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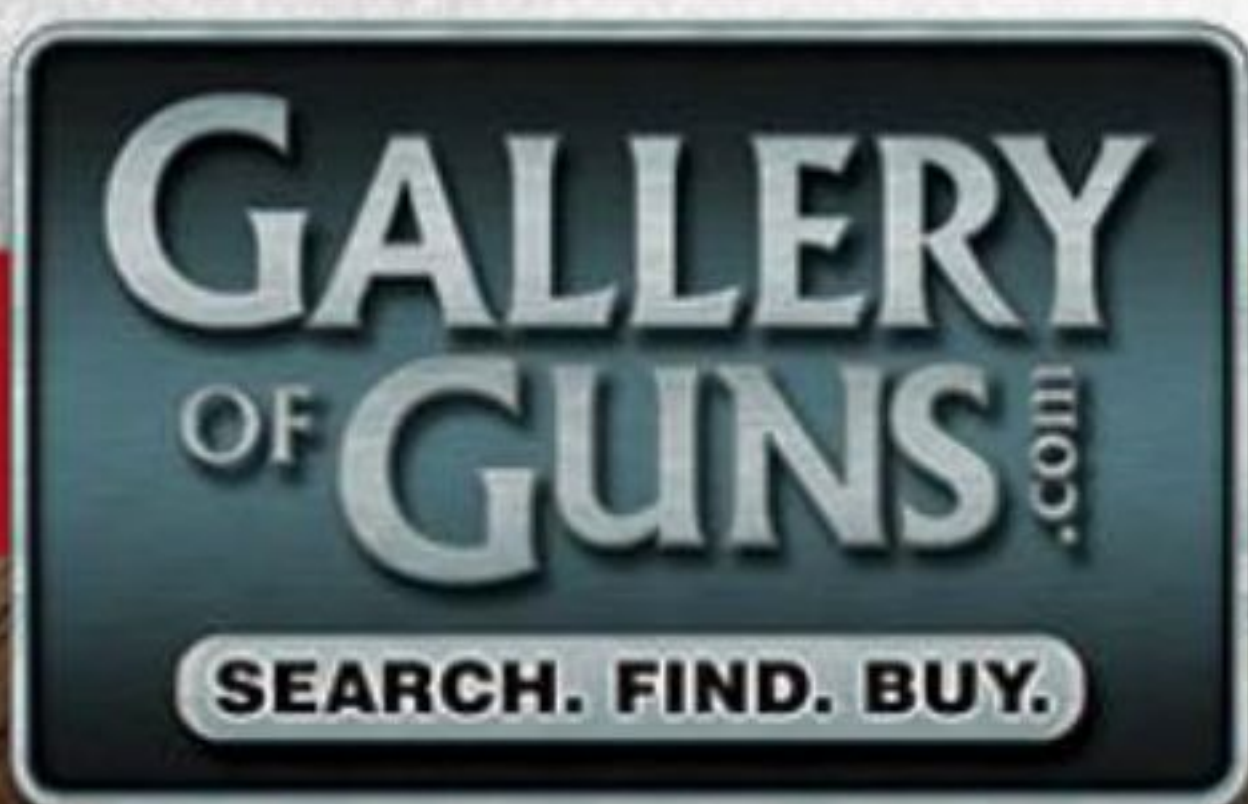


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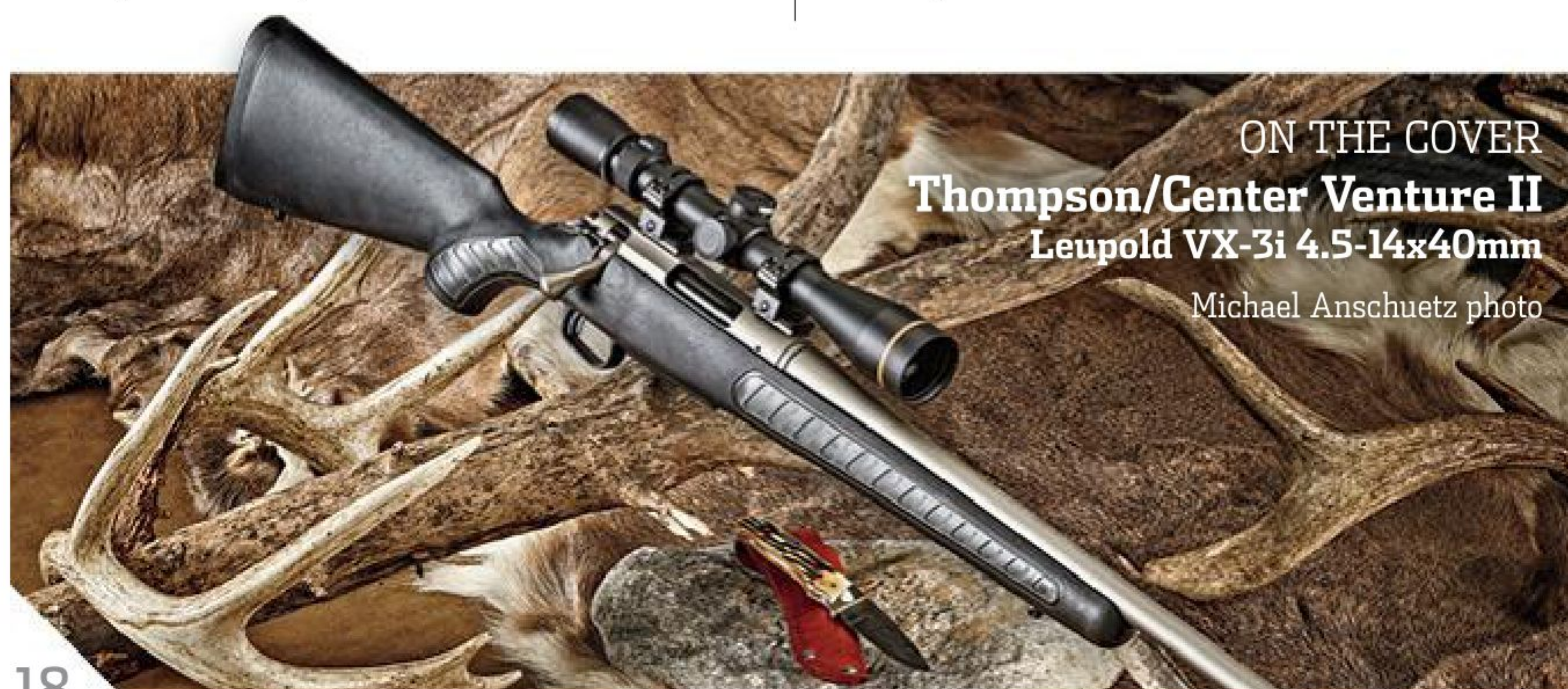
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MARCH
9th
2020

<<< We have the Benelli Lupo .300 Winchester Magnum At The Range. We celebrate Marlin's 150th anniversary at the Cody Firearms Museum. In the Pros vs. Joes competition, Tom Beckstrand shows his skill with a lever action rifle.



MARCH
16th
2020

<<< We have the Blackhawk T Series Holster At The Range. We test Big Ballistics in New Mexico in our Ballistic Science feature. We continue our Marlin 150th anniversary with a look at the Marlin Model 39A.



MARCH
23rd
2020

<<< We test the affect of extreme gun temperature in New Mexico in our Ballistic Science feature. We examine the Marlin Model 336 in our celebration of 150 years of Marlin. In the Pros vs. Joes competition, we challenge Chris Cereno in the Field Gun vs. 3-Gun Shotgun drill.

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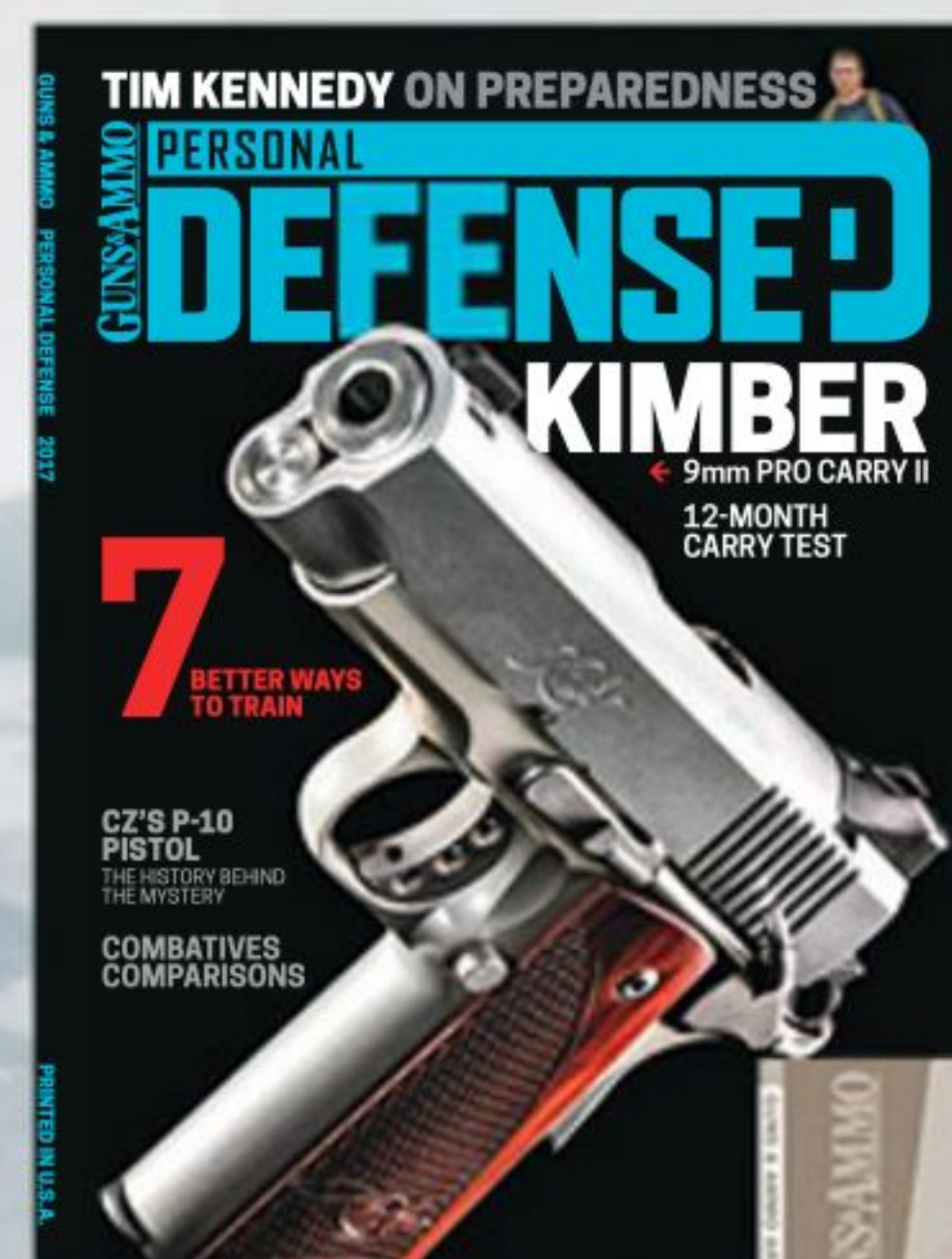


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The Man Who Would Save Remington

KEN D'ARCY TAKES THE HELM OF AMERICA'S OLDEST GUN MAKER. CAN HE RIGHT THE SHIP?

by J. Scott Rupp

As America's oldest gun maker, it's only natural that Remington has had its ups and downs since its founding in 1816 by Eliphalet Remington. Depending on who you talk to—okay, basically any gun person you talk to—the recent past has definitely not been an “up.” And the first person who would agree with that assessment is the company's new CEO, Ken D'Arcy.

D'Arcy comes to Big Green after several stints in the outdoor industry, including TrackingPoint and perhaps more notably airgun maker Crosman. He turned the latter company around, making it leaner and introducing innovative products—such as the first mass-produced PCP air rifle made in the United States.

Now he's tasked with bringing Remington back to prominence. When you talk to D'Arcy, you immediately get the impression he's a no-BS guy—in fact he tells you that right up front—and he is fully aware of the road that lies ahead. But as he said, “It's an iconic brand, and it deserves a fair shot.”

He's no newcomer to Remington,



either, having served on the company's board of directors since May 2018, so when he was hired as CEO he had good idea of what needed to be done.

“Job one is becoming financially sound,” he said, “and the number one challenge is to consolidate operations in order to be competitive. This takes money and machinery.”

Beyond that, he said, the company needs to pay more attention—a lot more—to what it produces.

“If you look at any successful company, they have a quality product,” he said. “You need to bring new products to the market on a regular basis, and these have to be quality products. They don't always have to be innovative, but they've got to be good.”

He cited the fact that previous regimes had focused more on penny-pinching than on quality, and he told the story of being in a recent product-planning meeting where managers

were talking about a recent product that had failed to meet expectations in the marketplace.

“They’d spent \$12 million and four years on it,” he said. “How can that happen?”

For starters, he said the company was going to stop trying to be all things to all people—concentrating on fewer things and doing those things better.

This includes the company’s brands. If you weren’t aware, Remington owns several well-known names, including Advanced Armament Corporation, Barnes, Bushmaster, DPMS, Marlin and more.

Going forward, D’Arcy said, the focus will be on just three: Barnes, Marlin and Remington. As for Bushmaster and DPMS, “We’re not an MSR company,” he said, indicating the company would simply “bench” the other brands—making no effort to market or support them, while still offering customer support to products already sold. D’Arcy also pointed out that Remington is a defense contractor, producing a number of weapon systems, and will continue to do so.

One exception is AAC. D’Arcy sees suppressors as an important part of the hunting and shooting community, and this brand will remain an active part of the portfolio.

During our conversation, D’Arcy constantly hammered on quality as the guiding force behind the “new” Remington. He said the company has made changes to its quality control processes, but perhaps more importantly, he and his team are trying to change the company culture.

“It has to start on the [production] line,” he said. “With somebody who looks at something and says, ‘That’s not right.’ It’s about putting pride back into the best firearms company in the world.”

Part of that, he said, is getting workers to feel more confident that management really cares—about them, about the products they produce—and is open and honest about the challenges the company faces.

It’s no surprise that our conversation eventually turned to the Model 700, which D’Arcy calls the “best shooting gun in the world.” But he was quick to point out it’s not perfect, and over the course of the next few years shooters can expect to see some changes to the iconic action. They won’t be terribly dramatic, he said, but rather multiple tweaks to make M700 rifles meet the needs of the modern rifle shooter.

He also takes a dim view of Remington’s “race to the bottom,” as it vied

to compete with numerous other gun makers to produce inexpensive, no-frills rifles. He believes that has cheapened the brand, and over the course of the next several years, he expects to move away from the lower end of the rifle market.

What does this mean for the shooting consumer? Impossible to say at this point. As D’Arcy pointed out, Remington’s fall from grace didn’t happen overnight, and any turnaround will take time.

“It’s taken a number of years to get to this point, and it’s going to take several years to get back” to where he wants the company can be.

