

## **Participating in the .50 calibre World Championship, Raton, New Mexico.**

Participating in the annual World Championship of the FCSA (Fifty Calibre Shooters Association) requires some degree of planning whether you are intending to take your own rifle or not from the United Kingdom.

If you are already taking part in .50 calibre shooting within the UK, or are contemplating taking this up, it is strongly recommended that you join the FCSA US branch as well as that of the United Kingdom. This is relatively inexpensive in the context of 50 calibre shooting and will not only provide you with a quarterly highly informative magazine specifically relating to the issues arising from shooting the 50 calibre (and also provides a booklet of 50 calibre supply resources) but also provides access to online forums that provide information pertaining to the issues specific to reloading and shooting for the 50 calibre together with access to individuals with a wealth of knowledge on the subject.

The FCSA US website is [www.fcsa.org](http://www.fcsa.org) where details on how to join are posted. Any queries, including those in which would be the best joining option, can be directed to the secretary, Karen Ritarita at [webmaster@fcsa.org](mailto:webmaster@fcsa.org) who is a treasure trove of information and happy to respond to any enquiries or direct them onwards as appropriate.

The details of the date of the next World Championship are posted on the website together with an e-mail contact point.

The World Championship is usually held in the weekend closest to 4 July and always takes place in the NRA Whittington Centre ( [www.nrawc.org](http://www.nrawc.org) ) in Raton in New Mexico. The location is somewhat remote and travelling to it, especially with your own rifle, requires a degree of planning in itself.

If you decide you wish to participate in the .50 calibre world Championships but did not wish to use your own rifle this can be undertaken relatively simply with sufficient planning given the generosity that has become apparent from those attending from the United States.

If you decide to participate without taking your rifle or ammunition I would suggest that you contact the club secretary, Rita, in the first instance, or the current FCSA president whose details are available on the website, expressing your interest in this.

This year Barry Hamilton was the president and facilitated the provision of a suitable rifle together with access to ammunition and other accoutrements to one of our UK members, Steve M. and another member from France, Marc.

Steve was put in touch with Jerry Hazlett of Amer-I-CAN Enterprises ( [aic@hintonet.net](mailto:aic@hintonet.net) ). Jerry supplied a standard Windrunner rifle for them to use in the majority of the classes as well as another Windrunner with modified stock for the "light" class for no cost. He also provided .50 calibre BMG ammunition that was loaded in once fired Winchester cases using military powder and a 750 grain AMAX bullets at a total cost of four dollars per round, the cases being returned to Jerry after use. Jerry also provided ground sheets, mats, spotting scope, seating, sun canopy, bench rest equipment as required, advice and "informed comment" upon performance.

The competition is split into morning and afternoon sessions and as such the resources supplied by Jerry were able to be shared with the French competitor, Mark.

Further to this, the world champion Lee Rasmussen, has generously resourced the building of a precision .50 calibre rifle solely for the use of international competitors that will be kept at the Whittington Centre for this purpose.

I was struck by the generosity of the participants, many of whom turned up with a truckload of equipment, some with multiple rifles and all of whom appear to be willing to share their knowledge and equipment.

Having spoken to many individuals at the competition I am of the opinion that, with adequate planning, a considerable number of individuals could be accommodated from outwith the United States and without the need for them to bring their own equipment.

Should you decide to take your own equipment this is somewhat more difficult but, however, is relatively easily achieved with adequate planning.

You will need to request an individualised invite to the 50 calibre World Championships and this can be obtained through the FCSA president or secretary, Rita.

The BATF (Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms) require that this invitation is made out specifically to the individual aiming to temporarily import a rifle and a general letter of invitation will not be accepted by them.

You then require the complete a ATF form 6NIA "Application / Permit of the Temporary Importation of Firearms and Ammunition by Nonimmigrant Aliens" ( [www.aft.gov/forms/download/atf-f-5330-3d.pdf](http://www.aft.gov/forms/download/atf-f-5330-3d.pdf) ) . This contains instructions on how to complete the form that should be printed out and sent to the address on the form. It is currently also possible to fax the completed form to the BATF on 001 304 616 4554.

In completing the Form 6NIA ensure that you not only put down details of the rifle you wish to take but also the details of the telescopic sight together with the ammunition you wish to take and reloading components such as cases and heads. I have previously applied to take in 400 heads and cases together with 100 loaded rounds.

