

Long Range Rifle - Continued...

for longer shots. The whole idea of putting this rifle together is to be able to shoot a long way. To do so means to hold high above the intended target. The last thing I want to do is run out scope adjustment. So, I opted for the elevated base.

Bipod & the Little Things

I added a short Harris S-BRM Bipod (\$169) for the front of my rifle. It telescopes from 6-9 inches and swivels and cants a little each way making for easy shot setups. The bipod is great for shooting in the prone position or from a bench. The good thing is that I already had the bipod and have used it often on my other rifles over the years.

I also have a small bean bag for the bottom of my stock. The bean bag stabilizes the butt end of the rifle. I picked up the idea for a bean bag at the Delta Red course. It is amazing how little a rifle wiggles us-

ing a good bipod on the front and a bean bag on the back. The little things matter when trying to hold a rifle steady for a long shot.

Accessories

Most of time, I'll be shooting this rifle at targets where I already know the distance. But I also want to take the rifle out and shoot at random targets. I chose a Vortex Ranger 1500 Rangefinder (\$579). The six power magnification and reflective rangefinding out to 1500 yards seemed plenty for my shooting. I can only hope to eventually shoot far enough to need a rangefinder that can go out farther.

The Gunwerks G7 BR2500 ballistic rangefinder is built with incredible ranging capabilities, ensuring that precision shooters have access to exact ranging technology that was only previously available to military units. But the retail cost is over

\$1,500. One great option is to buy the Vortex Fury 10x42 HD binoculars with integrated 1,600 yard rangefinder (\$1,499). It is a great pair of binoculars and excellent rangefinder in one package. A less expensive alternative is to go with a relative newcomer to the rangefinder market. The SigSauer Kilo 1250 is a six power magnification rangefinder that can range out to 1,600 yards. (\$274.99).

You can go all out and spend \$2,000 to \$4,000 on a high end spotting scope made by Swarovsky, Leica or Nightforce. But very reasonable spotting scopes like the Bushnell Trophy XLT 20-60 x 65mm Spotting Scope (\$219) will serve most your shooting needs, at least for a while.

I have an old Russian made spotting scope that was produced during the Cold War. It suits my shooting needs for now. But I grumble whenever I can't find the target because the field of view is so narrow. When I upgrade, which may be sooner rather than later, I'll probably pick the Vortex Viper V300 15-45x65 Spotting Scope (\$699).

Ammo, Fun and Experience

The fun really starts after the rifle system is assembled. Shooting can now begin. But shooting with a purpose is the name of the long distance game. I bought several boxes of match grade ammunition and shot targets with my new rifle at 100 yards. For my rifle, Hornady 140 grain ELD Match rounds shot best (\$29.99 per 20). I didn't measure the groups against each other, but Hornady was the clear winner for my rifle.

I tried the Barnes VOR-TX Long Range Ammunition 6.5 Creedmoor 127 Grain LRX Polymer Tipped Boat Tail rounds in my rifle (Retail \$35.99 per 20). Lucky for my wallet, they didn't shoot as well as the Hornady. All major ammunition producers

are manufacturing 6.5 Creedmoor ammo now. Lots of players makes for competitive pricing for the consumer.

Once I was zeroed at 100 yards, I moved out to 200 yards and shot some more. I was now developing my dope, which is seeing how much my rifle shooting the Hornady rounds dropped at each distance. I only shot a couple inches low, not enough to even adjust for. At 300 yards, I needed to raise the rifle or adjust my elevation turret 1.5 mils. I raised up 2.5 mils at 400 yards and 3.5 mils at 500 yards and so on. I have the option to hold over the bullseye using the mil dots inside my scope, or dial in the elevation using the turret. The main thing is I know how far my bullet drops for each distance.

After distance, adjusting for wind drift is the next hurdle. Entire books have been written on the art and science of wind drift. Windage separates the good shooters from the truly exceptional marksmen. My advice is to take a good course or shoot with an experienced marksman as your spotter. Over time, you can develop your long distance shooting skills.

From my Delta Red Course, I have a notebook full of technical ballistic formulas and factors that affect bullet flight. The classroom portion of the class was very interesting, if a little over my head at times. It is great to know how the forces of distance, angle, temperature, altitude and barometric pressure etc. affect bullet flight. But it is another thing to put all that together to make the perfect shot.

The Kestrel 5700 Ballistics Weather Meter can do all the math for you (\$399). There are also ballistic calculator apps for your smart phone that crunch a lot of the numbers for you. Knights Armament makes a good

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