It’s hard to come away from talking with D’Arcy—a serious, longtime race car driver who just a couple months before our interview had competed in a 24-hour road race in Daytona—without feeling confident he is the guy to turn this historic firearms company around. Not only does he seem to have the experience and the demeanor to make the right things happen, he’s a sportsman in the literal sense of the word. He hunts for meat, not trophies, and believes we need to get back to the family experience that nurtured so many of us hunters and shooters. It’s hard to imagine a better foundation to build upon. ■

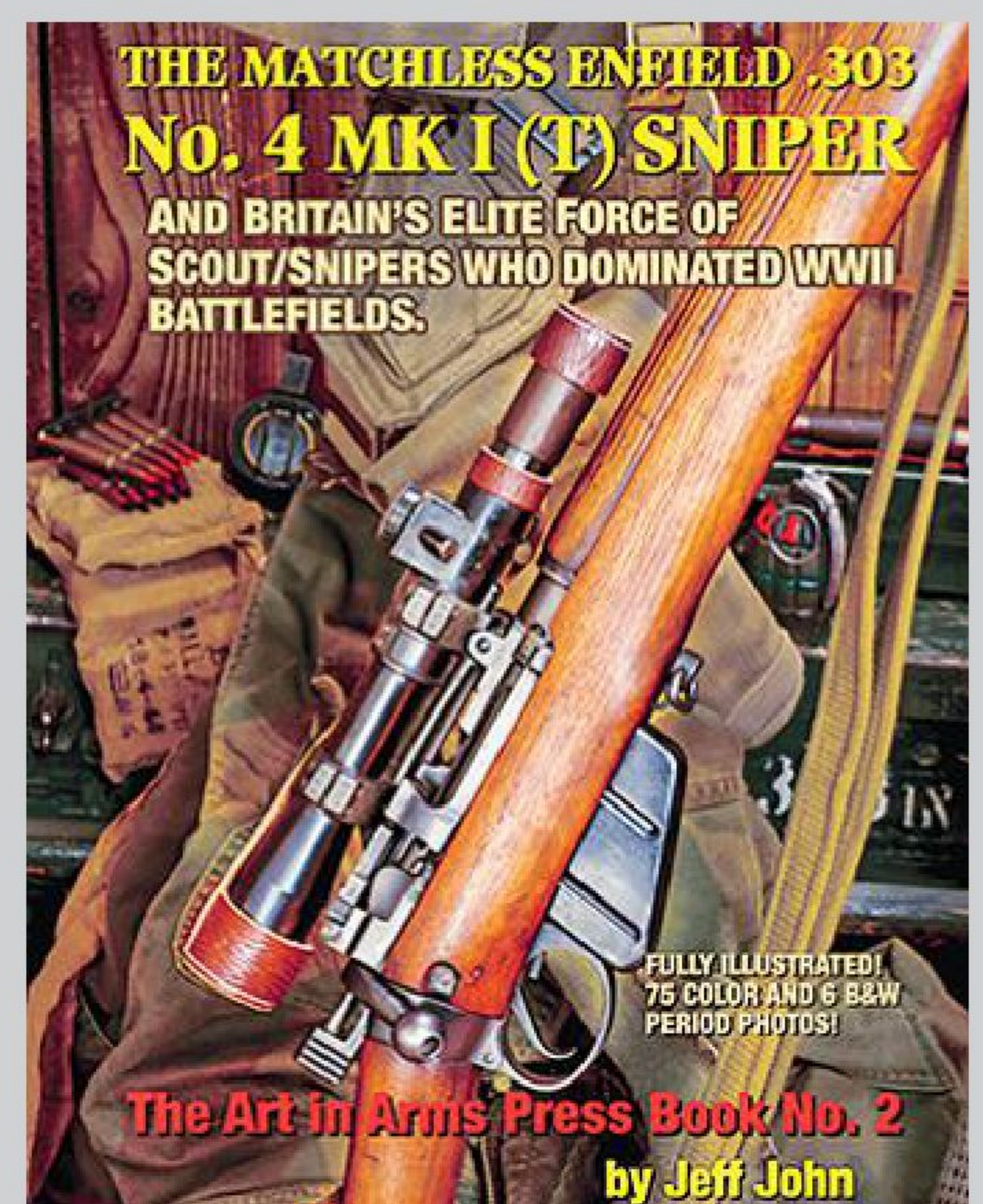
Diving into the Enfield Sniper Rifle

Years ago, I worked in the same office as author Jeff John, and I’d never met a more passionate fan of old military rifles. He was forever building or rebuilding one or another, and he loved to show them to the rest of us. With his new paperback book, *The Matchless Enfield .303 No. 4 Mk I (T) Sniper*, he shares his enthusiasm for a time-honored military rifle.

Over the course of 72 pages, replete with both full-color images and black-and-white historical photographs, he charts the path of Great Britain’s famous Enfield—and in particular a gun he calls “the finest sniper rifle of WWII.” His observations include not only the manufacturing and design processes but also the thought processes that led the country to develop and field the No. 4 Mk I (T).

The information is passed to the reader in a light, conversational style, and he doesn’t limit the discussion to just the gun but also the No. 32 riflescope British snipers used, plus info on slings, bayonets and a lot more. And because John’s focus is on a sample he purchased and worked with, there’s a good deal of advice on rebuilding and shooting the gun.

As he points out himself, this is not supposed to be a definitive look at the Enfield sniper rifle, and he includes a ton of great references for those who want a deeper dive. But as it is, it’s an interesting and informative peek at a significant military arm. The book is available from Amazon; cost is \$20.—JSR



CARTRIDGE CLASH » Brad Fitzpatrick

.375 H&H Mag. vs 9.3x62

In 1905 Otto Bock introduced the 9.3x62 Mauser to provide Germans living in colonial Africa with an affordable alternative to expensive double rifles. Propelling 286-grain 9.3mm (.366 inch) bullets at around 2,350 fps, the 9.3x62 generates roughly 3,500 ft.-lbs. of muzzle energy while generating relatively mild recoil. What's more, Bock's new cartridge fit neatly in standard-length Mauser 98 actions.

Then in 1912, the British firm of Holland & Holland released the .375 H&H Mag., a magnum-length belted cartridge that drove 300-grain bullets at 2,500 fps and produced a whopping 4,300 ft.-lbs. of punch. Soon the .375 H&H Mag. became the African queen for the full spectrum of game animals. And, like the 9.3x62, it dropped game in its tracks without generating excessive levels of recoil.

Over the decades the .375 H&H Mag. became the standard bearer for dangerous game cartridges, and once Winchester began offering the Model 70 in .375 H&H Mag. in 1937 the die was cast and American hunters had their big bore for Africa.

That means there are more ammo and rifle options available today for .375 H&H fans than for 9.3x62 shooters. There are .375 H&H production rifles available from several manufacturers, and factory ammo is available in weights ranging from 250 to 350 grains. A quick check of Brownells' website shows more than twice as many .375 H&H loads as there are 9.3x62 offerings.

The .375's reputation on big and dangerous game is beyond repute, and the round produces significantly more energy than you can get from a 9.3x62. Further, several African countries that make .375 the legal minimum caliber for dangerous game. In addition, the .375 H&H Mag. with lighter bullets

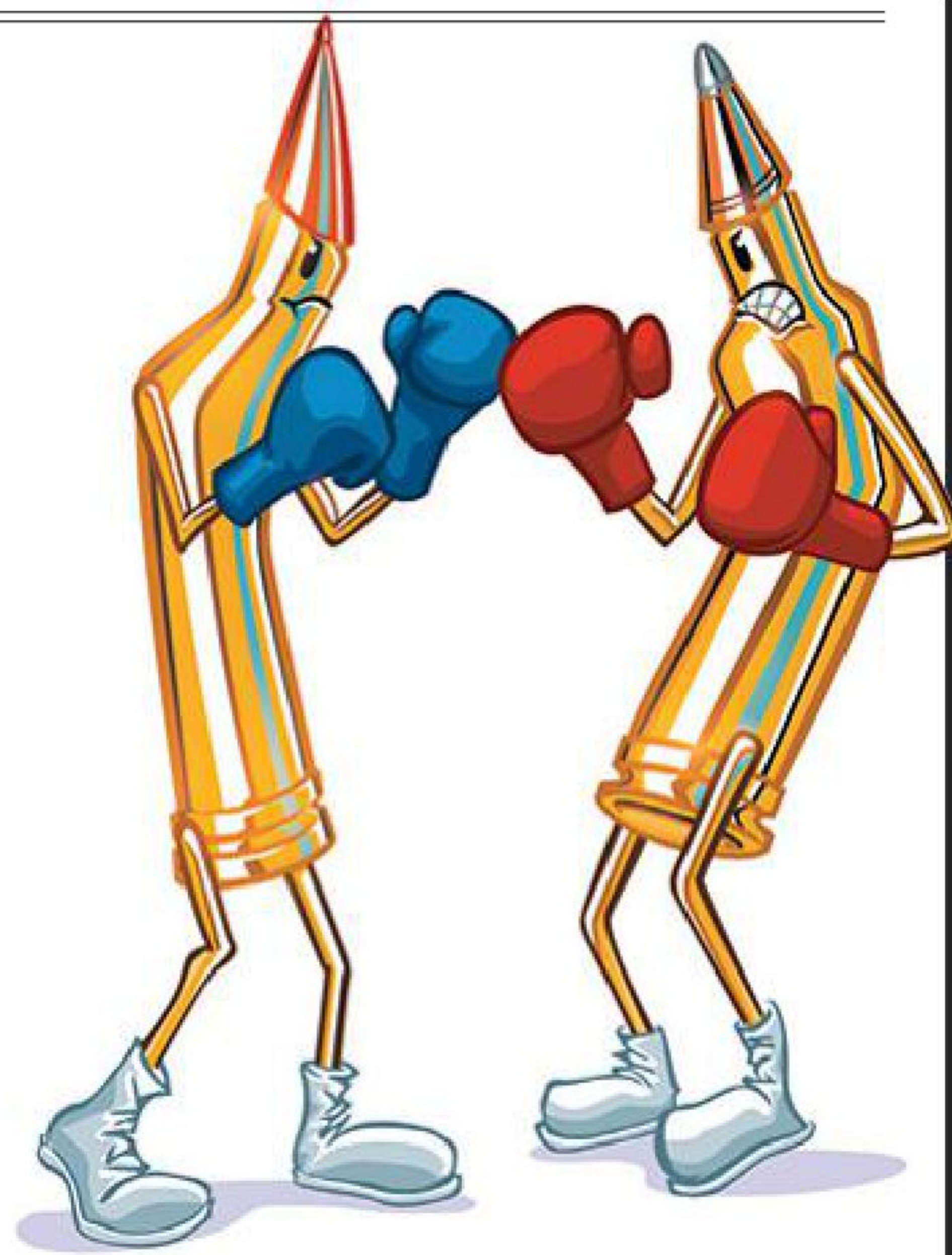
shoots flatter than the 9.3x62, which also makes it more versatile.

But before we kick the 9.3x62 down the back steps, let's take the time to look at some of the advantages this cartridge offers. For starters, the 9.3x62 does virtually everything the .375 H&H will with less recoil and gunpowder. Because the 9.3x62 fits in a standard action, guns can be built lighter and still won't beat the day-lights out of a shooter.

Even though there are fewer ammo options, factory loads are, on average, cheaper than the .375 H&H by an average of almost a dollar a round. And, according to *Speer's Reloading Manual 13*, you can resize existing .30-06 or .35 Whelen ammo for the 9.3x62, and that means a cheap brass option that's readily available.

In terms of performance, 286-grain 9.3mm bullets have the same sectional density as a 300-grain .375 H&H (.305), so the 9.3x62 penetrates extremely well. What's more, the 9.3x62 is now available loaded with 225- and 250-grain bullets—providing flat trajectories and enough power to stop big bears, elk, moose and the largest African plains game—and they do so with less recoil and gun weight than a .375 H&H.

It's impossible to evaluate the 9.3x62 without mentioning the blow that it took when the .375 Ruger emerged. The .375 H&H Mag's biggest



handicap is it requires a magnum-length action. The 9.3x62 was the standard-length alternative until Ruger launched the standard-length .375.

Nevertheless, the 9.3x62 is a practical cartridge for almost all the world's game at moderate distances, and even though it doesn't have the mainstream cult status of the .375 H&H, there are droves of 9.3x62 fans. CZ offers rifles chambered in the caliber, and in recent years, Ruger has also offered it so you'll occasionally see 9.3x62s on store shelves. If you see one, however, buy it quickly. I've just missed out on two Ruger 9.3x62 Hawkeye rifles because I didn't plunk my money down the moment I saw the gun.

.375 H&H MAG.

HITS

- More power and more reach
- Lots of rifle and ammo options
- Meets dangerous game minimums

MISSES

- Stiffer recoil
- Magnum-length actions are heavier
- Expensive to shoot

9.3x62

HITS

- Similar performance in a lighter rifle
- Easier to shoot well
- New loads great for a wide variety of game

MISSES

- Very limited rifle options
- Ammo typically needs to be ordered
- Not always legal for dangerous game

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Nightforce SHV 3-10x42mm

If you're looking for a practical hunting riflescope that will allow you to stretch the distance and do it well, Nightforce's SHV 3-10x42mm is your scope. Built on a 30mm tube, it's a second-focal-plane optic, and my sample came with the MOAR illuminated reticle.

With an overall length over 11.75 inches and a mountable tube length of roughly five inches, it's compact—and it's a sturdy piece of gear weighing 22 ounces.

The scope was mounted on a Mossberg Patriot Predator in 6.5 PRC—in Nightforce's excellent Ultralite low rings. These are top clamping instead of side clamping, and thank goodness for that since I find side-clamp rings to be a hassle to set up.

I'm on record as not being a fan of 30mm tubes for hunting scopes, and that's because I don't shoot at distance, but I know many people do. I counted the clicks and determined the scope offers 104.5 m.o.a. of elevation adjustment. The 1/4 m.o.a. clicks proved accurate and repeatable during testing.

The turrets are capped on this model, and resetting to zero is so simple I can't believe more optics companies don't do this. Instead of having to remove the cap by unscrewing two or three tiny, tiny Allen or Torx screws, on the SHV all you have to do is unscrew the top portion of the cap with a coin. Then simply lift off the cap, line up the "0" with the index mark on the scope and set it down.

You can do this with both the elevation and windage turrets. Too often it's not possible to reset the windage turret on a scope, and I get that it's not as crucial because few people click for wind in a hunting situation, but it's a nice touch nonetheless.

Both turrets also have numbered scales—even numbers on the left, odd numbers on the right—to make it easy to tell where you are in rotation travel.

If you prefer to hold instead of click for elevation, and if you're looking for a good reference for Kentucky windage,



Nightforce's SHV is a compact, practical scope for hunters who want or need to stretch the distance. The capped turrets are easily resettable by turning out the top screw with a coin, and the illumination control has an Off position between each number.

the MOAR reticle has you covered. It gives you 30 m.o.a. of elevation hold-over and 10 m.o.a. of "depression" on the vertical crosswire. The bottom portion of this wire thins to a point at the top, giving you a solid, quick reference point just below the 30 m.o.a. mark. You get 20 m.o.a. of wind holds on the horizontal wire.

On both wires you get reference numbers every 10 m.o.a. On the vertical wire, there are unnumbered marks every one m.o.a., and every second mark is wider. The horizontal wire also features unnumbered marks in the same intervals, but they don't extend to either side of the wire like those on the vertical do.

The center of the crosswire has an open area surrounding a small cross-hair. I like this design because it draws the eye to the very center, and it's easy

to pick up. If you're having trouble seeing it, simply turn on the illumination.

Illumination is powered by a CR2032 battery, and the control rheostat is on the left side of the scope. With this model there is no parallax control, so it's uncluttered, and you can dial up quickly without worrying you've changed the parallax setting.

The illumination on the SHV is more powerful than you'll find on other scopes because the dial goes up to 11! (That's a joke, in case you've never seen "Spinal Tap.") There are Off positions between each number.

Nightforce has made an excellent name for itself in the riflescope biz, and this SHV is a good example of why it has. I'm seeing street prices for this model just under the \$1,000 mark, and it's a lot of scope for the money.—*J Scott Rupp*

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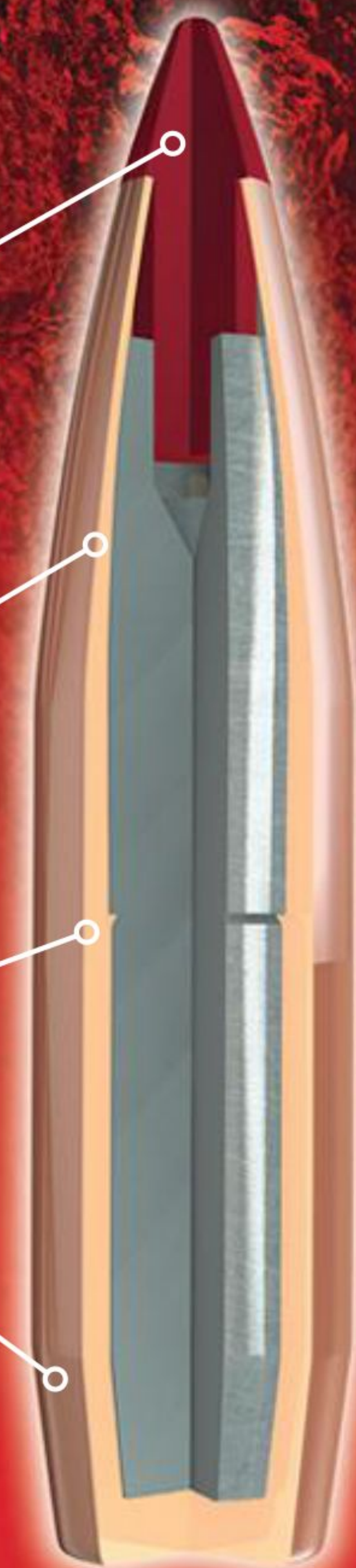


Heat Shield[®] Tip

AMP[®] Jacket

InterLock[®] Ring

Optimum Boattail



NEW GEAR » J. Scott Rupp



Savage Mark II Minimalist

Now that's it's once again an independent company, look for more innovation from Savage. Evidence of that can be found in the new Mark II Minimalist, which features a modernist laminate stock in green (shown) or brown. The rifle has an 18-inch carbon steel barrel with a sport contour and a 1/2x28 threaded muzzle. It incorporates the AccuTrigger and feeds from a 10-round detachable magazine. Caliber offerings include .17 HMR, .22 LR and .22 Mag.

