

A DAY ON THE KAIMAI RANGES: THE 2018 KAIMAI WINTER WARM UP

David Mamea

The day of the 2018 Kaimai Winter Warm Up begins with a cool morning and a promise of blue skies. Kaimai Pistol Club is just ten minutes drive from Katikati, close to the top of the Kaimai Range. It has four ranges, three of which can host two stages each, and a gully for a jungle run. Surrounded by bush and paddocks, it enjoys an excellent view of Matakana Island and the Pacific Ocean beyond.

KPC President Carl Purcell welcomes everyone, and he goes through the briefing. There are eight stages to the day, and we need to get cracking. I remember part way through his briefing to resume breathing, my nerves having snuck up on me.

The Winter Warm Up is the brainchild of KPC's Jono Mitchell, Steve Donoghue, Logan Parkin and Carl. They saw a gap of several months in the IPSC shooting calendar and thought a 'short sharp one-dayer' a month out from the North Island championship would get shooters tuned up — 'warmed up' — for that, as well as for the South Islands and Nationals that follow. It's only been running since 2016 but in that time, attendance has almost doubled from 45 that first year to 79 in 2018.

I'm in a squad of fifteen, mostly Standard division with a handful of Production shooters, our grades ranging from Master to Ungraded. We come from as far south as Whanganui and as far north as Whangārei, and the calibres are a mix of 9mm, .38 Super, .40 S&W, with a lone .45 ACP shooter.

Our first stage is similar to an Action Pistol plates match: engage four paper and three steel targets from 17 metres. I'm grateful for the easy start. My cockiness disappears after I miss the first plate. Two fifteen-round magazines later, I finish this eleven-round course, suitably chastened.

The next few stages involve movement. I plan where to change magazines — I err on the side of caution, sometimes dropping mags that are only half-empty — and try to remember to engage every target. I find I can hit everything except swinging targets.

The more competitive shooters in our squad are a mouthy bunch: each stage briefing is greeted with attempts at naked negotiation and pushing the boundaries of what can and can't be done on the stage. This to-and-fro between the shooters and range officers is good natured and entertaining to watch.

After four stages, I realise I've burned through over a hundred rounds, with another four stages to go. The minimum round count for the Winter Warm Up is 160 rounds. I congratulate myself on having brought 500 rounds with me.

There's a stage that's strong hand only. I'd forgotten that that was a possibility with IPSC — matter of fact, almost anything, safety foremost in mind, is a possibility with IPSC. On another stage, I hesitate after my second shot at the final target: did I get both on paper? And I realise in that moment what calling my shots mean. As I show clear and holster, my tunnel vision disappears, and I see that I nicked the very edge of the target. Every little bit counts.

On a short stage I run dry partway through, necessitating a time-consuming reload standing in front of my next target. I was tired — I was having so much fun, I'd forgotten to take a break for food and water. I remedy that before the final two stages. On one stage I leave no target untouched (but it took me over a minute to finish), while on the other I manage to reload *and* fire *and* hit my targets all whilst moving. I leave that stage feeling like a rock star.

In the end I expended 192 rounds, only 32 over the minimum round count. Planning magazine changes and leaving no target untouched is what I've learned today. Swinging targets, calling my shots, and shooting unsupported are added to my training wish list.

It's late afternoon when the prize giving gets underway. Winners and runners up receive their awards but then something else happens. One by one, all competitors are called up to receive a spot prize. No one leaves the Kaimai Winter Warm Up empty handed, which I think is awesome.

I win the overall spot prize of a new pistol. A cold sweat breaks out when I go up to shake Carl's hand and accept it. Only days earlier I had sworn to my Lovely Wife that a recently purchased revolver would be my LAST EVER FIREARM. I consider not telling her.

It's not until I'm driving back north that I realise that our lone .45 ACP shooter was driving a Grand Power like one I have back home. I should've asked him how it went — my one had field-stripped itself mid-match a couple of times. I've already registered for the North Island championship in Whanganui in late September; I hope to catch up with him there.

The Kaimai Winter Warm Up was made possible with considerable time and effort put in by: match director Mike Feeney who stood in for Jono Mitchell at short notice; Tanya Taylor entered everything into the scoring program in the lead up to the shoot; the KPC committee designed the stages; the KPC members prepared the ranges and built the stages; Steve Donoghue provided the scorers' van; Mel Harvey provided hot soup and baked goods on the day; Tanya, Margaret Thomason and Salma handled scoring with assistance from Debbie Wakker's mum; and a heap of quality spot prizes were provided by David Butler of Rusty Dog Outdoors and Jai Lucas of Ammo Direct.

956 words including title and byline

Optional accompanying photos are 'Million dollar view to the east.jpg' and 'Stage 2 in action.jpg'