

1 on 1

By Morris Gresham

Fred Tschantz's shooting life consists of three separate parts—when he was a child, when he was a young Army MP and, finally, the third and final segment when he became the skeet shooter he is today. The third try was a charm for the young man whose doubles style prompted Bruce Christian's fitting nickname for him. He is now known to many shooters as Boom-Boom.

Born in Barberton, Ohio on July 17, 1969, Tschantz grew up in that city with an older sister, Denise, and his fraternal twin brother, Brian. Although his parents weren't interested in hunting or shooting, his grandfather, Gaylen Schulz, was. He introduced the youngster to target shooting with a .22 and followed that with an introduction to shotgun shooting at hand-thrown clay pigeons when he was around 11 years old.

"My grandfather played a little trick on me with the old 12

gauge side-by-side shotgun," Tschantz recalled. "It was a double-trigger gun—where you pick a trigger for each barrel. He would load the gun and tell me, 'I don't want you to flinch or anything, but when I tell you to shoot, the gun could be empty or it could go off.' The first one fired and it surprised me because the 12 gauge kicked me pretty good, especially at 11. I didn't get to do a lot of shooting, but I did a little shooting with him."

His father Fred Sr.'s career as a tool and die maker influenced Tschantz to enroll in the vocational machine trades in high school, a route taken by his close friend Sam Armstrong. And, like Armstrong, Tschantz went into the Army immediately after high school. Then, again like his friend, Tschantz went into law enforcement after the Army—but the similarity ends there. Tschantz stuck with police work rather than using his machinist training as Armstrong did.

"My whole purpose in going into the military had

FRED TSCHANTZ

A happy-go-lucky, nice guy, but a hard-working, dedicated, relentless competitor



been to go into law enforcement," Tschantz explained. "Once I got into the Army and got past basic training and MP school, I went to Sierra Army Depot in California. I was in about a year and a half or so when I drove down the main post road and saw a gate open in front of what turned out to be skeet houses. I found out it was a turkey shoot and they did it every week for a very nominal fee. That's when I met Larry Krutsinger."

"We were having a turkey shoot," Krutsinger recalled. "Fred showed up one day and showed some interest. We had a couple of shotguns that we kept in the arms room for the troops if they wanted to shoot. We were out in the middle of nowhere. There were no stores where you could buy shells or anything like that. So, myself and another officer would load 1,000 shells apiece and then if any soldiers came out, they'd have shells."

"I was the Commander of the 980th MP Company," Krutsinger continued, "and Fred was one of the soldiers there at the Sierra Army Depot. The standard shift for those guys was like nine days on and three days off, so it was surprising that any soldier had enough time off to come out and shoot."

"We took him to his first registered shoot in Reno, Nevada," he recalled. "He had good hand and eye coordination and he progressed really well. Of course, we lost track of each other after he got out of the Army. About two years ago, a buddy from the Sierra days and I saw Fred's picture taken at the World—and we're thinking, 'We got him going and he's far surpassed us.'"

"I don't think I did very well at the beginning," Tschantz stated, "but I remember that I re-



Sam Armstrong presents Fred with framed stained glass in honor of his Ohio Hall of Fame induction.

ally enjoyed being able to compete because I am very competitive.

One of my first shoots was at Sage Hill Clay Sports in Reno. I think it was the Nevada State Shoot. I won a coin for some place like C or D Class second. Then I went to the 1990 Armed Forces Skeet Shoot down at Nellis Air Force Base. I think I'd been shooting for four to five months at that time.

"At the Armed Forces Shoot that year I purchased my first gun," he recalled, "which was a Remington 3200 competition grade with Purbaugh tubes. I had to call my parents and they wired me the money—and that was my first gun loan."

Tschantz was tail gunner on an Army Team which consisted of him, his platoon sergeant, the base adjutant Mark Haughs, and Krutsinger, the company commander. Then, when he left the Army in 1990 and found the Sportsmen's Shooting Center, the nearest gun club to his home.