» \$359, SAVAGEARMS.COM

Leupold Tracer

There are five styles in Leupold's new Performance Eyewear line, and they all have lenses with hydrophobic coatings to fight dirt, water and fingerprints, and they're diamond-coat-hardened to prevent scratches. They have complete UV protection and a no-slip nose bridge design. The Tracer (shown) features interchangeable lenses—including clear and yellow—that meet or exceed ANSI Z87.1 high velocity impact standards, and they come in tan or black frames.

» \$180 (tan), \$150 (black); LEUPOLD.COM



Swarovski ZSi Illuminated

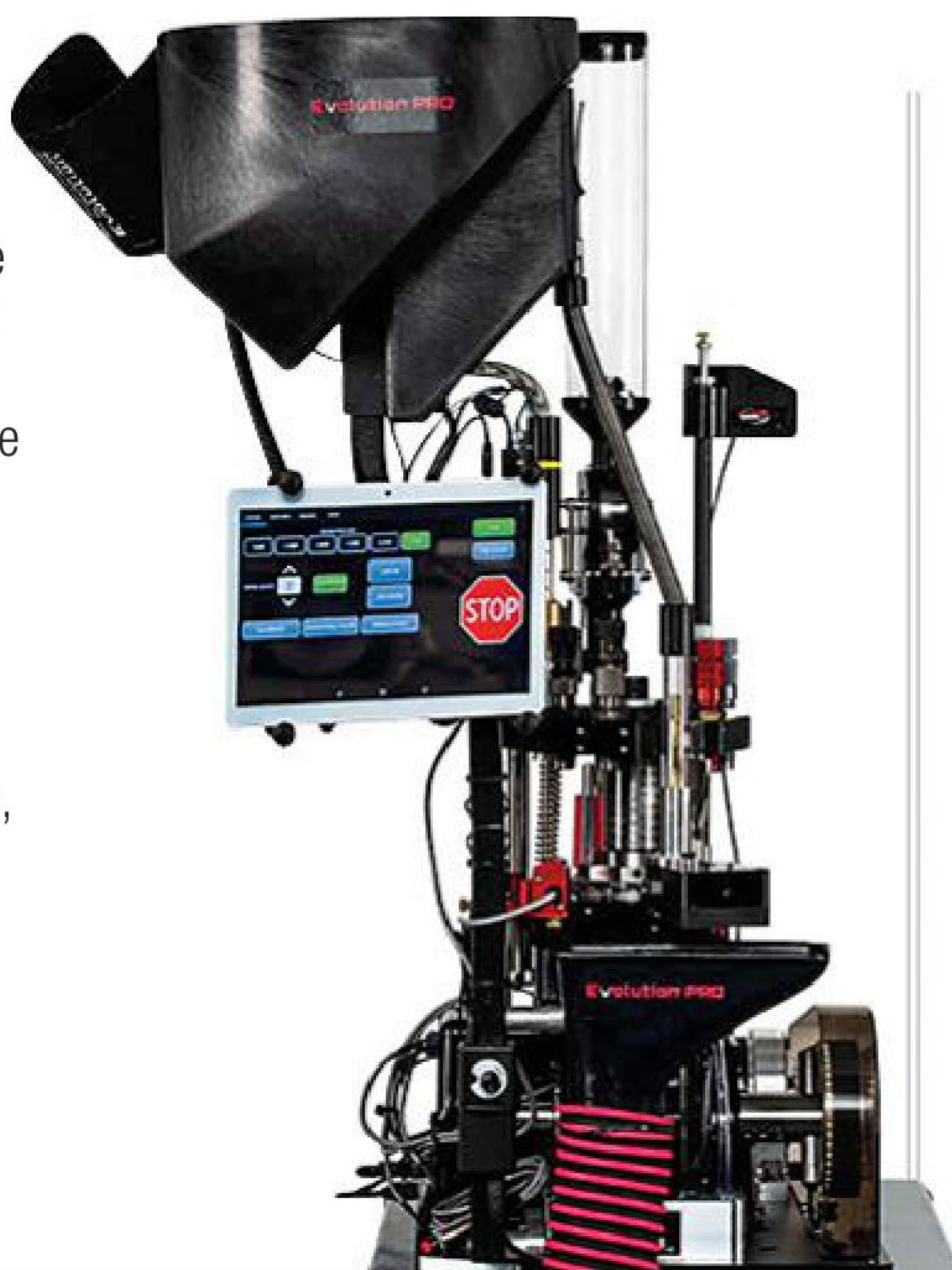
The new series of scopes from the Austrian maker feature one-inch tubes, so they're lighter than you'd expect from a Euro scope. As the model name suggests, it's a 5X zoom, and models include 2.4-12x50mm, 3.5-18x44mm and 5-25x52mm. There's a new illumination system, and adjustments are 1/4 m.o.a.. It's a second-focal-plane scope, and there are three reticle choices.

» \$1,588–\$1,921, SWAROVSKIOPTIK.COM

Lyman Mark 7 Evolution

This is a serious high-volume press system for serious high-volume shooters like competitors—or clubs or ranges that sell reloads. It's a 10-station press, available as a manual or with an optional auto-drive feature. It comes with an 11-inch case feeder, mechanical powder measure and stacked priming system, and it handles calibers up to .30-06. Optional sensors for ultimate safety/quality control include remote stop, decap senses, swage sense, powder check, bullet sense and primer orientation sensor. Hope to have a fuller report on it soon.

» \$2,995 (manual), \$1,995 (auto-drive), sensors starting at \$200 each; LYMANPRODUCTS.COM



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This new .22 load is specifically engineered to function reliably in semiautomatics. It uses clean-burning propellants, a key to flawless function, and enough oomph at 1,132 fps out of the muzzle to keep your gun running right. It also promises excellent accuracy, which is important to competitors and hunters alike. It should be available about the time you read this or shortly thereafter.

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Handy Horus

THREE GREAT PRODUCTS FROM HORUS VISION THAT PRODUCE FAST, EASY FIRING SOLUTIONS.



The Horus Vision HoVR 1.0 weather meter and HoVR 1.0 BT 2000 laser rangefinder connect to its ballistic calculator app on your smart phone, transmitting data via Bluetooth.

Horus Vision has always been a forward-thinking company, and its reticles have had a strong influence on long-range shooting. Horus offers an array of products, and I'm going to take a look at three stand-alone products—smartphone app, pocket weather meter and laser rangefinder—that don't require a Horus Vision scope or reticle.

Horus Vision's HoVR 1.0 BT 2000 laser rangefinder has an advertised ranging capability of 2,187 yards and Bluetooth connectivity to connect to, and communicate with, your smartphone loaded with the free Horus Ballistic Calculator app.

The laser rangefinder is compact and weighs 7.2 ounces. It is powered by a CR2 battery, features a built-in tripod adapter, 6X magnification and a 26mm objective lens. It provides both the range to the target and inclination. Plus, it can operate in scan mode to provide a continuous range readings of a target. The HoVR BT is easy to use and is a useful tool for quickly finding the range to a target and getting that information directly to the Horus ballistic calculator app. Suggested retail is \$430.

The HoVR 1.0 weather meter works in conjunction with the HoVR 1.0 BT 2000 laser rangefinder. Like the laser

rangefinder, it features Bluetooth connectivity that connects it to your smartphone and communicates with the Horus ballistic calculator app.

Rather than being a complex weather station better suited for a meteorologist, the HoVR 1.0 weather meter is tailored for use by a rifleman. It measures wind speed, temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure and altitude. You simply hit a button to access the data you need instead of having to scroll through screens.

It is powered by two AAA batteries; runtime is about 20 hours. Weight is seven ounces. It features rubber armor to shrug off impacts and rough handling. Suggested retail is \$115.

The last piece of the puzzle is the ballistic calculator app, which you can download for free from the Google Play or Apple app stores. I downloaded it to a Samsung Note smartphone and set it up without issue. During setup, you will notice it requires you to give it permission to access your phone's camera, location and storage. Loading data for

your rifles, loads and reticles is pretty straightforward.

The calculator displays four main sections: gun, target, atmospheric and solution. The solution section shows your reticle with a red dot indicating your hold mark. The weather meter and rangefinder linked to the ballistic calculator app without issue.

I tried the system out on my range using a 6.5mm Creedmoor Howa Oryx MDT. Conditions were not great, with a full-value wind running more than 20 mph, but it was a great opportunity to compare my range data with what the app generated for a firing solution. The app's solutions matched my actual range data at 500 and 700 yards. The hardest part was trying to correctly estimate wind to input into the app because while the weather meter will read wind at your point, conditions could be very different downrange.

I liked all three products. They're easy to use and quite handy, and they're tools any serious rifle shooter should investigate. ■

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Too Hot to Handle

THE WARNING SIGNS THAT CAN TELL YOU IF YOUR HANDLOADS ARE OVER-PRESSURE.

Loading your own ammo isn't exactly a roll of the dice, but if you don't pay attention, you can get into trouble—particularly if you're chasing maximum velocity. Heed these early warning signs to keep you out of over-pressure problems.

STIFF BOLT LIFT Stiff bolt handle lift is caused when cases expand too much when fired and can't spring back to easily extractable shape. Excessive pressure is distorting the brass significantly, and I've found that a stiff or "sticky" bolt handle lift after firing is the best initial indicator you've surpassed the chamber pressure the cartridge case was designed to handle.

Cases are typically designed to handle a certain level of pressure. If you push a cartridge significantly past the pressure levels the case is designed for, you compromise case resiliency. The rim and web at the case's base bulge, and they grip the chamber walls. Case walls stretch lengthwise and exert pressure between the chamber shoulder area and the bolt face, causing binding. Necks over-expand and grip, too.

All these things cause the case to stick in the chamber. Usually, breaking it free and extracting it simply requires applying more force than usual to the bolt handle. Extreme situations can lock the rifle up and require a gunsmith.

Be aware, though, that neck-sized-



(Top) Sticky bolt lift results from over-expansion of a fired case. (Bottom l.) The primer on the left is normal, while the one on the right is flattened. (Bottom r.) An extractor smear is a sure sign of an over-pressure load.

only cases can "grow" and eventually begin to stick when the base-to-shoulder dimension gets too long. If it's hard to close the bolt on a cartridge, it will likely be hard to open it after firing, too, even if pressures are mild.

FLATTENED PRIMERS Examining primers is a common way to check for pressure. If a fired primer appears unchanged except for the dent from the firing pin, pressures are mild. If it's a bit flattened but you can still see a bit of the original rounded edge, pressures are plentiful but healthy. If the primer is flattened enough to flow and entirely fill the primer pocket, you're past okay.

However, the way pressure exhibits on a primer is unpredictable and vari-

able depending on brand. A friend of mine once developed a .338 Ultra Mag load using CCI Large Rifle Magnum primers, which are known for hard, resilient cups. He ran out of those, and then loaded a batch of ammo with Federal F215 Gold Medal primers. Some primers blew. Others distorted badly. Federal primers are by all accounts softer, and my friend was just past the safe pressure ceiling. While the CCI's held and didn't let him know, the Federal's displayed significant warning signs.

Choose primers known for hardness—CCI and Winchester—when loading ammo for firearms known to beat up cartridges, such as M1 Garands. This can help prevent potential slam-fires.

ALL THAT BRASS

Hard primers are also good in cartridges and actions where a bit of primer distortion can lock the action up, such as the Winchester Model 1886.

Opt for softer Federal and Remington primers for everything else. I like the sensitivity because it shows me early if I'm approaching max pressures.

EXTRACTOR SMEARS This is arguably the most useful pressure warning sign of all. As pressure becomes just a bit excessive, it causes brass to slightly bulge into any available empty orifice. Most bolt faces have either a round hole with a spring-loaded plunger-type ejector in it or a cut for a mechanical ejector. Either provides an easy out for brass looking to flow.

The slight resulting bulge usually isn't enough to cause stiff bolt lift. Typically, it's just enough that it gets bur-nished by the rotating bolt face as the handle is lifted, resulting in a shiny spot in the brass—one that is shaped just like the extractor hole or cut.

If you find them on your fired cases, you're playing with excessive pressure. However, I've seen misleading extractor smears—and indeed distorted case rims—on brass that wasn't hardened adequately. The giveaway is that they occur even with mild loads.

LOOSE PRIMER POCKETS If your loads are too hot for the case's design, even the brass in the case head will



stretch and expand outward. As a result, primer pockets enlarge. In extreme cases, the primer may fall out as soon as the fired case is extracted. Sometimes just a trace of powder soot is visible around the fired primer, indicating leakage allowed by a loose fit. More frequently, the handloader doesn't know pocket expansion is occurring until fresh primers are seated, when they seat much too easily.

This is where a hand priming tool is a real asset because it enables a better feel than a press-mounted device. If new primers slide effortlessly into the primer pocket, the previous handloads had excessive pressure.

CASE RINGS This pressure warning sign is fickle and can be caused by an oversize chamber or by poor-quality brass. However, a case ring is a useful indicator when firing premium brass in a min-spec chamber. If you see a ring developing around the base of your cases, about a half-inch up from the rim,



(Upper l.) Enlarged primer pockets usually reveal themselves when fresh primers are seated. (Above) A bright ring ahead of the rim can be a good pressure indicator.

it indicates your loads are overworking the brass. Possibly, high pressures are forcing material to flow forward, thinning it just forward of the juncture of the heavy internal web portion of the case.

As you continue to fire, resize and reuse the brass, the ring will become brighter. The case will eventually separate there when fired. That's a bad deal, so pay attention. ■



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Thompson/Center has long been known as an innovative firearms company. After all, it's responsible for the famous Encore and Contender single-shot lines—the Transformers of the firearms world that can become rifles, handguns, muzzleloaders or shotguns with just a few parts swaps.

The company's track record with its bolt-action rifles has not been as stellar, however. I liked its first effort, the Icon, that was introduced in 2007. It was a handsome and accurate rifle, and I killed my biggest whitetail buck with one. But the Icon was relatively expensive—or at least it struggled against other rifles in its price range—and it languished, exiting the catalog in 2012.

There followed a series of less-expensive bolt guns: the Venture (2009),

the novel switch-barrel Dimension (2012, since discontinued) and the Compass (2016). It certainly didn't help that all three have been the subject of recalls, but the bottom line is the Compass and Venture didn't offer enough features to compete well in a crowded marketplace.

Thompson/Center intends to change that with the new II-series rifles, the Compass II and the Venture II. The Venture II is the higher priced of the two—\$525 versus \$405, suggested retail—and is being positioned as the company's flagship bolt-action rifle.

As such, the Venture II is chambered to all the usual suspects from .223/5.56 through .300 Win. Mag., plus the relatively new .350 Legend. I realize some of you reading this are tired of seeing coverage of the 6.5 Creedmoor, but it's the only chambering that was ready to roll when I had to get the

VENTURING FORTH

by J. Scott Rupp

WITH THE VENTURE II, THOMPSON/CENTER HAS A FLAGSHIP BOLT GUN THAT WILL APPEAL TO A LOT OF HUNTERS.



review written for this issue. The 6.5 Creedmoor and the .308 Win. models were in the pipeline at press time, and the rest should be coming on line in

SPECIFICATIONS	
THOMPSON/CENTER VENTURE II	
TYPE	3-lug bolt action
CALIBER	.223, .243, 6.5 Creedmoor (tested), .270 Win., 7mm Rem. Mag., .308 Win., .30-06, .300 Win. Mag., .350 Legend.
CAPACITY	3+1, detachable magazine
BARREL	22 in. (as tested), 5R rifling, threaded 5/8x24, 1:8 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in.
WEIGHT	7.3 lb.
FINISH	Weather Shield
STOCK	black polymer w/aluminum bedding pillars, Hogue OverMolded panels
TRIGGER	Generation II non-adjustable single-stage; 2 lb., 12 oz. pull (measured)
SAFETY	two-position non-blocking lever
PRICE	\$525
MANUFACTURER	Thompson/Center, TCARMS.COM

short order if they haven't already.

At the heart of the rifle is a three-lug "fat" bolt with sliding extractor that provides a short 60-degree throw. The bolt rides in a round receiver with a partially enclosed ejection port. A cut in the left side of the bolt's body matches up with the bolt release projection, and it rides smoothly in its tube with no wobble. The silver bolt release on the left side of the receiver



The Generation II trigger is excellent. It's a bladed style, and on Rupp's sample it broke just shy of three pounds with zero creep or overtravel.

actually looks nice—many don't—and operates easily.

The bolt handle is on the small side, both in terms of length and knob, and it's slightly angled. I had no trouble mounting a Leupold VX-3i 4.5-14x40mm, and even with today's trend toward larger ocular lenses, you should find plenty of bolt clearance with this setup.

Round-end cuts on both sides and top of the receiver reduce weight and also give the rifle a racy look. The rifle comes with two single-slot Weaver-style scope bases secured to the receiver with Torx screws.

