATA Executive Committee was next, and then onto the ATA Central Handicap Committee. Then recognizing the past presidents and Trap and Field associates. The Colors Squad from the Illinois National Guard in Sparta, Illinois marched onto the field and everyone stood for the National Anthem. Gipson then went on to recognize the Grand sponsors, went into the target attainment awards, and the trapshooters who earned their attendance patches starting at 25 years and ending with Dave Berlet attending for 80 years.



Fireworks & Fun

Winchester merged with White Flyer and wanted to continue the Blue Gray Shootout that was such a success previously. Each team member was introduced by Josh Taylor with their gun, ammo, and eye wear. Shooting for the Blue Team: Raylee Bishop, Wyatt Debrie, Cole Henning, Dagen Voigtman, and Dale Stockdale. The Gray Team consisted of Anna Rawe, Cody Meridith, Tyler Honnold, Shane Biser, and Robert Harden. After the teams were announced they went out into the crowd and each picked a person to root them on. These "fan/cheerleaders" won when their member won. The targets were set as a three hole using crusher targets. Each team member received a golden ticket. This ticket was in case



they missed they were allowed to use the golden ticket which allowed them to get back into the game one more time. However, they had to shoot a target that was sprung high into the air (think springing teal on the sporting clay course) on a rotating cycle. They all started at 16-yard line and all broke it. Moving to the left of the trap field, close to the skeet field was

where Raylee Bishop had to use her golden ticket, but she got that one to stay in the game. Cole Henning missed, but got to stay in as well. To the 27-yard line, post three is where Wyatt Debrie missed and used his golden ticket. Cole missed from there and was the first to walk off the line. Dale Stockdale missed one from there and then missed again when he used his golden ticket. Moving



on behind post five about 3 yards was the next placement. Raylee missed and since she'd already turned in her ticket she left the field. Cody Meridith missed

giving up his ticket and missed again. With six shooters left, they stepped back to just shy of the sidewalk. Anna Rawe and Robert Harden had to give

up their golden ticket there and then immediately lost it. Wyatt missed from there knocking him out as well. It was down to three. The three contestants moved just shy of the sidewalk behind post three. It was there that Dagen gave up his ticket and lost. Shane Bison went out giving Tyler the win. Battling it out for second and third and shooting one more target—Shane broke his target earning himself second and Dagen third place.

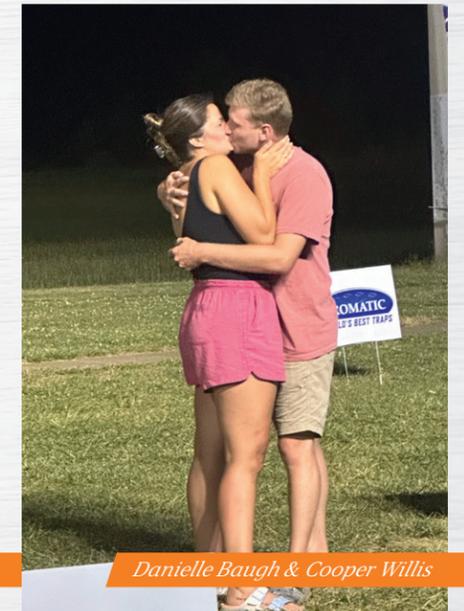
Introductions of the Open Team included gun, ammunition, and eye wear as had the previous team's announcement. The Blue Team consisted of Richard Marshall Jr., Ryan Glow, Garrett Helms, Peter Walker and Joseph Charnigo. Keith Ditto, Zach Nannini, Herbert Lewis, Scott Obenchain and Bruce Davis were the Gray Team members.

Josh Taylor went to the 16-yard line where you'd think they'd all obliterate the target. However, Walker missed and gave up his golden ticket there. Ricky,

Ryan and Zack missed when they took it to the right side of the field beside the skeet house. Using their golden tickets, they all stayed in, leaving four down after just two positions. Ricky went out when they moved to about the 30-yard line since he didn't have his ticket left. Garrett gave it all up right there too. Scott used his ticket, as well, but stayed in. Behind the walkway, at about 40 yards, they went and Scott missed, forcing him out. Bruce Davis, past winner of the shoot-out, had to give up his golden ticket. As he did, his young fan ran out and gave him a high five and a "special" shell. Unfortunately, it didn't work, but it was cute as heck. They moved the group behind post four to the sidewalk where Zach and Pete got out and Herbert Lewis was forced to use his golden ticket. Moving to the sidewalk behind post five is where Keith used his golden ticket and then promptly missed. Ryan missed, and was out. Lewis broke his target. Joe, winner of last year's competition, had to use his golden ticket there and earned his way back in. Since they were down to four shooters, they wanted third place decided before moving onto first and second. It took just one more bird for Ryan Glow to win third. It took another target to decide it between Herb Lewis and Joe Charnigo. Herb missed his in the next shot and Joe did not. This meant Joe won the Blue Gray Shoot-Out for the second year in a row. Josh Taylor was in control of the golden ticket machine and started showing the crowd what kind of wild doubles could be thrown. The crowd went crazy while Joe Charnigo, known for his ability in shooting Doubles and pigeons, had to try his hand at them; breaking one of the two both times he tried. Thanks to Winchester, White Flyer, Briley and Promatic for their sponsorship of this event. The shooters won AA Winchester ammunition, and Briley gift cards, while the fans received Winchester White Flyer gift cards that could be used at the store, and a Briley Shooter package. Everyone who



Joe Charnigo & his fan



Danielle Baugh & Cooper Willis

participated, shooters and fans, received a hat to commemorate the event.

Right before the fireworks started there was a marriage proposal. Cooper Willis asked Danielle Baugh to marry him. They've known each other for three years and have been attending the Grand and getting into shooting, so she knows what she's getting into. What a great tribute to love, as last year, there was a wedding between Scott and Anne Obenchain.

The lights went out and the audience was left to watch a phenomenal almost thirty-minute set of fireworks. They

upped their game and made it longer as well as setting music to the fireworks which was presented by White Flyer and the ATA. Although, the best was hearing the giggles from the kids in the audience when the fireworks went off. This is the night to come enjoy food, camaraderie, games, and fireworks. ■



