



Talbot on target! Field Rifle

Communications Officer Sam Talbot continues his mission to shoot the SSAA disciplines and this month tackles Field Rifle.

Last month I tried my hand at 3-Positional shooting and got more than I bargained for, discovering it's one of the more challenging SSAA disciplines. Having already jumped in at the deep end, I took part in a Field Rifle competition, which is quite similar. Field Rifle is generally considered a bit more forgiving than 3P, especially for beginners. Given the name I unsurprisingly found Field Rifle feels a lot more like being in the field and requires a lot more movement than 3P, which makes it a lot of fun.

What is Field Rifle?

Field rifle is about recreating hunting marksmanship and centres on the four most-used field shooting positions. In competition order these are Rapid Fire, Standing, Standing Post Rest and Sitting/Kneeling Post Rest.

The Rapid Fire position consists of four rounds shooting three shots in a 15-second 'burst' at targets from 25m away. This is done in a standing and unsupported position but only your best 10 shots count, giving you a free pass on your two worst. But if you don't get all three shots in the 15-second window you miss out on taking that shot.

The second position is also standing unsupported from 25m (50m for centrefire) but is shot 'slow-fire', which means you have 15 minutes to take all 10 shots. For the third and fourth position the targets are moved back to 50m (200m for centrefire) and a post is brought up to just behind the line of shooting which can be used for support. Standing Post Rest and Sitting/Kneeling Post Rest are also shot slow-fire for a total of 10 shots each.

Compared to 3P, Field Rifle has closer targets and allows competitors to use a post, so it's easy to see why Field Rifle is more beginner-friendly. It's much harder to make



Not the most technically correct stance but it felt comfortable.

mistakes when using a post and the fact you have two 'freebies' during the Rapid Fire puts a lot less pressure on competitors.

Competition day

Like last month, nomination fees for Field Rifle were just \$2 at the SSAA Para range and I bought a box of ammo for \$7. With a quick warm-up a box of 50 rounds is the perfect amount for a round of Field Rifle.

My scope was adjusted to shoot 50m so the first job was to set it for a 25m target which meant dropping the power to about 12. More power is not always best - if you're too 'zoomed in' your natural shakiness is accentuated and hard not to notice. Finding a balance between making the target a comfortable viewing size through the scope while minimising the amount of wobble is the key to success.

Another thing I should mention about Field Rifle is while bolt-action repeaters are far and away the most common and ideal, any type of safe action can be used including

lever and slide-action. In fact self-loading rifles were used on a regular basis before their restriction in 1997.

One of my fellow competitors was Adam Eddington who showed up with a single-shot foldable rifle called the Little Badger, made by Chiappa and using a break action instead of a bolt. The rifle didn't have a scope so not only would he have to break it each time he wanted to fire another shot, he'd be shooting with just iron sights.

Adam let me have a shot with the Little Badger and I was surprised how easy it was to shoot. Not only does it look like a skeletal version of my rifle, it feels exactly the same. The main difference was loading and having to break the rifle and I was keen to see Adam shoot Rapid Fire!

It was also interesting - and harder - to shoot without a scope but I prefer that. Having grown up using shotguns, scopes feel a bit unnatural and bringing the best shooters closer to my level could only help my scores in comparison.

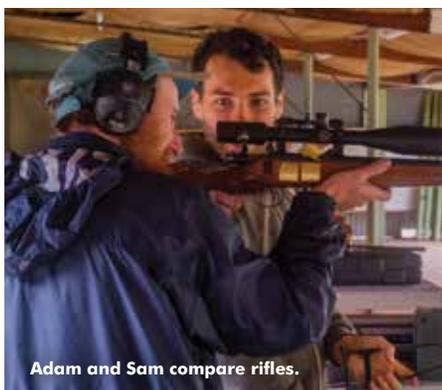


Talbot on target!

Shooting rapidly and slowly

Before the competition was officially under way I had a quick lesson in how to shoot Rapid Fire. The idea is to keep your body and stance in place as much as possible before and during each shot. Knowing your rifle becomes important here and being able to push the bolt back and forth without taking the rifle off your shoulder or losing sight of your target is key.

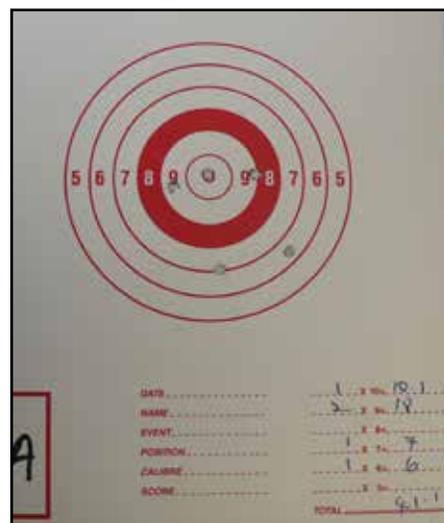
In the first round I barely managed my three shots in 15 seconds but was happy to have squeezed the third one in. They weren't the best but did hit the target and I was surprised at how quickly I



Adam and Sam compare rifles.