One of the big improvements to the Venture II over the original is the new Generation II trigger, and T/C really did a nice job with it. It's a non-adjustable bladed style, and judging by my sample, it doesn't need to be adjustable—depending on your expectations. Specs call for a pull between three and four pounds. The pull on mine was two pounds, 12 ounces and nicely consistent, with zero creep or overtravel.

The safety is a two-position lever on the right side. It doesn't lock the bolt on Safe, which I like. The lever features



The Venture II features a partially enclosed ejection port, and two single-slot Weaver-type scope bases come installed. Traction panels on the fore-end and wrist provide a secure grip.

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a relatively broad, serrated square at the top, and the throw is fairly short. This makes it quick and easy to move to the Fire position, but as there's not a ton of tension on the lever, you'd be wise to ensure it doesn't get moved accidentally through contact with clothing, packs or vegetation when carrying it in the field.

Short-action cartridges get a 22-inch barrel, and long actions get a 24-inch barrel. All are threaded 5/8x24 except for the .223 version, which sports 1/2x28 threads. A plastic thread cap is provided.

All Venture II barrels feature 5R rifling, long a hallmark of Thompson/

Center rifles. 5R rifling uses five lands and five grooves, and the lands are opposite the grooves. With an even-numbered lands-and-grooves design, lands are opposite lands and can squeeze the bullet into the grooves, causing deformation. With 5R you don't get that pressure, and bullets exit the muzzle in a more pristine condition, which contributes to accuracy.

Further, 5R lands are slanted, not at 90 degrees to the bore as in conventional rifling. This makes the bore easier to keep free of copper or other deposits. When I received the rifle, I examined the barrel with a Hawkeye borescope. I found one of the smooth-

est bores I've seen on a production rifle, with just one small chatter mark near the chamber. There was a tiny bit of copper fouling ahead of the chamber, likely from test firing.

During zeroing and testing, I fired 60 rounds, with a bare-bones cleaning between test loads. This was followed by another 60 rounds of position firing, with only a hasty cleaning once I was finished for the day. I reexamined the bore when I got home, and while there was noticeable copper fouling (I didn't use a dedicated copper cleaner at the range), it was easily removed with a proper application of Bore Tech copper cleaner.

I mentioned earlier that Thompson/Center has named the Venture II its flagship bolt action, and in addition to the Generation II trigger, which is also found on the new Compass II, the Venture II is treated to the company's Weather Shield metal finish. It looks like matte stainless, but it's actually much more corrosion resistant than straight stainless—50 times more, according to the company's testing.

The barreled action is free-floated in an injection-molded polymer stock with aluminum bedding pillars, and the recoil lug is washer style. The fore-end features a series of molded-in X-shaped cross braces that provide the stiffness often lacking in synthetic stocks while keeping weight down.

There is no bottom metal. Instead, the trigger guard is molded into the stock as one piece, and the three-round single-stack magazine simply snaps into the magazine well cutout in the belly of the stock.

The Venture II's stock also features Hogue OverMolded "traction panels" at the wrist and the fore-end. These address one of my complaints with many of today's injection-molded stocks—namely that they don't always provide a good grip. The panels on the Venture II provide excellent gripping surfaces, and it's something anyone who hunts in the rain or in cold weather will really appreciate.

The stock has a straight comb, which I found to be on the narrow side. Typically when I accuracy-test rifles with



The bolt handle is on the small side, and it would clear any scope easily. The two-position safety does not lock the bolt.

ACCURACY RESULTS

THOMPSON/CENTER VENTURE II

6.5 Creedmoor	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady American Whitetail PSP	129	2,706	29	0.49
Berger Classic Hunter	135	2,690	20	0.64
Hornady Precision Hunter ELD-X	143	2,594	16	0.70
Nosler Ballistic Tip	140	2,485	12	0.91
Federal Fusion	140	2,683	17	1.43

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of three three-shot groups at 100 yards from a Caldwell Fire Control rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded 12 feet from the muzzle with a Pro Chrono chronograph. Temperature, 25 degrees; elevation, 4,900 feet. Abbreviation: PSP, pointed softpoint

straight stocks, I add a strap-on cheekpiece to get my head position right, and I feared once I took off the cheekpiece to shoot the gun from field positions—which I did because I expect few buyers would use a strap-on cheek pad—the stock would be uncomfortable against my cheekbone. I didn't find that at all, at least in the 6.5 Creedmoor chambering, and I liked how the slightly curved recoil pad fit my shoulder.

As you can see from the accompanying accuracy chart, the Venture II is capable of excellent accuracy. Frankly, with its great trigger, 5R rifling and relatively rigid stock, I expected it to be. Of the five loads, the only ammunition the rifle didn't care for was Federal Fusion. No offense to Federal, but I've found few rifles that shoot Fusion to any great degree of accuracy.

The rest of the averages were terrific, and I was particularly pleased to see that a "good ol' bullet"—as Craig Boddington calls pointed softpoints like the InterLock in Hornady's American Whitetail—outperformed more technically advanced bullets. I think an economical rifle should shoot economical ammo well.

All is not roses, though. I've never liked the three-shot single-stack magazine Thompson/Center has incorporated into some of its rifles. I don't like the

limited capacity, and I don't like that it can't be top-loaded.

First, if you hunt with the chamber empty, once you do chamber a round in anticipation of a shot you've got only two backup rounds. Second, you can't top off without removing the magazine—which can be inconvenient at best if things aren't going well. Complicating this, I found the small magazine latch difficult to operate with gloves on. However, there's no faulting the magazine's reliability. It functioned like a champ.

The partially enclosed ejection port is on the small side, and it's nearly im-

possible to single-load the rifle. I gripe about this because it's how I like to load when I'm shooting from the bench, and it may or may not matter to you.

As our reviewer of the original Venture pointed out, the bolt is difficult on initial lift and upon closing. The same goes for the Venture II. The stiffness is exacerbated by a bolt handle that doesn't provide a whole lot of leverage. However, I experienced this almost entirely while firing deliberately from the bench. From field positions, working the bolt hard, I barely noticed it, and other than that the bolt cycles very smoothly.



The single-stack magazine holds only three rounds and can't be top-loaded, two characteristics Rupp doesn't care for, but it functions flawlessly.

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Overall, the rifle proved to be a solid performer, both from the bench and from field positions. The slim fore-end and wrist with their traction panels felt good in my hands, and the balance was great with the Leupold aboard. From sitting and kneeling I was able to keep relatively rapidly fired rounds in a six-inch circle at 100 yards.

Shouldering the rifle quickly and firing offhand showed me I could hit the vitals of a big game animal out to that

distance if I did my part, which speaks to its good handling.

The rifle's base weight is 7.3 pounds, and with the Leupold aboard, it weighed eight pounds, six ounces. Throw in a couple ounces for ammo, and you're looking at 8.5 pounds. So it's a standard-weight rifle that won't weigh you down too much while hiking or climbing, yet it has the gun weight to make it easy to shoot well.

Thompson/Center has its work cut

out for it with the Venture II, to be sure. The term "flooded" doesn't even begin to describe the state of the budget-rifle market, and many of these inexpensive rifles shoot accurately and have good-to-great triggers.

However, while the Venture II isn't expensive, it actually sits a price category above true budget rifles. Its competitors are "upgraded" versions of budget rifles from Remington, Mossberg, Ruger, Savage and others—rifles with camo stocks, better metal finishes, etc.

Other firms have simply extended specific budget lines to include upgraded versions, but Thompson/Center has taken a "good/better" approach with two different models in the Compass II and Venture II. That might be a good tack. While the firm hasn't been in the bolt-action rifle arena as long as many of its competitors, the Thompson/Center name does have cachet. Between its accuracy, Weather Shield metal treatment and great trigger, there's plenty to recommend the new Venture II. ■



The Venture II is treated to a Weather Shield finish for superior corrosion resistance, and the muzzle is threaded 5/8x24. The provided thread cap is plastic.


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LEADER OF THE PACK

BENELLI INTRODUCES THE LUPO BOLT ACTION, AND IT'S A NEW BREED OF HUNTING RIFLE.

by Brad Fitzpatrick

It's remarkable how quickly your luck can change while hunting. We'd spent the afternoon chasing a bachelor herd of impala rams through fearsome thorns in South Africa's Eastern Cape in the hopes Benelli's George Thompson might get a shot at one of them, but as the herd of rust-red antelope disappeared over a distant ridgetop so did our chances of success. When our tracker, Atti, returned with the truck to pick us up, he pointed frantically to the west. He spoke in Afrikaans to my PH Lammie Ferreira of Africa Anyway Safaris, and while I missed most of the conversation I did catch one word: *swartwitpens*, sable antelope.

Sable and roan were the primary objective on that hunt, and we immediately set off in the direction where Atti had seen three mature sable bulls feeding moments ago. I'd always hoped to get to hunt a sable someday, and my chance finally came when the team at Benelli asked me to join them in South Africa to test the company's first-ever bolt-action rifle, the Lupo. In the relatively short amount of time I'd spent with the Benelli, I'd grown confident in the rifle's capabilities, and I knew if we could find those bulls in the open, the Lupo would perform.

We found them, and I could see the distinct black and white facial markings and one tall, sweeping black horn—features that set the sable apart from other African antelopes. I pushed

the Lupo onto the sticks and centered the crosshair of the Steiner scope where the sable's leg and chest met.

When I pressed the trigger, I heard the shot land. The bull staggered, the 180-grain Hornady GMX .30-06 bullet striking just where intended. The sable faltered as he ran, and we found him in a clump of trees less than 50 yards ahead.

Roughly 45 percent of semiauto shotguns sold are Benelli guns. That's a pretty commanding share of the market for a company that competes with much older domestic brands. Benelli won over shotgunners by introducing Inertia-Driven technology to America, and the company hopes its new bolt-action Lupo (Italian for wolf) can win over rifle shooters by offering the same type of outside-the-box design features and class-leading performance in a center-fire bolt-action hunting rifle.

Marco Vignaroli, Benelli's technical director, joined us on the Lupo's South African debut event, and he made it clear the company wanted the Lupo to be a different breed of rifle than anything on the market.

"The Lupo wasn't built around a price point," says Vignaroli. Instead, it was a from-the-ground-up bolt-action reboot. It utilizes a two-piece stock where the tubular steel receiver mounts to an aluminum lower receiver, essentially making it a chassis rifle dressed as a sporter.

The Lupo also features steel recoil and barrel lugs, and the barrel lug insert in the aluminum lower receiver is also made from steel. An intermediate barrel attachment provides perfect headspacing and doesn't require any reaming after manufacturing is complete.

Benelli's Crio barrel technology involves cryogenically freezing the barrels

to reduce stress on the steel that results from manufacturing, and according to Benelli, the process makes the bore easier to clean and more accurate. The barrel has a 0.66-inch sporter contour and is free-floated. It measures 22 inches for standard calibers and 24 inches in magnum calibers, and all Lupo barrels have capped 5/8x24 threaded muzzles.

There are three initial caliber choices: .270 Win., .30-06 and .300 Win. Mag., but more cartridge offerings are certain to follow. The .30-06 comes with a 1:11 twist.

Italian stylist Marco Guadenzi penned the Lupo's design, but the rifle shares many design elements with Benelli's shotguns. For starters, the Lupo features Benelli's Progressive Comfort recoil-reduction system that uses internal baffles—which look like interlocking fingers in cross-section—to absorb rearward impact. However, the Lupo's Progressive Comfort setup has been optimized for rifles rather than shotguns.

Also carried over from the shotgun family is the CombTech design. It uses an internal leaf spring and dense, interchangeable foam inserts in the comb to reduce the rifle's impact on the shooter's face—a major cause of flinching.

What's more, the Lupo offers a level of modularity impossible to find on other sporting rifles. Not only can shooters adjust length of pull from 13.8 to 14.7 inches with the standard recoil pad and 14.2 to 15.2 inches for the optional extended pad, but also they can adjust comb height. A standard CombTech insert is included, but high and extra-high inserts are also available.

A shim kit allows the shooter to adjust cast, pitch and drop, and there are even inserts that allow you to adjust the trigger's length of pull. Trigger pull weight is adjustable from 2.2 to 4.4 pounds, and altering the trigger weight is simply a matter of removing the magazine and adjusting an internal screw.

Speaking of magazines, the Benelli's drop-out polymer magazine is superb. A latch of the forward portion of the mag well drops the magazine into your hand,



The Lupo combines a tubular upper receiver and aluminum lower receiver. A steel barrel extension provides proper headspacing for optimum accuracy.

ACCURACY TEST

BENELLI LUPO

.30-06	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Federal/Nosler Ballistic Tip	165	2,745	15	0.65
Hornady GMX	180	2,592	14	0.76
Hornady Precision Hunter ELD-X	178	2,689	11	0.94

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of three three-shot groups at 100 yards from a fixed rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle.



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and a lip inside the magazine divides the cartridges into two columns. The .30-06 magazine holds five rounds, and it fits securely into the aluminum lower without much finagling.

Like so many new hunting rifles, the Lupo is equipped with a minimized ejection port that adds rigidity to the rifle, but unlike other guns of a similar design, it's actually possible to top-load the Lupo quickly and efficiently.

Benelli's three-lug stainless steel polished bolt is fluted, and the fluting

reduces weight and friction and also makes room for the fifth round in the magazine. The bolt knob is football-shaped and free from checkering, and the bolt handle is flat and features a serpentine curve.

There's a two-position safety that's located on the tang and is easy to access from field positions. A small cocking indicator juts from the rear of the enclosed bolt shroud, and there are three sets of holes drilled on top of the receiver for mounting optics.



The Lupo's magazine holds five rounds of .30-06 in a double stack. It can be top-loaded, and function was excellent.

SPECIFICATIONS

BENELLI LUPU

TYPE	bolt-action centerfire
CALIBER	.270 Win., .30-06 (tested), .300 Win. Mag.
CAPACITY	5+1
BARREL	22 in. (as tested), Crio treated, threaded 5/8x24
OVERALL LENGTH	44.63 in.
WEIGHT	7 lb.
STOCK	two-piece polymer
FINISH	matte blue
TRIGGER	adjustable, 3.2 lb. pull (measured, as received)
SIGHTS	none; drilled and tapped.
PRICE	\$1,699
MANUFACTURER	Benelli, BENELLIUSA.COM

That's two more holes than you'll customarily find on sporting bolt actions, but the additional holes allow some flexibility in optics mounting and offer added rigidity for the optional one-piece rail mount. The Lupo will accept two Remington 700 rear bases in a pinch, but the rifle comes with two-piece bases.

One of the primary objectives for the Lupo's design, Vignaroli says, was perfect fit and maximum comfort. In addition to the recoil-damping features and near-infinite adjustability, the Lupo's two-piece synthetic stock offers complete control over the gun. The pistol grip features fish-scale texturing all around, and the flat-bottom fore-end is equipped with a full-length finger groove.

Dual sling studs are molded into the polymer stock, and the front stud is positioned so it won't interfere when shooting off bags. There's a pre-drilled, plugged hole in the underside of the fore-end for mounting a bipod.

European firearms manufacturers are required to proof test their barrels. While 4,500 bar is standard for hunting guns, Benelli decided to subject its heat-treated Lupo barrels to 6,500 bar, and the barrels held up.

The company also subjected the Lupo to drop testing, barrel obstruction tests and precision tests. It's a much more rigorous battery of examinations than is required for sporting firearms, but Benelli wanted to ensure the Lupo was safe.

As tested, my .30-06 rifle weighed in at seven pounds unscoped, which is manageable for a sporter. Overall length is 44.6 inches, and trigger pull came set at 3.2 pounds from the factory. As Vignaroli says, the Lupo was built around features and not cost, and when the dust settled the suggested retail price was set at \$1,699, which is reasonable for a gun capable of this level of performance.

Initial range tests prior to my African hunt inspired great confidence in the Lupo. With the Benelli top rail in place and a Steiner H4Xi 3-12x56mm optic aboard, the Benelli averaged sub-m.o.a. accuracy for three shots with Hornady's



The combination of the CombTech up top and the Progressive Comfort system makes for a comfortable-shooting rifle.

LEADER OF THE PACK

180-grain GMX ammo, and the lone five-shot group I fired—the final verification shots before boarding the plane to Johannesburg—still held under an inch.

The gun is comfortable to shoot, and the recoil-reduction technology worked as advertised. Prior to sighting in, I tinkered with the gun's various length of pull, pitch, cast and drop adjustments until the gun fit me perfectly.

The trigger and trigger guard are angled for a more comfortable shooting hand position and improved accessibility, and the Benelli trigger is excellent for an off-the-shelf production gun. The magazine was easy to operate, and, as I mentioned, it was simple to top-load the gun in the field.

It's worth noting that upon arriving at the lodge, all eight rifles we'd brought shot well, and none of the guns required adjustment—a rare occurrence considering the beating and abuse that airlines dole out during long journeys. In addition to my sable, I took four other animals with the Lupo from 45 to 335 yards without any tracking or lost game. The Lupo's matte blue finish and polymer stock held up well to life in the field with no thinning on the finish or excessive wear.

