

# BEST TARGETS

## **BEST Targets Shooting Team After Action Report (AAR)**

**Event:** 2018 Mammoth Sniper Challenge  
**Date:** January 12-14, 2018  
**Location:** Arena Training Facility, Blakely, GA  
**Websites:** [www.mammothsniperchallenge.com](http://www.mammothsniperchallenge.com)  
[www.arenatrainingfacility.com](http://www.arenatrainingfacility.com)

**Shooter:** Chris Andrews  
**Rifle:** GA Precision GAP-10 chambered in .308  
**Ammo:** Federal Gold Medal Match 175 gr SMK  
**Gear:** Vortex PST 6-24x in an Aadland Engineering 1 piece 20 MOA mount, Kahntrol Solutions muzzle brake, Harris Bipod w/Kahntrol Solutions Pod-Mod Adapters, Hawk Hill Custom Spiked Feet and Wiebad bags.  
  
Vasquez boots, Icebreaker merino wool socks and base layers, Patagonia PCU Level 5 pants, Propper fleece pullover, Wild Things Gear Lightweight Softshell jacket, Icebreaker merino wool neck gaiter, Mechainx Wear 0.5mm High Dexterity, Original Cold Weather & Windproof gloves, PCU Level 7 pants & jacket, Thermarest Z-LITE SOL sleep pad, SEATOSUMMIT Reactor Compact Plus bag liner, Canon Digital Image Stabilizing binoculars, Eberlestock Gunslinger Pack.

**Shooter:** Scott Whitehead  
**Rifle:** Mausingfiled Action, Hawk Hill Barrel, KRG X-Ray Chassis Rifle in 6.5 Creedmoor by Accurate Ordnance  
**Ammo:** 6.5 Creedmoor Handloads. Berger 140 Hybrids, 43.3gr H4350, Wolf LR-M primers, Lot R11a  
**Gear:** Vortex Razor AMG 6-24x, Vortex Precision Rings, Harris BiPod w/Kahntrol Pod-Mods and Wiebad bags.  
  
Merrell MOAB VENT boots, Smartwool PhD hiking socks, Patagonia Capilene baselayers, PCU Level 2 Waffle Fleece, Patagonia PCU Level 5 pants, Propper fleece pullover, Wild Things Gear Softshell jacket, Mechanix Wear Original Cold Weather gloves, PCU Level 7 pants & jacket, Thermarest Z-LITE SOL sleep pad, SEATOSUMMIT Reactor sleeping bag liner, Sig Kilo 2000 LRF, Vortex 10x Monocular, Eberlestock Low Drag pack.

### **Facility Notes**

The Arena Training Facility is in Blakely, GA and was formerly known as LegionOTG. We competed in the Mammoth Sniper Challenge here in 2015. Earlier this year team member Scott Whitehead paired with Nordic Components team member Joe Burdick to finish 4<sup>th</sup> in the Purgatory Sniper Challenge here. This is a huge facility with all manners of known and unknown distance ranges, shooting props, towers and shooting bays that's perfect for hosting Mammoth.

### **Event Format**

This year the BEST Targets team registered for the Regular division – ready to improve on our 4<sup>th</sup> Place finish in the 2017 rucking & shooting event. We had finished in the top 3 of Open division in the past and we weren't ready to commit to the rucking, shooting AND camping of Tough Man division ... until Match Director Joe Harris called to let us know that very few teams had registered for Regular and we either needed to move down to Open or up to Tough Man. Knowing that this year's event was at the Arena Training Facility in southern GA instead of the Rockcastle Shooting Center in KY we knew that the weather would be better and the rucks would be flatter so we went for it. Five-time Mammoth veteran Jason Crist helped us a ton with gear selection and reminded us leading up to the event that "Blakely, GA is practically Florida!"

In our 2016 AAR we wrote "Although the Tough Man division sound like an awesome challenge we haven't yet stepped up to it ... and may not ever". This year Joe Harris forced our hand. Thanks Joe 😊.

Teams were grouped into Squads of 10 two-person teams. Each squad included 8-9 Tough Man teams and a few Open teams. We were assigned to Squad 3. The Tough Man teams were required to keep a 16 min/mi pace and the Open teams rode in their vehicles behind the walkers. This pace was faster than any previous Mammoth. If a team failed to finish a hike in the allotted time they dropped out of the Tough Man scoring system at that point but they were allowed to

continue to shoot as an Open team. Each Squad had a Range Officer that led the group from stage to stage throughout the weekend. At each stage, another Range Officer delivered the stage briefing, answered any questions and kept score for each team. A Stage Spotter was assigned to each stage to call hits on targets. Squads of teams rotated around the complex for three days to complete all the stages. Because of the large rotation some squads shot some stages on different days or at different times than others but this is just a consequence of being such a large match. Scores were only posted at the end of the event Sunday.

