

SILUETAS METÁLICAS



¡SILUETAS METÁLICAS!

Pronounced in the native tongue of Mexico, land of its origin, the name of this new shooting game has an intriguing, provocative ring. And those who have tried it will agree it is the most intriguing shooting sport in decades. Metal targets of birds and animals approximately life-sized are placed at what at first seem to be impossible ranges. Scoring of the matches couldn't be simpler. The targets must be hit, and knocked over, within a time limit. Missed targets are ignored as the shooter moves to the next until one shot has been fired at each target in the allotted time.

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Metallic Silhouettes had their beginning in Mexico during the era of the revolutionary Francisco (Pancho) Villa. But no one knows just where or when the first match was fired. Some say that the first impromptu match occurred between the *Villistas*. From the outset targets were chickens, goats, sheep and steers, tethered down range at some arbitrary but challenging distance. From this spontaneous beginning, the sport of shooting at live animals grew, at least sporadically. Little is known about the matches held during the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1940s the game had attained a semi-commercial status. But interest among competitors was failing, due to fraud, pay-offs and other unscrupulous practices. As conducted then, live animal shoots offered ample opportunity for cheating and there were those who seized the opportunity to do so. A Mexican magazine once published an expose' on the unsportsmanlike conduct of officials and some

competitors at these shoots.

Live animal shooting died and it's just as well. While humanitarian considerations were not the prime cause, few today would favor the use of domestic stock for targets.

An old-timer who still competes in matches on both sides of the border saw the first use of metal targets in 1948. It was an informal match that took place in Mexico City. The president of a club in Orizaba, Veracruz, learned of this metal target match and introduced it to his club. The targets produced a loud clang when hit and had to be knocked off a rail to count. As such there was scant opportunity for a cheating scandal like the live shoots and the game quickly caught on with club members. The first National Championship was held in Mexico City in 1952 and by the 1960s the Mexicans had the game well organized. It was soon discovered by American rifle shooters who began to attend the matches across the border. But when some greedy *aduaneros* (custom officials) at the border began to bite them for gun "taxes" their visits became fewer.

In 1967 the first U.S. Metallic Silhouette range was set up in Nogales, Arizona. Then another was erected at Bisbee-Douglas, Arizona. The game languished for a time. The first noteworthy competition was held at Tucson, April 12, 1967, and an invitation was extended to Mexican shooters. The Mexicans welcomed this and the Tucson shooters became a part of the International Northern League which included shooters from clubs in several cities in Sonora, Mexico.

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Silhouette shooting grew as other clubs, mainly in the Southwest, adopted the new sport. National exposure in several shooting publications stimulated more interest. Other clubs in the nation acquired steel targets and began holding matches. The game crossed yet another international border and has enjoyed growing participation in Canada.

As presently conducted, Metallic Silhouette for centerfire rifles (center-

fire pistol shooters have their variation, described on page 324) is on banks of five targets at four ranges. At 200 meters (219 yards) are *gallinas* or chickens. The *javelinas* or pigs are at 300 meters (327 yards). *Guajalotes*, the turkeys, are at 385 meters (419 yards) and *borregos*, the rams, at 500 meters (547 yards). Competitors are permitted 2½ minutes to fire five shots at each range. Targets are taken, left to right, and targets hit out of sequence are scored as misses. All



firing is from the off-hand position with slings or other artificial support prohibited. Rifle calibers must be 6mm or larger and weigh no more than 4.5 kilograms (10 lbs. 2 oz.) with scope. The long favorite caliber is the 308 WCF. The 6.5, 270, 7mm and a few 30-06s are seen on the line, but they are definitely a minority. The game and rules are geared to popular standard big game rifles. Belted magnums are rarely seen. Many clubs prohibit them because they cause excessive target damage. But for most, excessive recoil from legal weight magnums has a telling effect on marksmanship long before the match has ended.

To reliably knock over the rams (which weigh over 50 lbs.), bullets of 160 grains or heavier are needed. A hit that merely produces a clang and leaves the target standing is scored a miss—the targets must be knocked over. It's keenly disappointing to hit a target and not receive a score.

No question about it, *Siluetas Metalicas* is a tough game at best. Shooters

who can manage to score on half their targets have a lot of matches and many hours of off-hand practice behind them. Add to this the often present conditions of wind and mirage and it is obvious why the winners always leave a lot of their targets standing.

In spite of its difficulty, serious shooters who try the game once are usually hooked. Many casual shooters have become very serious competitors after just one match. And, unlike many other traditional target events, Metallic Silhouette has a great deal of spectator appeal. There's no waiting for the statistics office to count and score some holes in a paper target, then post the scores perhaps hours later. The instant the shot is fired, those watching know whether an X or an O will go on the score card.

This company supports Metallic Silhouette shooting in all forms. And we urge those who have not yet tried it to do so. You may find it your most exciting shooting experience.



Metallic Silhouettes

New Game For Handguns

by **ELGIN T. GATES**
Executive Director, IHMSA

Nothing has ever hit the handgun world with the dramatic impact of metallic silhouette shooting!