After returning to the States, I wanted to see how the Lupo would perform with various hunting loads, and it shot very well. All three groups fired with Hornady's 178-grain Precision Hunter

ammunition grouped between 0.9 and one inch, and with Hornady GMX bullets the groups ranged from 0.65 to 0.94 inch. Federal's Nosler Ballistic Tip load produced the best group of the day at 0.41 inch, one of the best three-shot groups I've seen from a production rifle with factory ammunition. The Benelli is a tack-driver.

It also happens to be comfortable to shoot off the bench. The soft CombTech insert prevents the karate chop to the cheekbone that you get from some rifles, and the Progressive Comfort system does a good job calming recoil. The trigger and grip angle are comfortable, and the flat fore-end sits squarely on shooting bags. And, of course, the trigger is smooth and crisp. All factors that lend to improved accuracy. The tang safety is easy to access, but on one occasion I did accidentally disengage the safety when grabbing the rifle by the pistol grip.

There are lots of bolt guns on the market, and that makes it difficult for a new rifle to stand out. The Benelli Lupo does so thanks to its smart design elements, quality construction and excellent accuracy. Could the Italian company that rewrote the rules on semiauto shotguns be poised to claim its share of the bolt gun market? Perhaps. With everything it offers, the Lupo has the potential to become the new leader of the hunting rifle pack. ■



Fitzpatrick took this sable and a number of other game in South Africa at ranges from 45 to 335 yards, and the Lupo handled it all with aplomb.

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Last year Winchester commemorated the great Model 94 with a 125th anniversary special edition, but the .30-30 cartridge with which it's synonymous didn't debut until 1895.



MANY HAPPY RETURNS

THE .30-30 WIN. CELEBRATES 125 YEARS OF SERVICE TO BIG GAME HUNTERS, AND IT'S STILL GETTING THE JOB DONE.

by Craig Boddington



A perfect morning, frosty and clear, slight breeze out of the south. I put myself on a tree stand overlooking a winding creek, timbered ridge to my back. Two nice eight-pointers walked past, briefly sparred in front of me, and then walked on north toward a food plot. Twenty minutes later I heard more crunching in frozen grass over my left shoulder, and another buck walked cautiously into view. I just about lost it. He was the buck I was looking for: an ancient, huge-bodied unicorn spike that my neighbors and I have been trying to cull for three seasons.

While he was hidden by a cedar, I shifted around, raised the rifle and eared back the hammer. When he stepped clear

I had to raise up a bit to get over some low branches, and then the Aimpoint red dot was steady on his shoulder. At the shot he ran hard to the right, but I was sure I heard him crash. I waited a bit, climbed down, crossed the creek and immediately found blood on the frosted grass, both sides. A couple dozen yards on I saw back legs stretched out, and there he was.

In these days of big scopes and super-accurate rifles, the gun I used was simple: a tubular-magazine .30-30, taking deer cleanly as it has for 125 years. There were two tips of the hat to modernity. I had put a reflex sight on the Mossberg 464, and I was shooting Hornady's 140-grain MonoFlex bullet. The Aimpoint was in deference to my aging eyes; the fast, sharp-pointed bullet because it grouped well in the rifle.

It is often said the .30-30 has accounted for more deer than any other cartridge. This is possible because, after all, more than 7 million Winchester 1894s alone have been manufactured.

The shift to smokeless propellant began in about 1888, greatly enabled by the parallel development of jacketed projectiles. It is also often said that the .30-30 was the first smokeless cartridge developed for civilian use. This is almost true, but not quite.

Fully aware of the higher pressures of smokeless powder, John Moses Browning beefed-up the design of the '94 Winchester specifically for the new propellant. However, in 1894 the rifle was ready but smokeless cartridges sized to the action were not.

The 1894 was initially introduced in .32-40 and .38-55, both still loaded only with blackpowder. A year later, in 1895, Winchester unveiled the .30-30 and, on the same case, the .25-35.

Also in 1895, Arthur Savage launched his Model 1895 lever action in .303 Savage. The .303 Savage was in development in 1894, and it's probably fair to say the Winchester and Savage cartridges were parallel developments with similar case dimensions, but today it's not clear which hit the market first.

The .30-30 Win. first appeared Winchester's catalog No. 55 in August 1895. In blackpowder cartridges the charge weight in grains of blackpowder was

often appended to the nominal bullet diameter. So .45-70 meant ".45 caliber, 70 grains of blackpowder."

This convention continued only briefly in the smokeless era. The .30-40 Krag meant ".30 caliber, 40 grains of smokeless powder," similarly ".30-30" and ".25-35." As with most cartridge names, numbers are often approximate. The .25-35 didn't actually have a heavier powder charge than the .30-30.

More interesting, ".30-30" was not a Winchester designation. Its first Winchester name—in that catalog—was .30 Win. Smokeless. John Marlin quickly adapted his Model 1893 lever action to the new Winchester cartridge, calling it ".30-30" for the first time. For some years, the prevalent Winchester rollmark was .30 WCF, meaning .30 Win. Center Fire.

It is uncertain exactly when Winchester gave up trying to maintain the WCF trademark. Rollmarks vary. I have a 1906 Model 94 .25-35 stamped ".25-35 WCF." For sure the 20th century was still fairly new when the cartridge became commonly known, as it is today, as .30-30 Win.

The new smokeless powder cartridges offered higher velocities and flatter trajectories than was possible with blackpowder. Hunters quickly realized the increased energy and, coupled with new jacketed bullets, good penetration and the benefits of bullet expansion.

Faster cartridges came along quickly, but improvements in expanding bullets lagged. Cartridges with modest velocities in the low 2,000 fps range—like the .30-30 Win. and .303 Savage—quickly became known as highly effective hunting cartridges. From the starting gate, early expanding bullets were well-suited to .30-30 velocities and performed extremely well. After 125 years, they still do.

The .30-30 probably has been used to take all varieties of North American big game, including bison and the largest bears. Without question, it still accounts for some elk and black bear annually. Deer hunting remains its strongest suit, though—especially whitetail deer, where ranges are often fairly short, and the cartridge has plenty of power for even the largest-bodied bucks.

Through the 1950s, the .30-30 was America's favorite deer cartridge. With

millions of rifles still in use, the .30-30 to this day remains popular enough to hold a place on most manufacturers' lists of top sellers in both cartridge and reloading die sales.

The Model 1894 Winchester is by far the best-selling rifle commonly chambered to .30-30 (and also the best-selling sporting rifle ever manufactured). However, Marlin quickly adopted the cartridge, and it has remained the most popular chambering in its long-running Model 336. It was also chambered in the Savage 1895 and is currently chambered in the Mossberg Model 464 and several Henry rifles.

The .30-30's greatest fame, and most natural habitat, is probably the lever action. However, as a rimmed cartridge it was often chambered to single-shots, and it remains a popular barrel for Thompson/Center's break-open action. Not so widely remembered is that, despite its exposed rim, the .30-30 has been chambered to quite a few bolt actions. It was a

chambering for Winchester's Model 54, which was the forerunner to the Model 70. More recently, it was chambered to the Savage Model 340 and Remington Model 788.

Historically, the tubular-magazine lever actions for which the .30-30 was designed required blunt roundnose or flatpoint bullets to avoid the very real possibility of detonation in the magazine during recoil. Until Hornady's LeverEvolution, no .30-30 factory loads were ever offered with sharp-pointed bullets.

Thus, poor bullet aerodynamics always limited the .30-30's downrange performance, and since riflescopes didn't come into common use until after World War II, iron sights were another limitation to the .30-30's performance. Together, these are why the .30-30 has long been considered a "100-yard" deer rifle.

Side-eject Marlins have always been "scopable," but until 1982's "angle-eject" feature, all Winchester '94s were top-eject, preventing conventional low,

over-the-receiver scope mounting. Millions of iron-sighted lever-action .30-30s are still in use, and there are still a lot of deer, hog, black bear and other hunting applications where range limitations don't matter.

However, the .30-30 case and chamber accept all standard .308-inch bullets. You still can't use conventional spitzers in tubular magazines, but aerodynamic bullets can be handloaded for use in single-shots and bolt actions. When I was much younger, magazine articles often appeared about jazzing up .30-30 performance in bolt guns and single-shots. I haven't seen such a story for ages, but in stronger, non-tubular-magazine actions, careful handloading can up the velocity of the .30-30 and increase its downrange performance.

I've never owned a bolt-action .30-30 and probably never will, but in those magazine articles, the .30-30 generally proved surprisingly accurate. A .30-30 barrel I had for my T/C Contender was a tack-driver with standard loads. Considering the iron sight limitation, most of us probably don't know how accurate our .30-30s are or aren't.

Tubular-magazine lever actions have two inherent design restraints that often limit extreme accuracy: two-piece stocks and the tubular magazine secured to the barrel, most commonly at both fore-end tip and muzzle. These combine to affect barrel vibration, so accuracy varies widely. I suppose two to three m.o.a. would be average, and if we consider the .30-30 a 100 yard deer rifle, that's plenty good enough.

However, I have seen Marlin, Mossberg and Winchester tubular-magazine rifles that were much more accurate. Against all odds, my Winchester M94



Mossberg got into the .30-30 lever-action game with the Model 464 relatively recently, proving there's a lot of life left in the platform and the cartridge.



Boddington's Model 94 Trapper wears a Lyman receiver sight, and paired with Hornady's LeverEvolution ammo, it's still a game-getter.



With the Model 336, Marlin's side-eject design permitted a scope to be mounted low over the receiver.

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Trapper .30-30 is an amazingly accurate rifle. I bought it in about 1981, so it's one of the last top-eject guns. I put a Lyman receiver sight on it, and when I could see iron sights far better than I can today, it produced sub-m.o.a. groups.

The .30-30's inaugural factory load was a 160-grain bullet at about 1,900 fps. That sounds slow, but remember, smokeless powder was in its infancy. Such



A Mossberg 464 with an Aimpoint sight proved just the ticket for Boddington's sought-after cull spike buck in Kansas.

velocity is attainable with blackpowder and lead bullets but mostly with light-for-caliber projectiles. Winchester's original 160-grain jacketed bullet had decent sectional density (.241); offered good penetration and performance; and, even at this mild velocity, shot a lot flatter than the blackpowder cartridges folks were accustomed to. The 160-grain bullet started the .30-30 on its road to greatness, but it soon gave way to blunt-tipped 150- and 170-grain bullets as standard.

For about a century most factory .30-30 loads have propelled a 150-grain bullet at a bit less than 2,400 fps and a 170-grain bullet at 2,200 fps. Typically, most hunters consider the 150-grain load the better choice for deer, while the 170-grain load has long been the choice for larger and tougher game such as black bear.

My Model 94 Trapper always grouped considerably better with 170-grain bullets, so that's what I usually used, although the 16-inch-barrel gave up some velocity. This never caused me any

problem on wild hogs, which is the game I've hunted the most with a .30-30. On deer I always got through-and-through penetration, but exit wounds were caliber size, so with the slower, heavier bullet I didn't get much expansion.

Roundnose or flatpoint 150- and 170-grain bullets remain the most common .30-30 loads, offered by just about everyone. Hornady changed the game with its FTX (Flex Tip Expanding) bullet, essentially a sharp but "compressible" polymer tip that, for the first time, allowed safe use of an aerodynamic spitzer bullet in a tubular magazine. The LeverEvolution line incorporated the FTX bullet and also used blended proprietary propellants that allowed higher velocity. The initial LeverEvolution .30-30 load went back to the cartridge's roots, using a 160-grain FTX bullet at 2,400 fps.

I've used this bullet on Texas hogs with awesome results, and it has exhibited great penetration and obvious expansion. Our hog hunting on California's Central Coast has long required lead-free

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bullets, and Hornady solved this problem as well with its MonoFlex bullet, a homogeneous-alloy bullet incorporating the flexible polymer tip.

The MonoFlex .30-30 bullet is 140 grains. The weight reduction is necessary to meet cartridge overall length specifications because homogeneous-alloy bullets are longer than lead-core bullets of the same weight. In the LeverEvolution factory load, the 140-grain MonoFlex is rated at 2,465 fps. It's no speed demon but fast for a .30-30.

Trajectories of Hornady's 140- and 160-grain loads are within a tenth of an inch of each other to 300 yards. Sight either about three inches high at 100 yards for 200-yard zero and you're down a foot at 300 yards. I would never suggest that a .30-30 is a suitable 300-yard cartridge, but with such modern loads, rifles with optical sights can easily be stretched to a couple hundred yards and change.

Although the capability is there, I've never used a .30-30 much beyond 125 yards. If I need more range, I choose

something else. At close range, though, the capability keeps up with the legend.

I used the 140-grain MonoFlex to take the spike I mentioned at the beginning of this article. The bullet penetrated both shoulders and left a nickel-size exit on the far side. I haven't yet used that bullet to take a big wild hog, but performance has been exactly the same on medium-size pigs.

There's another factor to .30-30 performance that shouldn't be overlooked. Blunt-nose bullets tend to initiate expansion more rapidly than sharp-pointed bullets, transferring energy more quickly and seemingly delivering a heavier blow upon impact. My theory is this rapid energy transfer has much to do with the .30-30's reputation as a deer-thumping cartridge.

This is not necessarily lost with the new tipped bullets because upon impact the tip is driven down into the bullet, initiating expansion. I'm impressed by terminal performance of both the 160-grain FTX and 140-grain MonoFlex

bullets. However, for short-range use, one shouldn't forget the roundnose and flatpoint bullets that gave the .30-30 its legend.

My old Trapper has been a good friend for a long time. I still enjoy shooting it, and I need to hunt with it again. My Mossberg 464 is a new friend. The Mossberg is essentially John Browning's great design, except it has a round bolt. Like current Winchester Model 94s, the Mossberg has a tang safety that to me is more intuitive than the crossbolt safeties on current Marlins and Model 94s between 1982 and 1992.

Also like recent Model 94s, the Mossberg is angle-eject and drilled and tapped for scope mounts. I don't know exactly how accurate it is, and maybe someday I should put a scope on it and find out. However, since I think of the .30-30 as a short-range cartridge, it works great with the Aimpoint. So far it's done everything I've asked of it. In due time it will probably have a story. Right now it has more hunting to do. ■




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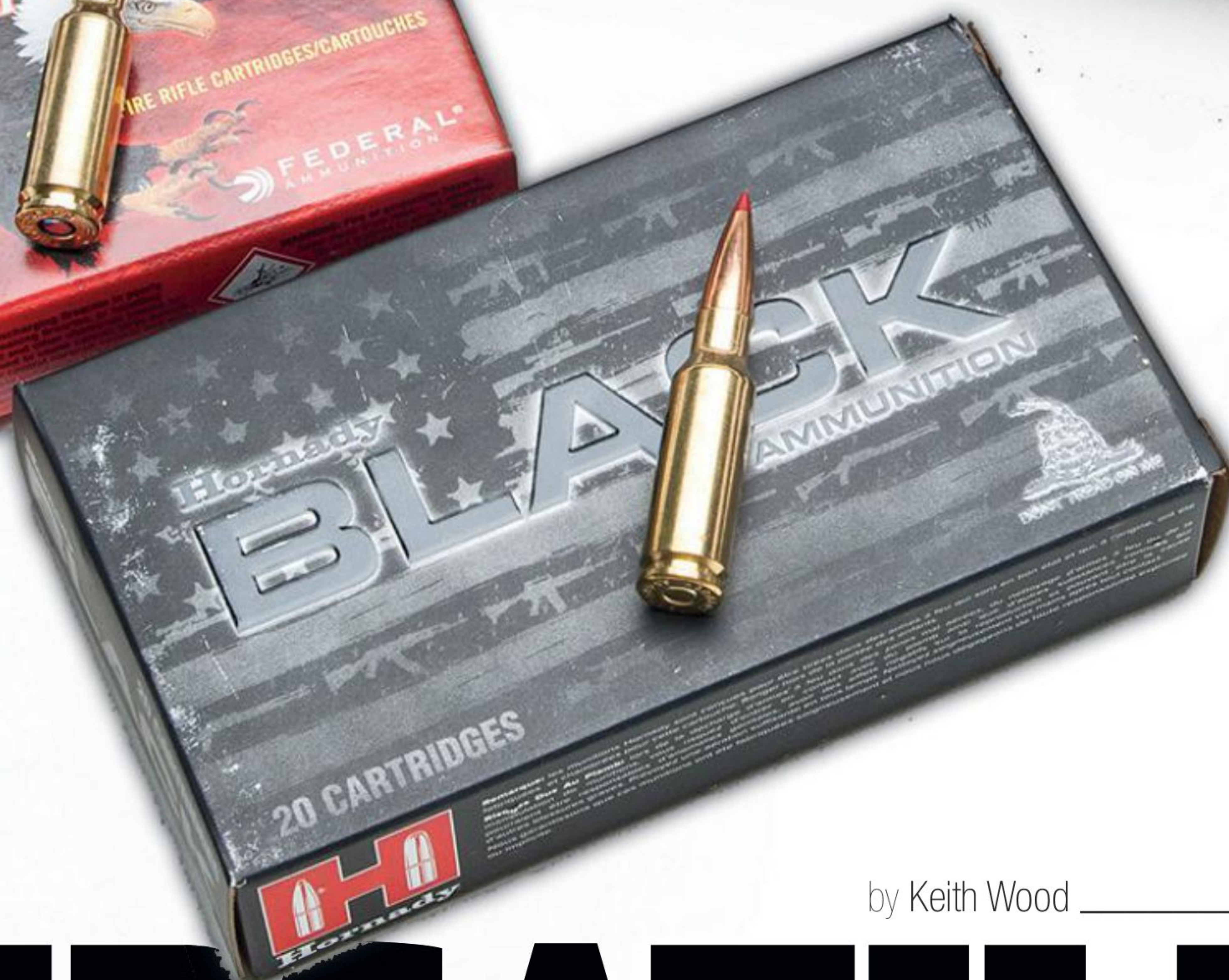
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by Keith Wood _____

VERSATILE VARMINTER



**THE CZ 527 VAR-
MINT MTR IN 6.5
GRENDDEL CAN
DO A LOT OF
THINGS AND DO
THEM WELL.**

For years, shooters and hunters have been turning to CZ for lightweight and appropriately scaled bolt-action rifles with a full-length Mauser-style extractor. The CZ 527 has been around for decades as the company's micro centerfire and has served as a handy package both afield and on the range in its various chamberings.

