Partner Down; and Leaving Las Vegas. All of these stages were well designed and challenging for the shooters. It was grand fun to shoot a match that was designed with a completely new mindset that’s outside my normal comfort zone. As a side note, the stages were kinda generally revolver friendly…kinda.

All the stages were manned with friendly, shooter-centric Safety Officers and the stage descriptions were very detailed…very detailed. The shooter who paid attention was well ahead of those of us who insisted in going into “brain shock” at the start signal. More than once I heard, “Mark, did you shoot the inside target first?” “Yes,” I would respond (having determined, in the heat of the day, that it needed to be shot first) and I would be politely informed that I had earned yet another procedural. My excuse is that I didn’t wear a big enough hat and the desert heat was slowly cooking my brain. The staff did a first-class job of keeping chilled water delivered to the bays and keeping the shooters hydrated. Then, I was a bit surprised to see that I was the shooter with webbed feet dressed in long pants and long sleeves. It wasn’t my first rodeo; I’ve been in the hot desert before.

There were two “dropped gun” stages, but involving revolvers. My favorite was New York Reload (Bug). Both dropped gun stages were fired with revolvers that were then placed on the prize table…pretty clever, don’t you think? In my case, I put down an empty four-inch revolver to pick up a loaded four-inch revolver...go figure.

Shooters got their money’s worth out of this entry fee. The first caps were busted at about 8:00 am and the last squads finished about 7:30 pm. It was a very long, hot day – but a day full of challenging stages and fellowship.

The Las Vegas IDPA Shooters did a nice job of stocking the Prize table and managing the raffle for access to the prize table. There were seven guns on the prize table: a very custom one-of-a-kind Springfield XD Tactical 9mm with a custom desert finish by Bob Hostettler of Bob’s Custom Shop, a custom 9mm built on a 1911 frame by Bar-Sto Precision Machine, two Smith & Wesson Model 60 revolvers, one Smith & Wesson Model 64, and two Glock certificates. Other items of note (none of which I was pulled early enough to pick up) were four 4-day training certificates to Front Sight Firearms Training Institute in Las Vegas. The Prize table was rich enough to support just about every shooter in the match. It’s always nice to get something off the prize table. I won two pistols in 2006, and don’t expect to win another until some time in my 70s.

While chatting about guns waiting to tape targets, I told one of the late-arriving shooters that I stopped shooting my Springfield XD because I didn’t like the trigger. Little did I know that I was talking to Irv Stone of Bar-Sto Precision Machine. He let me try an XD he had re-triggered. “Wow!” is all I can say. If you have an XD that needs a new trigger, consider calling Bar-Sto Precision Machine (760-367-2747). Irv and his crew can make those bad boys sing.

So it went at the great shootout in the desert of Las Vegas. High round count, good companions, and the three shooters on my squad who won some hardware, all added to the experience. Kudos go to young Seth Jensen of Nevada, who won first Sharp Shooter in Custom Defensive Pistol and the Most Accurate Shooter Award. I will just have to return to the practice line and work on my skills at following directions.

Above: Seth Jensen of Nevada loads and makes ready, on his way to winning Sharp Shooter in the Custom Defensive Pistol Class and the Accurate Shooter Award. Note the setting sun. Left: Author refines his new “one knee” kneeling position while executing a high-speed reload.