"Sportsmen's was a very large club," Tschantz said. "It had eight fields which was amazing to me! I shot some registered targets there toward the end of 1990. I

Fred Tschantz

Barberton, Ohio

Age: 38

Gun: Kolar

Home Club: Sportsmen's
Shooting Center

World Shoot: 8 consecutive

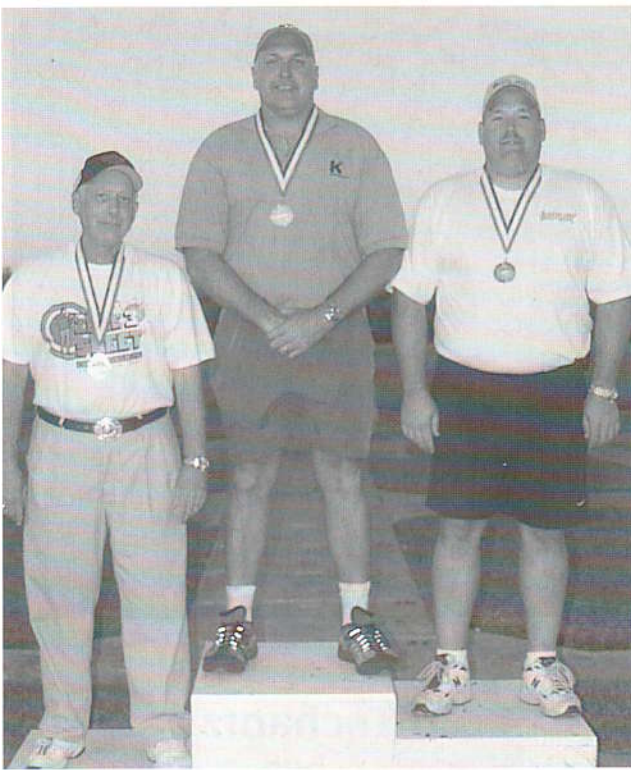
High Score: 398x400

548x550; 647x650

also shot in 1991 and I had my first 100 straight on 6-30-1991. I didn't shoot in '92 at all because I started my law enforcement career.

"When I was a kid, I always wanted to be an officer," Tschantz revealed, "and the person I always emulated was my uncle, Henry Schulz. He helped me get a police chief to sponsor me to the academy and set me on the road to my new career. That was in February of 1992. I owe him a lot for the opportunity to do something that I like to do and wouldn't trade for anything."

"Upon completion of school, I was hired as a part-timer right away for Franklin Township," he said. "I worked part-time for 4-1/2 years before being hired full time in December of 1996. I



Fred was 2003 World Shoot Doubles RU to Todd Bender. James Reece took 3rd.

am currently a corporal supervising second and third shifts. In my 15 years of law enforcement, I've only done two years of day shift and one year of weekends off."

Although he was hampered by a lack of days off, Tschantz went back to skeet as soon as he got the fulltime job. After five years away from the game, he came back in 1997.

"As soon as I came back, I was looking to upgrade out of the 3200," Tschantz recalled. "I bought a K-80 from Jim Murphy. Then about two years after that I bought one other K-80 from Larry Woo. I traded the old one in for a brand new K-80 with 30-inch barrels. Then, three or four years after that I decided to go to a Kolar. I absolutely love the gun.

"My first coach was Larry Krutsinger," he continued, "and he got me started with fundamentals and etiquette. When I came back in '97, Jim Murphy coached me. He changed my style around. I've

probably changed my style around three or four times since I started, to one varying degree or another—foot position, hold points, etc. Once I got into the AA/AAA ranks, his coaching has been more like helping me out when I have a problem with a particular station."

"Fred and I worked together a lot when he came back from his hiatus," Murphy confirmed. "We used to spend a lot of time down on field 1, just shooting and instructing. Then at the end of our instructions, we'd start shooting doubles. The last round

was always for a dollar. I still have six of his dollars. I won't shoot against him any more and I still show him the six bucks once in a while to remind him that I have it. He'll say, 'Well, let's go shoot for a dollar.' 'No-o-o-o. It ain't gonna happen. I'll keep your \$6.00 forever and just remind you of it.'