As handy as they are, these rifles

haven't been particularly well suited for long-range shooting, thanks to the slow twist rate of the rifles chambered in .223 and the mild velocities of the 7.62x39 variants. No longer. With the addition of the 6.5 Grendel Varmint MTR rifle to the CZ 527 lineup and faster twist rates on the .223 models, making hits at long range just got much easier.

The 6.5 Grendel cartridge was developed by Alexander Arms to maximize the

long-range performance of AR-15 rifles. The objective was to launch a 6.5mm projectile at the maximum velocity that the AR's magazine—and thereby its case capacity—would allow.

To accomplish this goal, Bill Alexander and his team necked-up the .220 Russian case to .264. The .220 Russian case is derived from the 7.62x39 and is therefore wider at the base than the 5.56x45, which allows plenty of powder capacity while

allowing long, high-ballistic-coefficient bullets to fit in a standard magazine.

The result is a cartridge capable of pushing 120-grain bullets at more than 2,500 fps, which is just about ideal for use on deer-size game. At 500 yards, the Grendel nearly matches the trajectory of the much larger .308 Win. with far less recoil.

CZ has been chambering its 527 series of rifles in 7.62x39, so it was an easy decision to adopt such a promising cartridge that used the same magazine and bolt face dimensions. At the heart of the 527 series is the forged steel micro-Mauser action, which combines a full-length non-rotating extractor, a fixed ejector and a two-position safety to create a strong and eminently reliable package adapted from the 1898 Mauser design. CZ's big

bores are the workhorses of African safari camps for a reason: They offer sturdy, reliable rifles at reasonable prices.

The Varmint MTR differs from other 527 models in several meaningful ways. For starters, it wears a relatively heavy-profile, cold-hammer-forged barrel with a diameter of 0.866 inch at the muzzle. Compare this to the 0.570-inch measurement on my little 527 American and you've got a significantly different animal.

Not only is the barrel heavier than on previous models, but also it's longer at 25.6 inches. The twist rate is 1:8, which can easily stabilize any bullet that this cartridge can accommodate, particularly one that will fit in the detachable magazine. (Notably, CZ has also updated the twist rates on its .223 rifles as well, going

from a slow 1:12 twist to a much more useful 1:9 twist.)

The barrel on this model is threaded 5/8x24 and covered with a knurled thread protector when a muzzle device isn't attached. My SilencerCo Omega suppressor spun on easily and made the rifle extremely pleasant to shoot.

Another departure is the stock on the Varmint MTR. This beefy, target-style Turkish walnut stock features a wide beavertail fore-end ideal for sandbag use, a high straight comb and a vertical grip that allows the right-hand thumb to ride on the top of the tang or on right side of the stock. Many shooters, particularly precision shooters, grip their rifles in this thumb-forward manner, and this stock makes it feel very natural to do so.

The grip panels and fore-end are stippled rather than checkered and provide a nice grip without being overly abrasive. A pair of sling swivel studs on the fore-end allow for both a sling and bipod to be used. A slight curve in the recoil pad surface helps ensure that the rifle sits high on the shoulder, putting the comb where it belongs. The length of pull is 14 inches.

As I mentioned, I've owned a CZ 527 American for many years and have tested



The 527 MTR features a forged steel micro-Mauser action and a target-style Turkish walnut stock with a high straight comb and a vertical grip.



The 527 uses a micro-Mauser action with a true controlled-round-feed bolt and fixed ejector. The top is grooved 16mm for dovetail scope mounts.

SPECIFICATIONS

CZ 527 VARMINT MTR

TYPE	bolt-action centerfire
CALIBER	.223 Rem., 6.5 Grendel (tested)
CAPACITY	5+1, detachable box magazine
BARREL	25.6 in., 1:8 twist, threaded 5/8x24
OVERALL LENGTH	44.5 in.
WEIGHT	8 lb., 9 oz.
STOCK	Turkish walnut target-style, stippled grip panels, recoil pad
FINISH	blued
TRIGGER	single-stage adjustable, 3.25 lb. pull (measured)
SIGHTS	none; 16mm dovetail for scope mounting
PRICE	\$879
MANUFACTURER	CZ-USA, CZ-USA.COM

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	.22 NOSLER	300BLK
	.223/5.56	7.62X40 WT
	.223 WYLDE	350 LEGEND
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several other of the firm's rifles. Like all of them, this Varmint MTR was well built and attractively finished from steel and walnut, with no polymer in sight. It feeds from a five-round single column detachable box magazine that is stamped "7.62x39" on the follower, indicating it can be used for either chambering.

There are rifle brands out there that claim to offer "controlled-round feeding" that are really just push feeds with full-length extractors. This isn't one of them. As the cartridge exits the magazine, the

rim slips under the extractor, which holds it firmly until it is ejected from the action.

There is nothing wrong with a push-feed rifle, but a well-executed rifle of this type offers an additional layer of reliability that is always welcome. To test the extractor tension, I removed the bolt from the rifle and slipped a round onto the bolt face. It held the cartridge securely. Feeding was smooth, and I encountered zero malfunctions along the way.

Unlike most 527 rifles, the Varmint MTR does not use a single-set trigger but instead uses the single-stage trigger found on the CZ 557. The trigger is adjustable using a set of three small screws that control pull weight, overtravel and sear engagement.

Before ever taking the rifle to the range, I pulled the action out of the stock and adjusted the trigger until I had a safe and reliable weight of 3.25 pounds. There was still a hint of creep after adjustment, and this may or may not smooth itself out over time.

The two-position safety operates in the reverse manner to what many of us are used to, with the forward position be-

ing Safe and the rear position Fire.

Like other CZ bolt actions, the Varmint MTR has a 16mm dovetail on the top bridges of the receiver to facilitate scope mounting. This dovetail design goes back to the Brno ZG47 made by CZ's predecessor company and is both simple and secure. Using a set of CZ factory rings, I mounted a one-inch Leupold VX-3i 4.5-14x40mm CDS scope to the rifle and headed to the range.

Let's get to some hard facts. Even in the 25.6-inch barrel on this CZ, the 6.5 Grendel is no 6.5 Creedmoor, nor is it designed to be one. The 123-grain Hornady Black load, for example, features a muzzle velocity that is 350 fps slower than a comparable 6.5 Creedmoor offering.

Put another way, the 6.5 Grendel's muzzle velocity is about the same as the Creedmoor at 200 yards. Faster is not always better, and the Grendel was designed for a very specific purpose, which it does well: maximize the capability of small, .223-size actions.

There are at least 15 factory loads available in the United States for the 6.5 Grendel, making it a good choice for those not interested in handloading. Bullet weights range from Nosler's 90-grain Varmageddon Varmint load to Federal Premium's 130-grain Gold Medal Berger, though most hover at around 120 grains. I tested three loads from different manufacturers: the aforementioned Nosler product, American Eagle's 120-grain Open Tip Match and Hornady Black's 123-grain ELD Match.

I found the rifle to be shooter-friendly on the range, with a comfortable stock that matched the scope height and felt natural on the benchrest. Recoil was light, especially with the suppressor mounted, and, thanks to the long barrel, muzzle blast was minimal.

Accuracy ranged from good to great, with the 90-grain Nosler ammunition providing the best performance by a healthy margin. Punching holes in paper got boring quickly, so I harassed steel targets at varying distances out to 400 yards using the CDS dial on the Leupold. Both the rifle and scope performed well, with the sound of hit after hit echoing from downrange.



The barrel sports a heavy profile—0.866 at the muzzle—and it's threaded 5/8x24 for suppressor use.



The wide fore-end is stippled as opposed to checkered and is just right for riding a sandbag.

ACCURACY RESULTS

CZ 527 VARMINT MTR

6.5 Grendel	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Nosler Varmageddon FB Tipped	90	2,662	17.7	0.57
American Eagle OTM	120	2,592	14.1	1.03
Hornady Black ELD Match	123	2,557	16.8	1.19

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of three three-shot groups at 100 yards from a benchrest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a LabRadar Doppler chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle.

The SAAMI-specified maximum average pressure for 6.5 Grendel ammunition is 52,000 psi, which coincides with the bolt strength limits of the AR-15 series of rifles and is identical to the .223 Rem.

Early on in the cartridge's life, there were warnings regarding its potential for being loaded in excess of the appropriate maximum, but these concerns have dissolved as factory loads have become more plentiful and standardized. Hand-loaders should nonetheless be cautious about leaning too hard on this cartridge, especially with cases formed from other cartridges.

One Load Issue

A rigid bolt action such as the CZ is capable of handling higher pressures than an autoloader, especially in terms of extraction, but I did encounter heavy bolt lift with the American Eagle load, even with air temperatures in the mid-50s. The ejector slot marks were visible on the headstamp, another indication of pressure-related brass expansion. Since the load didn't exhibit particularly high velocity, my theory is that the cases were on the soft side.

As far as applications go, the CZ MTR in this chambering would be a good choice for anything from varmints and predators to deer-size game. I wouldn't be afraid to use it on elk under reasonable circumstances.

Due to its size and weight, most users will view this rifle as better suited for static hunting or shooting. If a more portable option is preferred, the CZ 527 American uses the same 6.5 Grendel chambering in a 6.4-pound package. We found the Varmint MTR to be ideal as a long-range plinker and never got bored of smacking steel at extended ranges.

CZ has long had the reputation for building quality rifles at reasonable prices, and the 527 Varmint MTR certainly fits that description. Add in the option of the efficient and capable 6.5 Grendel and you're got a package that stands out in a crowded rifle market. With everything from 90- to 130-grain bullets to choose from, the MTR is capable of taking a broad spectrum of game. This is a reliable, accurate and useful rifle suitable for a variety of needs. ■



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RETURN TO ALASKA

by Layne Simpson

RUGER BRINGS BACK THE HAWKEYE ALASKAN.

The Model 77 Hawkeye Compact Magnum introduced in 2008 was the beginning of a popular trend at Ruger. Its 20-inch barrel was chambered to .300 Ruger and .338 Ruger. Walnut and blued steel or synthetic and stainless steel were other options. During the next year the Compact Magnum was joined by the Alaskan in .375 Ruger, also with a 20-inch barrel. Barreled action choices were stainless steel with either a natural matte finish or with a tough black coating. It also had a Hogue synthetic stock. The Alaskan was replaced by the Guide Gun in 2013.

The Guide Gun was the first snub-nosed Hawkeye I shot, and it is easily

recognized from a distance by a colorful Green Mountain laminate stock. I took one in .375 Ruger to Alaska for grizzly and could not have chosen a better rifle for the game and the conditions. Still in production, the Guide Gun is available in .30-06, .300 Win. Mag., .338 Win. Mag., .416 Ruger and .375 Ruger, the latter in right- and left-hand actions.

Production of the second-generation Alaskan variant of the Hawkeye began July 2019 and best as I can tell, it is identical to the earlier rifle bearing that name. The barreled action is also a duplicate of the barreled action of the Guide Gun and that made its reintroduction no more difficult for Ruger than switching stocks.

I am not sure what process is used

to apply a matte finish to the barrel and action, but it appears to be bead-blasted, and the beads used on the Alaskan were a tiny bit larger than on my older Guide Gun. You have to look close to see the difference in finish texture, and application quality is the same.



Pulling the Hawkeye's safety all the way to the rear for Safe cams the small pin protruding from the rear of the bolt shroud forward to prevent the bolt from rotating.

Whereas the bolt and its handle on my Guide Gun were given the same matte finish as the rest of the metal, they are brightly polished on today's Alaskan. The bolt handle hugs the side of the stock and that, along with the short length of the Alaskan, makes it an excellent candidate for saddle scabbard carry.

The Alaskan in .375 Ruger featured in this report weighed eight pounds, 4.6 ounces. Mounting a Weaver 2-8X Grand Slam scope with Ruger rings, attaching a leather sling and filling the magazine with three cartridges put hunt-ready heft at half an ounce over 10 pounds. All metal is stainless steel, and that includes the trigger guard/floorplate assembly.

The 20-inch hammer-forged barrel measures 1.16 inches just forward of the receiver and from there it tapers to a muzzle diameter of 0.77 inch. A fairly heavy tube is less likely to walk bullets as it heats up as some light barrels are prone to do, and it better resists bending when a horse falls and rolls over the rifle during a high-country elk hunt. A

Lyman Digital Borecam revealed a fairly smooth hammer-forged bore with only minor tool marks running across the lands. The six-groove rifling has a 1:12 twist.

The barrel wears a single-chamber, 28-port brake, and believe me when I say that it does an excellent job of reducing both recoil and muzzle rise. I seldom notice shoulder-bump when shooting at game, but a brake is most welcome during practice sessions, when developing a handload and when accuracy-testing a rifle. The brake weighs 1.7 ounces and rifle zero is unaffected when it is replaced by an included muzzle weight. A thread protector is there for those who choose to use the rifle without brake or weight.

To discourage caliber/brake mismatch, thread patterns differ: 5/8x28 for the .416 Ruger; 5/8x18 for the .375 Ruger; 1/2x32 for the .338 Win. Mag.; and 1/2x24 for smaller calibers. In other words, if you own two rifles in, say, .300 Win. Mag. and .375 Ruger, you will not be able to absentmindedly attach the .30 caliber brake to the barrel of the .37 caliber rifle. Ruger has started engraving the caliber on the side of the brake.

When the Model 77 rifle was introduced in 1968, its bolt had a non-rotating external extractor, and while its appearance was close enough to Paul Mauser's version to fool some gun writers, it was not a controlled-feed system. Rather, it was push-feed with the claw of the extractor shaped to cam over the rim of a cartridge after the cartridge had been pushed fully into the chamber by the bolt.

The bolt also had a plunger-style ejector. In other words, the Model 77 action may have looked like a Mauser, but it operated like a Remington Model 700.

When the Mark II version of the Model 77 was introduced in 1991, the action became true controlled feed with the rim of a cartridge slipping beneath the claw of the extractor just prior to entering the chamber. But should you need to single-load, the claw of the extractor will cam over the rim of the cartridge once the bolt has pushed it fully into the chamber. At the same time as



The large white bead is just right for a dangerous game rifle. The 28-port brake is quite effective and can be replaced by an included muzzle weight with no change in rifle zero.

the extractor was changed, the plunger ejector was replaced by a spring-loaded blade in the floor of the receiver.

Investment-casting the receiver and bolt offers several benefits to the manufacturer other than savings in production cost. Doing so makes it possible to have the bolt handle integral with the body of the bolt rather than brazed-on or attached in some other way as in many action designs.

The body of the bolt has dual-opposed locking lugs along with an integral guide that stabilizes the bolt during the opening cycle. The guide also reduces binding and wobble during bolt travel.

Unlike some other rifles with a pivoting-blade ejector, the left-side locking lug of the Ruger is not slotted for ejector passage. That increases the shear strength of the lug. Bolt removal is made convenient by an easily grasped release on the left-hand side of the receiver.

Disassembling the bolt for cleaning the firing pin and its spring is a snap. Hold the bolt upside down with its shroud pointed toward you and twist the shroud clockwise to about the two o'clock position. Then place a small finishing nail in the takedown hole of the cocking piece and the entire firing pin assembly is rotated counter-clockwise for removal.

