

Brainstorming brass tacks on a weight-saving hunting rifle

**AUSTRALIAN**

October 2023  
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# Shooter

THE MAGAZINE FOR SPORTING SHOOTERS



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SHOT**  
New Burris  
scope goes  
the distance

## REVIEWS

- ATA PRO 12 12G shotgun • Wedgetail WT25
- Bulletseeker Mach4 chronograph
- Zeiss S5 • Hikmicro Thunder 2.0 TQ50



**Courting controversy with the Savage Model 24**

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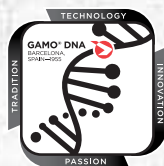
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These days, shooters are spoiled for choice when it comes to scopes, but what characteristics most benefit hunters? Thomas Tabor explores the various riflescope components and gives some great advice.

Savage rifles have long enjoyed a well-earned reputation for producing accurate rifles and the 110 High Country is no exception. According to reviewer Mark van den Boogaart, "It's a classy rifle, at a really affordable price point, and more importantly it's a straight and accurate shooter."

Years of hunting have taught Derek Nugent how to gear up for a successful hunt. He's developed a three-tiered hierarchy around not only what to carry on a hunt, but also how to efficiently do so, saying, "there is little benefit in carrying gear which in all likelihood is simply along for the walk".



Our October cover - see page 24





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# AUSTRALIAN Shooter

THE MAGAZINE FOR SPORTING SHOOTERS

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Phone: 02 8805 3900  
 Fax: 02 9832 9377  
 PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
 Email: membership@ssaa.org.au

## EDITORIAL POLICY

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## EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061  
 Email: edit@ssaa.org.au Web: ssaa.org.au  
 ABN 95 050 209 688

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 Karoline Wasiak on 0412 486 071.

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## EDITORIAL

ACTING EDITOR..... Jennifer Martens  
 ASSOCIATE EDITOR..... Thomas Cook  
 ASSISTANT EDITOR..... Dave Rose  
 CHIEF OF STAFF..... Jennifer Martens  
 ART DIRECTOR..... Mike Barr  
 PRODUCTION MANAGER..... Elizabeth Tyson  
 GRAPHIC DESIGNER..... Alex Heptinstall  
 GRAPHIC DESIGNER..... Tammy Michalski  
 WEBMASTER..... Mark Fieldhouse  
 ADVERTISING & PROMOTIONS..... Karoline Wasiak  
 MEDIA AND POLITICS OFFICER..... Rachael Oxborrow  
 ADMINISTRATION..... Debbie Wing  
 SENIOR CORRESPONDENT..... Trudy Sheffield  
 SENIOR CORRESPONDENT..... Rod Pascoe

## CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Scott Heiman, Russell Mark, Frank Varapadio, Chris Redlich, Daniel O'Dea, Joh Rutkay, Matt Fox, Peter Bartlett, Derek Nugent, Sam Garro, Geoff Smith, Mark van den Boogaart, Robert D Moore.

## STATE CONTACT INFORMATION

For SSAA inquiries please contact your state office

NSW	02 7900 1555	WA	08 9497 7919
QLD	07 3281 3447	SA	0419 849 452
VIC	03 8892 2777	ACT	0400 138 955
TAS	0418 734 008	NT	0402 013 918

## NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

SSAA National Chief Executive Officer  
 and Chief Editor Tim Bannister  
 Wildlife Programs Matthew Godson  
 PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

SSAA National Accounts Office  
 PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
 Phone: 02 8805 3900  
 Email: accounts@ssaa.org.au

SSAA General Insurance Brokers  
 Unit 1, 212 Glen Osmond Rd  
 Fullarton, SA 5063  
 Phone: 08 8332 0281  
 Freecall: 1800 808 608  
 Fax: 08 8332 0303  
 Email: insurance@ssaaains.com.au

Please mail all correspondence for the SSAA National Executive to  
 SSAA, PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
 Email: ssaa@ssaa.org.au



Welcome to the first interactive digital *Australian Shooter*. The October 2023 *Australian Shooter* is a landmark

moment in the history of a magazine that has been a part of the lives of hundreds of thousands of shooters and hunters for the past 70-odd years.

This is the first edition of the *Australian Shooter* that has been released as both an interactive digital and print edition, marking a significant change to the way the state and territory members of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia can choose to interact with the Association.

Readers can enjoy increased connectivity with stories and advertisements, as products, videos and other links can be found throughout the publication. You can read a product review and go straight to the online store to purchase.

Of course, the printed version of the *Australian Shooter* remains available for all, as sometimes you just can't go past sitting down with your favourite magazine and flicking through the pages.

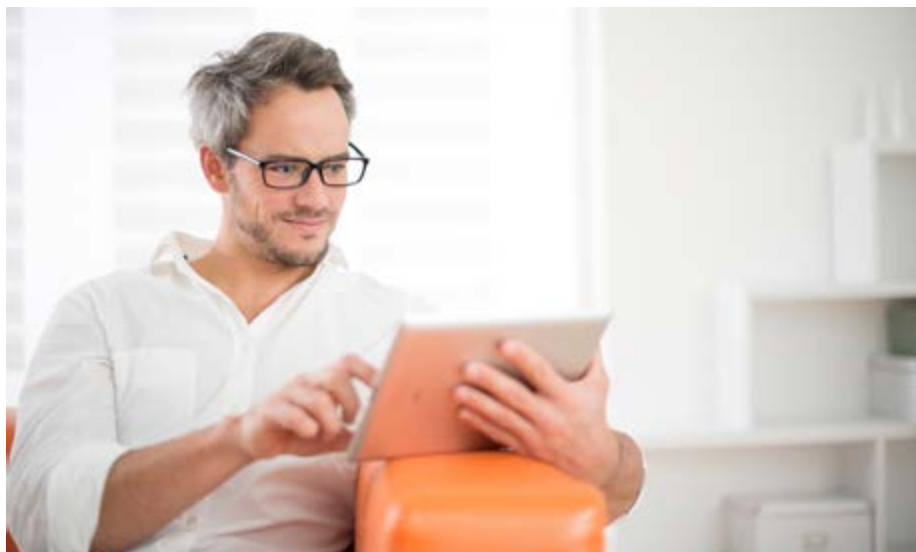
Members will be able to choose the way they receive the *Australian Shooter* when their membership comes up for renewal from this month and if print is your choice, you'll receive the paper version of the magazine in your mailbox at the start of every month. All members will receive the digital magazine.

We trust you'll enjoy this new offering, no matter how you want to read the *Australian Shooter*, and we look forward to bringing you Australia's most popular sports shooting and hunting magazine, now in print and interactive digital!

In recent months there has been much discussion on firearms and hunting-related topics in politics and the media, with the Western Australian Firearms Act re-write and inquiries in South Australia and Victoria into the hunting of native birds being hot topics.

It is our endless task as target shooters and hunters to talk about what we love about our sport and pastime. In WA, conversations with the media have been ongoing since earlier this year and it has been an uphill battle to get balanced, let alone positive, coverage. Recently, ongoing efforts to build relationships with some journalists have led to some great and insightful coverage of our cause and sport. It resulted in a positive television news story of SSAA WA attending agricultural field days with their mobile air rifle trailer, attracting crowds to try the fun and inclusive sport of target shooting. This is a prime example of how 'working behind the scenes' really works and can take months, if not years to pay off.

The key in all our efforts is to remain respectful, keep educating our friends and family and engage with our local members and any community consultation opportunities when they arise.



## SSAA - Protecting shooters since 1948



## The drastic plastic

I'VE JUST READ Lionel Swift's excellent article about the old gun shops of Latrobe Street in Melbourne (*Shooter*, March 2023) where he mentions the Super Cartridge Company and their 'all plastic-bodied 12g shotshells'. I lived about 6km from their factory and Super was one of my go-to places for shotshells. The day came I needed some so off I went and bought my usual No.4s and was asked if I was interested in their new product, the all plastic-bodied shotshells.

I was warned these couldn't be reloaded so was a bit hesitant and bought just one packet. The next day I went rabbiting at my favourite spot, loaded up my 12g pump-action Bentley shotgun, walked about 50m and spotted a group of rabbits. I took aim at a rabbit and fired. It was a good hit but sadly there was no follow-up shot on the rest of them.

On cycling the next round the extractor ripped through the plastic rim leaving the spent round still in the chamber. And my shooting partner who had a self-loading Browning had the same issue, bad news all round. It took a while to remove the spent shotshell though all was not lost as we had a great day out and a fine feed of rabbits. I dare say these plastic cases would still be good in an under-and-over or side-by-side shotgun.

**Peter Lytwynenko, via email**

## Dear Editor,

IT'S SATURDAY MORNING and I'm sitting with my 9-year-old son and we're reading through the August 2023 edition of *Australian Shooter*.

I only recently joined SSAA, having decided that I wanted to expand my social life into the sport, rather than simply managing vermin.

While some might relate that receiving industry periodicals can sometimes simply clog up one's mail, this publication is exceptional. I can't put it down.

The articles and reviews are highly informative, interesting and very well drafted. The advertising layouts are very good, with me spending at least equal time looking through all the ads, all with their tempting, high-quality pictures. The excellence of this magazine makes SSAA membership great value, just for the subscription itself.

Just wanted to say thanks very much and please keep up the great work. When something is this good, the people responsible need to know.

**Peter O'Brien, Newcastle**

## Anyone on the ball?

LIONEL SWIFT'S EXCELLENT article 'Little' Piece of History (*Shooter*, April 2023) prompted me to look at my own little piece of history, a 25-round packet of 7.65 auto pistol cartridges bearing a label reading: '32 cal Smokeless CF cartridges for Automatic

*Pistols, Made in Herstal near Liège (Belgium) for Alcock & Pierce, Gun and Cartridge Makers, Melbourne*'.

Lionel mentions Alcock & Pierce retailing shotgun cartridges under their name, as did many retailers in the early days, though I wonder if much is known about their ball cartridge sales and if this box can be dated.

**Peter Gillott, NSW**



## Feather in his cap

I ENJOYED PETER Meyer's letter about priming the pan of his flintlock (*Shooter*, March 2023) but was somewhat alarmed at the use of 'a small dry stick from under the nearest tree' to keep the ignition vent empty. What if it should break off? I use a feather, suitably modified, generously supplied by the abundant cockatoos in the area. 'Modern' shooters find the sight of a feather sticking out of the rifle a little unusual, often prompting comments and giving me the chance to promote the gentle pleasures of the flintlock rifle.

**Dave South, via email**



## Insurance Q&A

SSAA GENERAL INSURANCE BROKERS

Send questions to: [insurance@ssaains.com.au](mailto:insurance@ssaains.com.au)



**Q**I am a firearms and accessories collector and really enjoy the history of certain items and of certain eras. I want to make sure I have appropriate insurance for these items as some of them hold a lot of value. What is the best way to do this?

**A**The SSAA Mutual Members Firearms Protection and the additional top up cover can protect your registered firearms and fixed accessories against loss, theft and damage at home and away. The standard SSAA Mutual cover costs \$35 annually and covers you for up to \$25,000. If your items need more coverage, for an extra \$250, you

can increase that cover by \$50,000. This gives you the flexibility to adequately cover those expensive collectible items you mention with an appropriate consideration for their worth.

The cover itself allows for the new for old replacement value of items up to five years of age and secondhand market value replacement for items over five years old. In your case, with older collectible historic items, it is important you get your older items properly valued and assessed and hold onto this information as proof of value in the unfortunate case where something does happen.

The SSAA Mutual Members Firearms Protection and new Top-Up Cover is easy to get by calling (02) 8805 3900, visiting [membership.ssaa.org.au](http://membership.ssaa.org.au) or emailing [membership@ssaa.org.au](mailto:membership@ssaa.org.au)





## Political interference uncovered during game bird inquiry

My colleagues from SSAA Victoria recently uncovered acts of political interference during the Victorian Government's select committee inquiry into game bird hunting. After the release of the so-called majority report (only four out of the nine members signed off on it), they did not mince their words in calling the whole inquiry a 'stitch-up'.

Apart from ignoring expert advice that hunting had no impact on overall duck populations from waterbird expert Professor Richard Kingsford and Dr Marcel Klaasen, it seems the committee also disregarded many thousands of public (hunter) submissions. Examples of interference range from fringe animal rights factions getting more speaking spots than pro-hunting voices to the animal rights movement being afforded the last speaking slot of the day, so they always had the right of reply. But the most blatant and disturbing incident of bias was what seems to be deliberate hindrance of the select committee's work by elements of the public service.

The most exasperating example of hindrance was the obstruction of the Committee's request for access to a report that shows gamebirds can be sustainably harvested. The *Conservation and Sustainable Harvest Models for Game Duck Species* report puts to bed any questions regarding hunting compromising the viability of game duck species. It states that a proportional harvest quota of 10 to 20 per cent is sustainable.

It is evident now that the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) had held but not released this report for some reason to the committee for review. Although the report was completed on the July 6, 2023, it was still 'under consideration' by DJSIR until a week after the committee deliberated on the final report. This meant that this new information could not be considered. One day after the committee tabled their report on August 28, DJSIR released the report on their website.

With the core rationale behind the committee's recommendation to end native bird hunting in Victoria being sustainability, it is outrageous that this report was not provided to the committee to consider. The report simply shatters the thinking and provides a way forward for sustainable game bird hunting. This is one of many reasons why the committee report needs to be rejected by the Victorian Government and be shredded.

Of course, the anti-hunting groups are jumping up and down in celebration, with the report calling for the end of a duck and quail season in Victoria. In South Australia, there are anti-hunting groups calling for the SA Government to wrap up its much longer review on the recommendations of Victoria's flawed review. One main difference in South Australia is that the committee is not stacked with anti-hunting Labor, Greens and Animal Justice Party MPs. This will hopefully mean the issues are reviewed without the same bias and that information

such as the *Conservation and Sustainable Harvest Models for Game Duck Species* report will be considered.

One important new source of information on current duck populations in Australia is the *2023-2024 Annual Waterfowl Quota Report to NSW DPI Hunting, NSW Department of Primary Industries*. This recently released report highlights a massive surge of duck populations on the back of two very wet years. With the Victorian committee chair saying his proposed ban was based on "considerable environmental evidence of long-term decline in native bird populations, and a worsening outlook as our climate continues to change", this increase is against the trend. Pacific Black duck populations just in the Riverina area surged from 159,800 last year to 2.76 million this year. The total game bird population has increased a whopping 345 per cent to 4.3 million. The much-discussed long-term decline may in fact be over.

The war is not yet lost and with the blue-collar unions expressing their support of game bird hunting by forming an Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group, it may be a difficult decision for the Victorian Government to take on board the bias and flawed recommendations of a report that now is out-of-date.

Send questions to:  
[wildlife@ssaa.org.au](mailto:wildlife@ssaa.org.au)



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## Sugar and spice might just save your life

**S**weating is an important cooling mechanism whether on the sports field, in a paddock, on a run or just sitting still on a hot day. The fact is the most important thing you lose when you sweat is heat, so it's a great way to help minimise the risk of heat stroke. Yet sweating also results in fluid losses, which can mean dehydration, another heat illness.

Sweat rates vary between individuals from almost nothing to up to five litres an hour. The degree to which we sweat depends on several factors such as what activity we're involved in, our level of fitness, humidity and temperature, whether we're acclimatised to the geographic region and how hard we're working. Indeed, sweat rates can even be related to genetics.

The best way to remain hydrated is to keep replacing the water your body loses in sweat. After all, how often do you see people go on a hunt or have a day at the

range and return to the car with a full water bottle. The reality is the best place to store water is in your digestive system, not your water bottle or CamelBak. Simply lugging water around in a bottle or bladder does nothing but weigh you down. And you won't replace the fluids you've lost in sweat by reaching for a cold beer at the end of the day, as it's a diuretic which dehydrates you further.

Along with the fluid we lose in sweat we're also losing other things. We've all tasted the saltiness of sweat and felt it sting our eyes but what other minerals does the body release when we perspire? As it turns out the answer is quite a few, as in addition to sodium we also lose potassium, calcium, phosphorous, chlorine and magnesium.

This is why having some oral rehydration salt satchels and dissolvable tablets in your medical kit, as well as ready-to-drink fluids of the same kind in your fridge and esky, should be high on the priority list. There are many brands and it pays to shop around for something in a flavour you like, that way you'll be more likely to use it when you're hot and sweaty. And remember dehydration doesn't only happen in hot conditions; it can also come from diarrhoea due to food poisoning and the like, so there may be times when sprinkling oral hydration powder into a mug of warm water is another good option.

A method I use as an emergency backup is commonly seen at hospitals in impoverished countries. In truth it was a method we learned in the Australian Cadet Corps when I was a teenager before modern sports drinks were invented. It involves placing one teaspoon of sugar and one-third

teaspoon of salt in a litre of water and, as simple as it is easy, this is a great option to have up your sleeve because:

- Sugar is almost 100 per cent carbohydrate regardless of whether it's raw or highly refined, so it's a great source of energy. Use raw sugar and you have the added benefit of a minuscule amount more iron and calcium than granulated sugar.
- By weight, table salt and pink salt have the same amount of sodium. Use iodised granulated salt, however, and you have one-third more sodium than if you use the same quantity (not weight) of pink salt. That's because table salt is denser due to the grind, though that said, unlike table salt, pink salt has trace amounts of potassium, calcium and magnesium, all the minerals your body needs to stay healthy.

Armed with this knowledge, I bet the next time you see salt and sugar satchels on the counter of your favourite take-away, you'll look at them in a whole new light. For my part they're a permanent fixture in my survival kit.



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**Q** I was looking for some advice before I purchase a shotgun for my 14-year-old son. I was told recently that after 2024, all international trap and skeet shooting will be with steel shot only. If this is the case, I am very concerned about what firearm I should purchase for him. At present he just shoots sporting clays and the odd round of trap for fun, but like every father, I guess ultimately, I would like to see him wearing the green and gold and competing in the Olympics. Is there any truth in these rumours and if so, why? If steel shot becomes mandatory, I would assume I may need to buy a shotgun that has barrels especially designed for this type of shot?

**Manny Garfield, QLD**

**A** There are certainly many rumours flying around the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) at the moment about the introduction of the compulsory use of steel shot after the Paris Olympics in 2024. At this stage that is all these are. Rumours. I guess where there is smoke you could also suggest there may be fire forthcoming. The ISSF is certainly under strong pressure to save itself as a sport at Olympic level. The television ratings from the Tokyo Games suggest that the shooting sports were one of the worst rating events. It is a sign of the times when both skateboarding and rock-climbing made the top 10.

Anything that the ISSF can do to save their sport at this level is paramount. If they lose Olympic representation, then

the flow-on to everyone involved in the firearms fraternity will be huge. In many countries around the world, it is only the fact that shooting is on the Olympic program that even allows their citizens to touch a firearm. Using steel won't make it a better television event by a long way. If the current rules were applied and only 24 grams of shot size number 7s were able to be legally used, then the scores in the Trap event would surely decrease. In Skeet, I am not sure anything would change. The close distances that Skeet targets are shot at won't have quite the same detrimental effect in my opinion.