On the day before the match, we got to the facility in time to meet some friends and zero and chrono our rifles. We picked up the tent we were borrowing from Jason Crist and did a dry run of it's setup. Thursday night we shifted some of the weight and volume between our two packs and added a few small items for the upcoming weather, which included both significant rain and below freezing overnights.

## DAY 1

We were warned by Joe Harris at the 7:15 am Friday match briefing that this was a tough match and that half of the teams wouldn't make it to the end – just like he does every year. Once again it was true. Joe instructed everyone to pay attention to the details of the stage briefs and to ask any questions in the 5-minute Q&A time after the briefing. This was important as the stage briefings contained information that many missed. Range Officers were instructed to not help any team with pointers or suggestions during a stage. Although this can be frustrating it was fair and equal for everyone. Unlike some timed shooting events the time is not a factor in the scoring. Only hits matter. After the match briefing, we met at the green gate to start the first ruck. It was 63° and raining hard. It had been raining all morning and it was forecast to continue until around noon.

After counting down to the start, we were off and hiking. Our first hike was 3.4 miles from the pro-shop to our first stage of the match. Some teams took off running into the rain and others were walking right away. It was going to be a long, wet day. The ruck was not difficult but the rain and mud slowed half of us down. In the end Scott crossed the line to finish the first ruck in time but Chris did not. This was not at all how we were expecting to start the match – we were out before we even pulled a trigger. Pissed off and disappointed we decided to proceed with the weekend and shoot the best we could.



The stage brief for THE DEUCE AND A HALF included some important information that some teams missed. Starting at the back of a 2½ ton military truck teams had to move a large tractor tire up into and then onto the roof of the truck before any targets could be engaged. Our gear had to be moved into the back of the truck as well. The shooting position was off of the roof of the truck. All of the primary and secondary targets could not be seen from the briefing area but we were told we'd see them from the roof of the truck. No ranges were given - we had to range all the targets with our LRF. The tractor tire had to be back on the ground behind the back of the truck before the 8 min. time expired or your team score would be a zero. Teams waited in a holding area before getting on deck but we could watch other teams run the stage ahead of us.

Chris – The two teams ahead of us both timed out and scored zeros. Some of the teams were talking in the holding area and some thought that they had found a trick in the stage brief – the tire had to be on the roof of the truck before any targets could be engaged and it had to be back on the ground before the 8 minute time expired. Our plan was to get the tire into the truck then have Scott climb in so that I could hand him the gear. After I got in the truck we were going to put the tire up on the roof of the truck then immediately move it back to the ground before engaging targets. This would allow us to shoot right up until time expired and still meet all the requirements of the stage brief. We did exactly this and both Scott and I scored hits while the other ranged targets. We scored more points than any other team in our squad here and after gaming the stage per the stage brief the teams after us all did the same thing.

Scott – The actual shooting on this stage was rather straightforward. There would be some physical activity (lifting the tire) before the stage but we were comfortable with that. Once we got the tire up and then back out of the truck we set up on the roof to get some rounds down range. Before we could shoot we needed good ranges and that proved to be somewhat of an issue on this stage. Many of the targets were obscured by the berms and were difficult to get a clear reading on – something I had experienced during the Purgatory Sniper Challenge just a few months before. But a good wind call, good data and good shooting got us lots of points on this stage from a straight-forward and stable modified prone position.

After the stage was over, Scott was taken to get our truck, which we would ride in for the rest of the event. Our next stage was Stage 2 – OVALS. This was a 4 min. stage that required a roughly 30 yard run along the top of a berm to a prone shooting position defined by two stakes in the ground. The Primary and Secondary shooters each had (3) different sized BEST Targets ovals to shoot at, could score twice per target, and had (4) shots to get each hit. Once again we didn't get to see the targets until we arrived in the shooting position, and no ranges were given - we had to range all the targets with

our LRF. The shooters and all their gear had to return to the starting point before the 4 min. time expired or your team score would be a zero. Once again time management would be key.

Chris – We decided to play this safe and allow ourselves 30 sec. to return to the starting point. At the signal we ran along the berm and got in position side by side between the stakes. Shooting off the top of a berm meant the ground sloped down behind the shooting position, and it wasn't 100% stable. I ranged the targets for Scott and he quickly scored on all six of his hits. Targets were around 600 yards out. As I got into position Scott called out "hold 1.5 mils for wind" so I did and scored my first four hits. With 30 sec. left on our timer we headed out and crossed the start/finish line with 18 sec. to spare. Many teams did not make it back to the starting point here and scored zero points. After the stage Scott and I talked and I hadn't realized that he had taken his wind hold and converted it from his 6.5 CM data to my .308 wind hold in his head. We had talked about this earlier but I had forgotten about it – I just did what he said when he called it out and it worked well. It pays to not only know your own data, but your partner's as well.

