



Talbot on target! Air Rifle BR30

Communications Officer Sam Talbot continues his quest to shoot the SSAA disciplines, this month trying his hand at Air Rifle BR30



Despite their usefulness in hunting situations and their presence at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, air rifles can sometimes be forgotten about in the world of firearms. Recently I realised I'd barely shot an air rifle before, let alone know my springers from my pre-charged pneumatics.

With that in mind, this month I've attempted to shed some light on air rifles and show you how easy and fun it is to get involved in an air rifle competition. The main discipline shot by the SSAA is Air Rifle Field Target but my local club, like many other SSAA clubs around Australia,

offers a variety of official and unofficial air rifle competitions.

Friday night rifles

Each Friday night, SSAA Para in South Australia holds an air rifle competition where people of any skill level, including juniors and first-timers, are encouraged to attend. The main disciplines shot at the range are 10 Metre and 3-Positional along with Metallic Silhouette and International Air Rifle (Any Sight). From time to time they also run a BR30 competition, which is what my trip to the Air Rifle range coincided with. The name alone was enough to spark my interest and I was keen to see

what it was all about. It turns out the BR stands for Benchrest and while we might usually associate Benchrest with long-range targets, big rifles and even bigger vices, there's no reason we can't also think of air rifles. And while there are similarities there are also differences, the most notable being you don't actually shoot from a bench. The similarity is in the type of targets and the scoring system, both of which create an exciting and challenging competition in the pursuit of precision.

BR30

One of the key things to know about BR30 is scoring is based on the idea of worst-edge >

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scoring. That means the outermost ring that's broken is the one that counts as your score. This is the opposite to 3P and Field Rifle which are much friendlier and give the shooter the benefit of the doubt, awarding them the score of the highest broken inner-ring.

Competitors shoot at targets from 10m in the standing unsupported position. The course of fire is run over 30 minutes with shooters taking one shot at each target, meaning competitors should be taking one shot per minute. The targets used are quite small and ordered in three rows of 10 on a roughly A4-sized card.

The rifles

Air rifles are much quieter and produce significantly less recoil than traditional rifles. This leads to many parents introducing their children to air rifles before moving on to other firearms. Air rifles are especially useful for giving smaller and younger shooters their first taste of firearms without scaring them. Accordingly, the club has quite a few Anschutz and Hammerli rifles complete with 4-12x scopes for the public to try. Luckily for me though, Air Rifle captain Dennis Colmer was kind enough to loan me his Walther LG 300 for the BR30 competition.



Dennis teaches Sam the basics.

When Dennis handed me his rifle it was set to 20x power (which he uses). This seemed quite high initially given the targets were only 10m away, so I turned it down to 6x. But given the tiny size of the targets, 6x wasn't enough and I eventually found a happy medium at 16x. At this power the targets appeared much clearer than at 6x while not completely disappearing due to my wobbles. It seemed a good setting for me but the struggle between my wobbles and finding the right power will definitely continue.

Trigger

I have a habit of using the crease of my finger to pull triggers instead of the tip, something I got from using shotguns, but there's no excuse for it when shooting air rifles. I worked on overcoming my natural reflex and definitely had more success when pulling the trigger the right way.

The trigger was unique being handmade by Dennis and the pull had quite a bit of give initially before slightly more resistance kicked in, leading to a shot being

A detailed advertisement for Davide Pedersoli rifles. The background features a close-up of a Sharps Quigley rolling block rifle. In the top left, there is a 'Black Powder No. 1' logo. In the top center, a '50 Years' anniversary logo is visible. On the right side, the text reads 'NATURAL INSTINCT FOR PRECISION'. Below this, a paragraph describes the company's history and accuracy. At the bottom, the company name 'DAVIDE PEDERSOLI' is prominently displayed in large, bold letters. To the right of the name is a circular logo with the letters 'dp'. Below the name, contact information is provided, including a website, phone number, fax number, and email address. The overall aesthetic is classic and emphasizes the craftsmanship of the rifles.

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The BR30 targets are about the size of a 20c coin.



Sam got used to the glove and found it helped.

fired. The first pellet almost surprised me as it was probably the lightest trigger I've ever used. At first it felt a bit strange to fire and not feel a 'bang' or 'kick' but the lack of recoil made me aware of my follow-through since there's no need to brace after the shot.

The glove and stand

Dennis felt it would be best for me to use a shooting glove which meant changing my usual grip of 'stretched out thumb and

forefinger' to 'bent over wrist and knuckle'. While this position became comfortable eventually, I found that widening my stance brought the biggest improvement in accuracy. In fact, keeping your feet in the same position and shouldering the rifle the same way for each shot is vital to overall accuracy. This is particularly true in BR30 as you can take all your shots without ever moving your feet.