In the small amount of testing that I have conducted with steel shot it was my conclusion that the penetration power of steel shot at greater distances clearly diminished, therefore anyone that is relying on their second shot at 40 metres or more to break a clay target that is driving away from you and is pretty much facing 'edge on' will be in some trouble.

Most serious duck shooters would probably tell you that the killing power with steel shot compared to lead is certainly less and it can only be overcome with larger pellets. Here lies the problem for Trap shooters using steel. For many trap shooters their barrels are of a fixed choke and are usually configured with an improved modified (three-quarter) choke in the bottom barrel and a full choke in the top barrel for the second shot. There are some major manufacturers that strictly forbid any steel

shot to be used through barrels with this amount of constriction, in fact many only recommend the use of no more than half or modified choke when using steel shot. This will be the ISSF's biggest issue. Using steel shot may make themselves look wonderful in the eyes of the green movement, but they may very well be creating a huge 'barrier to entry' for their own sport.

Plenty of existing competitors simply will not be able to afford a new firearm or at the very least purchase a new set of barrels and have them fitted to their existing firearm. It would be a brave person to start using steel shot through a \$15,000 custom-made shotgun with barrels that will have its warranty void when they do so. I am not sure the ISSF will want to take that risk.

If you are still unsure I would strongly suggest you buy a shotgun with 'screw in' or variable chokes in its barrels. While many Olympic Trap shooters might be able to get by with a modified choke for the first barrel, I doubt anyone of note would use this same choke for their second shot.

Stay tuned. I am sure there will be much more on this topic in the coming year. What everyone is wondering is, of course, what will happen to the domestic disciplines worldwide in regard to this issue if the international governing body gives way? This has the potential to get really ugly, very quickly.



**Questions to:**  
[Russell@GoShooting.com.au](mailto:Russell@GoShooting.com.au)

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## Senator Bridget MCKENZIE

THE NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

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- ✔ Erosion of our rights and responsibilities under the NFA
- ✔ Threats to game hunting
- ✔ Greater access to our great sport

Authorised by Bridget McKenzie, National Party of Australia, 172 High Street, Wodonga VIC 3690.





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The RAPID 3-9x40 and 4-12x40 include a set of 1" Weaver Rings. Both incorporate a Plex Reticle.

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# Got a question - ask our **TOP SHOTS?**

John Dunn • Paul Miller • Geoff Smith • Barry Wilmot • Rod Pascoe

email: [edit@ssaa.org.au](mailto:edit@ssaa.org.au)

**Q** I have recently begun sambar hunting and am concerned about the amount of rubbish that accumulates in my rifle barrel over the course of a day in the bush, especially the dogwood leaves. I've been told by a few different hunters that a few small leaves down a barrel won't do any harm if the rifle is fired, but I really don't like the thought of what might happen should that not be the case. Is there a simple way to stop the rubbish getting in there in the first place?

**A** Yes, there is. It's called electricians tape. A piece of tape over the muzzle and a wrap or two around the circumference of the muzzle will keep the barrel clear of leaves and other rubbish. It will also prevent the muzzle becoming plugged with mud should you happen to fall over. The tape is thin enough to simply blow away when the rifle is fired without creating any excess pressures that might damage either the rifle or the hunter using it.

Another alternative is to carry an old-fashioned pull through – a string with a weight on one end and a brush on the other that can literally be pulled through the bore of the rifle to clean it. A Bore Snake will do the same job but neither is any good for poking out blockages such as mud or anything else that might become jammed in the

rifling. That requires a cleaning rod, which you should have in the car or in camp but can't really be carried around the bush all day just in case it's needed.

Try the tape. It's quick and it's simple, cheaper than chips and it won't let you down.

**John Dunn**

**Q** I've read in past editions of the *Australian Shooter* about various projects where rifles have required rebluing. Can one of your Top Shots recommend someone to do the same for my big game rifle, which is a rather rare Ruger Number 1 in .470 Nitro Express. As it is my favourite rifle, I'm after a really fine deep blue.

**Andy, Sydney**

**A** That is a very interesting rifle and cartridge combination. I have always been a fan of Ruger No 1s. Mine was a very accurate .22-250 and a delight to look at and shoot. Call me a coward or you a hero...that .470 NE is an elephant gun and shooting it would not be for the faint-hearted! I can well understand that it is your "favourite gun". There is quite a fascinating history behind that cartridge, as it was designed for shooting the biggest game in Africa and its energy and recoil figures are very impressive.

A unique Big Game rifle like this certainly deserves the best bluing to finish off your project. I would recommend you ring John Miall at Miall's Gunshop located at

Frankston in Victoria on 03 9783 1576. John and his team are always booked up with specialised rifle and shotgun work so the only downside might be a bit of a wait to get your cherished Ruger back in your hands from down south.

You can choose between two techniques called hot oxide bluing and rust bluing.

The hot blue produces a highly polished look while the rust blue is a more matt finish and is usually a very even and deep rich matte black. The hot blue is less expensive to do than the rust blue because of the generally shorter time it takes with less hand finishing. Rust bluing is a different process and more labour intensive so therefore more expensive. Personally, I like the rust blue on my firearms and it is said to be the more protective of these two bluing processes. John Miall will obviously know what is right for your Big Game Ruger.

All the best with this special project.

**Paul Miller**

**Q** Back in 2020 I bought a .310 Martini Cadet and I had it converted into a .44 Magnum. At the moment I am using 180-grain Hornady XPT projectiles using 27.5 grains of AR2205 and also I am using 240-grain Black Widow round nose bevel-base (RNBB) projectiles with 6.0 grains of AS30N. Both without any issues. Now I want to use the 240-grain Black Widow RNBB projectiles with AR2205 powder. I wrote to Black Widow and their response was: 'Our bullets are coated with Hitek Specialised Bullet Coating, which is manufactured guaranteed up to 3000fps. So you shouldn't have any problems.' My concern are the pressures. The ADI data for 240-grain Nosler JHP using 22.0 grains of AR2205 gives me 1674fps with a pressure of 28400cup, whereas the data for 240-grain Speer soft-point using AR2205 gives me 1195fps with of 10200psi. Ideally, I would







like to have the 240-grain Black Widow projectiles travel at 1624fps. My question is: Would it be safe to do so? Your assistance on this issue would be greatly appreciated.  
**Peter Lytwynenko**

**A** You didn't mention what you wanted your .44 Magnum Martini for but you're right to be concerned about excessive pressure and the potential for barrel leading when transitioning from a pistol to a rifle load. Your plan to use 240-grain Black Widow lead projectiles in front of AR2205 should be a good one for up to a couple of hundred metres. As an aside, Black Widow might be able to tell you the hardness of the lead they use in their bullets. Generally, 90 per cent lead mixed with five per cent each of tin and antimony will produce a Brinell Hardness Number (BHN) of 15, which would be a minimum hardness for rifle bullets especially if you are working up to higher velocities over 1500fps. I would start with 18 grains of AR2205 and work up slowly from there. A friend of mine has settled on 19 grains of 2205 in a .44 Magnum lever gun with lead projectiles. He doesn't know its muzzle velocity other than to say it's a slow, heavy bullet with plenty of energy to knock over full-size (metallic silhouette) rams at 200m - that's all that matters. I'm not sure you'll achieve the 1624fps velocity you are looking for with your intended load but make sure you keep observing pressure signs when you work up a load.

**Rod Pascoe**

**Q** I'm interested to know the make of this air rifle we've been given from a family member. We tried our local gunshops but had no luck as to where it was made and how old it might be. I located the serial number which is 46884 (.177 calibre).

**Kel Donney, via email**

**A** Your underlever air rifle is almost certainly a Hungarian-made 'Relum Tornado' and while some regard these rifles as a bit 'agricultural', they were reliable and well made. During the Cold War era from the 1950s through to the late 1980s, lots of air guns were exported from Hungary under the Relum or 'Jelly' brand and the disc that's missing from the left side of the stock of your rifle probably had Jelly or Relum stamped on it.

Because Hungary was at the time behind the Iron Curtain they were a bit coy for some obscure political reasons about branding, perhaps to avoid being embargoed in the US. If you do an online search for 'Relum Tornado' I think you'll see what I mean. I believe later exports were more carefully branded and I'd guess your rifle was made in the 1960s or '70s. Following the revolution in Hungary in 1956, Moscow came down hard on the locals and things were extremely grim right up until the Cold War ended, with the rest of the world looking on much as we're now looking at Ukraine.

**Geoff Smith**



# SSAA National CEO Tim Bannister steps down, leaving significant legacy

Rachael Oxborrow

After almost a quarter of a century, including 10 years as the inaugural Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia National Chief Executive Officer, Tim Bannister is stepping out of the chair.

Tim came to SSAA National as a media professional and revitalised the Association's flagship magazine, then called the *Australian Shooters Journal* and now known as the *Australian Shooter*. He then went on to launch a series of recreational shooting and hunting publications including the *Australian Hunter*, *Australian & New Zealand Handgun*, *SSAA's Comprehensive Guide to Shooting & Hunting in Australia*, *SSAA's Cooks Companion*, the international award-winning *Field to Fork* cookbook series, the *Australian Junior Shooter* and *Australian Women's Shooter*.

Following many years of discussion with staff and board members, the concept of the *Great Australian Outdoors* magazine was created as a vehicle to reach the non-shooting community and share messages around why we hunt and what role shooting has in our culture and environment.

As Tim says, it is a magazine of "destination, exploration and conservation". The magazine has proven so popular that the first two editions are completely sold out and it has gone on to receive international acclaim.

"The traditional media is rarely interested in the good news stories of shooting and hunting, so it was up to us to put our message out to the general public and tell those good news stories," he said.

"We've been able to share the stories of hunters helping save the yellow-footed rock wallabies in the Ikara-Flinders Ranges, removing foxes from farmlands in Western Australia, helping landowners across the country through the Farmer Assist program with culling operations and doing our best to save the quolls and Tasmanian devils.

"Conservation and hunting go together hand in glove and it is our role to educate the greater public about our activities and how we are part of the solution for the betterment of the Australian landscape."

## Federal lobbying and advocacy

After undertaking further university studies, Tim accepted an expanded role with SSAA National as a federal lobbyist.

While in this role he was a member of the Commonwealth Firearms Advisory Council and similar committees under both the Labor and Conservative governments.

"We are tasked with the responsibility of explaining the differences between legal and illegal firearm use and that one has little bearing on the other," he said.

"It is SSAA National's role to ensure that firearm legislation has public safety at its core and does not have inadvertent consequences on the state and territory members of the SSAA."

Some of the key activities driven by Tim during his time with SSAA National include:

- Responding to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into the Ability of Australian law enforcement authorities to eliminate gun-related violence in the community. To the immense frustration of The Greens, the majority report outcome clarified that legal firearms are not the main contributor to firearms violence in the community.

- In 2014, a terrorist attack that occurred at the Lindt Café in Sydney prompted an eventual review of the National Firearms Agreement, but also involved a stereotypical scramble by both politicians and the media for an explanation and





repercussions. The narrative that followed inaccurately suggested the perpetrator was a licensed firearm owner using a legal firearm. Tim and staff were able to swiftly defend Australia's one million law-abiding firearm owners and gain a correction from Australia's national broadcaster.

The NFA review that followed involved ongoing efforts by SSAA National to advocate and respond on behalf of SSAA's state and territory members. In particular, SSAA National was able to prevent a proposed handgun restriction that would exclude the SSAA and other groups from participating in lawful non-Olympic or Commonwealth Games handgun competitions as a part of their genuine reason for ownership.

- The SSAA Legislative Action (SSAA-LA) initiative was created to publicise our lobbying efforts and achievements. It is also a useful vehicle to support those who support us and expose those who are against our sport and recreation.

- SSAA National's involvement in the federal government report into the 'Economic and social impacts of recreational hunting and shooting' assisted in the creation of a tangible independent overview into what our community contributes to society. It found that the Australian economic footprint of our sport and recreation was around \$2.4 billion through direct and indirect flow-on activity.

- Providing international representation of SSAA National through the United Nations and the World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA). Tim spoke several times representing the SSAA at the UN in New York.

- Continuing the existing *Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport* publication, Tim created a campaign by coordinating with the firearms industry to develop a National Gun Safe Voucher program. This provided firearm owners with access to discounted storage facilities for their firearms, with SSAA National offering members discounts of up to \$100 to purchase police-approved safes. The program was highly commended by the then-Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Brendan O'Connor in 2009, and was awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Australian Institute of Criminology in its 2011 annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards.

- Spearheading the Year of the Hunter campaign in 2013 and telling the story of everyday people with everyday lives, who also happen to identify as hunters. The campaign gained awareness across the country as billboards captured the attention of the wider public and media.

- The Be Part of the Solution campaign was a multi-pronged approach to highlight

hunting as one of the tools in the toolbox to help reduce the impact of pest animals on the natural landscape. The visual presence of the campaign, using several emotive images including a fox with prey in its mouth, was created to start conversations and be a reality check for those in urban areas. The campaign included several billboards and posters around Australia, with the most notable billboard located at the Canberra airport to demand the attention of Australia's elected leaders.

- Sponsorship of the 2016 International Serious and Organised Crime Conference, positioning SSAA National as a key player in supporting evidence-based firearms legislation that would have key impacts on reducing illicit firearm use and firearm crime.

"Ultimately, all of SSAA National's advocacy initiatives and publications exist with a goal of providing the state and territory members with an environment and culture that supports their interests of shooting and hunting," Tim said.

"Whether it has been through having a physical presence in Australian Parliament to meet with our elected politicians or through magazines, websites, SSAA TV, SSAA Online Gun Sales or SSAA E-newsletters, the end goal has been to support the growth and knowledge of our community and their environment and culture."

#### **Global pandemic and the SSAA**

An unexpected and unwanted challenge during Tim's time at the helm of SSAA National was the COVID-19 global pandemic. The start of the pandemic was a very nervous time for both staff, and state and territory members. The staff pulled together as a team to continue to produce quality media and publications from home while also learning more than they ever wanted or needed to know about viruses and contagions. Likewise, the Sydney-based membership team went to extraordinary lengths to keep membership and merchandise processing running all while enduring arduous government restrictions.

Tim said this time taught him patience and tolerance as a communicator and leader, traits that now have application when explaining to the wider public the motivations for target shooters and hunters to legally own and use firearms.

During the early days of the pandemic, our members and all licenced shooters were subject to inappropriate commentary and accusations as some state governments forced the closure of gunshops and suspended firearms sales. This was a completely fabricated narrative and our members continue to be the most

law-abiding and sensible citizens in the country. Despite this negativity, it was during this time that membership continued to grow and state and territory joint membership figures surged beyond 200,000.

#### **SSAA National's growth**

In 2013, Tim was asked to take on the role of the inaugural CEO of SSAA National and by November 2023 he will have finished his third contract in this position. As CEO, Tim said he believes his main achievements have been professionalising the staff and departments of SSAA National and increasing the benefits and services to state and territory members.

During the past two and a half decades, the Association as a whole has grown to be the strongest and most independent shooting organisation in Australia, if not the world.

"We have been the envy of other shooting organisations, and with more than 200,000 members through the state and territory entities, so we should be. We don't rely on government funding, we are incredibly conscious of how we spend money attributed to membership fees and always consider how a decision will improve our position," he said.

"We are also the most broadly inclusive shooting organisation, with more than 20 shooting disciplines alone. We have members who participate in everything from cartridge collecting to hunting, target shooting with rifles, handguns and shotguns, conservation and wildlife programs and the SSAA Farmer Assist program."

But even after some 24 years with SSAA National, Tim is not the longest serving employee and he is pleased to have had these long-serving staff members remain and thrive during his time. He has also had staff leave his employment for family and interstate commitments, only to have them return to the team, illustrating the strength of the culture and squad he has cultivated to steer the SSAA cause.

Tim continues to have a love of the outdoors and will be looking to spend some time doing the things our community enjoys and what he has been reading and writing about for many years now.

"I'd like to thank the board members past and present who have supported me and the goals that I had in place throughout my tenure. I also cannot go past thanking the staff past and present who have helped us achieve so much more as a team than what we could have as individuals." ●

# ATA PRO 12 12G 32" sporting shotgun:



## A legacy of quality

Frank Varapodio

**A**TA Arms is a Turkish firearms manufacturer that specialises in producing shotguns. The company was established in 1955 as a part of the Akdal Group, a prominent industrial conglomerate. From basic over-and-under models and self-loaders to elaborately engraved side-plated versions, ATA has something for every shooter.

The ATA PRO 12 12G 32" sporting shotgun has gained considerable attention within the shooting community, thanks to its impressive performance, elegant design and reliable functionality. Moulded to cater to the needs of avid sports shooters, this shotgun offers a winning combination of style and substance.

As an avid shotgun shooter myself, owning a Beretta Silver Pigeon III and Beretta 694 Sport, I was keen to have a play with this Turkish beauty.

### Design and build quality

One of the things that stands out about the ATA PRO 12 12G 32" sporting shotgun (also available in a 30") is its sleek and sophisticated design. The shotgun features a beautifully chequered Turkish walnut stock and fore-end, exuding elegance and class.



Easy to adjust comb with included Allen key accessory, ergonomic pistol grip and recoil pad.



Fore-end dismounting cap design enables easy disassembly, quality finish as ATA is engraved into the finish.

The rich wood grain, combined with the matte black receiver and barrel, creates a visually striking contrast. The attention to detail and craftsmanship is evident, making this shotgun a true work of art. Furthermore, the stock's adjustable comb and length of pull allow for a personalised fit, accommodating shooters of varying sizes and preferences. Handling the shotgun was also remarkably pleasant, accustomed as I am to the more recognised and expensive peers and remarkably similar to a Beretta 686 Silver Pigeon. This shotgun oozes quality.

### Performance and handling

When it comes to performance, the shotgun truly shines. It is equipped with a 32" barrel, which contributes to excellent balance and manoeuvrability. This enables smooth and controlled swings, enhancing the shooter's ability to track targets effectively.

The extended choke tubes that come standard with the shotgun offer versatile patterning options, allowing shooters to adapt to different scenarios with ease. Whether you are engaged in trap, skeet or sporting clays, this shotgun delivers consistent performance and reliable ejection, providing a competitive edge on the range.

### Reliability and durability

Reliability is paramount and the shotgun excels in this area. The gas-operated system ensures reliable cycling and consistent performance, even with a wide variety of ammunition *Australian Shooter* permitted me to test.

This system helps reduce recoil, enabling faster follow-up shots and enhancing overall shooting comfort. The chrome-plated barrel adds to the shotgun's aesthetic appeal and also augments its durability by protecting against corrosion and wear over time. Whether you are shooting in challenging weather conditions or engaging in prolonged shooting sessions, this shotgun is built to withstand the rigours of regular use.

### Ergonomics and customisation

The shotgun offers a user-friendly experience with its well-thought-out ergonomics. It features an adjustable comb, allowing shooters to achieve their preferred cheek weld and sight picture, enhancing accuracy and comfort.

Additionally, the rubber recoil pad helps mitigate flinch, which reduces felt shudder and minimises shooter fatigue during extended shooting sessions. The safety button and bolt release are conveniently



Clean break action.

A disconnecter ensures safety by preventing the trigger from releasing the hammer if the breech bolt is improperly closed.





