



2020 Greater Houston Sports Club Briley Blue Goose

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Freedom. It's the reason we honor our Veterans each Memorial Day and this year, more than most, the meaning of the word seemed to resonate at the Greater Houston Sports Club's *Briley Blue Goose*. Scheduled for Memorial weekend, May 22 through 25, it was the first sanctioned state and national skeet event held since March. There was noticeable anticipation as RV's, cars, and trucks made their way to the club through light Houston traffic before guns were uncased that, in some cases, had a little dust on them. Folks who had spent months "social distancing," and thinking about the health of their friends, family, and country were happy to be outdoors, to renew friendships, and focus on breaking clay targets.

The 2020 *Briley Blue Goose* opened on Friday with the *Buckle Gosling* event. This year dubbed the *Gosling*, it was the second time the *Buckle Race*, Greater Houston Sports Club (GHSC) popular tournament series, kicked-off the *Blue Goose*. Now in its 7th year, the *Buckle Race* is a fun format that introduces competitive shooting without the pressure of a big-league tournament. The Friday *Buckle Gosling* Doubles Champion was Archie Alexander and RU Cameron Schuster. The .410 laurels went to Champion Carter Royston with RU Brian D'souza. George Murray crushed 198 targets to take the HOA with RU Armour Strunk two targets behind.



The *Blue Goose* Main Event opened Saturday morning with four 12-gauge and two 20-gauge rotations. There was a slew of perfect scores at the end of the 12-gauge event, and in the end, the \$750 payout Champion spot was grabbed by Allen Mitchell. RU was Josh Poole. Sunday marked the completion of the 20-gauge event, and Rachel Barringer went home with the top spot and the \$750 Champion payout, followed by RU Cameron Schuster. There were two 100s scored in the 28-gauge event, the perfect rounds shot by Champion Brandon Cade and RU Cameron Schuster.

The Memorial Day .410 competition produced one perfect 100 for Junior shooter and Event Champ Allen Mitchell. Laura Burge took RU with a 99. Next on the Monday schedule was the HOA shoot-offs, with the *Blue Goose* HOA Champion title and \$1,000 purse going to Californian Daniel Bocks with a 396. One target down was Jason Ward who earned the RU slot, and last year's *Blue Goose* champ Cameron Schuster took 3rd. Daniel, by the way, almost didn't make the shoot. Travel from California to Texas was restricted during the state's quarantine, but the governor's office announced the ban would be lifted on May 22 – the first day of the tournament. Booking a "red-eye flight," Daniel arrived in time for the first event, and in the end, took the shoot's top honors.



As might be expected, there were a number of changes made to the structure of the *Blue Goose* venue. The celebrated evening banquets were canceled, along with the 12-gauge Bounty, May Madness, and 2-man team shooting events. A cap was placed on the number of people permitted in the clubhouse at one time and pavilion seating was reduced. Some of the modifications were innovative, such as the staff's shoot-off format. Club COO Kevin Dougherty says that "to reduce crowding, we ran shoot-offs for only the concurrent, class, and overall gun champ. We used five fields, with only four on a field at a time. The abbreviated shoot-off schedule kept crowding to a minimum and the total time to around only 15 minutes. We ran everything else as long-run." None of the 150 shooters who participated in the 2020 *Briley Blue Goose* seemed concerned about what was different or missing from the schedule. They were having too much fun and enjoying the shooting action.

The late May Texas weather Friday and Saturday was picture perfect, warm but not hot. Sunday morning dawned fair, the sun squeezing orange and yellows ray between clouds that billowed into a pastel blue sky, as white, blue, and black-crowned herons filled the uncertain morning air. Things were going to change. Rain held off for the morning, and by the time the downpours and heavy wind did finally come blowing in the last shoot-off participants were walking off the field. Monday morning began with another deluge, but once again the skies cleared, as if on cue, as the first .410 shooters took the field.



The Greater Houston Sports Club staff is renowned for their planning, hospitality, and execution of clay target events. This year, however, was unlike any other. Kevin says that the staff held a number of planning meetings during event preparation, so “we weren’t surprised that the shoot was pretty much smooth sailing. We were ready.” The success of the event and the relaxed atmosphere were clearly a testament to their efforts, and while behind the scenes there was serious discussion and planning, the GHSC staff managed to have a good time bringing this shoot together. One example was the design of the *2020 Blue Goose* commemorative T-shirt –with its signature yellow surgical masks covering the models in the club logo on the front, and another added to the goose on the back. Masks even covered the faces of the shooters gracing the *Blue Goose* monument.

GHSC’s members, its Board of Directors, and management and staff extend their congratulations to the winners and wish to thank all of the participants, sponsor Briley, and the referees for making the *2020 Briley Blue Goose* another special one. The club anticipates another great *Blue Goose* in 2021 and looks forward to seeing returning shooters and meeting new ones. More information is coming soon for the *2021 Briley Blue Goose* at www.myskeet.com.