

A Night At The Opera: June 13, 2015 Night Match Analysis

Seven shooters stuck around until the lower range was blanketed in the inky darkness of a moonless overcast night. There were 11 shotgun targets in the woods (in the same locations as the day match) and 15 pistol targets arranged in a "U" shape in the open field. Shooters knew where the targets were in a general sense and how many there were since they set them up. The challenge was a technical one of locating and illuminating their targets, getting a usable sight picture, dealing with muzzle flash, and manipulating their equipment in the darkness.

At night the course had a profoundly eerie and realistic look. The zombies seemed to move as the shooter's lights danced around them before finally holding steady long enough for a shot or two that brought them down. During the pistol stage, a rainstorm blew in and actually added to the atmosphere of menace on the course. The wind moved the zombies' clothes and arms around slightly and the falling rain softened the focus on the whole scene and contributed to the illusion of movement.

I was too exhausted to RO the course so I kept score and the shooters took turns acting as RO for each other. We might do future night matches in this manner if we can't get a night crew of ROs to staff them. It's simply impossible for the RO team that runs the day match to hold out long enough to run the night event too. Our shooters did an excellent job of placing and resetting targets and even brought and grilled a fine supper right on the field so nobody had to fight zombies on an empty stomach. Our shooters made the night match possible and my impression was they felt it was well worth the effort. I know, even in my half-conscious state, that it was very compelling and surreal to watch.

ZK Thomas was the night match champion. He swept both stages with a 100% lethality on all 25 targets, the fastest total time and the fewest shots. Upstart Patrick Blevins actually shot the best shotgun stage. He and three other shooters scored 24 points. ZK Datillo was knocked out of the running for a win due to an unprecedented fail on the shotgun course when his new bullpup could not be effectively aimed in the darkness. ZK Doc Boyd was the only shooter to make the effort to shoot in formal attire and came tastefully dressed in a double-breasted suit earning him the only bonus point of the match.

I did some calculations to compare the day match results to the night match and I discovered that the average shots per zombie kill in the daylight match was 2.1 while the night match was only 1.9 shots per kill. (I didn't include ZK Datillo's night scores in that equation because I know them to be a fluke and they would have skewed the results.) I was surprised that our shooters were so accurate at night. There was more a difference in the time it took them to get off their shots. During the daylight match, the average was 10.43 seconds per shot. In the night match it shot up to 15.98 seconds per shot. Keep in mind that night match had the same shotgun course as the day match but a much easier pistol course. FYI, when we finished, another 159 zombies had met their end under the guns of our night owl ZKs!