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Zeiss V4 4-16x44  
Illuminated reticle 60  
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Illuminated reticle 93  
ASV/BDC Elevation Turret  
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#### Zeiss V6 Specials



Zeiss V6 2.5-15x56  
Illuminated reticle 60, Hunting Turrets  
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Zeiss V6 2.5-15x56  
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Was \$3330, **\$2549**



Zeiss V6 3-18x50  
Reticle 6, ASV/BDC Elevation Turret  
Was \$2970, **\$2375**



Zeiss V6 5-30x50  
Reticle 6, ASV/BDC Elevation Turret  
Was \$3185, **\$2435**

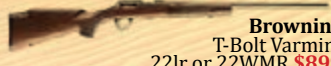


Ridgeline 4K Trail Cam  
24 mp and 4K video, 2" colour LCD  
screen, 8 month stand by time  
Was \$200, **\$119** while stocks last



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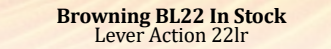
Browning  
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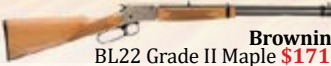
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22lr 5.5" Barrel, comes cased.  
Was \$1050, now just **\$795**



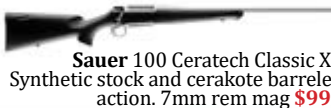
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GPO Evolve 6-24x50 GP OPS Reticle  
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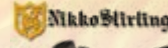
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Burris XTR II 5-25x56 SCR MIL FFP  
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Nikko Stirling  
Octa 3-24x50. 30mm Tube, side  
parallax. 4Dot Illuminated Reticle.  
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Nikko Stirling  
Diamond 6-24x50 FFP Illuminated  
HMD reticle 34mm tube and side  
parallax. Was \$570, **\$399**



Nikko Stirling  
Hornet ED 10-50x56 Illuminated  
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Nikko Stirling  
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### Rossi Clearance



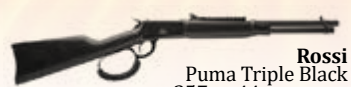
Rossi Rio Bravo Lever Action  
22lr or 22WMR **\$599**



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Rossi  
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Canik Rival SFX 9mm  
Black or Grey. Cased with 3 mags,  
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## ATA PRO 12 12G 32" sporting shotgun: A legacy of quality

located for easy access, streamlining operation and ensuring efficient handling.

The detachable trigger group offers its user to set length of pull from 375mm to 390mm and weight of pull from 1.2kg to 1.6kg. You can easily disassemble the trigger group by pushing the release button. Moreover, the shotgun's design allows for customisation, enabling users to mount various accessories such as optics or sling attachments according to their preferences and shooting style.

### Field testing

Setting up for a field test was relatively straightforward. Given my experience with shotguns, I was able to assemble it in a matter of minutes. The break action was a little stiff, but I assumed as much given I took it straight out of the box.

The fore-end dismounting cap was easy to use, clicked in for assembly and it was just a matter of a push of the button to release for disassembly. Sighting in a box target at 50m, I adjusted the comb half an inch, which was simple enough with the Allen key provided, to ensure I was comfortable when in the firing position.



I played with all three chokes, as I was provided with a selection of varied grain ammunition to test. Over the course of an hour, I fired several shells, the break action and ejectors were on point and the recoil was remarkably controlled. I wasn't fatigued or sore, which for me is of utmost importance.

The shotgun was balanced, and the recoil was well absorbed by the pad. My accuracy was consistent (with a full choke) at this distance, and my groups were tight and controlled. Once I was comfortable with the box target, I then moved onto clays. I was really happy with how balanced the shotgun was as I manoeuvred and fired, the red fore sight assisted in pointing the gun and I was able to rapid fire with comfort and control. Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to test on live game. This shotgun provides for versatility for the avid and experienced hunter or sporting shooter.

### Price and value

When considering the features, performance and build quality of the shotgun, it offers exceptional value for its price range. While it may not carry the same brand recognition as some high-end shotguns on the market, it delivers comparable performance at a fraction of the cost.

This shotgun provides a viable option for both casual and competitive shooters who seek reliability, functionality and aesthetics without breaking the bank. The shotgun offers an excellent balance of performance and affordability, making it an attractive choice for sports shooting enthusiasts.

### Conclusion

This shotgun is sure to impress on multiple fronts. Its elegant design, reliable performance and user-friendly features make it a worthy contender in the realm of sporting shotguns. The shotgun's sleek Turkish walnut stock and adjustable comb provide a personalised and comfortable shooting

experience, while its gas-operated system ensures reliable cycling and reduced recoil.

The firearm offers excellent value for its price range, delivering performance and style without compromising on quality. Whether you are an avid sports shooter or a casual enthusiast, this shotgun deserves serious consideration for its consistent performance and aesthetic appeal. You can confidently step onto the range or into the field knowing that you have a reliable and aesthetically pleasing shotgun that can deliver consistent results.

This shotgun is definitely punching above its weight when comparing price, quality and performance. ●

## Specifications

**Manufacturer:** ATA Arms Turkey

**Model:** ATA Pro 32"

**Gauge:** 12-gauge, 3" chambers

**Action:** Box-lock inertia cocking

**Trigger:** Single selective, tang safety

**Barrel length:** 32" with 3" chambers

**Chokes:** Three colour-coded extended in quarter, half and three-quarter

**Stock and fore-end:** Walnut (Grade 2) with satin finish, full pistol grip and rounded beavertail fore-end

**Stock dimensions:** 38mm at comb and 55mm at heel, cast 3.5mm for right-handers, 14.5" length of pull

**Weight:** Just under 8lb (3.7kg)

**Accessories:** Choke wrench, instruction manual

**RRP:** \$1840

**Distributor:** NIOA







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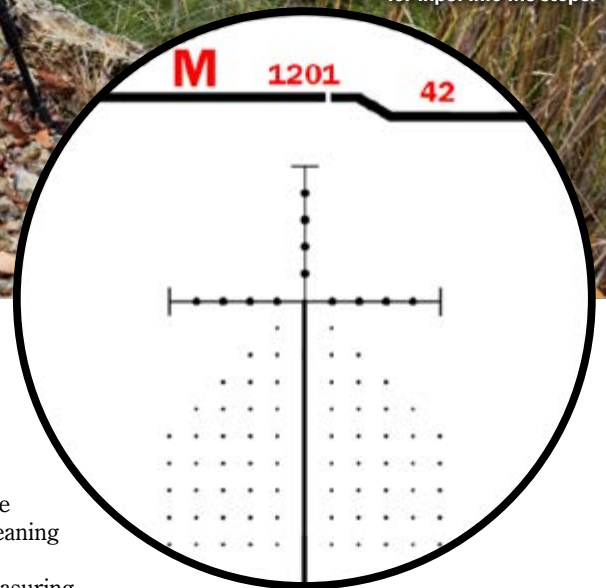
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# Eliminate doubt



Chris lines up on the 400m target during testing.

The X-96 reticle and data from the app ready for input into the scope.



## As Chris Redlich found, Burris scope does the hard yards (lots of them)

Almost a decade ago I watched with interest Australian hunter Rob Fickling in his series *Beyond the Divide* take a tahr in the NZ Southern Alps with the aid of a Burris Eliminator rangefinder scope. It intrigued me how he was able to take that difficult shot so comfortably while understandably putting a fair amount of trust in the scope's ability to correct his aiming point.

I prefer plain scopes with basic reticles so when accepting an offer to test the Eliminator 5, I somehow knew assessing its technical features would be a challenge. For shooters used to making their own calculations and corrections at distance, putting your faith in a scope which does all that for you can be difficult to comprehend.

Make no mistake, the Burris Eliminator is one complex piece of electronic optical equipment and the Eliminator 5 is the latest generation RF (rangefinder) scope with a solid past. Upon receipt I read the opening words of the user guide stating: "Eliminator 5 is the most innovative and effective hunting riflescope in the world," though I've heard many other manufacturers make that same boast, so was keen to put their claim to the test. The scope comes with impressive extras including objective sunshade, flip-up lens covers, batteries,

screwdriver and spanner, remote control, large microfibre lens cleaning cloth and user manuals.

Weighing a solid 850g and measuring almost 400mm it's by no means compact, though considering it has a hefty amount of built-in rangefinder and electronic features this wasn't surprising. Offering a wide window of 5-20 times magnification, the variable adjustment dial is silicone rubber coated for easy gripping and located forward-most on the ocular bell as per standard. For reticle and image clarity the ocular dioptre ring rotates easily but remains firm once adjusted.

The solid main tube is 30mm in diameter, made from aircraft grade aluminium and all external metallic components are finished in a durable matte black coating. Occupying the 12 and 3 o'clock turrets are the elevation and windage dials and, combined with the 30mm tube, they offer a generous 53 MOA of adjustment. Differing somewhat from the standard  $\frac{1}{4}$  MOA adjustment, the Eliminator 5 incremental values are worth a precise adjustment of  $\frac{1}{8}$  MOA per click.

Unlike most modern scopes with side focus, the Eliminator 5 has its parallax adjustment dial on the objective bell due to a battery compartment occupying the 9 o'clock position of the centre turret. This

houses two AAA batteries which power all electronics and are tightly sealed for water resistance.

At the rear of the battery compartment is the function control pad within reach of the non-master hand. On the tapered section of the objective bell are two opposed rangefinder buttons, easily thumb-pressed by either hand and giving range calculations out to 2000 yards for deer-size gamed and an impressive 2500 yards for reflective targets. Alternatively, the Eliminator 5 has a wireless remote pad for ranging freehand which is useful for longer periods of viewing. Finally at the northern end is a 50mm objective with upgraded lens coatings, providing a clear sight picture at long range.

### Set-up

Importantly the scope can't be mounted with conventional rings as Burris uses an integral dual dovetail, cross-slot mount designed to mate precisely to a Picatinny rail or Weaver-style bases. Securing the union between base and mount are two bolts with a 7/16" hex nut and as Burris recommends



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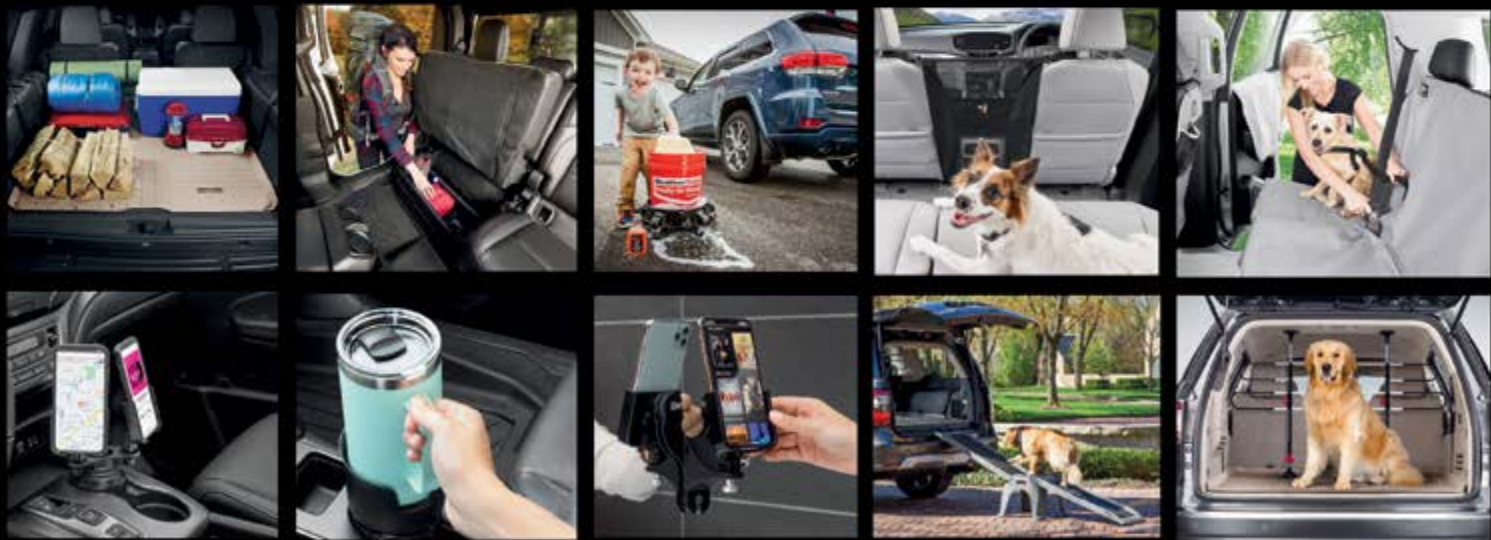


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## Eliminate doubt

a tightening torque of 50-70lb, supplied is a mini-spanner if you don't own a torque wrench. Tightening to 50lb torque was more than adequate and, in my opinion, recommending a 70lb maximum is excessive.

My review Tikka rifle has an integral Picatinny rail and I set up the Eliminator 5 with comfortable eye relief of 90mm. The beauty of this rangefinder scope is no electronics are required to sight-in for zero though it must be zeroed prior to programming. As I've discovered with most rifles using Picatinny rails, there's minimal lateral adjustment required for sighting-in and I was on target and zeroed at 100m in minutes, landing a sub- $\frac{1}{2}$  MOA using Sako 162-grain Powerhead Blade ammo.

### Technically speaking

Initially I feared this scope would be tough to get my head around yet it turned out to be a breeze. The hardest part (which wasn't hard at all) was retrieving the relevant data from Burris' ballistic program for the range calculating set-up. Once mounted on your rifle and, if using handloads, you'll need a few key ingredients before commencing. These include bullet type and weight, muzzle velocity, bullet ballistic coefficient, elevation above sea level, relative humidity and temperature.

The same applies to factory ammunition and ballistic information is printed on most modern ammo packets. Alternatively, Burris has hundreds of factory ammo listings with their relevant data which, once selected, automatically upload to the calculator. After keying my info into



Eliminator 5 and its inclusions, note the sunshade (left) and remote pad (right).

Burris' ballistic data entry, I screenshot the reticle codes from my smartphone and programmed them to the scope via the function control pad, synching the Eliminator 5 to my rifle and calibre as per the user manual.

The Eliminator 5 has the X-96 reticle which might seem a bit busy but has a distinct centre cross, connected by dots and additional graduated aiming dots in both lower quadrants of the reticle image. These correspond with relevant values depending on range, magnification and crosswind speeds.

With your target selected simply press either range button, the correct range will

appear in the display above and the illuminated red dot will place you exactly where you need to aim for elevation. At the same time a decimal number will appear to the right of the range display and this is your correct windage, offset for a 10mph crosswind for the target's ranged distance.

This two-digit windage number shows how many dots on the horizontal reticle to hold into the wind for 10mph (16km/h). It's up to the shooter to calculate this holdover using 10mph as a rough guide, eg half the number of dots for a 5mph wind and double for 20mph. Another key feature of the Eliminator is its ability to calculate angle compensation, of particular relevance when shooting down steep hills with the aiming dot placing you right on target for the angle of shot.

I must stress the X-96 aiming marks and display calculations are of more use at extended ranges which, after all, is the purpose of Eliminator 5. Quite simply, once programmed your scope should enable you to hit targets at long range and I was keen to test that accuracy.



Range buttons within easy reach of the operator's thumb.



Parallax adjusted for 400m by rotating the objective dial.





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## Eliminate doubt

### Testing

Baby steps first and the Eliminator didn't disappoint. I was happy with my first long-range target session at 300m using the supplied 162-grain Powerheads, impressed with a three-shot group under 1.5". Although I didn't factor the windage calculation for a stiff 14mph crosswind, the shots landed almost bang-on horizontal. This proved a good combination of correct data input with the superb accuracy of the Tikka Wild Boar rifle and Sako factory ammo.

Assessing the scope's ability at almost 400m came on a subsequent deer hunt. I chose a valley with a clear line of sight offering a perfect real-life hunting scenario to further test its accuracy. I had access to the ridge on the far side via a descent to the floor and pushing the ute in low gear made my way to a flat spot with safe backdrop.

After a few warm-up shots I fired two three-shot groups with the Powerheads. Using the windage correction to help counter the strong cross breeze, at 393m the group MPI (mean point of impact) surprisingly printed 5" higher than expected. This scope can possibly make corrections for non-reflective targets such as deer out to 2000 yards (1830m), yet my results highlighted the fact that to achieve accurate and reliable drop compensation with the Eliminator, it's vital the shooter confirms corrections on the range first.

I'd never attempt large game shoulder shots at more than 350m with a .308 Win anyway, yet my strong advice is to test and adjust the data input before risking a missed one-shot opportunity at your prize trophy. Burreis has a technical notes section in the manual with a step-by-step process on fine-tuning the scope for distances beyond 750 yards and potentially out to 2500, something well beyond my level of expertise.

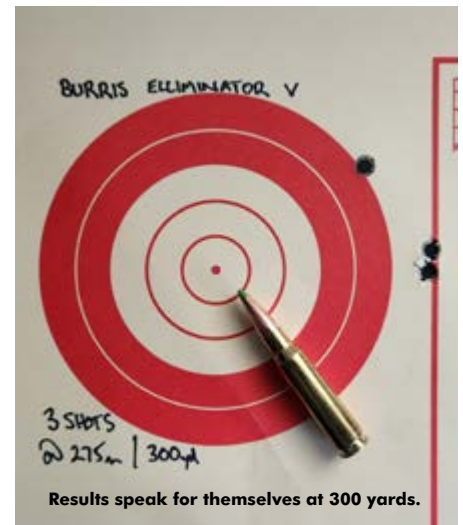


Above: Red dot highlights the point of aim and note windage dots for drift correction.

### Conclusion

Over more than a decade, Eliminator rangefinder scopes have built a reputation for convenience and reliability among long-range shooters and by now offering their fifth-generation version in Eliminator 5, Burreis has improved what was already a winning hand. Retailing for \$3499 (at time of writing) seems expensive though not surprising, considering it does a lot more than just provide a target image.

When fine-tuned the Eliminator 5 takes all the hard work out of long-distance calculations and backed by their exceptional Forever Warranty, No Questions Asked policy, rest assured Burreis and Australian distributor Beretta have you covered. More at [berettaaustralia.com.au](http://berettaaustralia.com.au) ●



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# Contract *Thriller*

Wedgetail an all-Aussie option for pro shooters, says **Daniel O’Dea**

**T**he ownership of self-loading firearms in Australia was all but curtailed after the 1996 National Firearms Agreement (NFA) and accompanying firearms buyback. As draconian as many might believe this to have been, the authorities concerned at least had enough understanding to recognise there was still a completely legitimate need for the use of self-loading firearms, primarily for vertebrate pest control by professional contract shooters and eligible primary producers (farmers).

Contract shooters for large vertebrate work such as the aerial control (chopper shooting) of pigs, goats, buffaloes etc. mainly use rifles of .308 calibre (7.62 NATO) and as far as firearms were concerned, this requirement had traditionally been fulfilled by self-loading surplus military rifles. Predominantly these included the Lithgow-made L1A1 (SLR), the US M14 and to a lesser extent early model Dutch Armalite AR10s. In design and manufacture all these can be dated back to the late 1950s. The Lithgow L1A1 ceased production in 1986, the M14 in 1980 and even 20 years ago it was apparent both the necessary parts and skill sets to service and maintain these firearms were becoming scarce.