Since I still struggle to shoulder rifles in the same position each shot, I spent a lot of

time looking down the scope for the target sheet, then the correct target on the sheet, then the middle of the target. While this may only take a few seconds, those seconds are when I'm most stable and thereafter fatigue sets in and I begin to wobble. Good shooters will shoulder the rifle perfectly straight away and identify their target, leaving more time to focus on trigger pull and breathing. I wasted time making sure I was shooting down the right lane!

Since we were shooting unsupported, all competitors used a bench to rest the rifle on between shots. The rest was positioned immediately to my right, allowing me to take the weight of the rifle off my shoulder without moving my feet and reload without putting the rifle down. This is particularly important as once you find good shoulder and foot placement you want to maintain the rhythm. Bringing the rifle back to your shoulder is significantly easier from the rest than from the ground and after the 30th shot I was glad to have a rest (pardon the pun). Even with the rest I was starting to tire so fatigue would have been much worse without it, not to mention the time saved.

The competition

This was a lot of fun. Unique among shooting sports there's no need for ear

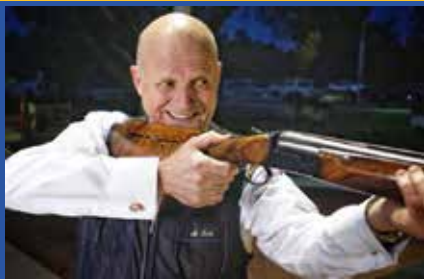


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"Law-abiding shooters should not be persecuted because of a tiny minority who use firearms in crimes."

-Senator David Leyonhjelm

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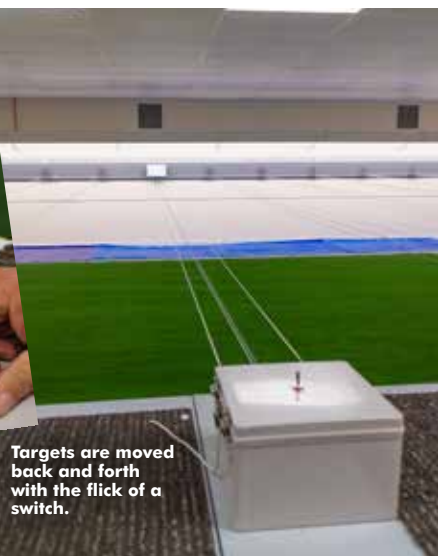
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muffs in air rifle, while the lack of recoil makes it easier than ever to focus on marksmanship. As we were shooting inside there was no breeze to consider either but as you can see by the size of the targets, hitting the middle ring takes quite a bit of skill.

In my opinion - and I've said this about other disciplines - scoring BR30 is extremely unforgiving. The distance between scoring 100 and 25 is almost nothing and with my inconsistency I felt the margin for error between a 25 and a 100 was random - hitting 100 felt almost like dumb luck. Of the 30 shots I managed only one score of 100 with 25s making up the bulk of my total. I was also guilty of pulling the trigger and hoping for the best instead of putting the rifle down, taking a breath and resetting. It's a bad habit I need to kick.

As well as Dennis I took some advice from Rob Worthley and his daughter Nicole. Rob has achieved a score of more than 2800 and Nicole, who was trying BR30 for the first time, managed just over 2400. They advised me to practise shouldering the rifle



Targets are moved back and forth with the flick of a switch.

quickly and naturally so I'd stop wasting time looking down the scope. Some things are easier said than done.

BR30 obviously has a natural crossover to 3P, 10m Air Rifle and similar competitions and I'm confident my scores would improve dramatically after a few more practice sessions. In the end my final score of 660 should be easy to top next time.

Getting started in Air Rifle

There's a wide world of air rifles to choose from. Some use springs, some CO2 gas and some compressed air. The common theme is they all require some sort of stored energy just like any other firearm. The good news is a quick search on SSAA Gun Sales threw up a variety of secondhand air rifles for sale at just a few hundred dollars. But the more expensive consideration may be how you plan on recharging your air rifle. This process can be simple or complicated but must be considered when choosing an air rifle. As a general rule, the faster the pellet travels the more energy it will use and therefore the fewer shots the rifle will output before needing recharging.

Air rifle competitions tend to be quite

accepting of many different types of rifles, and most will have competitors offering beginners the use of their own rifles or at least happy to make suggestions. As always though, the best place to start is your local club as they may have their own rules and will be able to tell you everything you need to know.

Conclusion

Air Rifle is a great area of the shooting sports to try and BR30 strikes an interesting balance between stamina and precision. For me, shooting air rifles was a particularly relaxing change of pace and a good way to spend a Friday evening.

For the beginner, air rifles are an ideal introduction to the sport without the issues of recoil and noise. For example, outfits like the Scouts are particularly keen on air rifle shooting. On the other hand, air rifles offer a fresh challenge for experienced shooters and are a fantastic tool for hunters - and the cost of pellets is probably the cheapest of all projectiles. ●



The target looks a long way off with the scope.



It's easy during the warm-up!



Impressive work by Rod Frisby.