Scott – Once we got prone and got a range reading (which was easy because of the berm right behind the target) I started shooting first. Shooting across the KD range we had estimated a slight left wind but, in fact, the wind was significantly more than we first read. Chris did a great job of getting me on the first and largest oval on my third shot with a 1.0 mil wind hold, equivalent to aiming 22" to the left of the center of the target. Each competitor was allowed two hits on each target and I quickly followed up with another hit on the largest, 1-point, target. I took that wind hold through the rest of my shooting, scoring both my hits on the 2-point target and both hits on the 3-point target. As we switched to Chris' shooting, I called out what my wind hold had been and adjusted it for his caliber to 1.5 mils. He quickly got both his hits on the 1-point target and 2-point target but was unable to connect with the 3-point target. We ran back to the starting point with plenty of time to spare – preventing a big loss of points which many teams suffered from because they did not manage time well.

The last stage of Day 1 for us – TABLE - was within walking distance of the previous stage. TABLE was very similar to OVALS in that we had a similar run from a starting point to a shooting position that included a wooden picnic table. Once again we didn't get to see the targets, or examine the shooting position, until our time started but we were told that there was (1) IPSC Torso and (2) E Type targets to be found. Each shooter could score twice per target, and had (4) rounds to get each point. Once again no ranges were given - we had to range all the targets with our LRF, and the shooters and all their gear had to return to the starting point before the 4 min time expired or your team score would be a zero.

Chris – Our plan here was the same as the previous stage but we also knew we had a little extra time left on the OVALS. After the short run to the shooting position we realized that the picnic table was much more narrow than we expected – it was only two boards wide. Scott tried a few different shooting positions before settling in and scoring on all (3) targets. I scored a few hits and we returned to the starting point in time and with 8 sec. to spare. Several teams timed out of this stage and a few either dropped gear or left something behind making them score zeros.



Scott – As we approached the table I started working out a shooting position as Chris got out the LRF. The smaller IPSC was at 325 yards and the more distant E-Types were 650 yards but the shooting position was more challenging than we had expected. The table was not only narrow and wobbly but the ground was slippery. I ended up laying the rifle fore-end flat on the table, using the barricade stop to load against and using my left hand to slightly lift the front of the rifle for elevation control. Mammoth support bag size restrictions prevent using the larger bags which would have made this position much easier. Struggling with positional stability on every shot, I was able to score five of my six hits allowed which I was very happy with but it took me longer than it should have and I didn't leave Chris enough time to take good shots at all his targets. This is a trade-off that often comes at Mammoth - we're constantly adjusting

the amount of time each shooter has based on how that shooter is doing at the moment and how difficult his targets are. On that day, on that stage, it made more sense to let me keep shooting. The Mammoth Sniper Challenge is all about maximizing TEAM points and sometimes that means sacrificing one shooter's rounds down range (and his ego).

For us Day 1 was now over. We shot and scored really well but I was also disappointed with our drop from Tough Man competition. We weren't alone as there were only 5 of the original 9 Tough Man teams left in our squad at the end of the day but that didn't make it better. The consolation prize was that we had scored more points than any other team in our squad on 3 of 3 stages for the day.

## DAY 2

Saturday morning the drivers and the remaining TOUGH MAN hikers met at the zero range at 6:30 am. for our first stage of the day – 1000 YARDS. It was dark and 30° when the brief started and we could tell the guys that had camped out were cold and tired. This was an 8 min. stage that started with a crawl up 10 stairs under barbed wire with our gear. Teams had several decisions to make on this stage. Each shooter was allowed 20 rounds. The primary shooter had (4) BEST Targets ovals with a range of point values ovals to shoot at off the 1000 yard shooting bench while single feeding rounds. At any point the team could call “Time” to stop their 8 min. clock - the remaining time would be left for the secondary shooter to shoot the same (4) BEST Targets ovals from the 600 yard berm. Teams could “Gamble” from either position and shoot partner assisted DOUBLING their score. Because of the team rotation we were to shoot this stage first.

Chris – Our plan for this stage was to get Scott in position and to spend most of our time trying to score from the 1000 yard line. Scott is typically a better long distance shooter than I and I usually spot better than he. Since I shoot a gas gun I can get my 20 rounds off quickly so we decided to call time at the 1000 yard line with 2 min. remaining. We climbed under the barbed wire and Scott got in position after just 30 sec. I had no call on Scott's first (7) shots then I saw shot (8) hit at the bottom of the target and 1 mil left. Scott made an adjustment and scored 12 hits in a row holding top edge and 1.25 mil right. I kept track of our timer and tried to lay out rounds for Scott to single feed. We called time after 20 rounds and had 2:05 left on our clock. The scorer told us that no one had hit from 1000 yards more than 4 times the day before. We moved to the 600 yard berm as a group and I scored (5) hits shooting off Scott's shoulder for double points. I had the wrist mounted timer in my vision as I shot and my last round went off as time expired. Once again we had a squad high score.