Likewise, although there were some commercial variants of both rifles still being made in the US, both designs could be considered somewhat antiquated by modern standards. At the same time in Australia, although the NFA recognised the need for such firearms, for many years the Federal Customs Act remained somewhat ambivalent, making it near impossible to meet the importation requirements for legitimate licence holders.

Thankfully this situation has been improved but requirements and times for importation can still be somewhat arduous.



Basically there has been opportunity presenting for locally-made options to service this niche market and among these is Victoria-based Wedgetail Industries. They make items catering to both Defence and law enforcement as well as domestic commercial sale with their main products being firearms and suppressors. Being both correctly licensed for possession and testing, I had the chance to review their WT25 self-loading variant which specifically caters to Category D primary production and professional vertebrate pest control licence holders.

Wedgetail Industries state: “The WT25 is a gas-operated, rotary bolt, magazine-fed, air-cooled, self-loading rifle chambered in .308 Winchester.” In essence it’s a modernised version of the Armalite AR10. The basic design with its modular split receiver system, excellent ergonomics and proven reliability has stood the test of time and would be one of the most copied, improved and modified platforms in firearms history. With multiple trips to the US SHOT Show and similar events, I’m familiar with the platform and its various interpretations.

The WT25 arrived professionally boxed along with an extensive A4 binder-sized owner’s manual, some neat ‘Wedgetail’

merch by way of stickers and Velcro patches and on the more practical side, a comprehensive Otis Defender Series .308 cleaning kit which includes a pull through four-piece steel rod, brushes and jags, a quality item in itself I know retails above \$150. For testing the rifle was also supplied with a Blast deflector, suppressor and B&T case-catcher, as it’s Wedgetail’s intention to offer these items as a complete package to appropriately licensed professional shooters.

My first impressions were that of a solid if not hefty rifle (4.25kg bare), the one supplied being the 16” barrel variant (20” also available). As with all AR-type rifles



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## Contract thriller

the WT25 comprises a two-part modular receiver system, both upper and lower receivers 100 per cent Australian made by Wedgetail from 7075-T6 aluminum, as is the free-floating hand guard. All these items are finished in black Cerakote over Type III anodising. Noticeable design features of the lower receiver are the integrated trigger-guard and ambidextrous magazine and bolt releases, the excellent trigger a two-stage unit also made by Wedgetail.

Some AR-type rifle offerings are nothing more than component builds. There have even been cases where particular models of well-known brand names have been effectively licensing deals with the complete rifle being made of components outsourced, even assembled elsewhere and only carrying the brand name.

Wedgetail use Magpul components, a company recognised as a premium Mil-spec supplier and on the WT25 these are the MOE rubber over-moulded pistol grip, 10-position Mil-spec receiver extension and SL-S adjustable buttstock which includes battery storage in the cheekrest. The rifle is also supplied with a 20-round Magpul Gen M3 P-MAG.

With the upper receiver assembly, both receiver and modular handguard mate seamlessly for about 500mm of continuous Picatinny rail across the top for scope and accessory mounting. Likewise, handguard ventilations are machined as MLoc slots across seven of eight features (top being the Picatinny rail) providing almost endless options for further accessory fitment.

The rifle's barrel chambered in .308 Winchester is locally made by Lithgow Arms in chrome moly steel with six lands and grooves and has a one-in-10 twist rate. The muzzle is threaded  $\frac{5}{8}$ -24 and fitted with Wedgetail's suppressor taper mount allowing for fitment of various muzzle devices. Also supplied for testing was a Steiner M8Xi 1-8x24 scope courtesy of Beretta Australia and a Spuhr QDP-4002 mount, so I was keen to see how the WT25 would print on paper.

Locked down in my Caldwell Lead Sled I was impressed. Factory loaded .308



Wedgetail WT25, suppressor attached, ready for function testing.

Winchester ammunition included offerings from Winchester, Federal and Hornady of various weights and the group average achieved was around 1 MOA, though the WT25 particularly liked the American Gunner 155gr with groups as tight as  $\frac{1}{4}$  MOA. I've shot many AR-type rifles, mostly in the US, and have seldom seen accuracy like this.

Wedgetail credit this to their complete redesign of the AR10 barrel to trunnion interface. The barrel nut threads into the receiver trunnion as opposed to the normal arrangement with a barrel nut screwing down over the externally threaded diameter of the trunnion. This reversing of the male/female thread arrangement is said to stiffen the complete assembly making it more inherently accurate.

Groups were fired both with and without the supplied Wedgetail suppressor fitted. Point of impact was affected though it would seem only on the vertical plane with windage remaining the same. Simply put, point of impact dropped 2-3", ammo dependent, with the suppressor attached but being only a vertical change, this data could

easily be recorded with optics adjusted as required dependent on suppressor fitment.

Accuracy aside, shooting the WT25 with suppressor fitted dramatically changes the gun's dynamic, as it not only cuts out noise but seems to reduce felt recoil and all but eliminates muzzle blast. Contrary to popular myth, suppressors don't 'silence' a firearm but importantly, on a rifle like this, reduce dangerous level noise exposure to more bearable levels. You're still wearing hearing protection but the blast is significantly reduced and in occupational situations their use should really be mandatory. Thankfully some state regulatory authorities are now recognising this and approving permits to qualifying end users.

In operation I found the ambidextrous controls particularly useful. For those familiar with the basic AR layout, on the left side of the WT25 you now enjoy a magazine release button just below the traditional position of the bolt release paddle. On the right the magazine release is in the normal position as is the forward assist button, though we now have the addition of a bolt release/hold open lever between the two. This is perfectly positioned for activation by an extended trigger finger outside of the triggerguard and operates the same as a Magpul B.A.D. lever (Battery Assist Device), only much better as it's integrated into the lower receiver as opposed to a 'bolt-on' accessory.

In practice these additions improve the method of arms for this type of rifle. Example: Rifle at point, loaded magazine, bolt locked open. To charge, traditionally you'd either remove the left hand from the handguard to depress or slap the bolt



Wedgetail suppressor features a patented reduced back pressure design developed in conjunction with the Defence Innovation Hub.



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## Contract thriller

release paddle, or operate the charging handle to full rearward extension to release the bolt that way. Now you simply extend your trigger finger and press the right-side lever down, likewise to lock the action open without a magazine inserted.

Again, traditionally this could be quite a manipulation involving removing the left hand from handguard to grasp magazine housing with thumb over top of the bolt release paddle, then removing the right hand from the pistol grip to operate the charging handle rearward while tilting the bolt release paddle backwards to lock the bolt open.

Now you just pull the charging handle back with the left hand and with the right hand in full control still on the pistol grip, extend your trigger finger to press the lever upwards to lock the bolt. Much simpler! Please excuse this extended description but it's really a significant improvement. I note the WT25 as tested didn't have an ambidextrous safety lever but did have clear markings F (in Red) and S (white), Safe and Fire, on both sides of the receiver so I'm sure this would be an available option.

Gas adjustment is easily done using a 5/16 Allen key (supplied) to turn the regulator screw on the forward face of the gas block. Easily accessible, this is just inside the end of the handguard effectively shrouded by the same for protection. Being able to adjust the gas is a valuable feature on a gas-operated rifle, as it lets you tailor operation for best efficiency. Ideally you want to be using just enough gas to reliably cycle the action and eject spent cases without stoppage, as too much gas can increase recoil and wear



Suppressed and unsuppressed groups showed similar accuracy with only a vertical change in POI.

and tear on the rifle, too little and the gun simply won't cycle. Adjustments are click adaptable and the alterable screw can be removed for cleaning.

In closing, the Wedgetail WT25 presents as an accurate and well-built, functional 'D' Category firearm with a host of great features well above that of many standard US-made commercial offerings. They

offer local support for parts and service claiming they already have contractors (clients) putting more than 30,000 rounds a year through their WT25s. Lastly, pricing appears competitive against comparable imported offerings without all the AG import hassle, so for approved licence holders let's support our local outlets. More at [wedgetailindustries.com](http://wedgetailindustries.com) ●



### Specifications

**Rifle:** Wedgetail WT25  
**Action:** Gas operated self-loading  
**Trigger:** Wedgetail two-stage  
**Calibre:** .308 Winchester  
**Capacity:** 20-round detectable box magazine  
**Barrel:** Chrome moly steel 16" (406mm)  
**Twist rate:** One-in-10, six lands and grooves  
**Sights:** Picatinny rail  
**Upper and lower:** 7075-T6 Alloy  
**Stock:** Magpul SL-S  
**Pistol grip:** MOE rubber over-mould  
**Weight:** 4.25kg (9.37lb)  
**Price guide:** Around \$6790 RRP



The WT25 easily field strips for cleaning, storage or transit.



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# A benchrest diamond

Rachael Oxborrow salutes Max Coady's 60 years of service

If you've shot in the Benchrest National Championships during the past six decades there's no doubt Max Coady has scored your target. Max, who recently retired after 60 years as SSAA Benchrest National Scorer - a remarkable diamond anniversary - could always be found in the office, diligently working his way through a pile of targets as you were greeted with a smile and a quip before he put his head down and went back to work.

He started scoring benchrest competitions around 1957. Said Max: "I wanted to compete but didn't have a rifle at the time so I volunteered to score. It just happened from there and I've always really enjoyed it." He put his hand up as marker for the national competition when it began as a postal shoot around 1965, then in 1972 took on the National Benchrest Scorer role officially along with Benchrest Awards Secretary and keeper of all records.

Over time as the Nationals grew, they started being held at various locations around the country and since then Max has been present at almost every competition, though until this year had never attended as a competitor. Having retired from his role as head

scorer, 2023 saw him take to the firing line in a National Benchrest championship for the first time. "I came dead last," he said, "but enjoyed every minute."

Max took his role seriously and subsequently garnered enormous respect from competitors for being fair and accurate. "I've always been the scorer and that's the way I treated it," he said. "It's a really involved role and it makes sense that one person does it to make sure scoring is consistent."

While he may have waited until this year to compete in a national event, Max is an avid shooter in local competitions around Canberra and Coffs Harbour and began aged 14 at the Baulkham Hills range with brothers Phil and Ken. At 16 he was able to join the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia as a junior, when the trio learned from more experienced shooters to develop their benchrest skills at Baulkham Hills and St Ives and shotgun at Bankstown and Windsor.

Max was involved in construction of the first and second Baulkham Hills benchrest ranges as well as facilities at Narrabeen and Silverdale. He was also hands-on in the establishment of branches throughout New South Wales and the forming of state and territory bodies across the country.

His expertise has also been appreciated worldwide as Max assisted with international postal shoots in the US, Canada, Italy and Germany, while he also scored at the World Benchrest Championships in New Zealand and Pacific Regional Shooting Championships on several occasions. In recognition of his work over the years Max has not surprisingly amassed many accolades and was awarded SSAA (NSW) Life

Max hangs targets after scoring the 2010 Pacific Regional Shooting Championships in New Zealand.



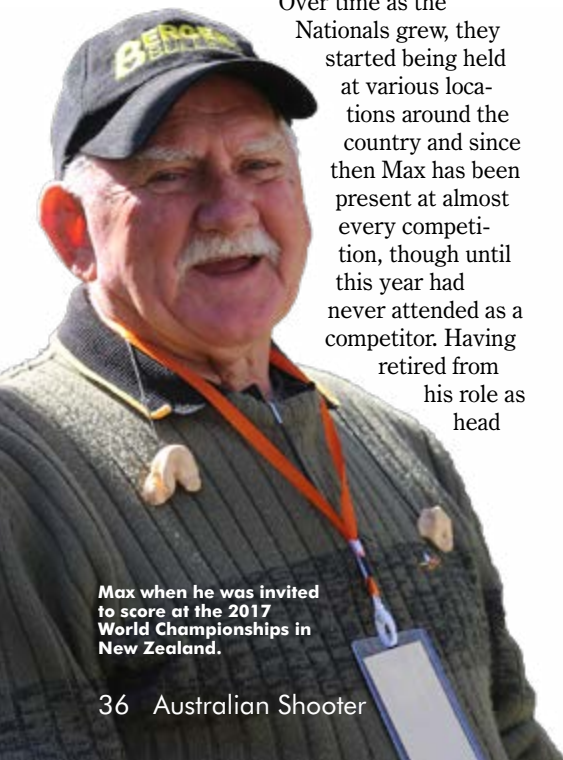
An early photo at the Baulkham Hills range. Max enjoys a benchrest shoot at Narrabeen.

Membership in the 1960s, SSAA National Life Membership in 1999, the Australian Sports Medal in 2020 as well as being a member of the Benchrest Hall of Fame. His father 'Pop' also received SSAA National Life Membership in 1973.

Max is now looking forward to continuing target shooting and says he won't be a stranger at National Benchrest Championships if the location fits his plans. SSAA National presented him with a certificate of recognition for his decades of unwavering service when he retired from his scoring role earlier this year. His hard work and commitment to supporting the Association, its disciplines and fellow shooters is unrivalled and the SSAA National Board and staff send their gratitude to Max for his devoted service and offer their best wishes for the future. ●

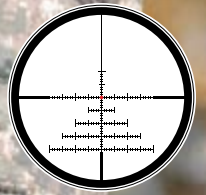


Attention to detail earned Max the respect and admiration of target shooters in Australia and worldwide.



Max when he was invited to score at the 2017 World Championships in New Zealand.





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# See the light!

John Rutkay did his homework on a weight-saving hunting rifle

Field evaluation of the Howa produced a fine stag for meat.

**T**he hilly country I hunt and advancing years have been nudging me towards a lighter rifle for a while and now, as the lightest of new lightweights are approaching the 2kg mark, I'm becoming more interested but also a little concerned. Is it possible to strike an acceptable compromise between the conflicting concepts of weight reduction and shootability in such a light rifle, as shootability or shooter friendliness is a 'must-have' for any hunter's rifle.

So what is a lightweight rifle and how does it differ? A good rifle has an ergonomic relationship with its user which enables the best result from that rifle-shooter combination. This compatibility which we may also call shootability, has been developed and refined over centuries in the form of the standard hunting rifle

for the average hunter. If we make a rifle significantly lighter than the established standard, the ergonomic harmony of the standard rifle won't apply to the new one, as the lightweight version is expected to be proportionately more difficult to shoot accurately as well as creating other shootability drawbacks.

A lighter rifle is inherently less accurate because a steady hold becomes more difficult, rifle movement due to sharper recoil increases and shooter comfort and confidence is reduced. A certain level of accuracy is a fundamental requirement for hunting and any level of accuracy is more difficult to achieve with a light rifle, meaning a light rifle is not for the casual shooter. However, a hunter with established shooting skills and experience is well placed to overcome the considerable negative influences a genuine

lightweight places on its shootability and achieve the accuracy and comfort expected of a good hunting rifle.

So is a lightweight rifle right for me? I can draw on years of broad shooting experience from rimfires to magnums, including offhand shooting competitions like SSAA Field Rifle and Metallic Silhouette. As a result I know my recoil tolerance and level of shooting skills relevant to hunting, therefore feel confident of achieving acceptable accuracy and shooting comfort with the lighter rifle. Furthermore, my hunting background includes habits of passing up most moving shots and rarely shooting beyond 200m, which will make a sufficient accuracy level with the new lightweight more achievable.

I'll be sticking with the .308 Win calibre as it has ample power for my hunting needs and if recoil becomes a problem,



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See the light!

The Howa 'ready to go' with scope weighs less than 3kg.



Savage Lightweight Storm was also considered as a lightweight option.

handloading will allow me a range of projectile weight and velocity options to reduce recoil while retaining sufficient power. Young and inexperienced shooters are generally advised to graduate from rimfire to a standard weight centrefire before going to a magnum or lightweight rifle and can also use research to make up for lack of experience. Reading stories such as this, shooting different combinations of rifle weight and calibre whenever possible and competing in offhand shooting disciplines will quickly broaden personal knowledge and experience to help them make sound firearm choices.

Do I really want a lightweight rifle? On the plus side, a well-designed lightweight will make gains over a standard rifle in various ways. Handling improves as the rifle is generally shorter, making it quicker to point and operate, it's the preferred option for confined spaces such as in a hide and on difficult terrain. It's also easier and less tiring to carry, enabling longer and more effective hunting.

On the minus side accuracy is reduced, particularly for offhand and partially supported shots. Rifle weight generally aids accuracy, hence the reason for upper rifle-weight limits in most shooting competitions. The usually shorter barrel of lightweights produces lower velocity and power while felt recoil is increased, resulting in loss of accuracy due to more rifle movement.

Heavier recoil in conjunction with increased muzzle blast from the typically short barrels of lightweights heightens the risk of developing a flinch, that accuracy destroying involuntary muscular movement before trigger release. Flinching is the body's response to anticipated recoil and muzzle blast and indicates the rifle (as-is) is exceeding the shooter's tolerance to both. If flinching is suspected it's best checked by an observer as the shooter is rarely aware of it.

Main indicators to the shooter are unexplained bad shots or total misses. There are means of moderating recoil yet the most common, the muzzle brake, isn't the answer to flinching as it will reduce recoil but increase muzzle blast, creating an



Howa created a new reduced mid-action length with a smaller bolt diameter to maximise weight saving.



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**Acid test of 'shooter friendliness' - will the rifle stay put and on target with only one hand controlling it?**

overall neutral effect. Muzzle brakes redirect blast back towards the shooter and so have low social acceptance, they're banned on some ranges and I don't recommend them for hunting.

Having considered the pros and cons and still keen on a lightweight rifle, we should choose what level we want based on our specific situation. Just how light a particular rifle should or can be depends on the owner's calibre requirement, recoil tolerance, shooting ability, strength, fitness and so on. Ultimately our choice will be condensed to the available off-the-shelf rifle which best conforms to our individual needs and preferred weight. In my case the main gain sought is lightness for easier traversing of difficult terrain and better handling in restricted spaces.

If we accept the oft-quoted standard (centrefire) hunting rifle weight of 3.7kg bare and 4.4kg ready to hunt, we reach a weight reference point and better perspective of reduction achievable by the available lightweights. Changing to a true lightweight, hopefully below 2.5kg bare, could produce a ready-to-hunt combination around 3.2kg (or about 27 per cent lighter



**The Savage had a 'lightweight look' with helical fluted bolt body and skeletonised receiver bridge yet the Howa was lighter.**

than my standard-weight current outfit) which I feel would make a significant difference when hunting in the hills.

Having finished with the planning and theorising I'm now considering real rifles and found two likely contenders in my price range. One is the Savage Lightweight Storm weighing 2.56kg and priced around \$1700, a compact stainless-synthetic all-weather option with adjustable length of pull and 50cm barrel. The other is the new-to-Australia Howa Super Lite which lives up to its name at 2.01kg for about \$1500.

The Howa differs through its carbon steel metalwork, threaded muzzle, Limbsaver recoil pad, lighter weight and soft-touch stock finish. Its weight and Limbsaver both favour the Howa, while other relevant differences are that soft-touch finish for better stock grip and lower price. Stainless steel metalwork (not a priority for me) was the only noted advantage for the Savage but as my goal was a significantly lighter rifle, the Howa Super Lite became an obvious choice.