The Model 77 action originally had a two-position, trigger-blocking safety slide on the tang. Beginning with the Mark II version, it was changed to a receiver-attached, three-position lever located just behind the bolt handle, and it also blocks trigger movement.

Like the safety on the Winchester Model 70, all the way forward is Fire and all the way rearward is Safe, with the bolt blocked from rotation. Placing the safety in its middle position allows the bolt to be rotated for loading or unloading the chamber with the safety still engaged. Unlike the Model 70, fully engaging the safety does not cam back the cocking piece to deactivate the firing pin.

While the Model 77 action was in its design stages, Bill Ruger had six of its features patented, and one was the



The sturdy express-style rear sight is windage-adjustable, and it would be difficult to damage in the field.

recoil lug setup. Like the lugs on many other rifles, it extends downward from the bottom of the receiver, but whereas the action bolt usually enters from the same angle, on the Ruger it enters the rear of the lug from a 30-degree angle.

Tightening the bolt draws the lug into firm contact with a shoulder in the stock mortise. In those days most rifle stocks were made of wood, and the thinking at Ruger was the design compensated for possible shrinkage away from the lug due to fluctuations in moisture content in the wood.

There are several things to like about Hawkeye rifles (Ruger has dropped the Model 77 designation and now simply calls them Hawkeye), and one is the inclusion of scope rings, which saves the new owner money and eliminates the hassle of rounding up a scope mount. And since the base is integral with the receiver, all screws are easily accessed for tightness check without removing the scope.

The Alaskan also comes with extremely durable and altogether practical open sights. The express-style rear sight consists of a thick, 0.17-inch steel blade with a wide and shallow V highlighted by a vertical white line at the rear. Dovetailed to a sturdy steel base, the blade is windage-adjustable only, which is okay since the iron sights on the Alaskan would mostly be used for getting off quick but well-aimed shots at fairly close distances.

A big problem with the front sights on most factory rifles is the bead is too small for quick acquisition during poor ambient light conditions. Ruger

SPECIFICATIONS

RUGER HAWKEYE ALASKAN

TYPE	dual-lug bolt action centerfire
CALIBER	.300 Win. Mag., .338 Win. Mag., .375 Ruger (tested)
CAPACITY	3+1, hinged floorplate
BARREL	20 in., cold hammer forged stainless steel, 1:12 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in.
WEIGHT	8.25 lb. (actual)
STOCK	Hogue OverMolded w/ Hogue pad
METAL FINISH	matte
TRIGGER	Ruger LC6, 5.4 lb. pull (measured)
SIGHTS	windage-adjustable rear, white bead front
PRICE	\$1,279
MANUFACTURER	Ruger, RUGER.COM

covered that base quite nicely with a white bead measuring 0.095 inch in diameter. It is attached to a ramped base, and the base is attached by a wide integral band encircling the barrel. A bit farther back, another steel barrel band has a post for a quick-detach sling swivel. Shifting the front swivel from the stock to the barrel is the thing to do on a hard-kicking rifle.

The LC6 trigger was introduced in 2006, and it was not designed to be user-adjustable. A video on Ruger's website clearly explains complete disassembly of the rifle for cleaning, and that includes the trigger. The trigger departs the factory quite heavy, but it will usually improve if the rifle is shot a lot. Ten pulls with a Lyman digital gauge on the spanking-new Alaskan averaged 5.5 pounds with a variation of six ounces.

My Guide Gun has seen a bit of use and its trigger pull averages 4.25 pounds with a five-ounce variation. While both triggers have neither creep nor overtravel, neither could be described as smooth. Switching springs and honing surfaces will make it smoother and lighter, and a good gunsmith should be able to handle the job.

The Hogue OverMolded stock worn

by the Alaskan is made by injecting molten synthetic rubber around a fiberglass skeleton for a permanent bond between the two. The fore-end has a good bit of flex, but the barrel free-floats in a roomy channel, and contact between it and the stock is unlikely.

There was only one issue with the stock. I shot the open sights at 50 yards, and while lateral bullet points of impact of the three test loads were close enough and close together, stock comb height prevented me from bringing the bead down close to the rear sight, and that caused the gun to shoot quite high.

It would not be a problem with a wood stock as its comb could be easily lowered with rasp and sandpaper, but that's not possible with the Hogue stock. Back on a positive note, dimpling at its wrist and fore-end along with the tacky surface of the Hogue stock ensure a non-slip grip with wet and muddy hands. But don't let your cat rub against the stock!

The barreled action is pillar-bedded in the stock. The rear pillar has a conventional shape and size, but the front one is shaped for compatibility with the angled action screw of the recoil lug. Bottom metal is steel, and since the magazine floorplate release is located flush with the front of the trigger guard, it is not likely to get bumped in the field.

The performance of the entire family of Ruger Compact Magnum cartridges is impressive, and I have grown especially fond of the .375. But due to a combination of minimal body taper, short overall length and a sharp shoulder angle, the top cartridge in a fully loaded magazine does not feed smoothly when the Hawkeye is new.

Aggressive bolt manipulation will make it feed reliably, but slowly and quietly easing a cartridge from magazine to chamber should you suddenly find yourself within close proximity of game can be difficult if not impossible.

I cured my Guide Gun of that affliction by loading 20 dummy cartridges (no primer or powder) and running them through the action numerous times. I stayed with the program until the top cartridge could be eased into the chamber fairly quietly.

I was curious to see how much velocity is lost with the 20-inch barrel. Advertised speeds for Choice Ammunition with 250-grain Barnes TTSX, 260-grain Nosler AccuBond and 300-grain AccuBond are 2,820, 2,805 and 2,670 fps, respectively, from a 24-inch barrel. Velocities from the Alaskan were 2,746, 2,736 and 2,588 fps.

An average velocity loss of 19 fps per inch of barrel length is a fair tradeoff considering how handy the snub-nosed Alaskan is in heavy brush. Differences in points of impact of bullets of different weights came as no surprise. With the 300-grain load zeroed dead-on at 100 yards, the 260-grain load was four inches high and the 250-grain load was six inches high.

Several years ago a clerk at a big gun shop in Anchorage told me the Ruger Guide Gun and the Alaskan were their best-selling big game rifles. That may account for the number I have seen in the hands of guides and hunters in Alaska. Alaska is hard on hunters and even harder on rifles, and both Rugers have stood the test.

In addition to being capable of fending off some of the harshest weather and hunting conditions on the planet, the rifles are light enough to carry over difficult terrain for days on end and short enough to weave through the thickest of alder thickets. They are extremely durable, totally reliable, accurate enough and are chambered for cartridges that are capable of finishing a hunt with a single shot but also of completing the job should things go wrong. ■



The magazine holds three .375 Ruger cartridges, and its floorplate release fits flush with the front of the trigger guard.

ACCURACY TEST

RUGER HAWKEYE ALASKAN

.375 Ruger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Choice/Barnes TTSX	250	2,746	19	1.31
Choice/Nosler AccuBond	260	2,736	7	1.54
Choice/Nosler AccuBond	300	2,588	5	1.93

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four three-shot groups at 100 yards. Velocities are averages of five rounds clocked 12 feet from the muzzle of the 20-inch barrel by an Oehler Model 33 chronograph.

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FIELD SHOT CHECKLIST

PRACTICAL RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP DEPENDS ON FOLLOWING THESE FIVE FUNDAMENTALS.

by Joseph von Benedikt

When the Sitka blacktail buck walked out and posed on the grassy knoll, he was 205 yards above me. My rangefinding binocular measured a 33-degree angle. I was perched atop a cliff. It wasn't a big cliff, perhaps 12 feet high, but the terrain dictated that the only available shooting position was on the lip atop that sheer rock face.

I rolled out of my backpack, lay prone and swiveled my legs into thin air, letting them hang off the cliff in order to get behind the backpack and rest my rifle over it. Crosshairs steady on the vitals, I squeezed the trigger of my favorite .375 H&H, sending a Hornady GMX bullet crashing through the buck. It fell and tumbled almost 60 yards before hanging up in an alder patch.

Extremely stable, well-supported shooting positions on a benchrest help us finesse accuracy, tweak point of impact to perfection, and tune handloads. However, shooting benches are a crutch that prevents many shooters from developing good field-shooting skills and adaptability.

To refine your ability to hit your

target quickly, precisely, and if necessary, multiple times when far from any shooting bench, practice is required. And not just any practice. You've got to develop the specific skills you'll need when adrenaline is high, time is short, and support is minimal.

Several aspects of field shooting are critical. First, you must achieve an adequately stable shooting position. It likely will not be possible to get as steady as you'd like, but with practice you can usually get as steady as you need. Then, you've got to acquire your target, maximize stability, execute the shot, follow through and prepare to fire again as efficiently as possible.

Achieve a Stable Position

The high points are these: Get as low to the ground as terrain and vegetation allow and find a rest for your rifle's fore-end, whether it's a backpack, rock, log, shooting sticks or bipod.

Field shooting conditions are rarely optimal, and usually you have to adopt some mutation of the classic prone, sitting or kneeling position. Position yourself to support your rifle with your skeleton rather than your muscles,

which can tremble and tire. Ideally, give that skeleton multiple points of contact with the ground—for example, using your tailbone and both heels to create a tripod-like structure.

Better yet, glue your brisket and both elbows to Mother Earth. Rare indeed is the shot that can't be cleanly made from a solid prone position behind a rested rifle.

Finally, learn to quickly read the terrain and take advantage of any natural support it offers, such as a stump, to rest your rifle across. Slide quickly into position, adapting on the fly and creating a solid field position in just seconds.

One final tip. When at the range preparing for a hunt, shoot a careful three-shot group from your favorite field position to ensure that your point of impact is where you want it. Sometimes

point of impact is different from a lightly supported field position that flexes during recoil than it is from a benchrest.

Target Acquisition

This is a skill that many shooters take for granted, often to their profound regret. Western big game guides typically list clients' inability to find an animal quickly in their scope as the primary reason for failing to get a buck or bull.

Keep your riflescope turned down to minimum magnification and practice throwing the rifle to your shoulder and aiming it at various objects. Keep your eyes on the object as you bring the rifle up and work at it until the scope naturally merges in line with your vision and the scope centers effortlessly on the object.

Then do the same from kneeling, sit-

ting and prone positions. Finding your target from prone is difficult for many shooters because the same rigidity that makes the position so steady also makes it hard to scan for your target. Since prone is the best of all field positions, it's worth mastering target acquisition from this position.

When shopping for a new scope, don't buy too much magnification. I like no more than 4X on the bottom end and prefer 3X or even 2X. While practicing and hunting, keep that scope turned down. Also, a cheek rest of appropriate height really helps by naturally aligning your eye with the scope

Prepping for the Shot

Once you're stable and have acquired the target, take a deep breath or a couple deep breaths to oxygenate your muscles and your eyes, minimizing shaking and maximizing vision. Slump into the ground, relaxing muscles and allowing your skeletal structure to provide as much support as possible.

If you've got time, take a few seconds to bring your natural point of aim onto the target. If you find that you're exerting noticeable muscular force to hold the rifle left, right, up or down to keep it on target, shift your position so that when you're relaxed the crosshairs naturally come to rest on or very near the animal.

Trigger Squeeze

Arguably the easiest of all shooting techniques to grasp but the hardest to master, a proper trigger squeeze is essential. If you flinch or snatch the trigger, the crosshairs will be wrenched off target and you'll miss.

Even through most shooters grasp the logical importance of squeezing the trigger gently, they still tend to scrunch up their eyes and jerk, tensing their whole body in anticipation of the recoil and throwing the shot wide as a result. Worst part is, many shooters don't realize they're doing it, and even when they recognize the tendency don't develop the discipline to stop.

Learning to discipline your way through a flinch and squeeze the trigger can be difficult, particularly if that



Getting a steady position is job one. Once that's accomplished, acquire the target, get your breathing and natural point of aim right, and squeeze the trigger.



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flinch is deeply ingrained. Start with dry-firing. It's safe with any bolt-action centerfire, and the beauty is that dry-firing also helps polish your sight acquisition. Dry-fire from every improvised field position you can imagine. Practice until you can squeeze the trigger, hold the crosshair steady through the click, and follow through for at least a second.

Add a quality .22 rimfire rifle with a good, crisp trigger to your practice regimen. Keep dry-firing your big game rifle, but get out and shoot at least 50

rounds per week with your rimfire. Work on perfecting your ability to improve field positions at the same time.

Finally, work on your trigger squeeze by adding your big game rifles to your practice sessions. Ideally, first work into a mild cartridge such as a .243 Win. or 6.5 Creedmoor, then on up to a .30-06 or one of the fast magnums. I firmly believe that once you mentally isolate a flinch and learn to discipline your way through it, you can shoot any cartridge well—whether it be a light deer cartridge or a heavy magnum suitable for Alaskan moose or brown bear.

Follow-Through

This is just as important to shooting as it is to a golf swing or a baseball pitch. Probably more so, since a fraction of an inch of variance matters a great deal to a bullet heading several hundred yards downrange to a relatively tiny target.

Here's the simple version. If you flinch, your follow-through is already screwed up. It's already too late. But if you stay relaxed and squeeze the trigger, all you have to do is keep your head in position on the stock and your eye in position looking through the

Adding a cheek pad keeps your eye naturally aligned with the scope, which not only helps target acquisition but also overall accuracy.

scope. Do so and your shot will exit the bore cleanly.

In addition to clean shot execution, follow-through is critical for seeing the result of your shot. With the light cartridges and aggressive muzzle brakes used in PRS and cross-country long-range competitions, good follow-through enables you to see bullet impact in your scope—important to correcting your hold before triggering your next shot.

With heavier big game cartridges, following through gives you the best shot at seeing the bullet impact your game and, importantly, the best crack at getting a fast follow-up shot should one prove necessary.

Fast Follow-Ups

While every hunter hopes he won't need to shoot more than once, getting additional shots on game is a critical skill. As the rifle comes out of recoil, assuming good follow-through, the rifle should fall back into position more or less trained on the animal. Depending on distance, the bullet will impact during recoil or as the rifle settles out of it. Practice keeping completely still and relaxed until the rifle settles. You'll often see the result of your shot.

Then, with your eye glued to the scope, work the action like there's no tomorrow. Keep your eye firmly in the scope, quickly but gently finesse the rifle back on target, and nail the crosshairs back on the animal.

It's worth noting that most right-hand rifles will recoil up and right due to the conventional right-hand rifling twist and the fact that the right shoulder flexes away from the recoil and acts as a mild fulcrum point for the gun to swivel off of.

If the animal is not down, shoot again, using a proper trigger squeeze and follow-through like you did on the first. It's easy to get even more excited—possibly even a bit panicked—on follow-up shots. But if you continue to apply the basics outlined here, as long as your original assessments of distance and wind were correct, you can bring the hunt to a successful conclusion. ■



Proper trigger squeeze and follow-through will help ensure your bullet goes where it's supposed to, and good technique will set you up to shoot again if necessary.

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RIFLE REPORT

by
Stan Trzoniec



Savage B. Mag Target

Being a woodchuck hunter since adolescence, I am always looking for a new piece of equipment to take afield. This time around, I hit the jackpot when I received the new Savage B.Mag Target chambered for the hot .17 Winchester Super Magnum (WSM). It was like a breath of fresh air for rimfire shooters.

Savage engineers designed the B.Mag Target action specifically around the relatively new .17 WSM cartridge. The rifle features a rear-locking-lug design, and it cocks on closing the bolt with some effort. This was done because, interestingly, the parent cartridge was created from a Winchester industrial round made to drive nails into concrete. With that came a stronger case—50 percent thicker than the .17 HMR case—and

it's designed to work at more than 33,000 psi. The cartridge also called for a stronger spring and firing pin.

The bolt body is polished. The bolt handle, bolt knob and rear shroud are aluminum, with the tapered bolt knob drilled out to save weight. Even though the action of the gun is stainless, this assembly is black, which is a nice contrast to both the action and stock.

At the bolt face you have a round firing pin, as opposed to the more common rectangular rimfire firing pin, and the extractor has been made rugged to help pull the hefty .17 caliber case out of the breech. The bolt release is on the left side of the receiver.

The safety is mounted on the rear tang; forward for Fire, back for Safe. The AccuTrigger was its usual crisp self. My sample came from the factory

SPECIFICATIONS

SAVAGE B.MAG TARGET

TYPE	bolt-action rimfire
CALIBER	.17 Winchester Super Magnum
CAPACITY	8-round rotary detachable magazine
BARREL	22 in., stainless, 1:8 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	40.25 in.
WEIGHT	6.1 lb.
STOCK	matte gray laminate
FINISH	matte
TRIGGER	AccuTrigger adjustable; 3 lb. pull (measured, as received)
SIGHTS	none; Weaver-style bases installed
PRICE	\$589
MANUFACTURER	Savage Arms, SAVAGEARMS.COM

averaging three pounds, and if you want to change it, simply pull the barreled action to adjust it.