Scott – I climbed under the barbed wire, Chris followed right behind me, and we got into position very quickly. The shooting position was off a concrete shooting bench - something I never practice on but it was incredibly stable. After the first few shots disappeared into the muddy berm behind the target with no read at all I was getting frustrated. I knew Chris was watching carefully but we had no feedback and the single feeding meant I was breaking my position after each shot. I started really focusing on the single-feeding process and on calling every shot while “feeling” around the target to try get a single hit ... but frustration was setting in. When Chris called my miss and gave me a correction I was desperate for the information and followed it exactly. I remember questioning why I was hitting low relative to my data but at that moment it was time to “trust the bullet”. I broke my next shot high and 1.25 mils right, and heard “HIT!”. From that moment on I tried to find a rhythm – loading rounds one at a time, exercising an almost-religious trigger control and calling each shot break and I hit it 11 more times in a row! Although we started this stage a little rough, I was happy with my performance. For the second half of the stage, we moved to the 600 yard berm and I tried my best to be a good shooting platform – syncing my breathing with Chris' shot cadence. We can definitely get better at this but Chris did a great job off my shoulder and we put up an excellent score.

After shooting the 1000 YARDS stage we drove to THE TOWER stage and waited for the Tough Man teams to arrive. This was an 8 min. stage. Both team members had to climb stairs to the top of the (3) stacked Conex container tower, with all their gear. From here the secondary shooter had (3) targets to engage from (2) shooting positions. After ranging these targets the primary shooter could come back down and get in a prone position to shoot at any of (6) targets available to them. All non-shooting gear had to be behind a post behind the scorer by the end of the stage. This stage involved some time management, communication, target acquisition, spotting and wind calling.

Chris – This stage was pretty straightforward but not easy. We got up the stairs and I got in position quickly and Scott called out the ranges to my targets in seconds. I struggled with wind holds and only scored (3) hits from the two positions. I saw all of my misses off the left edge of the targets but I never got the wind holds right to score more points. Scott was in position and had his first two targets ranged when I arrived on scene down below. He scored hits as I moved on to range more targets for him. Many of the targets were in open field, or in some way obstructed and difficult to range.

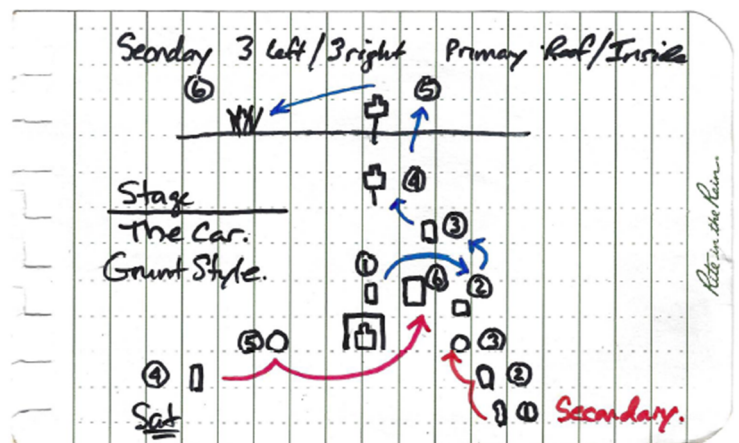
Scott – At the buzzer I ran up the stairs and started ranging Chris' targets. As soon as he had his range data, I left him to shoot while I got settled in on the berm to do my own shooting. After being careful to drop my bag in the indicated spot so as not to lose any points, I got out my gear and started ranging my targets. Once again, ranging was difficult and on some targets – nearly impossible. I heard Chris ring a few targets and come running to my position when he was done. Without a good wind call, I started probing my first target and I finally got a wind call on my second and third target. Along the back berm were three targets and we had noticed, while paying careful attention in the stage brief, that one target seemed to have a lot of points for its level of difficulty. Instead of moving to the next target in numerical order, we moved straight to the higher-point target, and connected with it with seconds to go.



After the TOWER stage we had a short drive to THE CAR stage sponsored by Grunt Style. The stage brief here was very specific about a few things but also left many details wide open. During the 8 min. stage, the team had to advance to the shooting position by dragging two tires with rope up towards the car and past two stakes in the ground. The secondary shooter had (6) targets to engage – (3) thru the right rear door of the car and (3) thru the left rear door of the car. While the secondary shooter was shooting the primary had to spot from only the hood of the car. After the secondary shooter tapped out the primary shooter had (6) targets to engage from the roof of the car and then again from inside the car.