Scope, mounts and sling are indispensable and a significant proportion of the total weight when fitted to a lightweight rifle. I couldn't find a lightweight scope with the attributes I wanted so my choice was features or weight. I was reluctant to compromise on traits like eye relief, wide magnification band starting at 2 or 3x for quick target acquisition when stalking and over 10x for the range. So for a good illuminated reticle which allows me to hunt into the evening and night, I opted for the features.

Research led me to an Athlon Talos 3-12x40 /1" BDC IR at ScopeUout.com.au.

This scope at 460g is not overly light but fulfils all my visual requirements and will be solidly held in 1" Talley lightweight alloy medium-height scope mounts. Fortunately I was able to access a Howa Super Lite in .308 Win thanks to Australian distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies, enabling a thorough evaluation of my choice of lightweight rifle.

The first range session showed recoil affecting accuracy won't be a problem. Off the benchrest shooting 125gr and 150gr loads indicated a tendency of the front to jump, though compensating with the hold minimised the rise and importantly the 100-yard accuracy hovered at not much more than an inch. Now for the 'real' test at the field rifle post as I laid the light fore-end across the wrist of my left hand which was holding the post and, gripping the rifle with only the right hand, I sent two Winchester 150gr Power Points at a 50m target.

The fore-end appeared to stay on the wrist much to my relief as the shots landed about an inch apart (I repeated this important test with similar results a week later). The Super Lite was a joy to carry in the hills, the stock fitted me well in all positions indicating that, given some minor personalisation tweaks, it'll become as shooter-friendly as I hoped it would.

The choice of a Howa Super Lite has more than fulfilled my expectations of a lightweight change. The stock fit, accuracy, handling and ease of carry afforded by the calculated 33 per cent less weight compared to my standard weight rifle, has made hunting in the hills a far more pleasurable experience and I've subsequently bought the test rifle. ●





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# Old boys with old toys

## Robert D. Moore outlines a rebuilding adventure

Many like me are still troubled by the problem of 'The Nut on the Butt', an ongoing source of amusement and at times frustration. The problem was my groups at the range weren't always quite right so I went in search of an answer by way of a rebuilding exercise. I've been through parts of this story several times as I have a .22WMR, .223R, .308W and 6.5 Creedmoor and almost all the tuning has been applied to all firearms, though the muzzle brake wasn't needed for the .22WMR or .223R.

My venerable stock-standard Howa 1500 SA in .308W has been used as a development tool for what follows and it has been an adventure, starting with an old-time easy way to float a barrel. Firstly, how much float do you need? I found the thickness of a \$10 note slid between the stock and barrel is often sufficient but be aware of a very hot barrel. I noticed the front mounting lug on the Howa allowed the fitting of a spacer (very hi-tech) so a washer 1mm thick was carefully filed to suit, which allowed the stock to be refitted now with a tiny gap. This solution may not apply to all rifles and the purists will be howling for my blood, though I haven't played with bedding the stock as that seems to me to be almost a black art.

Recoil is a major factor in perceived accuracy of any firearm and fitting a muzzle brake will assist in this (YouTube videos for bolt-on brakes show results where recoil was down 40 per cent). If only it was that simple. The two main types available are screw-on or bolt-on and remember the brake must suit the calibre. Reducing recoil will improve accuracy and in my case, with an arthritic shoulder, the brake helped reduce groups on the .308W from about 3MOA to single MOA (an add-on cheek piece can also help).

Another source of frustration is that of a heavy trigger and while many factory triggers are pre-set to about 5lb, some can be adjusted to a much lighter weight. A 2lb trigger for benchrest shooting might be useless for hunting where 4lb or more could be better, and a recent trigger rebuild

cost me \$10 for springs while a replacement Timmey trigger will be around \$300.

The never-ending riddle of scopes is next with numerous options and many possible solutions. Ask yourself: What is your target and at what range? Many think a hunting kill shot at 250m is probably as good as it gets, though reading *Australian Hunter* articles tell of some game being taken at less than 100m if the wind is favourable. If you're a hunter, a well-made one-inch scope that's 3x9x40 or a variation is probably the best solution and second focal plane scopes with a wide field of view are generally much better for hunting.

A great example of the laws of diminishing returns relates to the riflescope market as costs quickly increase the larger the size. You may find it hard to see a difference in group size by changing from a \$500 scope to one costing \$1000 or more but it's your choice so enjoy. First focal plane (FFP) scopes generally need a 30mm tube, many use a 34mm body, and you can ponder the price difference but don't forget the cost of higher mounts. Same goes for the front lens and moving up to a 40mm or 50mm one could make it hard to find the value.

As a rebuild I settled for a Vortex FFP with 34mm tube in 6x24 magnification and through it I can't see the hair on a bunny's ears but can see a .223 hole on a target at 200m, though you do have a greatly reduced field of view which is fine on targets but not suited to hunting. And except for my .22WMR I feel a scope with parallax adjustment is essential.

After completing the above list on my Howa it was where to go next, buy a new 'toy' or continue the refinement process. Now you know what you want and realise new toys with the options you desire or need can be expensive and while my old rifle was reliable and accurate, the original Hogue stock was undoubtedly a bit tatty.

On the farm my son has a problem with various feral animals so we started on build No.2. My first experience with a pistol grip rifle was the L1A1 SLR with aperture sights in the pre-Vietnam era. Oh what a change from the SMLE and that seemed to be the way to go but there were so many alternatives. I find product articles in past issues of *Australian Shooter* to be a valuable resource along with the advertisements in

The venerable stock-standard Howa.



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## Old boys with old toys

this magazine for information on product supply and price.

Memory told me there were several articles on the new type of stock in this publication and after some digging I found them. With an engineering background from long ago, I dug up the article on a three-piece modular unit which suited my situation, this product having the added feature of a folding buttstock to aid transport and bolt movement. I chose the Southern Cross TSP-X stock which has been a joy though there are alternatives and one irritation, at least on the model I have, is the need to remove the cheekpiece to extract the bolt.

The cheekpiece has a sideways adjustment which has been put to good use as my son shoots right-handed and I left-handed. The flat on the frame behind the bolt is great for setting the scope level and this unit uses the AICS magazine system



The new barrel after floating.

which accommodates longer rounds than the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) standard, though you have to buy the magazine separately.

As part of this project while waiting for the new barrelled action to arrive, I used my development toy for some fun. You don't have to disassemble your rifle except to remove the existing stock and you should store that old stock, hardware and inbuilt magazine for a future project. Following the instructions it's simple to assemble and install the new stock with just basic tools needed, though make sure you apply the recommended torque to the screws. Setting length of pull is easy with spacers and the cheekpiece adjusts for height.

The new chassis is so precise that after removing the Hogue stock I was able to install the old rifle with scope into the new modular unit and didn't even have to adjust the scope level. The rebuilt 'toy' with stock was amazing - I was sold. But as with 'boys and their toys' my son needed more, so using the experience gained to date, a new Howa barrelled action in .308W with 26" varmint barrel was purchased and I fitted a screw-on muzzle brake.

This unit came with the trigger factory-set at 2.5lb. Note the Howa action has

a 90-degree bolt lift which may require higher scope mounts for clearance. Heavy duty four-stud scope mounts were added to complement the Vortex FFP 6x24x34mm and after sighting-in at Eagle Park, the new addition to the family was delivered to my son with five shots through one hole at 100m! Happy days, though I'm glad he's carrying it to the hide and not me.

The adventure continued and following the 'devil you know' principle, another build also based on a Howa barrelled action was next, this time in 6.5 Creedmoor and with a TSP-H stock. The build was simple though the cheekpiece is better on the 'X' variant than the model I have. The fit was perfect, the results outstanding and keeping an eye on the dollars again, the switch was made to a Nikko Stirling scope with the same specs as the Vortex. Out to about 300m no real difference was noted compared to the Vortex and this new toy is also capable of five shots in one hole on a good day if the wind is favourable.

The original Howa now rebuilt with the old Hogue stock looks a bit like the proverbial farmer's friend that lives in the ute, and further investigation is now under way, this time looking at a stock made from laminated engineered timber. My research continues. ●

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# BEST OF British

Glorious buck a trophy to treasure, writes **Matt Fox**



It's been four years since I moved to the UK from Australia and I'd put the rifle down to start helping friends fulfil their hunting needs, though after a couple of years I had itchy feet and needed to run the hills again. My Kiwi friend (also called Matt sorry for any confusion) was living there too, so along with my friend Rob I teed up a hunt and it's one he'll never forget.

Matt's relatively new to hunting and does it for all the right reasons of putting fresh meat on the table, experiencing the wilderness and a sense of adventure. He told me: "If I'm going to hunt I'm going to go all-in and be good with a bow." After a few close calls and unlucky outcomes he was in need of some success and I was more than happy to help out.

Arriving at the property we'd be hunting before dawn, it was pitch black but we could hear a stag roaring in the distance and began closing the gap. A lot of UK scenery is so different to Australia, being relatively flat with great visibility and cool temperatures. We began our descent through the trees when we spotted some hinds feeding on the timberline just as the light began

to rise. The wind was in our favour as we scuttled around a fallen stone wall while the stag was rutting and rounding up his harem. We could see glimpses of movement through the long grass and his antlers held our attention.

Things didn't go our way as the stag continued to be just out of reach though I did manage some decent video footage of him, a lovely young 7x6 with small tops and nice lower tines. We spent the afternoon on the other side of the property, stalking through trees in search of fallow and while there were plenty of yearlings and does, no decent bucks. Rob spotted a cull buck in the distance going away from us, so we hatched a plan to return the following afternoon and wait him out from a nearby tree stand if all else failed.

Matt was a proficient bowhunter but rifle hunting was new to him. My .308 shot true as I'd dropped some roe bucks with it earlier in the year and anything within 200m was toast. Matt knew this but nerves and 'buck fever' are all too real as we'd soon find out. Another early start saw us pursuing the same red stag but

from a different direction as we dropped in over the back fence and there he was. The scenario was perfect with Matt lying prone and taking advantage of our thermal imaging camera as it was still pitch black, the stag about 300 yards out and closing.

We held tight as I scanned the countryside for other animals and could hear faint roars coming from thick foliage, so if this stag wouldn't cooperate we'd head into the forest. Eventually the stag moved out of sight with his does and we'd no choice but to chase the distant roars. We moved quickly into the thick timber and in our rush bumped a buck who arrogantly stopped right on the top of the hill, just long enough for us to admire his antlers silhouetted in the morning light. It seemed our luck was turning.

The next hour is one I'll never forget. We snuck into some heavier timber and immediately saw antlers belonging to two young bucks feeding. This lower part of the country had heavy, green foliage with small open sunlit pockets which is perfect deer habitat. Trying not to spook the bucks we doubled back on ourselves and snuck





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## Best of British

around the hillside, so focused on the duo we hadn't noticed a group of red hinds watching us. Their movement caught my eye but it was too late and they were off and running before Matt could take position, while the stag of a lifetime reared his head and was gone in a flash, at least a 12-pointer and possibly more with lovely symmetry and length.

Before we knew it a hind stepped into a sunlit pocket followed by another, then a third, a yearling and a spiker. Rob said: "A stag will be following them, get ready." Matt was in the perfect position but no stag appeared. I was scouring the hillside for anything when a glimpse of white had my heart racing. It was a buck and a big one looking in our direction and he didn't seem spooked. Matt manoeuvred into position against a tree while I was fixed on the big guy through the binoculars, a beauty on his own, standing over his scrape.

We had the ideal set-up above him with an 80-yard shot and the wind perfect. I could only imagine how Matt must've been feeling with his heart pumping and finger twitching. Time slows down in these situations and this felt like forever but as this would be Matt's first deer he wanted the shot to be perfect. I was mentally screaming at him to take the shot but as smart bucks do, they don't hang around and he was gone seconds before the trigger was pulled.

Matt was dejected and rightly so as he couldn't have opened his hunting account with a better specimen. I whispered: "Just a little bit quicker next time mate." Matt nodded, knowing exactly what had to be done. Rob knew the lay of the land which dropped away into a valley and had seen good bucks there previously. I was bringing up the rear with video camera rolling ready to capture the shot and we'd walked less than 200m before Rob stopped abruptly.

We crouched as I filmed three bucks running single file down the hill and out of sight, Rob and Matt checking their progress through binoculars. I was slightly higher up with a wider field of view and glanced back at where they'd come from when I froze. I picked up a stick, tossed it towards Matt and as he and Rob turned, I signalled to the right where a mature buck was enjoying the morning sun. Matt moved behind some shrubs as the buck was facing down the hill where the others had fled, oblivious to our presence.

Matt was set, squeezed off a round and the familiar thud of bullet hitting its mark rang out as the buck leapt off the ground, took three steps, reared up on his hind legs and keeled over. Handshakes and hugs all round - this buck was a dandy. A



perfect 60m heart shot had done the trick and I kept the camera rolling as Rob headed back for the vehicle and Matt spent some one-on-one time with his trophy. This meant the world to him as he knelt and paid his respects in a moment he'd been working so hard for.

This buck had some serious character, a dual brow tine on his left side and plenty of length to go with a seemingly endless number of tines on his palms. As it was early in the rut he was still in superb condition, a healthy layer of fat covering his body and no visible injuries from fighting. We field-dressed him before heading home, taking every inch of meat we could.

I returned to the tree stand in early afternoon hoping to land the cull buck and, after 40 minutes of endless glassing, I heard a twig snap. He was only 30m away rubbing his antlers on a fallen tree as like a ghost he just appeared. I quietly and slowly



The hide and antlers from Kiwi Matt's buck.



Matt was all smiles after taking his first trophy buck; Inset - An impressive set of antlers.

turned and lifted the rifle, having to shoot left-handed as he was in a tricky position. I squeezed off a shot and smacked him where he stood, an old fella missing most of his teeth and in really poor condition.

Our backpacks were heavy as we boarded the train home, parting ways with Rob at the station. This was as good as it gets and Matt's buck is now on full display at his house, hide on the floor and antlers on the wall. What a way to remember his first successful hunt and one I was proud to be a part of. ●



A sizeable serve of venison filled the backpacks.



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# Make mine a Martini

Zulu-inspired Peter Bartlett documents a labour of love

Black powder, white smoke - Peter at the silhouette range.

I was interested in the article by Joe Norris in the February 2023 edition of *Australian Shooter* about his experiences loading and shooting his Martini-Henry carbine, as my journey with this rifle is similar but takes a different tack. In truth I've been interested in Martini-Henrys since I was a youngster after watching the Zulu movie starring a spritely Michael Caine.

Being part of a shooting family, my father had given me a book on old cartridges which included the .577-450 and I instantly imagined how it would render one hell of a kick. Not long after, I bought a .577-450 cartridge for my collection and, in the years that followed, thought it would be fun to own a rifle and fire the occasional shot.

Fast-forward a few years and I'm on the wrong side of 60, still a shooter and SSAA member for more than 30 years when COVID-19 lands. I was one of the lucky ones who could continue working, go running most days and brew beer but there was no fishing or sailing and very little shooting. I could search online for old Hollis shotguns for my collection and it was while looking for a sidelock that an Isaac Hollis .577 Snider sporting rifle came up for sale. I had to buy it and after doing so had left a hole in my collection that could only be filled by a

Martini-Henry. I know I'd rather go for Holland & Holland but former coal miners collect what they can!

Not long after a Martini-Henry came up in decent condition with a good barrel and, like all Martinis, a great trigger, so I closed the deal on a Mk4 long-lever rifle with 32½" barrel made by Enfield in 1887. I was told it came from Nepal but the stamps on the stock indicate it went to Rawalpindi in Pakistan in 1908 so I wondered what it's been doing for more than a century.

I needed some bullets so my friend John and I tried making some dies on his lathe and forming cases from 24-gauge brass shotshells, but after we'd wrecked half a box we gave up and used them to make brass for the Snider which were easier to form. I bought 40 .577-450 cases from Bertram Brass which weren't cheap but are excellent quality and I intend to anneal them regularly to make them last longer.

Then I needed dies to load with and having a ⅞" press I found most dies available for .577-450 are 1¼". I was thinking of buying a Master Simplex but after a few emails and calls to Bill at Simplex, he made me some neck-sizing/seating dies for the old ⅞" Cartridge Master press I inherited from Dad and is probably older than me (I also use them to prime my Snider brass).

Like Joe, I bought a mould in .468" and 480-grain from Cast Bullet Engineering and as I hadn't cast before, sought help from my friend Bob at the pistol club who casts for his .357. His first comment? "They're big!" They came out the mould at about 493-grains and, like Joe, I put the projectiles in a tray and poured lube around them until it set then just pulled them out, leaving lube in the grooves ready to go.

Unlike Joe I wanted to use black powder and after hours of online research I mostly followed Rob from British Muzzleloaders via his entertaining videos and methods. The original service load was 85-grains of black so I started with a large pistol primer, 80-grains of Wano FFG, cotton wool filler, a card cut with a 12mm wad punch from a milk carton then a lube cookie made by pouring 3-4mm of lube into a tray. After letting it set I simply pushed the mouth of the case into it leaving a wad of lube in the case, two more cards then seated the projectile. I haven't felt the need to go to the full 85-grain service load as the above is just fine.

## Shooting

After a few shots I realised it didn't live up to that fearsome reputation I'd imagined in my youth, though it lets you know there's





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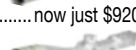
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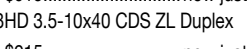
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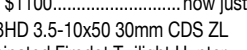
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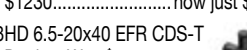
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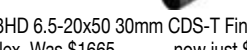
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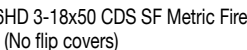
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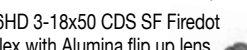


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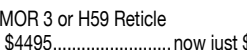


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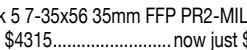
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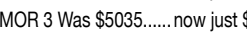
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## Make mine a Martini

something happening when you pull the trigger, with lots of white smoke and solid big push-style recoil rather than the nasty jarring those noisy magnums deliver! I don't know what velocity I'm getting as I don't have a chronograph but it doesn't matter much because, for my first try at loading black, they're surprisingly accurate. At 50m off the bench so far, every three-shot group with my blurry sights on the blurry target has been inside 1.5" with one going into .6" though a little over 200mm high (I'm told they all shoot high). I tried dropping the load to 75-grains but it made no difference to POI.

To fix the elevation issue without permanently changing the rifle I ground down a piece of antler and glued it to the foresight. But how high did it need to be? I could only guess, draw it to scale on paper but couldn't figure it out so I enlisted the help of a surveyor who used the black art of trigonometry to come up with a figure of 2.26mm. I ground it down to 2mm and it still shoots a little high but much better. On the silhouette range with a 6 o'clock hold it knocks down the 100m rams every time if I do my part, though those skinny turkeys at 75m are harder to hit but that could be those blurry sights again.

### Cleaning

Initially I shared Joe's reservations about filthy black powder so I did more online research. The first few times I shot it, I brought it home and poured soapy boiling water into the chamber via a funnel and into a bucket, scrubbed it, more water, patched it out and oiled it. Not too bad. Then someone suggested wet wipes so now, after shooting at the range and preferably with the barrel still warm, I cut up some wet wipes and push them through, a few passes with a brush then another wipe, a dry patch then oil. The fired cases I drop into a container of soapy water while still hot then give them a scrub when I get home, dry them in the oven and put them through the tumbler.