Shooting coach Rod Frisby explains how to operate the bolt without taking the rifle off the shoulder.



How to score Field Rifle

Scoring in Field Rifle is as easy as adding five numbers. Your first five shots (six for Rapid Fire) are taken at the left target and your last five at the right target.

The outermost ring counts as a score of 5 with each consecutive inner ring counting 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 respectively. Everything that falls outside the rings is a 0.

The bullet hole needs to be merely touching a ring to be scored as that ring, so even if a bullet hole is just barely touching an inner ring, that shot is given as the higher score.

All shots leaving a mark impacting the centre ring (X-ring) are recorded as a decimal point after the sum total of all the individual shots.

In this example we have shots impacting the following rings: 6, 7, 9, 9 and 10 which, when added together, equal 41. Also, the shot in the 10 ring impacts the centre X-ring so this target is recorded as 41.1.



The green flags show a distinct breeze from left to right.

With the first two positions down, the 25m targets can be brought in.



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could manoeuvre the bolt. I spared a thought for Adam who had to break the Little Badger each shot, eject the spent round, load a new one, close the rifle and get it back to his shoulder. I'm not sure if the fact he got all three shots in is impressive or annoying.

In my second round of Rapid Fire I shot far too fast. I took the second and third shots as soon as I eyeballed the target, finishing in eight or nine seconds. By the third and fourth round I had the hang of it and spaced my shots out far better, including taking some time to aim. I finished Rapid Fire with a total score of 55 which included capitalising on the two 'freebies'. It was promising to see my first two burst rounds scoring 21 and my last two scoring 34, a noticeable improvement especially since it was my first time shooting Rapid Fire.

My new-found confidence disappeared when it came time to slowing down though. I only managed a score of 44 for Standing, 11 points lower than Rapid Fire. My constant over-thinking and having too much time to psych myself out is my only defence, even though I had far more time. But I peppered the outer rings with a surprising amount of consistency even compared to my higher scoring Rapid Fire rounds which saw several shots miss completely. As one competitor put it: "The trick is not to get a visit from an American - the yank!"

The next time I shoot standing unsupported I'll focus on keeping my elbow straight instead of using my body to support my elbow. I'll also ensure I make all vertical adjustments using only my forearm while



Again, not the most technically proficient position.

using my upper body for horizontal adjustments. This was advice from my 'coach' on the day, Richard Taylor, who knows what he's talking about given he shot a score of 100.3 for sitting post.

The post is my best friend

When at the range you might notice holes in the ground along the line of fire. These are used to drop a post in for the last two shooting positions in Field Rifle and other disciplines which allow their use. The post certainly made a difference to my overall stability and comfort. Although my Standing Post Supported score was only 64, a relatively modest increase on Standing Unsupported, my shots were much more



Sam realises that shot was less than ideal and instantly regrets it.

consistent and only two wayward ones ruined what could have otherwise been a good score.

Last month I had a miserable time in the Sitting/Kneeling position but this time I had a post by my side so was feeling far more confident. There are several ways you can support the rifle with your hand/wrist/arm against the pole and I tried a few, but they all felt roughly as stable as one another so I just did whatever felt most natural. Sitting/Kneeling Post Supported still requires some flexibility as you must remain behind the line of fire which is about 10cm in front of the pole, but the pole makes life much easier.

My total for the final position was 67, a marked improvement in score and enjoyment compared to not using a pole. What was cause for even more celebration was that all 10 shots counted as scores - sometimes in life we have to celebrate small achievements.

Conclusion

Field Rifle is a discipline that welcomes a wide variety of rifles, styles and techniques. It's easy to learn but hard to master for shooters of all skill levels and requires shooters to really get to know their rifle.

The discipline is particularly good for beginners who are reasonably confident using a rifle, as it has them moving around a lot and using their rifle in a variety of ways. I'd recommend beginners try out Field Rifle and if they like it give 3P a crack as well. As



Sam gets a lesson on using the Little Badger.

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for hunters and more experienced shooters, they can use Field Rifle as a way to further develop their skills.

Field Rifle is a popular discipline and if you're good enough you could end up competing in national or even international events. The SSAA sends teams to take part in the US as part of their Smallbore NRA matches as well as at the Pacific Regional Shooting Championships, although I can't see myself competing internationally any time soon.

Next month I'll be leaving the rifle in the gun safe and getting back to my roots with a Field Shotgun outing. ●



Sam celebrates a section with all 10 shots registering a score.

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