The rotary magazine is detachable and small enough to carry an extra in your pocket for day hunting. Made from a combination of metal and polymer, it is center loaded and holds eight rounds. A plastic latch combined with a metal fitting on the other end hold this magazine in place within the well of the rifle. Twin screws at one end allow you to disassemble it for cleaning or maintenance.

The heavy barrel measures 0.80 inch at the muzzle and is 22 inches long with a target crown. The receiver comes with the traditional Weaver cross-slot bases, onto which I attached a Simmons 2.5-10x40mm scope for testing.

The Savage thumbhole stock comes from Boyd's. It's perfect in all the details that make this a great stock for small game or varmints and is treated to a weatherproof satin finish. I love this type of grip on a thumbhole stock because it positions your hand in the same place every time.

The right side of the stock is dished inward to allow your hand full access to the thumbhole while allowing your hand to fit comfortably into the hole. The cheekpiece is rather long and has a bit of a rollover. For me, it positions my eye right behind the scope. The classic recoil pad has a black spacer, and there's a sling swivel stud near the toe.

The Savage logo is engraved on the base of the pistol grip. I should mention that you need to be careful when you flop down to shoot from prone. One wrong move and you could easily chip this part of the stock.

The fore-end is two inches wide and flat. It also contains a pair of swivels—one for carry, one for a bipod. There are finger grooves on each side as well as vents to cool the underside of the barrel.

Shooting this gun is a pleasure. If you're not familiar with the .17 WSM, it cruises along at about 3,000 fps—a lot faster than both the .17 HMR and



The B.Mag. Target uses a rear-locking, cock-on-closing action to accommodate the hot .17 WSM cartridge.



The laminate thumbhole stock features a full cheekpiece with a slight rollover and put Trzoniec's eye right behind the scope.



The fore-end sports three cooling vents as well as a finger groove. The twin swivel studs permit attaching a bipod and sling simultaneously.

ACCURACY RESULTS

SAVAGE B.MAG TARGET

.17 WSM	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
HORNADY V-MAX	20	2,963	23	0.52
HORNADY ELD MATCH	25	2,581	20	0.64
BARNES LRX*	20	2,893	22	0.81

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five five-shot groups at 50 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on an Oehler Model 35P chronograph. Temperature, 70 degrees; elevation, 652 feet

.22 Mag. If you like to shoot varmints at 200 yards, bullet drop with the .17 WSM is only four inches, as opposed to 11 inches with the .17 HMR and 18 inches with the .22 Mag. And the WSM delivers twice the energy as either of the other two.

RifleShooter protocol requires rimfire rifles be accuracy tested at 50 yards, but believe me, both the rifle and cartridge are good for longer distances than that. Much longer. Hornady's 20-grain V-Max turned in not only the best overall average but also the best group of the day at 0.41 inch.

Recoil was nearly nil, and with the exception of getting used to the extra effort of closing the bolt to cock it, the rifle operated without any problems. This combination is going to be a winner in the field. As I understand it, more variety in ammunition is on the way, but even with the current loads, the Savage B.Mag Target is a great choice for all you varminters out there. ■

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RIFLE REPORT

by
J. Scott Rupp



Mossberg Patriot Predator

We've published a review on the Mossberg Patriot Predator before, and normally I wouldn't go back to the same well. Occasionally, though, a rifle/cartridge combination comes along that's impressive enough to make it worth reexamination. The newest Mossberg Patriot Predator is one such case.

Actually, calling this rifle "Predator" does the combination a bit of a disservice, because the new 6.5 PRC chambering makes it one of the most versatile big game rifles out there. Sure, the rifle will get the job done on coyotes and such at any shootable distance, but the cartridge also has the speed, energy and trajectory to make it an excellent choice for white-tails, mule deer, pronghorns, black bear, sheep and more.

Hornady's 6.5 PRC is one of the newer 6.5mm entrants in the battle for the hearts and minds of America's hunters. Today there are seven factory cartridges of that diameter trying to establish supremacy: 6.5 Creedmoor, .260 Rem., 6.5-300 Wby. Mag., .26

Nosler, 6.5-284 Norma, 6.5 RPM and 6.5 PRC. The 6.5 PRC stands in the middle, considerably faster than the Creedmoor and the .260 but not quite on the power level of the .26 Nosler or 6.5-.300 Wby. The 6.5 PRC brings the energy without the recoil and blast of the bigger 6.5s, and this makes it a great pairing for a rifle like the Patriot Predator.

The Patriot line is perhaps the most consistently accurate of today's crop of affordable bolt actions. The heart of the Predator is a twin-lug, push-feed action, and the 6.5 PRC Predator version feeds from a detachable, four-round polymer box magazine that fits flush and is easy to top-load. As someone who dislikes protruding magazines in hunting guns, this makes me happy—as does the fact it can be top-loaded.

The Patriot Predator sports a fluted bolt with an oversize handle. The safety is a two-position lever on the right side of the receiver, and it does not lock the bolt on Safe, which I prefer. The bolt release lever is on the left side of the receiver.

The top of the receiver features a

SPECIFICATIONS

MOSSBERG PATRIOT PREDATOR

TYPE	2-lug bolt-action centerfire
CALIBER	.243, 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC (tested), .308, .450 Bushmaster
CAPACITY	30-round magazine supplied
BARREL	24 in., fluted, threaded 5/8x24, 1:8 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	44.25 in.
WEIGHT	6.5 lb.
STOCK	flat dark earth synthetic
FINISH	matte blue
TRIGGER	LBA; 1 lb., 15 oz. pull (measured, as received)
SAFETY	two-position lever
PRICE	\$455
MANUFACTURER	O.F. Mossberg & Sons, MOSSBERG.COM

Picatinny rail. It's held in place with Torx screws, so you can take it off if you prefer two-piece mounts.

One of the features that sets the Patriot action apart is the Lightning Bolt Action (LBA) trigger, one of the

Leading Ingredient For Acid Reflux Bouts Linked To Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Scientific studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health

by David Waxman
Seattle Washington:

A published study on a leading acid reflux ingredient shows that its key ingredient improves digestive health while maintaining health levels of inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure®, its ingredient was already backed by research showing its ability to neutralize acid levels and hold them down for long lasting day and night relief from bouts of heartburn and, acid reflux, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting, better sleep, more energy, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance could be a major contributing factor to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation through immune system adjustments which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, acid overproduction, and nausea.

Now, backed with new scientific studies, AloeCure is being doctor recommended to help improve digestion, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Virtually all participants taking it reported stunning improvement in digestive symptoms including bouts of heartburn.

Users can also experience higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep, healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swelling and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the famous healing compound found in Aloe Vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach and helps the immune system maintain healthy functions.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date millions of bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharma therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health before considering drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"All the problems with my stomach are gone. Completely gone. I can say AloeCure is a miracle. It's a miracle." Another user turned spokesperson said, "I started to notice a difference because I was sleeping through the night and that was great. AloeCure does work for me. It's made a huge difference."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Millions spent in developing a proprietary process for extracting acemannan resulted in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist, and it's made from organic aloe.

According to Dr. Leal and leading experts, improving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.



When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune system, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health and manage painful inflammation through immune system adjustments without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure's ingredient maintains healthy immune system function to combat painful inflammation...reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help strengthen hair and nails ... maintains healthy cholesterol and oxidative stress... improves sleep and energy.... and supports brain function by way of gut biome... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age.

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- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles and Increases Elasticity
- Supports Healthy Immune System

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

This is the official nationwide release of the new AloeCure pill in the United States. And so, the company is offering our readers up to 3 FREE bottles with their order.

This special give-away is only available for a limited time. All you have to do is call TOLL-FREE 1-800-991-4408 and provide the operator with the Free Bottle Approval Code: AC100. The company will do the rest.

Important: Due to AloeCure's recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 48-hour deadline may lose out on this free bottle offer.

best bladed-style triggers out there. It's adjustable from two to seven pounds, and my sample came from the factory breaking at one pound, 15 ounces with very little pull-to-pull variation.

The fluted barrel is 24 inches long and has a 1:8 twist. It is affixed to the

receiver via a smooth barrel nut. The muzzle is threaded 5/8x24 for addition of a suppressor or muzzle brake, and it comes with a thread protector. A polymer block insert in front of the mag well acts as a bedding block.

The synthetic flat dark earth stock has a classic straight comb with

shadow-line cheekpiece. The grip and fore-end feature stippling, although I do wish the stippling was more aggressive for a better grip with wet, cold or gloved hands.

Bare weight of the rifle is 6.5 pounds, which I think is right at the sweet spot for a hunting rifle meant to be carried a lot. Mounting a Nightforce SHV 3-10x42mm (see review on page 10) boosted total unloaded weight to eight pounds, five ounces. I like this scope and think it's a good mate for the Patriot Predator, but it does weigh 22 ounces and you could go to a lighter scope if you wanted to pare overall gun weight to less than eight pounds.

There aren't many 6.5 PRC loads out there yet, and I shot both Hornady loads along with a handload featuring a 127-grain Barnes LRX bullet. You can see the results in the accompanying chart, and I think they're impressive as hell. That's not just for a gun with a suggested retail of \$455—and a street price just a bit north of \$300; that's for any production bolt-action rifle.

In addition to the 100-yard testing, I shot several groups at 200 yards, and the rifle maintained its accuracy. The ELD Match load actually shot better at 200 yards than it did at 100, with groups in the 0.4- to 0.5-m.o.a. range.

Other than the stippling on the stock and the slightly off-putting look of the muzzle end of the barrel, which steps up in diameter to accommodate the threading, I have no complaints.

In fact, I think it might be the best all-around rifle out there today: super accurate, affordable, light and chambered to a versatile caliber that's flat-shooting and hard-hitting without beating the crap out of you. Yes, it's too early to tell whether the 6.5 PRC will withstand the test of time, but with this rig you can play in the PRC pool without a big investment. ■

Buy it now. Log on to GALLERYOFGUNS.COM, select this firearm, pay a deposit and it will be at your local gun store in two days. When purchased from GALLERYOFGUNS.COM, Davidson's guarantees to repair or replace this firearm for life.



The Mossberg Patriot Predator features a smooth cycling, two-lug action with oversize bolt handle, and a Picatinny rail up top makes optics mounting easy.



The 22-inch barrel is fluted, and it's threaded 5/8x24. The muzzle looks a bit ungainly, but the design allows for a slimmer barrel and therefore a lighter gun.



The Patriot Predator averaged sub-m.o.a. with all ammo at 100 yards and carried that accuracy to 200—as evidenced by this 0.8-inch group (shown with cartridges).

ACCURACY RESULTS

MOSSBERG PATRIOT PREDATOR

6.5 PRC	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
HORNADY PRECISION HUNTER ELD-X	143	2,965	21	0.53
HORNADY ELD MATCH	147	2,936	18	0.72
BARNES LRX*	127	3,037	18	0.76

Notes: (*Handload) Accuracy results are the averages of three three-shot groups at 100 yards from a Caldwell Fire Control rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a Pro Chrono placed 12 feet from the muzzle. Temperature: 25 degrees; elevation: 4,900 feet

THE LAST WORD

Continued from page 64

The .250 Savage preceded the .243 by 40 years and remains a suitable alternative. For small-bodied deer at medium range, both are fine. In recent years supplies of clean .250 Savage rifles have decreased dramatically, but I still see numbers of 99s in .300 Savage—which greatly outsold the .250.

On the surface this seems to blow my .243/.250 theory, but keep in mind that the feral hog has been a more important game animal than deer in California for decades. Under our spot-and-stalk conditions, 6mms and mild .25s are questionable, especially for big boars, but the .300 Savage is an ideal choice.

Today, factoring in availability and use on both hogs and deer, it seems to me the .308 Win. has become the local standard. Again, take your pick. The .300 Savage and .308 Win. are both excellent choices for our game and hunting conditions.

Throughout the Rocky Mountain West, mule deer hunting is the driving force behind choices, but the much larger elk must also be considered. Among local Western hunters, especially of my generation, my observation is the .270 Win. remains a top gun, perhaps rivaled by the .30-06. Either remains pretty hard to beat.

I'd rate the .270 better for deer, while the .30-06 is a better choice for elk and, thus, as even Jack O'Connor grudgingly acknowledged, the more versatile of the two. Obviously, there are many other choices, including the full gamut of magnums in 6.5mm, 7mm and .30 caliber. I see them all in hunting camps, and of course, they work, but despite decades of hype, I haven't seen a wholesale shift to fast magnums.

I have opinions on traditional preferences in other regions, but without a lot of personal experience I hesitate to voice them. Think about what you see most frequently on the range, in deer camps and on the used gun racks in your area. Then think about why preferences for certain rifles and cartridges develop in specific areas. Then consider if maybe the old-timers had it right all along. Please let me know what you discover. ■

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The Regional Phenomenon

Back in 1909, Henry Ford made his famous comment that his automobile could be had in “any color so long as it is black.” From what I hear today, you can go into any gunshop in the country and purchase a rifle in any cartridge you desire—so long as it’s chambered to 6.5mm Creedmoor.

I tip my hat to the Creedmoor’s amazing popularity. It is an accurate, efficient, mild-kicking little cartridge. However, despite what we’ve heard, it is not the world’s only useful centerfire rifle cartridge. In fact, I’m not certain its acceptance is as universal as some of the pundits suggest.

It would be grandiose to call myself an “outfitter,” but Kansas neighbor Chuck Herbel and I pool our adjacent farms during our short rifle season. In recent years, we’ve hosted more than 100 nonresident hunters.

In the 2019 season, Brad McCarty from Michigan brought a Tikka in 6.5mm Creedmoor. This was the first time one of our hunters has brought a Creedmoor, so his was our first whitetail to fall to this cartridge. His shot was about 150 yards, and he placed a single 143-grain Hornady ELD-X perfectly. The results were predictable: The buck went nowhere.

McCarty’s confidence in his Creedmoor was thereby reinforced—as it should have been. However, with such a shot and a good bullet well placed, there are scores of cartridges from hundreds of rifles that would do as well.

It has long seemed to me that popular choices in rifles and cartridges are somewhat regional and usually based sensibly on traditional knowledge of local conditions. This is only a theory because I can’t claim in-depth knowledge of more than just a few regions. I

can, however, cite some examples I’m reasonably certain of.

I’m extremely familiar with our southeast Kansas whitetails. Kansas is almost a special case because, prior to our first modern deer season in the mid-60s, Kansas hunters had little need for centerfire rifles. We had .22s, but we were mostly shotgunners.

Back then, one of my quail-hunting buddies got a .25-06, another a .300 Win. Mag. I started with a .243 and quickly moved to a .264 Win. Mag. Dad got a .308 and stuck with it. Absent long-standing traditions, Kansans’ tastes in rifles seem to remain varied and eclectic. In our neighborhood, the .270

Texas, which is a great bastion of the .25-06. Texas deer—whether whitetail or mule—are medium in size, and shooting distances vary. The .25-06 is plenty powerful enough for any Lone Star buck, and at reasonable distances few cartridges shoot as flat.

Perhaps most typical of the Texas situation is the grid of endless cutlines or senderos through thick brush, habitat that produces some of the largest bucks. Distance down these long openings is deceptive, and when a buck starts across, there may not be time to mess with a rangefinder.

I can think of many fast, flat-shooting cartridges that would be as good, but

TO THIS DAY, LOCAL GUNSHOPS HAVE AN INORDINATE NUMBER OF SAVAGE 99S IN USED-RIFLE RACKS.

and .30-06 seem most prevalent, but there’s a .25-06, a 7mm Rem. Mag., and a couple of new Creedmoors.

As I mentioned, we host a lot of hunters, but it’s misleading to judge our area by what our hunters bring. They come from all over, and they bring rifles suited to a mental picture of Kansas deer hunting, not the reality of our heavily timbered southeast corner.

During the 2019 season, between neighbors and out-of-state guests, I saw deer taken with 15 different cartridges. There is no consensus, but the cartridges we see repeatedly are pretty much limited to .270, .308, .30-06 and a variety of .30 caliber magnums. Under our conditions, I could argue overkill with the latter group, but with a well-placed bullet they all work—and when the bullet isn’t placed properly, they can all fail.

Another region I’m familiar with is

combining adequate power with plenty of reach and minimal recoil, I’m hard-pressed to think of anything a whole lot better than the .25-06. Spend time in Texas deer camps and you will see .25-06 rifles—but it’s a cartridge I’ve seen only infrequently elsewhere.

Along California’s coast, the .243 Win. seems to reign as our most traditional deer cartridge. Again, the shoe fits. Our blacktail deer are not large, and in our tight, poison-oak-choked canyons ranges are usually moderate. A .243 remains a great choice.

I think our Central Coast was a traditional stronghold of the Savage 99. I believe this because, to this day, local gunshops have an inordinate number of Savage 99s in used-rifle racks. A lot of them are chambered to .250 Savage.

Continued on page 63



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