The only negative comments so far have been from some fellow competitors on the silhouette range when the wind is just right, though spectators and the Range Officer seem amused by my clouds of white smoke. I also enjoy giving anyone interested a shot or two. Overall it's been a rewarding project with great results and I appreciate the help and advice I was given along the way. What's left to do now? Shoot more. I'll be trying it on the 300m range and it might be introduced to a feral pig or two. I think it'll be adequate! ●



Peter's Enfield Mk4 with its 32½" barrel.



Markings on the Enfield 1887 Mk4.

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# Media commentary, UN agreements and National Firearms Register round-up

The United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition has culminated in an agreement to a new global framework for conventional ammunition management, with Australia being one of the parties.

The voluntary global framework is a set of political commitments aiming to address gaps in through-life ammunition management to reduce firearm crime and map ammunition movement.

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) expressed opposition to one concept discussed during the OEWG's process, when the feasibility of marking individual ammunition cases was discussed. The reasoning for this concern was the impact this measure could have on industry having to introduce cumbersome marking processes to their production and how the concept could affect the practices of reloading and reusing empty cartridges.

On 9 June, the OEWG agreed on the new global framework for conventional ammunition management and it is expected to be considered and adopted in the UN General Assembly September meeting. This set of political commitments is captured in 15 objectives covering issues such as storage, transfer, marking, tracing, disposal, law enforcement and international cooperation.

A spokesperson for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said Australia is fully supportive of the recommendations of the voluntary framework. They said Australian representatives argued for maintaining the strength of elements of the framework most essential to our interests – including small arms ammunition, diversion risk assessments, and gender mainstreaming.

The objectives agreed to under the global frameworks apply to national stockpiles and conventional ammunition under national ownership and control. DFAT has assured SSAA National that there are no specific obligations imposed on civilians who own ammunition.

## National Firearms Registry

National Cabinet met in August and a decision on the National Firearms Register was expected to be made; however, no updates have been made available at the time of printing the *Australian Shooter*.

SSAA National is in regular contact with the Attorney-General's Department on the matter and will provide an update to members as soon as it becomes available.

Options for the National Firearms Register were informed by feedback provided by the firearms community and SSAA National earlier this year in an open consultation process.

The Police Ministers Council agreed to these options in early June in preparation for the National Cabinet to consider 'mid-year'.

Talks of a National Register began in the first few months of 2023 in the wake of a series of tragic events in rural Queensland in December 2022, when an act of domestic terrorism involving unlicensed people acting illegally with firearms resulted in tragic losses of lives. The kneejerk commentary that followed these events called for firearms law reform. As details of law enforcement access to firearms licensing details came to light, the tune of the conversation changed to a perceived need for a National Firearms Register, which would allow police from all jurisdictions to access firearms licensee details with more ease than they can at present.

## Subtle undertone changes Rocky's positive target shooting story

An article using the words 'violent', 'gun enthusiast' and a trigger warning before the start of the story says more about the authors and the intended audience than our segment of the community. What could be a positive feature story with SBS about responsible firearm owners and the sport of target shooting now perpetuates the myths that plague us.

The SBS news story put together for the SBS Chinese channel in Australia introduces shotgunner Rocky Shi as an "unapologetic gun enthusiast", begins with a trigger warning and went on to clumsily suggest there is a stereotype that "gun owners are violent" and entertains the musings of 'experts' who back this claim.

Rocky is a great example of a target shooter sharing his love for his sport, but the way the story is edited and the other content included paints another picture.

When writing about firearms, maintaining fairness and balance while putting together a good story can be a difficult task, particularly when seeking sales or ratings. Firearms and the shooting sports are a specialised knowledge area and it can be easy to get it wrong unless you are a sporting shooter or you have personal experience with the topic.

These challenges are intensified when you bring another country into the mix where firearms are subject to some of the strictest control measures in the world. Painting the picture for the audience of SBS Chinese required the journalists involved to cover off on Australia's current firearm ownership and legislation, history of firearm crime and a final word from anti-firearm group Gun Control Australia. This overview gives the illusion of fairness and balance, but the subtle negative messaging throughout, whether intentional or otherwise, tells a different story.

SSAA National actively works with the media and contacts journalists and news sources to help address inaccuracies and educate media professionals. *A Journalist's Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports* was produced as an extensive guide to assist journalists and media professionals when reporting on firearms-related stories.

In response to media coverage such as this, we look to make contact and build positive relationships with media professionals to help educate and equip journalists to produce educated firearms-related news content in the future. ●



**SBS Chinese's feature story angle misrepresented our sport and hobby.**





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# Long shot

Daniel O'Dea sees the bigger picture with Zeiss S5

View on the range.

The ever-growing popularity of long-range shooting disciplines has brought with it a greater array and availability of rifle optics and, at the top end of town, Zeiss needs no introduction as arguably one of the world's premium manufacturers. The Zeiss LRP S5, acronym for Long Range Precision, is part of their first focal plane (FFP) scope product family, FFP referring to the position of the reticle in the riflescope's erector tube assembly.

In brief, if the reticle is located in the FFP it's placed to the front of the magnification lenses, while in the second focal plane (SFP) it's the other side of those lenses, the difference being how the reticle is viewed as the variable magnification is changed. With SFP scopes, as magnification increases or decreases the reticle appears the same size regardless of power selected. With FFP scopes the reticle remains the same size relative to the power selected, so in practical terms, when viewed through an FFP scope the reticle looks smaller at low magnification and larger at high magnification.

The big difference between the two is when you introduce ballistic reticles with hash marks. On an FFP scope, as the reticle remains the same size relative to

magnification (smaller or bigger), the value of said hash marks also stays the same, though not so on an SFP scope where these values vary as does the power. This is why SFP riflescopes with range-finding reticles require the power change ring to be registered at a certain power setting for values quoted to be valid. As such, generally speaking FFP scopes are preferred for long-range competition and hunting as reticle marking values remain constant and don't change as magnification is increased or decreased.

The Zeiss LRP S5 comes in either a 3.6-18x50 or a 5-25x56 with a choice of MOA or MRAD illuminated reticles and for review purposes, Zeiss agent Outdoor Sporting



The windage turret features an external locking system.

Agencies provided the former in both reticle options. Dimensionally the LRP seems to follow another emerging trend in long-range riflescopes as, once upon a time, it seemed long-range scopes were, well, long.

These days it appears short and thick does the trick and they're certainly more compact with length giving way to girth in both main tube and turret housing. It doesn't seem so long ago that 34mm main tubes were rare and almost a novelty, yet now they dominate the market in long-range rifle optics. And for good reason as that extra room in the main tube and turret housing provides the necessary space for the mechanicals to maximise elevation adjustment.

To this end the LRP offers a massive 40.7 MRAD or 140 MOA of vertical adjustment, claiming 'Best in Class' for total elevation. For context, 1 Mil being 1m at 1000m means you could dial on for 40m of bullet drop at that range and for extreme range shooting, this means you have plenty of adjustment to work with before reverting to hold over (lateral adjustment runs out to 24MRAD or 60MOA left to right).

Dimensionally overall the scope is just 330mm long and, as mentioned, the main tube is 34mm in diameter. The 50mm





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## Long shot

objective lens housing has an overall diameter of 56mm with the ocular housing 46mm and the whole package weighs just under a kilo at 930 grams. Like similar long-range optic designs in appearance the scope is dominated by the turret towers, three in total with a conventional layout, top controlling elevation, right for windage and left for parallax and illumination adjustment.

The turrets sit off a central housing that's spherical in shape about the size of a handball with six flat sides, somewhat like a round-cornered dice in shape. From the base of the housing to the top of the elevation tower is about 90mm (height) and from left turret cap to right about 120mm (width). The turrets have clearly audible and tactile click adjustments at values of 0.1 Mil or 0.25 MOA per click. On the turrets, multiple rotation is enhanced by large print dual row engraving for the values, providing fast reference and rapid precise adjustment.

The elevation turret incorporates a zero stop feature which is noted as being 'rock solid' for confident and absolute return to zero and there's an external lock on the windage turret to prevent accidental adjustment. Basically, the turret needs to be pulled out to adjust and pushed back to lock in place. Both windage and elevation turrets are oversized at about 40mm in diameter, heavily ribbed and in use are easy to grip and adjust.

The left tower houses a single 2032 battery to power illumination as well as control brightness and parallax adjustments. This turret comprises two adjustment wheels with the outer (and slightly smaller diameter) wheel handling illumination, with its endcap unscrewing to reveal the battery compartment. In similar fashion to the windage adjustment lock, this outer ring pushes in and out though in this case serves as an on-off switch for illumination. The inner (larger) ring adjusts parallax from 25m to infinity.

The illumination is digitally controlled and features 'Diffractive Reticle illumination Technology' which "allows for far greater reticle illumination intensity, therefore offers a truly daylight visible reticle illumination even in the harshest lighting conditions". The illumination system also has 'auto off' and 'motion' features and if left on for four hours will turn itself off. Likewise if the scope is tilted greater than 45 degrees, like laying the rifle on its side on a bench, the illumination's motion sensor switches it off.

As soon as the rifle is righted the illumination instantly turns back on and the same is true for angles plus or minus 70 degrees from horizontal. If circumstances dictate a need to shoot in excess of these angles, from a tree stand for instance, the motion sensor can be turned off via a short procedure you'll find in the manual, something I tested with an unmounted scope. With illumination on and viewing through the eyepiece, presenting these different angles produced immediate results with the reticle lighting up and falling dark instantaneously at angles designated.

Optically the usual Zeiss combination of premium Schott glass, fluoride lens elements and their proprietary Zeiss T\* and LotuTec coatings provide a winning combination to produce arguably some of the best shooting optics on the planet. In my experience their optics always appear clear and bright for superb light transition (quoted at 90 per cent) in pretty much all lighting conditions.

I mounted the MRAD LRP S5 on my Howa 1500 in 6.5 Creedmoor with OSA providing a set of 34mm medium-height Tier One Tac-Rings for the job. The scope didn't disappoint with tracking and adjustments spot-on, clarity and brightness optically as good as it gets and mechanically everything working as

advertised. It's the features and ergonomics of the Zeiss LRP S5 which stood out for me.

I liked the compact appearance and design. On a competition rifle which may be used around barricades and obstacles, you really don't want too much length out front where you might go bashing the objective lens into things if hastily assuming position. It would likewise stand to reason that shorter main tube lengths between lens housings would offer more rigidity. The dial markings are large and easy to read while the oversized turrets are simple to grip and manipulate in any conditions, adjustments clear and precise, audible and tactile.

Changing magnification again is easily done via the large ribbed gripping surface or with the optional 'Fast Throw' lever combined with large, engraved power setting markings, while at the same time diopter and focus adjustment can be quickly made at the eyepiece. Eye relief is ample at 90mm and field of view generous comparative to power setting, aiding swift target location when required.

The unit's not overly heavy for its variable range and features, so could equally be at home on a long-range hunting rifle as a competition option. Lastly, the scope is built as tough as it looks and will withstand multiple shock tests at 1500 G-force (that's .460 Weatherby Magnum territory) with internals designed in testing to withstand more than 800 impact cycles at 1000 G-force. Water resistance to 400 mbar ensures the scope is impervious to moisture in all hunting conditions.

The Zeiss LRP S5 is a great riflescope and would be an ideal choice for those in the target market if budget extends, as it's a premium product and priced appropriately, though that's not to say it's too expensive compared to some direct competitors at around \$4500-\$5000. It's far from alone dollar-wise in the market and could even be considered good value if fishing that pond. ●



Zeiss LRP S5 mounted and ready for testing.



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# Seeing double

Derek Nugent salutes the Savage Model 24 combination



Savage Model 24F Predator.

Without doubt one of the most enduring, passionate and controversial fireside conversations between hunters is that concerning the 'ideal' calibre/rifle combination for hunting in Australia. Everyone has their own opinion as to what constitutes the best all-rounder and supports their view with a myriad of facts and anecdotes, often based on decades of field experience.

In general terms my own view is firearms are much like golf clubs, specifically tailored to a particular usage and so a 'set' is really required to cover all possible scenarios with practical confidence. For just as you wouldn't chip with a driver or drive with a putter, nor would you take on an NT buffalo with a .22 WMR or rabbits with a .45-70. Yet with that said, one option often overlooked in the search for an ideal compromise in terms of a single firearm able to deliver in the broadest range of circumstances, is the modern double rifle or combination gun.

## Multi-barrelled firearms

The concept of a multi-barrelled firearm isn't new, in fact it's been around for centuries. As early as the late 17th century, references can be found to their existence and certainly after the French and Indian War of 1760 they were in common use. Indeed it was such a firearm (a double-barrelled flintlock smoothbore) that Captain Cook was using to defend himself in 1779 at the moment of his untimely demise in Hawaii. In the early years of the Napoleonic Wars the Royal Navy adopted the Nock gun, a

seven-barrelled smoothbore flintlock volley affair, and while effective in clearing a ship's deck at close quarters, they were quickly discontinued due to their massive recoil.

In the Wars of 1812, double-barrel firearms were issued to Canadian and British light infantry officers (for example at the Battle of Chateauguy in October 1813), for use against US forces. The Americans themselves used them at the Battle of the Alamo in 1836 and most notably it was the weapon of choice for Colonel William Travis, the garrison commander. Interestingly, modern reproductions of such firearms persist including, among others, the Pedersoli Kodiak Express double-barrel flintlock in .63 calibre.

As arms technology moved forward so did the evolution of the multi-barrel firearm. Whether in a side-by-side or over-and-under configuration - as a shotgun, combination gun, cape gun, double rifle, drilling or Vierling, the reliability and versatility of such guns ensured their enduring popularity as evidenced by the plethora of manufacturers maintaining offerings

in the marketplace today. These include high-end names like Purdey, Rigby, Holland & Holland, Blaser and Merkel to cite but a few, to more pedestrian makers like Bruno, Tikka, Savage, Baikal and Chiappa. Regardless of origin, all share the same simple and reliable break-action design and, more importantly, the versatility of having a multi-calibre capacity on hand to cover most hunting situations.

This is particularly true of the combination gun (rifle/shotgun) version of the multi-barrel firearm which, when paired with appropriate ammunition choices, propels it into all-rounder consideration, at least I like to think so. And it was with this rationale in mind almost 30 years ago I made the decision to buy the nondescript yet exceptionally versatile Savage Model 24F Predator.

## Savage Model 24

This has been available in one form or another for more than 80 years and appears today in the second-hand market from time to time. Introduced by Stevens Arms in 1938 as the Model .22-410, it remained in production until 1950 and during World War



Nock gun.



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## Seeing double

Two the US Army Air Corps acquired some 15,000 as aircrew survival guns. In 1950 the Model .22-410 was redesignated the Savage Model 24, enjoying a production run in excess of a million across some dozen variants until its discontinuation in 2010.

In 2012 the Model 42 was introduced as its successor, though available only in .22-410 with a takedown version released in 2016. Interestingly this latest iteration of the Savage combination gun echoes its distant Stevens origins. How the wheel has turned - or not!

The US-made Savage Model 24 is an over-and-under, break-action firearm using a traditional standing breech, extractors (not ejectors) and a rebounding exposed hammer. Initially the barrel selector was a button on the right-hand side of the action, later replaced by a selector integral to the hammer via a small throw lever. A traditional top of tang lever breaks the action, though some variants feature a side lever or press button in front of the triggerguard for this purpose. The safety is a simple cross bolt.

Variants of the Model 24 are almost boundless and use names like Camper Companion, Survival, Predator and Turkey Special. Stocks could be had in either wood or synthetic (Tenite in WWII era and Rynite subsequently) and in an assortment of grades, finishes and configurations. For example the DL version came with a satin chrome finish and gold trigger, some had the barrels joined over their whole length, others separate. Some stocks were of Monte Carlo design, others straight with or without a semi-pistol grip. Some featured chequering while others were smooth and there were models which even had the capacity to carry extra rounds in the butt itself.

Iron sights were standard but later models had grooved receivers or were drilled and tapped for Weaver mounts while basic engraving and colour case hardening was also available. The calibre

range was impressive: .22 LR, .22 WMR, .22 Hornet, .222 and .223 Rem, .30-30 Win, .357 Mag and .357 Max over either .410, 20 or 12-gauge. It's the scope of these chamberings which foster the versatility and suitability of the Model 24 to a wide array of hunting scenarios and consequently help push the case for its consideration as that elusive all-rounder.

### Personal experience

My decision to buy a Model 24 was in direct response to the tragedy which unfolded at Port Arthur in 1996. With the legislative situation in flux as then Prime Minister John Howard considered the necessary changes to firearm ownership laws in Australia, I asked myself what would be the most versatile firearm to own should the decision be 'one licence, one gun'. On consideration of my target species red deer, pigs, wild dogs, foxes, hares and rabbits - I settled on the Savage in .30-30/12g and bought one from Rebel Gun Works in Brisbane.

The gun is a Model F with synthetic furniture, weighs just over 3kg and is 100cm long with 60cm barrels. It points well, the trigger breaks crisply and cleanly and it has operated flawlessly for decades. The synthetic stock and metal finish are tough and durable, lapping up hard usage. Yet being essentially a single-shot firearm does bring its own challenges and rewards in terms of ensuring that first shot is right every time, this being an understanding all ethical hunters would have to appreciate when using a Model 24 in the field.

It's easily broken down and is therefore a terrific 'traveller' (within legal guidelines) and a great camp gun. It's the 'go-to' if I'm planning an 'armed walk' and by this I mean when doing work on my property, checking hides and trail cameras or any other activity where I just might opportunistically encounter game and in this capacity it has



taken deer, boars and dogs with efficient ease. I augment its versatility by carrying a selection of ammunition on my belt, in particular using solids, buckshot and lighter field loads for the 12g and 150gr for the .30-30. In recent years I've modified the gun slightly by fitting a Picatinny rail to allow for a greater range of sighting options and have variously used iron sights, a red dot and traditional telescopic sights to good effect.

### Final reflection

I'll be honest and say that over the years I've had a love-hate relationship with my Model 24, primarily due to my preference for timber as opposed to 'plastic fantastic', though at the time I bought what was available. I often look at it and think "Boy that's ugly, I should sell it," then common sense will prevail and I'll take it afield and be reminded of the versatility and performance which drew me to it in the first place.

Although now discontinued, examples do come up for sale from time to time and while the Model 24, or indeed any combination gun, may not be to everyone's taste, they're certainly a versatile firearm, particularly when paired with purposefully selected ammunition options.

Modern combination guns and double rifles represent the end point of an evolution in firearms technology and design which has progressed over many centuries. But are they truly that elusive all-rounder we all talk about? Maybe or maybe not and I'm not going to kick the hornet's nest with a definitive yes or no. But I honestly believe this category of firearm is much underrated, has a lot to offer and as such warrants consideration, though ultimately the final decision is for every individual hunter to make. ●







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# Thunder Down Under

## HIKMICRO's Thunder 2.0 TQ50 Thermal scope on review

Matthew Godson

It was great to receive the brand-new, cutting-edge thermal scope from HIKMICRO for review. The Thunder 2.0 TQ50 has been recently released in Australia and it is a quality product that will find a place in the Australian market. It ticks all the boxes in respect to the key elements you should consider when choosing a thermal device. It has powerful sensor resolution, excellent display quality, Ultra-high thermal sensitivity and a well-sized front lens.