"We used to travel together," Murphy said. "We talked about the kind of attitude you need to have when you go into a shoot-off. Early on, it was Station 3 or 4 and he was out. So we worked on that."

If you looked for Tschantz at many of his early shoots, he wouldn't be hanging around the clubhouse. Instead, he said, he'd be sitting behind a field watching other shooters, trying to pick up

pointers for his game.

"I've watched Dave Starrett, one of the best shooters in Ohio and the country," Tschantz said, "and that's where a lot of my shooting style comes from. I've watched Bender, Mike Schmidt, L.P. I've tried to incorporate what I believe is something that would fit my body type and shooting style. There are a lot of influences in my style of shooting...with Dave Starrett being probably the largest influence. I've talked to him many times about shooting in general. He is probably the most knowledgeable person about skeet shooting and all of its intricacies.

"I've shot off a number of times against Dave," he recalled. "I shot off with him for a 28 gauge Zone Championship one time and

he knew I was going to miss. I'm a very aggressive shooter. I just can't hold on a target and ride it. If I put the saddle on it and ride it, I'm missing. Unfortunately, I generally speed up. The further I go, the more I speed up. Dave saw that in the second box and told me later that he knew I was going to miss.

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He also knows what other people around him are capable of."

According to Tschantz, his squad had much to do with his development. "Sue Huszai is one of the top ladies in the country and she has driven me the most," he claimed. "Although I may have a few more open titles, she...holds far more open state titles than I do. Bruce Poyer has numerous state titles, probably in double digits. And Jim Murphy was a AA/AAA

shooter when I started. He coached a number of good shooters, including Sue Huszai. I've just tried to align myself with good shooters.

"When I came back into shooting, I lucked into getting on the squad," Tschantz insisted. "Jim Murphy was our leadoff, then Jack Meiser, then Greg Huszai, Sue Huszai and myself as the tailgunner. The squad has changed a little bit. I ultimately became the leadoff shooter, then Sue and Greg. Every once in a while we'll team up with Jimmy Rogers and his son Bryan and try to keep a five-man squad going.

"My philosophy has always been that you have to shoot with people who are better than you because it drives you to get better. Sue and I are two-man team partners at the large shoots. We do it for fun because we like to go play with the big boys and see what we can steal."

"He is great to shoot with," said Sue Huszai. "He eats and sleeps skeet shooting. He was inducted into our Ohio State Skeet Shooting Hall of Fame earlier this year. In his acceptance speech, he said, 'There's not a time that I don't think about shooting skeet.' And I believe that.

"Fred and I were both very fortunate to get great instruction at the right time," she continued. "He practices extremely hard. Fred will go home and get a couple of hours of sleep and then it's back out to the gun club for a couple of hours before he goes and chases crooks. Fred works very hard at his job all winter so he can have the time off to shoot in the summertime. It's like shooting with my big brother even though he's younger than I am. We have a friendly rivalry and he's going to give you a hard time—unless somebody else does."

"Since Fred got back to shooting, he's been a skeet shooting machine for the most part," Greg Huszai

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related. "He's a relentless practicer. Nothing is good enough. A couple of years ago at the World Shoot, he had a 548 and that wasn't good enough. He thought he'd let us down. That's Fred. And it takes him a couple of days to realize, 'Yeah, I did OK. It wasn't perfect, but I did good.' He's a little anal retentive about a lot of stuff, but I think that's what makes Fred, Fred."

"Fred is pretty serious about

skeet," Murphy concurred. "Fred has a bad hip and we worked on foot positions and hold points that would be least painful for him."

"Fred is basically pretty laid back," Bruce Poyer said, "but he's a tough competitor. He's probably the toughest guy in our club and other than maybe Dave Starrett, the toughest shooter in the state of Ohio.

