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“Steel Challenge” is a sport which lives up to its name – its considered one of the most challenging among the various shooting sport disciplines.

There are eight stages, with each stage having 5 steel targets placed at varying distances and configurations. On the “beep” of the timer, competitors must draw their weapon of choice, and shoot the five steel plate targets as quickly as they possibly can. The sport has been likened to “drag racing with guns” – the ultimate test of marksmanship and speed.

For the first time in Steel Challenge history, a State Championship Steel Challenge match was held in Kentucky on November 10th, 2017 at the Blue Grass Sportsmen’s League range in Wilmore which is a world-famous gun range just outside of Lexington. When former Magoffin County resident John B. Holbrook, II learned of the historic first-time match, he immediately knew that he would not only compete in the prestigious event, he would be among the winners. “As many Magoffin County residents may know, I lost my father (John B. Holbrook) earlier this year. When I heard about the match, I just knew I had to compete and win for my Dad. It would have made both of my parents (his mother, Betty Sue Holbrook is also a former resident of Magoffin County) very proud.” The only problem? John had never shot Steel Challenge prior to 2017. “I actually just started shooting unsanctioned local Steel Challenge matches this year where I live in the Dayton, Ohio area.” “I did pretty well in local competition, and usually finished in both 1st and 2nd place because I compete in two different divisions. But I anticipated that the Kentucky State Championship match would certainly be a much higher caliber of competition, and given that this was a historic first-time event, I expected it would draw some of the top competitors in the US.”

Holbrook, an NRA Certified Instructor, is no stranger to competitive shooting. In 2016, he was ranked #16 in the US in the United Practical Shooting Association’s (USPSA) Pistol Caliber Carbine (PCC) division. In 2017, Holbrook competed in the world’s largest 3-Gun competition, the Rockcastle Pro/Am 3-Gun Championship, finishing 12th out of 33 in his division, and a respectable 74th out of 230 overall competitors in amateur competition. Holbrook also finished 35th in the US in the 3-GUN NATION Unlimited Division and earned an invitation compete in the 3-GUN NATION Nationals – an invitation he declined in order to compete in the Kentucky Steel Challenge State Championship. “I decided it was more important to me to shoot the State match, but I had to get classified in Steel Challenge in order to compete in the Kentucky State Championship. Fortunately Blue Grass Sportsman’s League held a couple of classifier matches leading up to the State match. I got classified my first time out in both of the divisions in which I compete – Carry Optics (a pistol division) and Pistol Caliber Carbine (a rifle division).”

The 2017 Kentucky Steel Challenge State Championship drew over 150 competitors, several of whom had competed earlier in the year at the 2017 US Steel Nationals. Holbrook ended winning 1st place gold medals in both the “C” Class Carry Optics Division, and the “B” Class Pistol Caliber

Carbine Division. He also won a 2nd place silver medal in the overall Carry Optics division, and 14th out of all 45 pistol competitors in the Main Match. "Mom and Dad would have been really proud - my 2nd place finish in the Carry Optics Division would have put me in 3rd place at this year's US Steel Nationals in my division." Holbrook plans on shooting at the 2018 US Steel Nationals in March, and may try to make the US Team which will shoot in the 2018 IPSC Shotgun World Shoot at the National Shooting Center in Châteauroux, France.

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