It felt like Christmas as I unpacked the box. Inside the cardboard box was a HIKMICRO labelled carry case. The carry case, which included a handy shoulder strap, unzipped to reveal the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 snug inside. It was securely held in place with Velcro strapping that was surrounded by ample padding to protect the valuable equipment. Also, inside was the USB-C Type charger and not one but two high-capacity battery packs. These new battery packs have a claimed operating time of approximately 6.5 hours (with hotspot off) and you can charge the packs by either using the battery charger provided or leaving them inside the device. Both methods having a charging time of approximately four hours.

The first thing I noticed was that the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 felt quite compact and light. This is thanks to its magnesium alloy design. It was reported to weigh a mere 530

grams and when loaded with a battery pack I found that only increased to 644 grams. There is a lot to like about the new look exterior design of the Thunder 2.0 series. A focus knob on top of the device replaces the frontal focus ring found on the previous model and on many other scope brands. This simple feature makes activating the device so much more user friendly. It enables a more convenient and natural hand posture to make smooth and precise lens focus adjustments using only small finger movements.

The next thing to like about the Thunder 2.0 series is that the five well-sized buttons on top of the device access the functions that you use the most. The size of these control buttons, even with gloves on, make them easy to find and operate. A short press of the Power button activates standby mode or wakes up the device, holding it will turn the device on or off. A short press of the Mode button switches palettes, holding will correct non-uniformity of the display (refresh the screen). A short press of the Capture button will take photos, holding it will start/stop video recording. A short press of the Menu

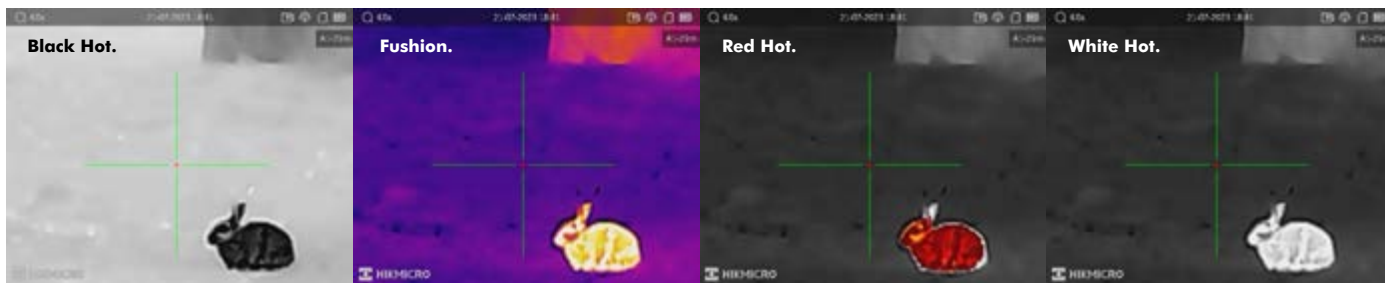
button will take you to a quick menu where you can make swift adjustments to brightness or contrast only, whereas holding it will take you to the main menu for access to more functions. A short press of the Zoom button allows you to switch digital zoom levels and holding it down will enable/disable picture-in-picture mode.

Diving into the technical specifications of the Thunder 2.0 TQ50, it features a powerful 640x512 12 microns ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) resolution thermal detector, an impressive 1024x768 OLED display, and a large 50mm F1.0 lens. Its heat sensor has a NETD value below 20 milliKelvins (mK), which certainly will capture the smallest details in objects and surroundings. This high-thermal sensitivity combined with an ultra-powerful camera will ensure outstanding detail recognition in different weather and light conditions. It has a base magnification of 2.6x, which provides a handy Field of View of 15.36mx12.29m at 100m. The digital zoom can be cycled through 1x, 2x, 4x or 8x settings. The 50 Hertz (Hz) frame rate ensures that the refresh rate of the screen (=50 times per



After the quick zeroing process the scope is ready to go.





second) is fast enough to minimise blur or lag in images while scanning the landscape or quickly changing views. It has a detection distance up to 2600m.

Taking the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 out for a test run, my first impression looking through the eyepiece was - wow! After scoping an area for rabbits with a thermal monocular that had a more than satisfactory  $\leq 30\text{mK}$  NETD sensor, the ultra-high thermal sensitivity of the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 produced enhanced detailed images at a new level. The  $\leq 20\text{mK}$  NETD sensor, in combination with the unit's powerful  $640 \times 512$   $12\mu\text{m}$  thermal camera, provided impressive detail even on small targets such as rabbits. It has certainly set a new standard for me in comparing other thermal optics. Even when using the scope to scan areas, I found no lag or blur in the images I saw through the eyepiece. It undoubtedly lives up to its marketing slogan: 'Game in sight, like never before'.

Attached to my Ruger American .22LR rifle, the two coupled up to provide a light-weight and compact combination. Although sitting higher than a traditional scope, I found the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 still comfortable to shoulder and easy to view the OLED display through the eyepiece.

On observing my first rabbit for the night, I decided to do a run through the four palette choices available with the Thunder 2.0 series and play around with some of the functions. All palettes provided a high-quality thermal image. It will come down to personal choice when deciding which one is for you. For me, I like to use either Black or White-Hot palettes when I employ thermal devices to minimise eye fatigue.

As mentioned earlier I liked the placement of the focus knob on top of the device. Out in the field it was just so easy to switch from close to far targets and re-focus with just a little finger movement. The control buttons on top were simple to find and cycle

through while looking through the eyepiece. This made zooming in and out, contrast and brightness adjustments, turning on and off picture-in-picture mode, and taking pictures very effortless tasks indeed.

While shooting, the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 automatically recorded 14 seconds of video with sound: seven seconds before and then seven after the shot had been taken. These clips provided evidence of my success, which was shared with friends. It was good to know that even the slight recoil of .22LR subsonic ammunition was enough to trigger the recoil activation function. Activating the WIFI function, I connected to the HIKMICRO Sight App on my phone to take still photos and videos while the rifle was securely held in a tripod. The app also allowed me to make easy adjustments to the palette, zoom, contrast and brightness settings.

The Thunder 2.0 TQ50 was attached to my Ruger American rifle using a genuine HIKMICRO Picatinny rail mount. I found that it maintained reasonable 'zero' after taking it off and reattaching it following an initial zeroing process. I did make sure that when reattaching the mount, it was placed in the exact position and screws were tightened to the same torque setting both times. It pays to always check zero if you take a scope on and off your firearm before hunting unless you have tested the mounting system to be truly return-to-zero.

All up I found the Thunder 2.0 TQ50 to be easy to use and provided functionality and high-end specifications of a very high-quality product. The HIKMICRO Thunder 2.0 series has a range of models, which includes three sensor variations ( $256 \times 192$ ,  $384 \times 288$ ,  $640 \times 512$ ) offering four fixed lens configurations (19mm, 25mm, 35mm, 50mm). The TQ50 is the top of the range, with the most powerful sensor and largest lens. It certainly has the specifications to be considered an advanced high-end product that delivers a level of ultra-sensitivity that many in the Australian market seek. The Thunder 2.0 series range is backed by a three-year warranty on the full product, one year for the battery and 10 years for the detector. The Thunder 2.0 TQ50 model has a RRP of \$5999. ●



Brno ZKK 602 with bullet comparison. From left a .338WM long 300gr solid, .375 H&H 235gr, 270gr, 300gr RNSN and 300gr Hydrostat.

# Grass not always greener



## Sam Garro's highs and lows in quest for a .375 H&H Magnum rifle

A few years back I committed to the purchase of a .338 WM as my firearm of choice for the large-bodied sambar deer and water buffaloes of the Northern Territory, using Woodleigh's 300gr RNSN and solid projectiles. A trip to Arnhem Land and the ensuing hunt with an accredited outfitter resulted in my first trophy buffalo. While I was happy enough with the calibre, I also favoured the .375 H&H Magnum (Mag) with a little more knock-down power and ability to better handle a 300gr projectile, compared to the much longer 300gr .338 WM which on occasions has been known to tumble and hit the target side-on. The .375 H&H Mag also has more of a pushback recoil compared to that sharp kick the .300 WM and .338 WM are noted for.

### Brno ZKK 602 .375 H&H

My quest to find a .375 H&H Mag I'd be finally comfortable with took me on a rather roundabout and regrettable journey in some respects and, with hindsight, I wish I'd stuck to the initial choice I'd researched. It was at a military and collectables show I bumped into a gun dealer walking the isles who happened to stock the very rifle

I was after, a used but in good condition 1979 Brno ZKK 602 .375 H&H Mag for \$17,000 and previously owned by the son of the owner of Evans & Balfour, a prominent Melbourne gunshop at the time.

I considered myself lucky to find one so easily, as such a firearm in its condition is snapped up as soon as advertised. Made by Brno Arms of Czechoslovakia, the reliable and reputable Mauser 98-style full commercial magnum action has preferred Monte

Carlo walnut stock and a square bridge receiver. Add to that a curved standard-type trigger, ramp front sight and express rear sights (one fixed and two folding-leaf for 100, 200 and 300 yards), five-round capacity and control round-feed action. This suited me for hunting dangerous game from thickly padded wild boars and heavily built sambar deer to scrub bulls, bantengs and buffaloes along with other big game if I went abroad.



Latest Brno ZKK 602 (1987) in component form.

Square bridge receiver and rear sight.





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## Grass not always greener

### Swayed by a Custom M98

Barely a month had passed when a stunning looking Custom Mauser 98 .375 H&H Mag rifle built by a gunsmith in South Africa and advertised on a gun-sales website for \$3250 caught my eye. It was built on a Colombian 1930 FN Mauser 98 medium action with lustrous blued barrel and metalwork and featured a walnut stock. While I'd just acquired the Brno and had no intension of buying the Custom Mauser, I figured there was no harm in taking a look. Big mistake! Handling this fine piece in the gunshop and admiring its features, my mind was overtaken by an urge to somehow own it even though it was way outside my budget.

### Where there's a will

I'd no problem with the Brno as it was well balanced and performed accurately at the range using various ammunition. Yet over the coming days that custom rifle played on my mind until I decided I must have it, though I still had to work out how. In the end an initial deposit followed the balance in three weeks, allowing me time to sell the Brno and some of my well-kept Puma knives and European trophy mounts to secure it. I also bought a Leupold VX-R 2-7x33mm #4 German Fire Dot scope for mounting on the rifle.

### Unforeseen problems

It was a couple of months later when trialing the rifle at the range I encountered my first unexpected problem. In all my careful checking and scrutiny of the firearm, the magazine box meant to hold three rounds could only comfortably take two without the bolt jamming when trying to chamber the third.

With custom-built rifles using old Mauser actions, original accompanying components like a one-piece triggerguard, magazine box and floorplate assembly are difficult to source, so gunsmiths often resort to making the parts themselves. But then it depends on the expertise and capability of the gunsmith to make it properly and how much the owner's prepared to spend.

In this case while everything appeared satisfactory, the fabricated magazine box wasn't quite right and had some play in the stock. Furthermore, the medium actions on which so many custom rifles are built are a little restrictive for the bullet length of larger calibres like the .375 H&H Mag compared to a magnum action which allows for greater clearance.

### The fix

To cut a long story short I gave the rectification work to Bob De Vries, a

Gunsmith Bob De Vries inspects the Custom M98 before going to work.



Sam sights-in the ZKK 602 .375 H&H Magnum rifle.

highly-skilled gunsmith at Kudu Services, at the same time requesting he install crossbolts to strengthen the stock and for the rear of the action to be honed back within parameters to improve top feeding. Bob did a fine job in all that was requested. He hand-made and shaped a new metal box and floorplate from quality steel for a tight fit in the stock and action, so all rounds chambered and extracted flawlessly.

While the rifle with added improvements was working properly the overall cost of the firearm, quality scope and expensive fix was far greater than anticipated and almost twice the price of the gun. In the end after enjoying it for a brief time I

reluctantly sold it, albeit at a bit of a loss as is often the case in such scenarios. I could've traded it before the fix but that would be handing the problem to someone else, so a costly lesson learned.

### Another .375 H&H Magnum

Now I was back to square one with no .375 H&H Mag and having gone through the mill with the custom rifle, I looked for a quality factory-built one in the calibre. The Winchester Model 70 .375 H&H Mag made in the US at around \$2200 was the preferred option, though a few months passed before one eventually came up in good condition. Again it was a quality



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## Grass not always greener

firearm that performed accurately and I couldn't fault it, though the overall feel and balance wasn't the same as the Brno. I persisted with it for a couple of years before finally moving it on and thereafter put the calibre out of my mind for a time, knowing I should've stuck with the first Brno.

**Brno ZKK 602 .375 H&H Magnum: Part 2**  
Mates returning from successful Top End wild boar and buffalo hunts and the thought of revisiting there myself at some point rekindled a dwindling flame, hence a renewed quest to find a similar Brno ZKK 602 Mag of the era. Over the following months a couple in good condition were passed up as they either had the less-preferred Bavarian stock or the stock or other parts modified and I was after an all-original.

Then an earlier one made in 1987 with 25mm CZ gloss blued steel rings was advertised for \$2200. Always sceptical of buying sight unseen I contacted the dealer in Queensland to ascertain its condition and ownership history. I found the dealer genuine, stating it was previously owned by a serious collector who, due to illness, wasn't able to enjoy it and it sat in his safe for several years.

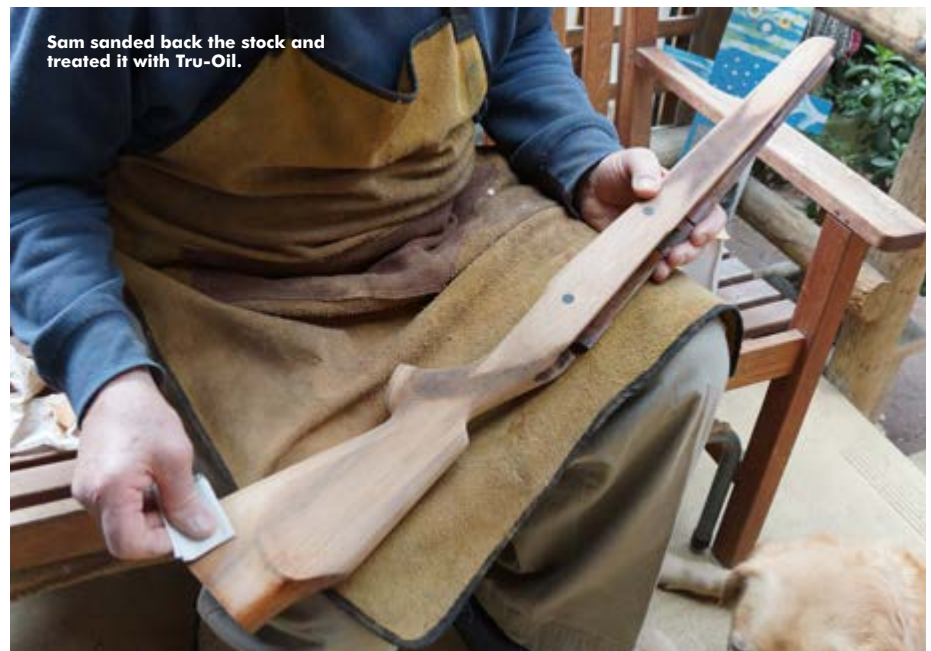
The metal blueing, action, rifling and walnut stock (except for some cosmetic marks) were all in good condition and if I wasn't satisfied I could return it. The action had also been bedded and barrel floated, as well as crossbolts fitted with buffalo end-caps by noted Queensland gunstock maker Gabe Gatti. On that basis I went ahead with the purchase and wasn't disappointed, though to improve aesthetic appearance I decided to refurbish the 36-year-old stock using Tru-Oil finish.

### Performance

The Brno ZKK 602 .375 H&H Magnum noted for its accuracy, ruggedness and six-cartridge capacity (one in the chamber and five in the magazine) has been used extensively in Africa by professional hunters and together with the .338 WM, is their preferred minimum dangerous game calibre in the Top End. Once the rifle was sighted-in using handloaded Woodleigh 270gr RNSN bullets, tight groupings were achieved at 25m and 50m and satisfactory at 100m, though the target at that range was so small and it was a blustery day. For more accurate shot placement and effect, most dangerous big game is often taken within the 100m range.

### Conclusion

The .375 H&H Mag rifle journey was interesting at best, in that it inadvertently enabled me to derive greater appreciation and understanding of what's involved in building a properly functioning Custom Mauser 98 H&H Mag rifle. How things at times are not what they seem despite appearance and close scrutiny and how sometimes it's better to stick to what you set your mind on and worked for you. Yet all is not lost as a well-kept quality firearm will normally attract interested buyers and sell within a reasonable time to recoup your money. Or you could consider another firearm or project build as there's nothing wrong with trying to own a prestigious and finely crafted memento. ●







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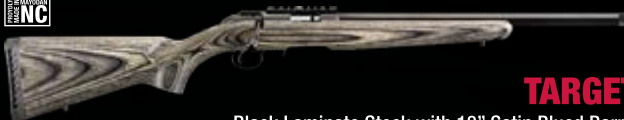
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SCAN TO VIEW RANGE



# Case for the

# defence

Geoff Smith enjoys peace of mind gun transport

Not so many years ago it was commonplace to put firearms on the back seat of a vehicle or perhaps wrapped in a blanket or in vinyl bags in the boot when going to and from the range or hunting area. These days this is actually illegal in some states and is certainly not the best way to transport our valuable firearms anyway. They should be securely stored in containers which minimise impact damage and reduce the risk of theft, preferably under lock and key and definitely out of sight.

The X-Hunter online retail store sent *Australian Shooter* several examples of high impact polymer cases they're currently offering and which appear to meet modern requirements. The cases, made by Tough Move, include a large 53" (135cm) long-arm case in olive green, capable of holding two rifles or shotguns and a smaller sand-coloured version designed for handguns.

The larger case has external dimensions of 1360mm long, 370mm wide and 140mm deep and when empty weighs 8.9kg. Internally, the storage area is 335mm wide x 1300mm long, so will accommodate two of virtually any modern long-arms we'd encounter in Australia. It features latches at each end as well as five along the opening edge, with four substantial hinges on the opposite side.

A pair of good-sized padlocks can be fitted through 9.5mm holes on either side of the horizontal carry handle, while at one end is a vertical carrying handle. Each of these folds back into the case profile so they won't snag on nearby objects and at the end opposite to the vertical handle are a pair of wheels which enable the case to be transported effortlessly. The top has grooves which are matched with tongues on the base, enabling the cases to be stacked securely when there are more than one.

Shooters who travel by air will find these cases ideal as they're tough, easily handled

and should be able to have labels attached with minimal fuss. Once closed the foam lining is both dense and secure enough that even when being bounced around in-flight, guns inside should remain in position without shifting appreciably. The external structure ensures good protection against being damaged.