While this application should be made some three months in advance of the competition I have found the response has been faxed to me (but not sent by mail) in the region of three weeks after being lodged. It is essential that you have this authorisation to import your rifle prior to travelling to the States.

This authorisation also permits you to take back out of the USA those reloading components you have not used.

You should check with your airline if there are any restrictions travelling with a firearm, additional costs or weight issues. To date I have travelled with the .50 on a variety of airlines (EasyJet (with costs), US Air and Virgin Atlantic) I have not experienced any particular issues. I have merely had to arrive at the check-in with the rifle, complete a form and on occasion talk to customs in the UK and show my firearms certificate. On arrival in the United States the rifle either comes out in the normal

baggage carousel or is taken aside directly to the customs department in the luggage area. Being polite and co-operative with the officials facilitates the passage into the United States. Returning to UK in a similar manner has been equally simple with the customs officers checking the rifle against my firearms certificate.

The .50 calibre rifle, however, presents particular problems with regard to ammunition. The vast majority of airlines restrict the transport of ammunition per passenger to a maximum of 5 kg. This equates to approximately 40 rounds of .50 calibre ammunition. The total amount allowed on any civilian aircraft usually totals 25 kg. To compete in all the classes for the purpose of the "Iron Man" competition you should budget for 60 rounds per competition (ie total of 240 rounds) of ammunition to include sighting in and for the competitions.

For competitive purposes I loaded up 40 rounds to take with me together with 200 pre-fired and fully prepared cases to load on my arrival. I had contacted Barry Hamilton who provided full reloading resources together with reloading bench, presses, CC I 35 primers, H50 BMG powder and supply of AMAX750 BMG heads. My Wednesday afternoon (the first day at Raton) was spent reloading 200 cases.

The alternative open to individuals wishing to compete is to purchase ammunition in advance and this can be organised through Jerry Hazlitt (some of whose rounds I used for sighting purposes).

I am currently making enquiries regarding the prospect of being able to ship loaded rounds to the Whittington Centre at Raton for any future competitions.

With regard to ancillary equipment you should take what you feel you will need and can transport. I have a list of what I feel is worthwhile transporting there and back. In addition I have a list of items I purchase there and dispose of following the competition (for example groundsheets, foam camping mattress, carpet tiles, cleaning fluid, patches etc). Walmart and BassPro shops can be found in most routes to Raton.

Whether or not you are intending participating with your own equipment or otherwise you then have to decide what categories you wish to shoot in and register for these prior to the Match.

There are essentially four main classes with an overarching category for those who compete in all, termed "Iron Man". Further to this there are two subcategories namely "Semiauto" and "Practical".

The details of the various classes and rules can be found within the "Official Match Rules and Bylaws" that is on the FCSA website.

Essentially, however, the four main categories of rifle used are:

1. Light (maximum overall weight less than 32 LB 8oz)
2. Heavy (maximum overall weight less than 50 LB)
3. Unlimited (any weight)
4. Hunter (to be shot from the ground rather than bench rest and using a bipod)

It is possible to shoot all categories using just one rifle.

Each of these categories is shot by each competitor taking part both in a morning and subsequent afternoon session (or visa versa). The weather changes considerably during the course of the day it being more settled first thing in the morning and "more challenging" later in the day.

While the World Championship is based upon the best scores from the light and heavy categories I would suggest that any competitors from United Kingdom compete in all classes, namely the "Iron man" competition. While it may seem relatively simple to participate in all classes, especially if the equipment is supplied to you, I can assure you that it is exhausting, particularly if you participate in pit duty. While it is currently required to you participate in iron man over a four-day period this may change to a lesser period in the near future.

The competition starts on a Wednesday with registration and checking of equipment. Each rifle is weighed to ensure it meets the limits of the category into which the competitor has registered. With this a sticker to this effect is applied to rifle. The Wednesday also provides the opportunity to zero the rifle both at 1000 and 600 yards (the latter being for participants in the "practical" shoot). This is followed by a mandatory shooters meeting in which the running of the competition is detailed, potential issues aired and instructions on how to undertake pit duty are given.

For the smooth running of the competition pit duty is essential to be undertaken, unless the competitor is physically or otherwise unable to undertake this or has organised for a "pit puller" to undertake the duties on their behalf. This again can usually be organised in advance for a cost in the region of \$50 per day. I would suggest that pit duty as part of the whole experience, exhausting as it is, it is worth while undertaking.