Chris – Up to this point we had strategized and executed stages efficiently and scored very well. This was our first big fail of the match – every year each team has one. The tire was heavier to drag than I expected but I got it up to the car and moved to the right rear door quickly. I hit my first and second targets after Scott called out their ranges but I never heard the scorer call “Hit”. I moved to the right rear door and hit one of my targets but still didn’t hear “Hit”. Scott called out that the scorer wasn’t on glass which is an indicator that we were doing something wrong. I went back to pull our gear and the tires slightly forward and the scorer got on glass – I had left my tire inches behind the stakes in the ground costing us points for at least three hits. Scott got on the roof and I ranged targets for him but we did not score well here.

Scott – After a little frustration to start the stage it didn’t get much better for me. The position was not nearly as stable as you might imagine – I was slipping backwards after each shot, and unable to spot anything. Chris was getting me some ranges but again the LRF did not get a good reading on every target. I think I scored one or two hits on this stage.



After completing THE CAR stage we drove to our last stage of Day 2 – A-FRAME AND PLATFORM.

The A-FRAME AND PLATFORM stage included an A-Frame structure similar to what we shot off of at Rockcastle last year. On the right of the A-Frame was a small elevated platform. This was an 8 min. stage. The stage brief was clear and the stage required each team member to carry a sandbag up and over the top of the A-Frame and return it to the pile where it started before getting into position. If the sandbag was dropped and touched the ground that shooter would have to start the task over. The primary shooter had to shoot from anywhere on the A-Frame and the secondary shooter had to shoot from anywhere on the platform. If either dropped any gear from the shooting position it could not be retrieved. The primary shooter had to shoot diamond and triangle shaped targets spread throughout the field and the secondary shooter had a variety of target shapes to shoot. Most of the targets could be seen from the briefing area but some could not.



Chris – Although these matches are always great fun Scott and I always show up to compete and finish as well as possible as well. To that end we always look for any advantage we can find and we do a good job of learning what we can from our competitors – until we don’t. We were able to watch this stage from the staging area and we noticed that some were resting their sandbags on the top of the A-Frame while they crossed over the top. We hadn’t thought about that and we were happy to pick up that good idea. We also heard a few teams call out numbers like “170” or “190” when ranging the first target so we had that in mind as well. Our sandbag carry went well and we both climbed into our position. Although I saw others try a seated position from my platform I was able to get sideways prone pretty easily. As I got into position I noticed Scott struggling beside me. I ranged the first target and saw a “450” in the LRF. I called out “450 yards, can that be right?” and Scott wasn’t

sure. Expecting to see a number close to 200 I pulled our backup LRF from my pocket and ranged Target 1 again and got right at 450 yards. Scott struggled to get stable and score more points as I ranged more targets then I saw the magazine drop from his rifle to the ground. He told me to get ready as he reloaded and sent a few more rounds so I dialed my 450 yard dope and squared up on Target 1 when he yelled "I'm out". I scored hits on Targets 1, 2 & 3 quickly and we ran out of time as I was getting on Target 4. We definitely wasted too much time here by initially not trusting our gear and then later by taking too long for Scott to build a position.

Scott – I had shot off an A-Frame like this one, maybe the exact same one, twice before, and always found a way to get very stable. This probably caused me to get over-confident during the stage brief and not look for another "Plan B" position. I had found the two cross-bars I was looking for, with the rear one a few inches lower than the front (allowing room to support the front of my rifle while also using my rear bag), but when I got into position they were just a few inches too far apart. I struggled to find another position but all I found was a position with one point of contact – not nearly stable enough for this stage. I wasted so much energy finding a position that I missed a rather obvious ranging issue – there was simply no way these targets were only 200 yards away. In this case the issue was not with the LRF – it was with the LRF operators. I managed a couple of hits but used up way too much of our precious time in the process.

After this stage we drove back to the cabin for the night. We were disappointed with the mistakes we made and our execution of the last two stages of the day but we had still posted squad high scores on 3 of the 4 stages today.

### DAY 3

Sunday morning the drivers and the remaining TOUGH MAN hikers met at the ATV course at 6:30 am. We learned before the briefing that another Tough Man team had dropped from our squad and that we'd be shooting two stages at this site.

The first stage we shot here was PARTNER ASSIST AND TRIPOD. This was a 4 min. stage. The targets were a vertical dueling tree with (6) round targets 391 yards out. There were two shooting positions. One was from the top of a waist-high tripod made of sticks lashed together and the other was partner-assisted. The partner assisted position had to be shot off the partner's shoulder and the partner could touch a designated tree with only their hand. Unlike past Mammoth Sniper Challenges, slings were allowed on this stage. Each shooter was allowed to engage three targets from each of the positions with 4 rounds each. The order of who shot where was up to the teams.