"Fred is just as tough at shooting

100 .410 targets at practice as he is if it's the World," Poyer insisted. "You put the gun in his hand and it's a different kind of Fred. Jim Murphy is the one who screwed Fred's head that last quarter of a turn and got him going.

"We go out a few times a year to socialize and if you really twist his arm you can get Fred to have about three beers," Poyer revealed. "When Fred made the Hall of Fame, he was more nervous about that than he was the shoot. I don't think he realized that he had done as much as he had until Sue started reading the stuff off and presented him at the Hall of Fame."

Then Tschantz got a little jumpy a second time when he was called onto the shoot-off field at the 2007 Kastle Steel Shoot where Sam Armstrong gave him a special gift. "My wife made a stained glass picture commemorating his induction into the Ohio Hall of Fame and I framed it," Armstrong revealed. "Al told everybody that Fred had a good year in 2007, moved into his first house, got inducted into the Ohio Hall of Fame and that I had something to give him to remember 2007 by. It was fun.

"Fred didn't want any holes in his freshly painted walls," Armstrong explained, "That was one of the reasons for doing this because all the awards he's won are shoved into a dresser in a spare bedroom."

"I was very surprised," Tschantz admitted. "Sam stayed at my house on his way to the Kastle Shoot and when he got to my house, he took a box out and put it beside the back tire of my truck. It was wrapped in bubble wrap. The next day when we were leaving, I said, 'Don't forget this.' He says,

'Oh, man! I can't forget about that. Thanks.' It turned out to be for me.

"Sam has been a very good influence on me," Tschantz said. "He has probably helped me more on the mental aspects of the game. He's one of the top shooters in the country. I'm

just glad to be called his friend.

"Sam stayed at my house for the Col-orMatrix because I'm only about 30 minutes from the club," he continued. "We go out to practice—and I can't hit three pairs in a row to save anybody's life! Sam goes, 'Aw, don't worry about it.'"

"Fred couldn't hit three pair in a row to save his life," Armstrong verified. "So we get back out there a little late Friday and didn't get to practice. We shot the doubles event and tied with 98s and had to break our tie for AAA3 or something. We finished the first box, finished the second box, finished the third box. I think I missed on the tenth pair of the fourth box. The day before he couldn't hit three pair in a row! He turned to me and said, 'I've never went over three boxes before.'"

"On Saturday Fred ran the 12 and 28," he continued, "Then he goes out for the 12 gauge shoot-off and he went into the fifth box with Kurt Grates when he finally won it. Then he changes goes out for the 28 gauge shoot-off and gets runner-up!"

It hasn't all been shoot-offs and fun, of course. "Fred is one of the good guys in the game," Murphy explained. "A couple

Jim Murphy is the one who screwed Fred's head that last quarter of a turn and got him going.

of years ago I talked him into being the president of the Ohio Skeet Shooting Association, something that he just didn't want to do. But having been president for four years, I assured him that I would give him all the assistance that I could. He did it for two years and he did a great job."

"When my husband took your voice mail that you wanted to interview me about Fred," said Melinda Angel, "he said, 'You tell him for me that Fred is a hell of a guy and he can quote me on that.' My husband doesn't shoot, but he has always been real supportive of me. He has taken a liking to Fred. I consider Fred to be my best friend in the whole wide world.

"When I first started shooting, Fred was really encouraging," she continued. "I never dreamed of competing, but he would encourage me to stick with it. It kind of surprised me because I was a nobody. When I did start competing, he explained all about the dos and don'ts."

"Eventually when I started going to shoots that were not close to home," Melinda revealed, "my husband didn't have an interest in going because it was pretty boring for him. So, Fred and I started traveling together. My husband really liked Fred, realized that he is a true, true gentleman and he is tickled to death that I have somebody like Fred that I can travel with. Some people,

mainly people from outside the shooting world, think it's kind of odd. 'You're going off with some guy! Your husband is OK with that?' They just don't understand.

"I have a story that is quintessential Fred," she said. "A couple of years ago at the Sportsmen's Midwest

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