

Rifle Metallic Silhouette



Heather McGregor at the 2007 Tasmania State Titles.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette is a sport in which rifles are used to knock down metal targets at a variety of distances. The sport originated in Mexico in the early 1950s, arrived in Australia in the late 1970s and is now a sanctioned and popular discipline of the SSAA.

Rifle Metallic Silhouette usually caters for centrefire and rimfire rifle shooting, but air rifle, service and black powder cartridge rifles can be used in some competitions.

There are two classes of centrefire rifle shooting:

- Centrefire Silhouette Rifle: has fairly liberal rules governing weight and dimensions and allows shooters to use custom rifles based on a wide choice of calibres, actions, barrels, triggers and stocks.
- Centrefire Hunting Rifle: only allows for commercially available sporting and hunting-style rifles without modification.

There are also two classes of rimfire (.22) matches:

- Rimfire Silhouette Rifle: using a target-

style rifle.

- Rimfire Hunting Rifle: using a commercially available off-the-shelf rimfire hunting rifle.

The targets used in this discipline are metal cut-outs in the shape of animals (chickens, pigs, turkeys and rams) and are made of varying thicknesses depending on the distances and the calibres being used. A steel stand is set into the ground and the targets placed on it. There are 10 targets at each distance in two banks of five.

In the centrefire matches, chickens are placed at 200m, pigs at 300m, turkeys at 385m and rams at 500m. Targets for the rimfire matches are scaled down to one-fifth of their centrefire counterparts and the ranges at which the rimfire targets are shot are likewise scaled down to one-fifth. Chickens are thus placed at 40m, pigs at 60m, turkeys at 77m and rams at 100m.

Air rifle targets are one-tenth the size of the centrefire matches and are shot at one-tenth of the range. Chicken targets are shot at 20 yards (note: not metres this time), pigs at 30 yards, turkeys at 36 yards and rams at 45 yards.

The range is set up with the targets at their appropriate distances from a common firing point. Most SSAA branches can accommodate the 100m required for the rimfire matches. However, 500m centrefire ranges are not as common because of the large amount of land required to contain both range and safety zone.

Five shots are fired at five targets in sequence, from left to right. There is to be only one shot taken for each target. For all matches, in all classes, the time limit for firing the five shots is two and a half



minutes. The sequence is repeated until the required number of shots is fired at the required number of targets.

Matches consist of 40 shots (10 at each of the four types of targets). All Rifle Metallic Silhouette matches are shot from the standing offhand position, with no support, not even a sling.

To score a hit, these armour-plated animals must be knocked off their stands, but they must also be shot in the correct order and within the time limit. Each shooter normally has a scorer recording the shots and making sure the shooter abides by the rules.

The rules allow shooters to use custom-built firearms and most serious Rifle Metallic Silhouette shooters choose this option.

NSW Rifle Metallic Silhouette Chairman and National Selector Conrad Smith takes aim at the 2007 Tasmania State Titles.

Commercially manufactured rifles are more often used for the dedicated Hunter Class matches.

Centrefire rifles must have a minimum calibre of .243 (6mm). The ultimate choice of calibre comes down to a trade-off between the rifle's felt recoil and the ability of the bullet to retain sufficient energy to topple the targets.

If you intend using your hunting rifle for serious competitive Rifle Metallic Silhouette shooting, there are a couple of rules that apply: the rifle must have a maximum weight of 4.2kg, including sights, and the trigger pull must have a minimum of 2lb. There are other rules that apply, but if the rifle is a true off-the-shelf model without modification, almost any rifle will pass scrutiny. The same general rules apply to the Rimfire class rifles, except the overall weight is not to exceed 3.5kg.

Air Rifle Metallic Silhouette is becoming very popular. The two types of air rifles allowed are target and sport-type air rifles. Target air rifles include any precision target air rifle including running target rifles. There is no weight limit on these target air rifles, but a 4.6kg weight limit is applied to the sporter-type air rifle, which specifies any unaltered factory air rifle that is or was a commercially available item.

While .308 Winchester has traditionally been the most popular calibre, the development of lighter recoil calibres



The best-looking bloke at the shoot - Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Chairman Andrew 'Juddy' Judd at the 2007 Tasmania State Titles.

with sufficient energy is becoming more common. The 7mm-08 Remington, a .308 necked-down to 7mm, appears to meet the requirements of high energy and low recoil.

While the custom silhouette rifles can use wildcat cartridges, the Hunter Class match only allows calibres that are commercially available for the rifle you choose. Fortunately, a number of manufacturers are producing hunting rifles in a 7mm-08 Remington version. Of course, there are many lighter calibres suitable for Rifle Metallic Silhouette, including any of the 6.5mm variants.

Because the rams require around 1000 ft-lb of energy to remove them from their stand, their load will be hotter and have a heavier projectile to guarantee a knock-down. Silhouette shooters tend to load their own ammo for the centrefire matches. Apart from economic reasons, it gives them a choice of loads for different ranges. Silhouette rimfire ammunition must be standard velocity to reduce damage to targets; .22 Magnum and hot loads such as 'Stingers' are not permitted.

The rules allow commercial-type sleeveless shotgun shooting vests, as well as clothing suitable for existing climatic conditions.



This is one of those 'how the hell did I miss that' looks.

Each year there are state and national championships, as well as national and state postal competitions. International matches are a common event with Australian teams regularly selected. The SSAA will continue to enter in such matches as the NRA Metallic Silhouette Championships.

Many branches shoot Silhouette in one form or another. For more information on Rifle Metallic Silhouette, visit the SSAA Competition Information webpage at www.ssaa.org.au/newssaa/disciplines/disciplines.html or contact the National Discipline Chairman Andrew Judd on 0418 734 008 or email namovlov@bigpond.com ●

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