Chris – To minimize our transition time and take all the allowed shots we decided to shoot Scott partner-assist, Scott tripod, Chris tripod, Chris partner assist. I don't think we did great at any of these positions but I scored two hits and Scott scored one. We definitely saw a few teams beat us here. The positions weren't terribly stable but I did see all my misses go off the right side of the targets. Maybe there was more wind here than we guessed.

Scott – I think we planned this stage reasonably well but just failed to shoot it well. I know I was simply unstable in every position and didn't get off good shots. I had not packed a sling to shoot with, which really would have helped, because slings had never been allowed during the stages at Mammoth. I blame most of my misses here on nothing more than poor "rifeman" skills – shooting in awkward unstable positions. I need to work on this badly.

After shooting the PARTNER ASSIST AND TRIPOD we moved 50 yards to another stage that incorporated the same targets but from two different positions – TREE AND ROPE. This was also a 4 min. stage and the round count was the same as the last stage. The same plate rack was now 324 yards from a tree/bench combination and then roughly 300 yards from a rope hanging from a tree. Both shooters had to stand on a bench and use a tree as their sole support then both shooters could move and shoot thru the loop at the end of a rope draped over a tree limb while their partner held the other end of the rope. Slings were allowed on this stage. This stage also included a large hostage torso "Bonus Target" that could be shot off the rope. The hostage swinger was worth 4 points but a hit to the hostage torso would be a loss of 2 points. This was a classic Mammoth sucker target and I don't think we saw anyone shoot at it.

Chris – Our plan here was to take our time shooting off the tree as the rope position seemed really difficult. I had practiced this tree position so I felt pretty good going in but I only scored two hits from the tree. We had a little time remaining when Scott finished shooting from the tree so I moved to the rope position but time expired before I got a shot off. An impressive note here was that we did see one shooter in our squad score a hit off the rope position.

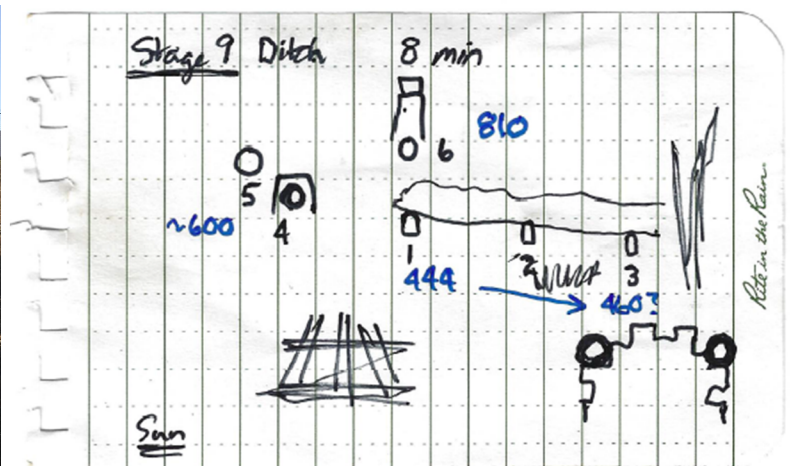
Scott – We agreed that we would take as long as necessary to get off good shots from the tree and I did that. This is not a position I practice normally but I got very stable for the first two shots, getting one hit in the first two. After the second shot, I made some body adjustment and I don't know why, but it KILLED me – my wobble zone literally tripled after that. I don't think I scored another hit after this adjustment – it was like I completely destroyed my positional stability.

For our final stage of the event we drove to THE DITCH and our Tough Man squad mates met us there. THE DITCH required a low crawl under orange construction tape. This was an 8 min. stage but each broken tape would bring a 30 sec. time penalty. The primary position was prone off a pair of railroad ties. No gear was allowed to touch anything other

than these two railroad ties. The primary targets ranged from 400 to 800 yards out. The secondary shooter had two positions – one was off a very flimsy PRS style barricade and the other was the same prone position as the primary. The (3) secondary targets were small and on a brush line roughly 400 yards out. All targets needed to be ranged on the clock.

Chris – The tape crawl was pretty easy as it was pretty high but any team that shot this on Friday would have struggled in the rain and mud. Once again to minimize transition time we planned for Scott to shoot first while I got in position and ranged targets from the barricade. When he was done I'd shoot from the barricade and then move to the prone position if time remained. Scott scored on target one then struggled on the rest of the targets that were difficult for me to range and make wind calls on. I scored on Target 1 from the barricade and then struggled to find Targets 2 & 3. After struggling I moved to the prone position and scored on Target 1 again. After time expired I did something I had never done in competition before. As I was getting up from behind the gun I AD'd and sent a round downrange. The scorers discussed it and since it was in a safe direction per Joe Harris' rule we did not get DQ'd. I'm not sure exactly how this happened but I promise it will get your attention. If you've ever done this you know the feeling and if you haven't you likely will someday.

