

# **The History of the Steel Challenge**

*Founded in 1981, the first Steel Challenge saw just 70 shooters step into the shooting boxes of its now famous all steel stages. It was John Shaw who claimed the first title of "World's Fastest Shooter" along with his share of the \$20,000 in cash and prizes. Since those early days the number of shooters has grown and the firearms industry has taken notice. Every major manufacturer participates in the Steel Challenge and the key to the success of the match can be found in the philosophy of its creators.*

*Mike Dalton and Mike Fichman, both accomplished competitive shooters, dreamt up the idea for the Steel Challenge as a way to expand the shooting sports.*

*"We founded the Steel Challenge out of our love for the shooting sports. We wanted a match that was challenging and fun but would also be easily understood by non-shooters who would see the competition and find within themselves a greater desire to join the shooting sports. We also believed that the sport needed a tournament that was media and spectator friendly", said Mike Fichman.*

*Their match design called for simple stages, or courses of fire, made up of just five steel plates. The steel plates would be of differing sizes and placed at various distances and angles to create a variety of challenges. The shooter would assume his or her position in the shooting box and, upon the beep of the timer, draw their pistol and shoot each plate with the fifth being a stop plate synchronized to the timer.*

*Each shooter would shoot the stage five times with the slowest time dropped. The score would be the combined time of the best four runs and that time added to the combined times of the other stages for a final match score.*

*"From the start we knew we wanted an easy scoring system that any spectator could follow regardless of their shooting knowledge. The structure of using the four best runs out of five allowed shooters the opportunity to recover and provided added drama for those watching", explained Mike Dalton.*

*Over the years the match has seen its fair share of drama as great champions have risen and fallen from one year to the next and sometime even within the course of a single match.*

*"We have watched world records set and broken on the same stage as one shooter followed another. We've seen great shooters collapse under the pressure of the match. And we have seen unbelievable comebacks", said Fichman. "The Steel Challenge has never failed to excite."*

*It is the tremendous sense of possibility that draws so many shooters to Piru, California, every August. Every shooter knows that this could be their year and despite falling short, they return the following year with renewed optimism.*

*In the winter of 2007, Dalton and Fichman sold the Steel Challenge to the United States Practical Shooting Association (USPSA), which is the national governing body of Practical Shooting in the US. Despite being a difficult decision, Dalton and Fichman thought only of the future success of the match and its dedicated competitors.*

*"The Steel Challenge is a natural fit for USPSA and we have put into place plans to both grow the match as well as the sport of Steel Shooting in general", said Dave Thomas, Executive Director of USPSA.*

*"One of our primary goals is to greatly expand the role of the Steel Challenge Shooting Association here in the US and internationally. But we knew from the start that USPSA would need to rely on the true Steel Shooting experts to help guide our efforts. That's why we asked Mike Dalton and Mike Fichman to remain on consultants and serve as Match Directors in 2008", continued Thomas.*

*Dalton and Fichman are regarded as two of the most accomplished shooting event organizers and promoters in the shooting sports and while the World Speed Shooting Championships are under 'new management', the legacy and vision of the 'Two Mikes' will forever be present on the Steel Challenge ranges.*