On past occasions, when firing at paper targets with one of the big Magnums, I've felt a sense of massive overkill. Even football-sized rocks on the side of a nearby hill seemed like flimsy targets for the smashing thunderbolts delivered from such as the .41 and .44 Magnums, and a few others.

The subject is academic now. There's an exciting new game in town that provides worthy opponents for big bore handguns, a game called metallic silhouettes. It is also the most interesting and exhilarating shooting sport that has appeared on the horizon in many a year.

Try it once and you will likely be

hooked. Even minor success will bring instant gratification. On the other hand you may feel a sense of frustration and near impotence. You will probably walk away from the firing line with the sudden realization that your big Magnum isn't as potent as you thought it was. You may feel a bit ineffectual; at least thoughtful and subdued. And you can hardly wait to try it again!

Furthermore, it opens up a whole new world of handgun ballistics that will add new pages to the loading manuals. During the past year more progress has been made in long range handgun shooting as regards equipment, loads and techniques, than in all the years put together since the handgun was invented.

There is something about the game



that appeals to whatever latent instinct there is inside a man that wants action whenever he pulls the trigger.

Action is the name of metallic silhouette shooting. As a spectator sport it has no equal in the shooting world. Punching holes in paper targets at short distances has heretofore been the accepted technique of handgun competition. Silhouette shooting adds a new dimension.

As practice for actual hunting in the field it is a country mile ahead of anything else on the horizon. For the man who doesn't hunt, for whatever the reason, but likes the machismo of shooting big bore handguns, it is the perfect game.

For the uninitiated, here is a taste of what metallic silhouette shooting is all about.

Level down on a half-inch-thick steel plate chicken painted flat black at fifty meters with your favorite Thompson Center Contender in .30 Herrett, Ruger .44, S&W .41, Dan Wesson .357 Magnum, or whatever. A



Shooting silhouettes on the Lewiston range.





Her first shot with a 44 Magnum.

low hit will take the leg out from under the steel bird with a gratifying clang. A hit high on the back can tumble it end over end. A fore or aft hit can send it spinning wildly. A miss will likely send up a spurt of dirt — and you will miss a lot of them.

Next is the lifesize Javelina silhouette at 100 meters, also of half-inch plate. Five of them are standing on a bank about ten feet higher than the shooting line. Your first shot is a miss. Then another miss, and still another. Then a satisfying clang from a solid hit that topples the steel pig off its stand.

At the next firing point you are up on the side of a valley shooting downhill at a row of lifesize turkeys, 150 meters distant. More misses. Then you settle down, dig in, and squeeze off a shot with tooth-gritting concentration. The chosen turkey turns slowly to one side from a front hit then topples over slowly as the hit clang comes back up the slope. How sweet it is!

Then, suddenly, it's your turn to shoot the rams. Oh, no! you think, as you look at those tiny black sil-

houettes over on the other side of the valley. They too are lifesize. But shooting them at 200 meters? With a handgun? Nobody can hit one at that distance.

But they do. Maybe you miss the first five, the first ten, or maybe hit one on a leg. You get the satisfaction of a clang, but the ram remains standing with regal contempt. Finally, with perseverance, skill, determination and luck, the moment comes when you tag a ram solidly and watch with bated breath as the distant silhouette seems to hang in suspended motion, then slowly, majestically, it topples off the rail. I tell you, pistoleros, there just isn't anything to equal it in the realm of paper-punching or any other kind of artificial target shooting.

No one will forget the thrill of toppling that first ram. But you won't be long satisfied with just one because there are five in a bank and you get one shot at each.

Spectator interest? Let any shooter blow down the first four silhouettes on any bank and you can bet that every eye at the range will be watching as he buckles down — probably with the

two-minute shooting limit coming to an end — to fire at the last target. There will be groans of sympathy if he misses, solid applause if he cleans the rack.

That's metallic silhouette shooting. It isn't the only handgun game in town, but for sheer, spine-tingling exhilaration, it's way ahead of whatever is in second place. It is, in one simple phrase, the epitome of long range handgunning.

The International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association is the sanctioning body for virtually all of the handgun silhouette matches being held throughout the country.

IHMSA rules provide for two basic categories of competition, Production guns and Unlimited guns. Shooting is freestyle, except there is a separate classification for standing competition.

Rules are very specific. Production guns must be used as they come over

the counter. Only two exceptions are allowed. Sights may be painted to contrast against the normally black silhouettes, and any catalog grip or stock available to the general public may be used. Inside, only the trigger action may be honed.

The Unlimited category is just that, unlimited. The only restrictions are a weight limit of 4½ pounds and a barrel length and sight radius not to exceed 15 inches.

In a little over two years, membership in IHMSA has reached the 9000 mark.

The founding principles of IHMSA are directed toward the legitimate sporting and recreational use of handguns for all Americans. Metallic silhouette, as administered by IHMSA, is an enjoyable, family oriented shooting sport.

Write: IHMSA, Box 1609, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401

The unlimited class.