The competition itself starts on the Thursday morning approximately 7am with a shooters meeting, prayer, raising of the flags together with pit and shooters preparation. This routine is repeated over the following four days.

There are 100 shooting lanes on the "High Power" 1000 yard range. Shooters are usually allocated even number lanes. There are wind flags every two hundred yards downrange in three equal rows for the shooters to "interpret".

In each class 20 minutes are allowed for a preparation period to get all the equipment that will be required together to shoot. There follows a 10 minute unlimited rounds sighting period in which the pits will advise, if possible, if the target is missed and where the round has landed (above, left or right, on the "berm"... If on the "berm" the target pillars are showered in dirt).

At each sighting period a fluorescent orange disc is placed where the round has hit on the target and the target raised to be viewed by the shooter.

After the 10 minute sighting period there is a short interval while the targets are "pulled and patched". This is followed by the line manager calling for five rounds to be placed beside the rifle and calling for the first five shot "record" string over a period of 10 min. The targets are then pulled, scored and patched.

A further 3 min unlimited rounds sighting period occurs followed by another five shot "record" string over 10 min. Yet again the targets are pulled, scored and patched and further 3 min sighting period occurs followed by the final five shot "record" string over 10 min.

During the record strings a large orange disc is placed in the last shot, a smaller orange disc remains in the previous shots and should subsequent shots be within the marking disc a green disc is used and this result "green on lane ....." is called out over the tannoy.

This continues over the various categories which are shot in groups of two either in the first or second relays between which the pit crew change with the shooting crew.

The attempt is to finish shooting by approximately 2 PM to avoid the extremes of weather.

The additional class of semiauto is pretty much taken up by the users of Barrett rifles that may be made available to competitors from the United Kingdom should they so desire.

The practical class is shot in an afternoon following the main shooting details. It is undertaken at 600 yards with standard M33 ball ammunition which is supplied by the organisers. Three rounds are shot at a 6 inch plate over a five-minute period observed by a "spotter", usually the shooter beside you who advises on the point of impact. Adjustments are made by the shooter and five shots are taken upon the target. There follows one further "spotting shot" followed by five targeting rounds over 3 min. There is then one further "spotting shot" followed by a further five target shots. The target is then patched and scored. This competition is a particularly dusty experience.

There is also a "Junior" class for which the youngest age of participation is 12 years (one of whom is also one of the top overall shooters) and a "Rookie" class for those that have never participated before. Further to this four person teams can be entered for the team event.

On the Sunday afternoon the scores are tallied and there is an awards ceremony. A vast number of prizes are donated by organisations related to .50 (and other) shooting and it would be difficult to leave the competition without something more than you arrived with.

Outwith the shooting there is the opportunity to meet with the other competitors and their families. There is a barbeque one of the evenings at the range which is superb. Outwith this there is a lot of banter and advice to be gleaned on this form of shooting that is difficult to access in the United Kingdom. I have been struck by the friendliness and generosity of those I have met at the shoot, without exception.

I have now been to the world Championships on two occasions, once travelling with my wife as part of a larger holiday and subsequently with a friend with the primary intent attending the shoot. On both occasions I've taken my own equipment and on the latter occasion Steve had it supplied on site. On both occasions there have been some physical difficulties (mainly related to my back) but overall it has otherwise been relatively easy to participate.

Raton itself is in a rather isolated area. I have accessed it from both Denver and latterly Las Vegas. Las Vegas is approximately 800 miles distant from Raton and while we undertook this trip in one day I would not recommend this course of action. Denver, however, is only approximately 200 miles away and thus Raton can be accessed somewhat more easily. With regard to accommodation within Raton I have utilised the Holiday Inn Express on both occasions and found it the most accessible residence to the facility, friendly and comfortable. It does not, however, have the benefit of the restaurant on-site or a bar for which travel into Raton itself is required. Accommodation is also available at the Whittington Centre and details of this can be found on their web site.

Having spoken to a variety of shooters in the FCSA (UK) there has appeared to be a concern that were they to attend, they may not perform well against the US competitors or even get on target. I can assure those individuals that this would most definitely not be the case.

I had found the first trip a bit intimidating in anticipation but quickly came to realise it was not as difficult as I had anticipated and was a very rewarding experience.

I would be happy to answer any questions fellow shooters may have about participating in this event.

Scott W.