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An Interview With Smith & Wesson's Doug Koenig - The 2012 NRA World Action Pistol Champion

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (October 9, 2012) – Smith & Wesson Corp. today announced that Champion Shooter Doug Koenig won his fifth NRA World Action Pistol Championship held September 12-16 in Philipsburg, Germany. Koenig's score of 1,916 points left him in a three-way tie for first place. With the tiebreaker coming down to the number of "X" counts, Koenig edged out Kevin Angstadt with 184 "X" hits to take the Overall Title.

The three-day NRA World Action Pistol Championship is comprised of four separate matches with fixed times. During the match, competitors participate in the Practical Event, Barricade Event, Falling Plate Event and the Moving Target Event.

Considered by many to be one of the most well-rounded competitors in today's shooting sports, Koenig has had quite an impressive 2012 season. In June, Koenig was part of Team Smith & Wesson's First Place Industry Open Division at the Sportsman's Team Challenge National Championship. Following the competition, Koenig also took home titles in the Open Division of the Masters International Shooting Championship, the Overall Title at the MidwayUSA & NRA Bianchi Cup and the European Open Bianchi Cup.

Blue Heron caught up with Koenig during some downtime to get his reaction to his latest victory.

BHC: Doug, congratulations on your NRA World Action Pistol Championship win. You obviously have to be pleased with your performance. What's your overall feeling coming away with your fifth world championship?

DK: It was a great feeling. I put my heart and soul into the match, as I do all of them. I shot the European this year and last, mainly because they were on the same range. I wanted to get familiar with the range, surroundings, places to eat and all that kind of stuff. Get all my ducks lined up, so to speak. I had more time to prep for this event than I typically do and I practiced dialing in my equipment at home. I put it all out there in an effort to try and win my fifth championship.

BHC: Which Smith & Wesson gun did you use for the match and what made this gun ideal for this match?

DK: During the match, I shot the Smith & Wesson 1911 DK .38 Super. Smith & Wesson is known for high-quality products and this gun was perfect for the situation. It has been customized for Bianchi competition, which means it has a shroud and I've added my own personal optic. The pistol that I'm using will typically shoot around one-inch, 12-shot groups at 50 yards. When everything is dialed in, there's really no other choice for that style of competition.

BHC: Can you talk about the conditions of the course and how it affected your focus and performance?

DK: When we arrived the weather and range were great. It was probably in the mid-upper 80s. The day before the match started, a cold front came in and the high was only in the low 60s and it dropped down into the 40s at night. This change didn't directly affect anything or anybody but it is different. Your hands are subject to getting cold and this does change the game. The range in Germany is outdoors, but it has a sound dampening system crisscrossing the roof. Even though it's basically an outdoor range, you feel like you're inside. The lighting is a little darker, which changes things up. I think overall, it made the whole thing a little tougher for everybody.

BHC: Which stage did you find to be the most difficult and why?

DK: For me, this year the Practical Event ended up being more difficult than it needed to be. I had a little situation with my glasses. That's where I shot two eights on one string on the Practical. Typically this event is one of my strong suits. So that was kind of a hiccup or bump in the road. I just tried to stay positive and keep my focus. I knew it wasn't over until we fired the last shot.

BHC: Being held in Germany, how does this affect your preparation and competition as a whole?

DK: It all comes down to the preparation ahead of time. I had made two trips over there for matches already, so a lot of the legwork was out of the way. Things like getting ammunition sent over, finding the most suitable hotel and restaurants were already checked off. I live in Pennsylvania Dutch country, so the food in Germany is very similar to what I typically eat in the Northeast, so there wasn't much of an adjustment. It's still important to find good places that you want to eat at and know the locations. Keeping your routine just like it is at home so that there are no surprises is really crucial when traveling overseas.

BHC: This match marked the end of your competitive shooting season. What's next for you, any downtime?

DK: For me, because I have the television show, we have several hunts being filmed this fall in November and December. And then, basically it's back to work as a shooter. Come SHOT Show, the start of the new season isn't far behind. So, I am going to enjoy a little downtime with the family for the next couple of weeks before I hit the road and start filming.

BHC: We know you're an avid hunter and so are your boys. What's first on the Koenig family's agenda?

DK: Well, archery season just opened, so I'll take the boys out after football practice this week and before their games this weekend. It's been great to watch them get involved and their enthusiasm is contagious.

BHC: Full-time shooter and full-time dad?

DK: Absolutely. And a coach.

BHC: Doug, thanks for sharing your experiences from the championship with us. It's been fun. One last thing before you go. Your show, "Doug Koenig's Championship Season" will be airing the NRA World Action Pistol Championship soon. When can fans tune in to see the action?

DK: Thank you for the opportunity. The show airs on the Pursuit Channel Fridays at 8:00 p.m., Mondays at 11:00 a.m. and Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. (EST). The episode over the world championship will probably air within the next two to three weeks.

About Smith & Wesson

Smith & Wesson Holding Corporation (NASDAQ Global Select: SWHC) is a U.S.-based leader in firearm manufacturing and design, delivering a broad portfolio of quality firearms, related products and training to the consumer, law enforcement, and military markets. The company's brands include Smith & Wesson, M&P and Thompson/Center Arms. Smith & Wesson facilities are located in Massachusetts and Maine. For more information on Smith & Wesson, call (800) 331-0852 or log on to www.smith-wesson.com.