Scott – I felt like I got under the tape very well and got into position quickly. When I started shooting however, some combination of range and wind got me off most of the targets. I simply could not connect with the targets I needed to. Target #2 was hard to find, target #3 was hard to get to because of how the railroad tie was pointed and the wind was switching around on us but none of those are good excuses here.



After we finished THE DITCH the remaining four Tough Man teams headed out to the starting position of their last ruck. All Tough Man teams did the last ruck together so that there could be a Top 3 ruck finishers at the finish line.

Chris – A whole three days after not completing the first ruck on time I was still disappointed with my performance there. Fortunately we shot well for three days, met some great people and made some business contacts for BEST Targets. I wasn't looking forward to the 8 hour drive home but was ready to get out of the match I failed and AD'd at.

Scott – When you're riding a streak of very strong finishes year to year, a bad day hurts, and that is what Mammoth was for us this year. A chance to go back with our tail between our legs and prepare harder for next year.

## Things Done Well

The biggest strength we showed as a team at this event was once again communication & planning. Scott and I always strategize the movement and execution of the stages well and we plan around each other's strengths to score as many points as possible. This year we each ran a timer so that we were both aware of where we were and/or we always had a backup. I think this may have been our first Mammoth of the five that we've done where we didn't score a zero on any stage. Our rifles, optics, ammo, dope, backpacks, gloves, boots & clothing all did well for us.

Chris – After missing some opportunities at the last few Mammoth Sniper Challenge Scott and I tried to focus on maximizing our stage points more than ever this year. I think we did well at that. GA Precision updated the gas block and did a thorough service on my GAP-10 this year and I cleaned/lubricated it mid-day each day and it ran flawlessly – this was an improvement from last year as well. Although we are sponsored by Vortex Optics we carried a pair of Cannon Digital Image Stabilizing binoculars this year instead of a spotting scope. These were very space and weight efficient and great to spot with. We hope that Vortex will come out with something for this market soon. We helped out a few Mammoth rookies with suggestions and loaned out our spare timer to a team as well. It's always fun to be part of the good will between teams at Mammoth - even in such a competitive environment.

Scott – Chris and I continue to work well as a team. We know each other strengths and weaknesses and we use them to great effect. Our time management, stage management, and communication were good. We arrived with well sorted gear – a result which came from a good bit of luck, because we did not shoot nearly as much leading up to this event as we typically do. Much of our preparation this year relied on our previous experience and knowledge from this event. I was especially glad to see Chris' GAP-10 run well all weekend. Having familiarity with his data, and knowing how to convert a wind hold from my rifle, to his, also paid off a few times.

## Results & Lessons Learned

Although we were listed as finishing 38<sup>th</sup> out of 43 Tough Man Teams and our score is not listed on the sheet Joe Harris always shares total shooting scores with the teams that complete the match. Our total score of 98.5 would have placed us 3<sup>rd</sup> in Open Division again. It is absolutely not fair to compare our shooting score to the Tough Man teams that had the additional stress of three days of hiking and camping so we hate to even speculate where we would have landed there.

At every competition we learn something new about competition events, our gear, our abilities and our weaknesses.

Chris' takeaways/to do's:

- This is a direct quote from our 2017 Mammoth AAR – “I need to work more on cardio training for next year. My weight lifting, hot yoga, circuit training and hiking all helped me to get ready but my poor breathing and poor cardio slowed me down. We were never at risk of missing a time cut but I was definitely the slower hiker on the team. I don't want to be that guy.” Turns out I was that guy and I need to work on this in a big way.
- Five years ago LRFs were not allowed at Mammoth and the stages were either know distance or required target milling. Over the last few years LRFs have become more affordable and nearly everyone has one. For maybe the first time ever scoring hits at this Mammoth event hinged on having a quality rangefinder. We're not sure how we feel about this but we could definitely use something better than a Sig Kilo here.
- Our time management was better this year but there were a few stages where Scott forgot to start his timer and one stage where my arm hit the button and stopped mine mid-stage. Continue to get better at this.
- Trust your gear. When you range a target with a LRF that you've been using for over a year, don't doubt what it tells you over something you heard from someone else. Duh.
- Scott and I talked a lot about my failed ruck and what we could have done better. Obviously, I need to be more prepared. Beyond that there are things we can do to distribute our load differently to help the team. Scott is younger, bigger and stronger than I and it could be that he may need to carry even more of the team load.
- Don't AD. Trigger discipline is key – even for someone that's been shooting for 30 years.