The smaller tan-coloured version is designed for up to two handguns. Externally it measures 300mm x 250mm, is 85mm deep and weighs 452g empty. It also has a pair of the tongue and groove stackable features similar to those on its bigger sibling. Internally it measures 280mm x 200mm and allowing for compression of the 'egg crate' foam lining, would hold handguns up to about 80mm in depth. This model comfortably held my 6"-barrelled Colt Diamondback or a 1911-style self-loader, though longer-barrelled guns like the 8" revolvers often used in metallic silhouette would need a larger version. Two of the above smaller handguns can be fitted into a single case by arranging them accordingly.

They appear both neat and robust and are claimed to be crush-proof, IP67 waterproof and weatherproof. The polyurethane lining foam is hydrophobic (water repellent) and the larger case has a threaded cap labelled an 'air valve', which could be advantageous during air travel where temperatures and atmospheric pressures can fluctuate substantially as altitude changes. For transport in vehicles, especially those with no enclosed boot such as 4WDs and station wagons, a steel lanyard cable would enable one or more of these cases to be locked in.

The larger case has an RRP of \$295 while the smaller pistol case is listed at \$60. Visit the website at [x-hunter.com.au](http://x-hunter.com.au) for more details of these and a wide range of other shooting and hunting-related equipment. ●



The tough polymer latch and handle both have hardened steel pins.

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40 per cent of its original weight, that's when you remove the string bow and toss it in the microwave (at 600w), indicator down on a piece of kitchen paper. Ensure that the microwave is fat and grease free first.

Tested and approved in Germany, Pingi won't leak, as the moisture is held in by silica gel pellets. It is available in three sizes:

- 150g (ideal for 3m<sup>3</sup>) - \$15.95
- 250g (6m<sup>3</sup>) - \$19.95
- 450g (6m<sup>3</sup>) - \$29.95.

Visit [allstatehealthcare.com.au](http://allstatehealthcare.com.au) to get your Pingi and to browse their many other nifty products. ●



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## National

### Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Rimfire Postal Shoot

June 1-November 30, 2023

All SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette clubs

Program: 40-shot match in accordance with SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette rule book. Contact: Kathy Tobler email toblerkathy@gmail.com

### National Muzzle Loading Postal Shooter

July 1-December 31, 2023

Program: 1 x Military 50m offhand Class 1; 1 x Traditional 50m offhand Class 2; 1 x Flintlock 50m offhand; 1 x 100m bench rest Class 1 & 2; 1 x 100m bench rest Class 3; 1 x 25m Precision revolver Class 1 & 3; 1 x 25m Precision pistol Class 2; 1 x 25m Snap pistol Class 1 & 2; 1 x Percussion shotgun; 1 x 100m bench rest BP Cartridge. Matches to be shot during programmed matches at your range and scores witnessed by range officer. Rule Book Number 8 applies. All scores to the Muzzle Loading Chairman by end of December; results announced January. Medals sent by end of February. All targets signed by Range Officer; include name/address of competitors and the event entering. Send scores to Steve Nicholas National Discipline Chairman; GPO Box 2013, Adelaide South Australia 5001 or muzzleloading@disciplines.ssaa.org.au, secretary@ssaapara.org.au

### International Handgun Metallic Silhouette National Championships

September 28-October 6, 2023

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA

Program: September 28-October 1: Small Bore, Field Pistol. October 2-6: Big Bore. See National website for full line-up. Facilities: Camping available, canteen. Contact: Russell Mowles via email at handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

### SSAA Combined Services National Championships

September 29-October 1, 2023

Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic.

Program: See National website for full details. Facilities: Camping at range with showers and toilets, powered sites, canteen on range open for breakfast and lunch, dinner on Saturday at 6pm. Contact: Jim Oden secretary@vmrc.com

### Air Rifle Field Target National Championships

September 29-October 1, 2023

SSAA Range, Majura, ACT

Program: September 29: Practice. September 30: Open Air Rifle FT. October 1: Open Springer Air Rifle FT. Facilities: On-site camping \$10 daily per adult, juniors \$5. No fires. Catering and supermarkets nearby. Contact: Chris Dale 0418 255 874 or Darius Krivanek 0418 103 360.

### BPCR Silhouette Nationals

September 29-October 1, 2023

Rankins Springs Target Shooting Complex, Lake Cargelligo Rd, Rankin Springs, NSW

Rifle Metallic Silhouette Program: Fri 29 Sept Range set up/practice. Sat AM .22BPCR 40-Shot Match followed by 40-Shot BPCR 'Any Sight'. Sun AM 40-Shot .22BPCR Match followed by 40-Shot BPCR National Championship. Nomination fee \$20/event or \$70/four events. Pre-nominations essential. Email nominations to: danmac4070@gmail.com Rules: SSAA RMS Rulebook. Prizes: National medals and prize table. Facilities: Canteen for breakfast and lunch. Pub in town. Caravan park and camping in town. Primitive camping on the range. Contact: Dan Mac 0408 480 105, danmac4070@gmail.com

### National Lever Action Championships

Dates: September 30 - October 2, 2023

Host Branch/Club: Alice Springs SSAA

Rules: As per National Lever Action Rule Book  
Facilities: See information nomination form online.  
Contact: Jim Ellis 0418 675 526 or leveraction@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

### SSAA Practical Shooting Handgun National Championships

October 14-15, 2023

Host: West Coast Pistol & Revolver Club, Wanneroo Shooting Complex, Pinjar, Perth, WA

Program: 12 Practical Handgun Stages over two days. Full details and nominations on National website. Nominations to Paul Fitzgerald: practicalshooting@ssaawa.org.au. Rules: SSAA Practical Shooting Rule Book No.6 2019. Huge prize table. Camping on site. Full canteen Saturday and Sunday; Sunday presentation dinner included with entry fee. Contact Paul Fitzgerald on practicalshooting@ssaawa.org.au or 0407 773 826.

### Australian Single Action Shooting National Championships

October 16-22, 2023

Frontier Shooting Club, State Shooting Park, Virginia, South Australia.

Program: Monday 16th gates open; Tuesday 17th Long Range Rifle & Side Events; Wednesday 18th Mexican Standoff & Warm up Stages; Thursday 19th 4 Main Stages & Side Events; Friday 20th 4 Stages and Side Events; Saturday 21st 4 Main Stages & Side Events, Main Dinner; Sunday 22nd Master Gunfighter & Awards Presentation. Nominations Close October 1, 2023. SASS rules apply. Shooters must be SSAA members. Facilities: Camping with showers and toilets; no power available. Contact: Violet Rose 0407 182 249.

### Long Range Precision National Match

October 20-22, 2023

T42 SSAA Tasmania State Range, 770 Woodsdale Rd, Runnymede, TAS 7190

Program: Friday 20th 2pm range open for zero checking; Saturday 21st 8am sign-on and scrutineering, 9am start with Match 1: 500m and Match 2: 600m. Sunday 22nd 8am sign-on, 9am start with Match 3: 700m and Match 4: 800m. Nominations close September 30, 2023. Nomination form can be found on SSAA National website. Send to: secretary@ssaatas.com.au; Rules: SSAA Long Range Precision Shooting Official Rule Book No. 1. Prizes TBA. Facilities: Camping available at the state range (toilets, fire places and limited water).

### SSAA Steel Challenge National Championships

October 20-22, 2023

Discipline: Action Match

Host: Kukerin Practical Pistol Club, Kukerin, WA  
Program: Range open for practice Thursday, October 19; Rimfire Friday, October 20. Centrefire Saturday 21 and Sunday October 22. Nominations: See National website. Rules: Steel Challenge International Rule Book. Camping and canteen on site. Limited local accommodation. Contact: Steve Marris - smarris@westnet.com.au

### 2024 Australian Sporting Clays National Championship

February 3-4, 2024

T42 Riddell Range, 770 Woodsdale Rd Runnymede, Tasmania. Program: Saturday 3rd - 100 targets; Sunday 4th - 100 targets. Nominations open via postage. MCMS opening soon. Rules: Current version of National shotgun rules. Be aware of rule changes. Prizes: Medallions, sashes and raffles open over the weekend. You must be present to win raffle prizes. Facilities: Unpowered campsites with toilets/laundry. No showers or campfires. Fully catered canteen all

weekend. Event Contact: Dale Foggo dalepest@msn.com or 0408361 638.

### National 5 Stand Clay Target Championships

February 10-11, 2024

SSAA Tasmania (T42) Riddell Range, 770 Woodsdale Rd, Runnymede, Tasmania.

Program: Saturday and Sunday 100 targets each. Nominations by post with cheque or via MCMS after November. Nominations on the day will incur a late fee. Rule book 4.3 to apply. There are modified rules so please read up on them. Sashes, medallions and prizes with lucky entry raffle. Range has camping, with toilets/laundry, hot water but no showers. No campfires allowed. Contact Dale Foggo on dalepest@msn.com or 0408 361 638.

### SSAA National Lever Action Silhouette Title

March 23-25, 2024

Westbury Shooting Club (T05), 1053 Birralee Road, Westbury, TAS

Program: Friday practice after 12pm. Saturday Match 1 Big Bore Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Sunday Match 2 Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Monday Match 3 Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Presentations to follow. Matches follow current SSAA Lever Action Official National Rules. Fees include breakfast and lunch each day for competitors. Small fee for non-competitors. Camping with toilets, tank water, no electricity or fires. Entry form from admin@westburys shooting.club Fees direct deposit or cash/cheque. Contact Steve Collins 0459 834 885 or via above email address. Fees: Adults \$30/match or \$80 all. Juniors \$10/match or \$25 all. Full details on SSAA National website.

## NSW

### SSAA NSW Muzzleloading Shotgun and Cannon Titles

October 14-15, 2023

SSAA Bathurst, NSW

Program: Saturday, 14th October - 9am start. BP Cannon 25m (7 shots, 5 to count); BP Cannon 50m (7 shots, 5 to count); BP Cannon 100m (7 shots, 5 to count). Lunch break. Caplock Muzzleloading Shotgun - MLAIC Trap - 25 Clays; Flintlock Muzzleloading Shotgun - MLAIC Trap - 25 Clays. Sunday, 15th October - 9am start. Flintlock Muzzleloading Shotgun - Field Shotgun - 25 Clays; Caplock Muzzleloading Shotgun - Field Shotgun - 50 Clays. Presentations. Nominations (see website for form): \$50 max (Ladies and Juniors \$25) \$10/Shotgun round, \$10/Cannon event. Rules: SSAA Muzzleloading Rule Book No. 8. Prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Facilities: Rifle Range, 100m (Cannon). Shotgun Range, with Trap and Field/5-Stand layouts (Shotgun). Camping, toilet block, shower, kitchen. BBQ breakfast, lunch and drinks for purchase (advise for catering). Contact: Shayne Barnsley - 0418302062 or darth\_royce@hotmail.com

### SSAA NSW Muzzleloading Rifle & Pistol Championships

October 21-22, 2023

Mid-Western Pistol Club Inc.; Windamere Regional Shooting Complex, 8863 Castlereagh Hwy, Cudgegong NSW 2850. Program: 20 Friday - Noon to 5pm Practice; 21 Saturday - 8am registration/bench allocation. 9am start. 22 Sunday - 8am start. See SSAA National website for full program. Nominations: See National website. Rule Book 8 to apply, available to download from National ML website. Prizes: Medal presentation on Sunday afternoon. Facilities: Free camping for tents/caravans, with toilets and hot showers. BBQ lunches and cold drinks for purchase Sat/Sun. Range dinner for purchase Saturday night



(nominate beforehand). Contact: Shayne Barnsley on 0418 302 062 or darth\_royce@hotmail.com; Alison Hughes on 0407 853 393 or secretary@mid-westernpistolclub.org.au

### NSW 5-Stand State Titles

November 24-25, 2023  
SSAA Griffith, Dave Wallace Range Simms Rd.  
Program: 100 targets over two ranges. Nominations: \$75. Rules are 2019 Rule book 4.2. Prizes: Ammunition. Facilities include multi-purpose shotgun range, clubhouse, showers and toilets. Contact: Guy Pitchford 0409 555 244.

## Tas

### SSAA Tasmania 5-Stand State Championships

November 10-12, 2023  
State Complex, Woodsdale, Tas.  
Program: Friday: Side x Side 50 targets HCP; Sub-gauge 50 targets HCP. Saturday: 100 targets 5-Stand; Sunday: 100 targets 5-Stand. Facilities: Camping on-site, limited facilities, full canteen Saturday and Sunday. Contact: Dale Foggo 0408 361 638 or dalepest@msn.com

### SSAA (Tas) Single Action State Championships

November 25-26, 2023  
Glenorchy Mitchell Range, Tas.  
Program: Saturday: 8.30 briefing, 6+ stages. Sunday: 9.30 briefing, 4+ stages, Master Gunfighter stage and presentation. Contact: Ray Vallerine 0487 334 714.

### SSAA Tasmania STATE Lever Action Silhouette Title

March 9-11, 2024  
Westbury Shooting Club (T05), 1053 Birralea Road, Westbury, TAS  
Program: Friday practice after 12pm. Saturday Match 1 Big Bore Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Sunday Match 2 Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Monday Match 3 Rimfire Lever Action Silhouette 80 shots. Presentations to follow. Matches follow current SSAA Lever Action Official National Rules. Entrance fees include breakfast and lunch each day for competitors. Small fee for non-competitors. Basic camping with toilets only. Tank water, no electricity and no fires. Entries available from admin@westburys shooting.club  
Fees direct deposit or cash/cheque on the day. Contact Steve Collins on 0459 834 885 or the above email. Fees: Adults \$30/match or \$80 total. Juniors \$10/match or \$25 total. Full details on SSAA National website.

## Qld

### Queensland NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoots

All (SSAA) Qld branches with approval to shoot Postal Metallic Silhouette Program: Shoot 1: February 1-May 31; Shoot 2: April 1-July 31; Shoot 3: May 1-August 31; Shoot 4: August 1-November 30. See National website for full event details. Contact: Hazel Bozic (07)4128 0467 or pms@ssa QLD.org.au

## SA

### SSAA SA Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Titles

October 7-8, 2023  
Monarto Metallic Silhouette Rifle Club, Monarto Shooting Complex. Program: Saturday 40 shots Centrefire Hunter and 40 shots Rimfire. Sunday: 80 shots Centrefire. State Titles Centrefire Match preceded by a Hunter Centrefire Match and an invitational Rimfire Metallic Silhouette Match (40

shot) on Saturday. Range open at 8:30am both days for practice/weigh in; first match 10am; afternoon match 2pm. State Discipline Meeting on Saturday and presentations Sunday evening. Nomination forms on National website. Adults: Centrefire \$25, Centrefire Hunter \$15, Rimfire \$10. Juniors/Pensioners: Centrefire \$15, Centrefire Hunter \$10, Rimfire \$5. Forms to Mark West: markwest@kentcivil.com.au; 0421 775 101. Event is catered with onsite camping. Contact: mmsrcsecretary@gmail.com for information.

### SA BPCR Silhouette State Championships

November 25-26, 2023  
Hosted by Para at Monarto Silhouette Range. Saturday 9am-12 practice. 12.30 40 shot BPCR Iron sight match. Evening BBQ. Sunday 8.30-9 practice. 9.30am 40 shot Scoped match. Nominations \$25/day or \$45 for both. Current RMS rule book applies. Prize table on Saturday night. Contact John Visnyai johnvz@hotmail.com or 0421 117391.

## Vic

### SSAA (Vic) Field Rifle, 3P, Scoped Air Rifle and NRA State Championships

October 22, 2023  
Eagle Park Range, Vic  
Program: Centrefire competition followed by Rimfire. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

### Victorian Muzzle Loading Club State Championships

November 18-19, 2023  
Victorian Muzzle Loading Club, SSAA Eagle Park Range, Gifkins Road, Little River, VIC  
Program: See website for full program. Rules: Firearm and competition information from the VMLC Member Book 2021. Prizes: Trophy for first, second and third. Facilities: on-site camping (fees may apply) and café. Fire Ban for the Central Area will result in cancellation of black powder competitions for that day. Free BBQ lunch on Saturday. Possible free BBQ breakfast on Saturday and Sunday and free lunch BBQ on Sunday (subject to availability). Contact Craig Kinder on craigk@jeatech.com.au or 0409 707 157.

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stay in touch!



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# Winners!

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## Home on the range

Looking back over the year, I haven't said a whole lot about the range, so it's time to do something about that. To start where you should, that is the beginning - since the mid-80s my range has been SSAA Belmont in Brisbane.

Why haven't I said much about it? Well, two reasons. Firstly, over time the range has taken a back seat to my hunting. Secondly, rifle reviewing has turned range visits into a workplace of sorts and I have a certain medical intolerance for workplaces.

Nowadays when I do go to the range, if I'm sighting in a hunting rifle, I'll grab any available bench. If I'm reviewing a rifle, I'll try and land bench #1. It has the most space and allows me to set up a camera while not bothering anyone else. It might sound like a clinical approach, but it hasn't always been that way.

In the early 2000s, the noughties as they call them, thoughts turned to returning to the range after an enforced break post-1996. I was a fan of ex-military autoloaders and pump-action shotguns and a few years beforehand through the stroke of a politically motivated, bureaucratic pen I went from cool stuff to no stuff.

At the time I was unattached, working in the city and earning sound money. Good friend Tim and I started talking about guns and ammo over Friday night drinks. These conversations eventually led us to pre-genitrified Fortitude Valley and Queensland Gun Exchange, right there on busy Ann Street.

Tim's living situation wasn't exactly the same, but as Meatloaf once sang: *'Two out of three ain't bad'*. It wasn't long before we both found ourselves recommitting to fire-arm ownership. We had hunted previously, but had lost contact to properties, so it was off to the range we go.

After a couple of false starts we found ourselves spending Saturdays at Belmont. Armed with left-hand Tikkas and lever-action rifles we killed plenty of paper pigs and returned a lot of lead to the ground.

For us, the range was our local. Sure, we might belly up to a bench, but for the most part it was talking, chatting and generally having a load of fun.



It was the old hands who really made it special. For some years Belmont had a renowned Range Officer. He spoke with a strong European growl, which reminded me of my father's voice. But I got on like a house on fire with him. He respected and responded best to those willing to give him a little of what he gave out.

Another was Geoff. I heard he passed away some years ago, but when we knew him, he was an avid reloader. His preference was a Tikka T3 Super Varmint in .223 Rem and he was deadly off the bench. He thought Tim and I were hilarious in our approach to shooting and life in general and over time we'd make sure to share corresponding benches. He even put together some handloads for me which I used to take a pig in a New South Wales State Forest.

As the years ticked by my rifle collection grew through a constant process of renewal. Along the way I began to write, and be published, and consequently met people at the range who would recognise me from either *Australian Shooter* or *Australian Hunter*

magazines. I was even asked to join the Pistol Club after some work appeared in *Australian and New Zealand Handgun*, but for the time being I've decided to stick with writing about antique flintlocks.

Recently I managed to help a father and son obtain a newly acquired rifle firstly on paper, and then zeroed in for 100.

The Range Officers have changed over time, but they all still seem to respond favourably to friendly conversation. While we might not like to admit it, rules exist for largely sensible reasons.

So, to all the range shooters, ROs and those working before the scenes, this one is for you.







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