Scott's takeaways/to do's:

- Although we have a “good” LRF, we need to make a significant investment here, unfortunately, if the match continues to include so much UKD work. The guys with the high-dollar LRFs simply were able to get ranges when we were not.
- Although Chris is hard on himself and is focusing on the training side of making the rucks, I believe that most of what we need for the rucks is a mindset change. We need to push time harder when we can – in the beginning of the rucks – and bank time for later. On our first hike, we got caught by some severe mud right at the end of the ruck, which prevented us from making up time at the end.
- Better rifleman skills are always in demand, and we had a chance to make up some points with them on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, and couldn't.
- If we continue to shoot matches which require hiking, shooting and camping, I need to get a bigger pack. There are a few other packs in Eberlestock's line-up which I will be seriously considering.
- A PCU L5 jacket is not a rain coat. No matter how nice that jacket is, it will wet, and eventually allow water through. An additional rain layer is needed for extended rain.

## Summary

Once again, the Mammoth Sniper Challenge proved to be a great challenge. Hat's off to the 22 of the 43 Tough Man teams that completed the entire event – this is no small task. Although we thought we were prepared for the Tough Man division we were not. Once again, the stages included some physical challenges this year. There was more prone or modified prone shooting this year than last year but there was also much more target ranging on the clock this year. It's fun to look back to a few years ago and see the progress we've made and the additional challenges we've signed up for. Joe Harris, Marcus Harrison and all the ROs and Scorers did a great job moving squads around efficiently. We know we made a few errors in stage execution so we know where we could have scored better. Our gear selections continue to change year to year per the event but our gear decisions continue to be solid as well. We have finished in the top five of Open division and Regular division before and I expect we'll be back and more prepared for Tough Man in 2019.



Open

Finish	Name	Total
1	Marcus Harrions/Chris Beck	105.5
2	JB Kopp/Mike Keenan	104
3	Jason Crist/Brian Sneed	69.5
4	Jeremy Parker/Pete Laub	63.5
5	Tom Wilson/Mark Roberts	58
6	Tony Kahn/Jeremy Kahn	34.5
7	Dane Petersen/Robbie Swartz	30
8	Michael Moorman/Chris Comer	24.5
9	Geof Slichter/Ion Howell	22

Tough man

Finish	Name	Total
1	Dane Lentz/Matt Hammond	154.5
2	Alexander Lewine/Jeffrey Ocheskey	75
3	Kirk Freeman/Ben Mercer	68
4	Scott Thomas/Geoffrey Sansone	62.5
5	Zach Cerrone/Chris Funk	60
6	Nathan Cloud/Austin Cornwell	60
7	Alexander/Dmytro	60
8	Curtis Spivey/Jerry	59.5
9	Christopher Hoog/Wade Ledbetter	52
10	Steve Cassell/Sean Beech	52
11	Chris R./Chris R.	51.5
12	Brad Arms/Jaime Jimenez	50
13	David Steinbach/Danielle Vermeulen	49.5
14	Marshall Milligan/Ryan Scott	47.5
15	Colin Mcquaid/Adam Gallagher	41.5
16	Travis Andrews/Gary Trent Frazor	41
17	Allan Jaworski/Matthew Gillenberger	39.5
18	Richard Begin/Danny Warren	39.5
19	Samuel Slichter/Jason Sartar	38.5
20	Nathan Bedie/Jonathan Beck	35.5
21	Dario Perez/Jonathan Wutt	20.5
22	Mike McCann/Brian McCann	17
23	Bryan Ingenito/Cameron Parker	DNF
24	Zak Keehn/Scott	DNF
25	Mike Glasby/Micah Barcus	DNF
26	Mike Thacker/Ryan Brockman	DNF
27	Reuban Keenan/Jeremy Frazier	DNF
28	Luke Crawford/Vince Mui	DNF
29	Austin Warner/Austin Amelsberg	DNF
30	Ben Garrett/Brian Leach	DNF
31	Kurt Boller/David Boller	DNF
32	Nathan Hellweg/Shane Smithson	DNF
33	Ed Schopman/John Way	DNF
34	Dustin Schuldt/Cullen Kothmann	DNF
35	Clint Owens/John Ritterbeck	DNF
36	Napoleon Magpantay/Christophers Burroughs	DNF
37	Jeff Gillison/Keith Marcum	DNF
38	Scott Whitehead/Chris Andrews	DNF
39	Matthew Lilley/Joel Roberts	DNF
40	Cordell Lain/Alexander Santiago	DNF
41	Andre Granzotti/Nino Granzotti	DNF
42	Billy Collins/Pat Kangeter	DNF
43	Sammy Medina/Randy Vasquez	DNF

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