

BEST TARGETS

BEST Targets Shooting Team After Action Report (AAR)

Event: 2020 Bushnell Elite Sniper Challenge
Date: February 21-23, 2020
Location: Coleman's Creek Training Center, Ellerbe, NC
Websites: www.colemanscreek.com/

Shooter: Chris Andrews
Rifle: GA Precision GAP-10 chambered in .308
Ammo: Federal 175 gr Gold Medal Match
Gear: Vortex Razor AMG 6-24x, Aadland Engineering 20 MOA mount, Kahntrol Solutions muzzle brake, Harris Bipod w/Kahntrol Solutions Pod-Mod Adapters, Hawk Hill Custom Spiked Feet & Cole-TAC data holder, Vortex Fury 5000 Rangefinder, Rock Solid Shooting Solutions (RS3) rifle cover, Mechanix Wear gloves.

Shooter: Scott Whitehead
Rifle: KRG Whiskey-3 chassis, Mausingfield Action, Hawk Hill Barrel in 6.5 Creedmoor by Accurate Ordnance
Ammo: 6.5 Creedmoor Handloads. Berger 140gr Hybrids, 43.5gr H4350, Wolf LR-M primers, Lot #R11f
Gear: Vortex Razor Gen II 4.5-27x, Vortex Precision Rings, Ckye-Pod, Cole-Tac and Reasor Precision bags, Vortex Fury 5000 Rangefinder, Feisol Tripod, Rock Solid Shooting Solutions (RS3) rifle cover, Sunrise Tactical armboard. Cole-Tac "Cheat Sheet" data holder.

Facility Notes

Coleman's Creek Training Center is a relatively new facility in south central NC. This is not a range or a club but instead it's a training facility available to military and law enforcement teams for live fire training. The 2020 Bushnell Elite Sniper Challenge was the first competition event held there.



Event Format

This was the third year for the Bushnell team event. There are three divisions of competitor teams LRRP (ruck, camp and shoot), Trooper (ruck and shoot) and Mechanized (ride and shoot). After Scott Whitehead suffered a fractured foot at the recent Mammoth Sniper Challenge the BEST Targets team representing Vortex Optics moved from Trooper to the Mechanized division. Interestingly the Mechanized division was the largest of the match with 26 teams.

Shooters were divided into five squads and the five squads rotated thru five stages per day. Each day's stages were within a short walk from each other so the rotation between stages was quick. The teams that rucked the match had a 3+ mile ruck in and out from the stages each day. Friday's stages were 5 minutes long, Saturday's stages were 5 minutes and 30 seconds long and the Sunday stages were 3 minutes in length. About half of the stages included pistol work. All of the stages were blind and any available targets had to be found and ranged by the teams before engaging them. Most stages allowed the team members to shoot in any order but once one the second shooter engaged a target the first could not return to their trigger.

Most stages allowed three rounds per target and higher points were scored with first round hits. Typically, the Primary shooter's three rifle round hits were worth 3, 2 and 1 point while the Secondary shooter's rifle round hits were worth 2, 1 and 1 point. Pistol targets were all worth 1 point each and the stages allowed unlimited rounds to hit them.



Background

Scott and Chris have competed in five Mammoth Sniper Challenges together along with several other events but after becoming the Match Director for Mammoth in 2019 Scott has been shooting with several other teammates. This event was the first opportunity to put the band back together and Chris' return to a big match after two years off.

Thursday afternoon we signed in at the range, picked up the match shirts and checked into the hotel. After dinner we did a final pack and gear check and laid out what to wear based on the forecasted snow and 30° to 55° weather for Friday.

DAY 1

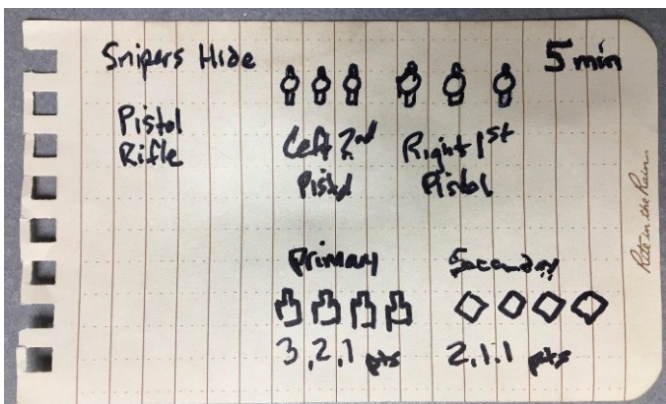
The match brief was Friday at 6:30 am. Match Director Joe Burdick covered basic and not-so-basic safety rules and the format of the match. At 7:00 the rucking teams stepped off towards the range and at 7:30 the Mechanized teams rolled off on trailers. By the time the sun was up we were all at our first stage.



Our first stage was "The Net" at 5 minutes long. Shooters moved into a shooting hide covered in camo netting. The primary shooter was to engage (4) torsos from underneath in a prone position and the secondary shooter was to engage (4) sniper heads from a shooting off of a pallet stacked on a spool up and to the right of the primary shooter. As we approached the position three of the primary torsos were visible to the naked eye but Chris struggled to find the white sniper heads out in the snowy field. After waving off the secondary targets Chris ranged the three torsos we could see using our Vortex Fury 5000 binoculars. With a perfect range, and good data, Scott's first round was just off the right shoulder of a 945 yard target which gave him the wind call to land two more shots on it and then hit the next two targets with three rounds each. Although we didn't score as many points as we wanted to our communication and strategy were solid – as was Scott's shooting.

Our second stage was "The Bottoms" at 5 minutes long. The stage included one rifle shooting position off of a strap, one rifle position off of a spool and then two pistol positions. Team members had to shoot "all available targets" from one rifle and one pistol position each with unlimited rounds. Scott moved to the strap rifle position and hit (4) rifle targets quickly all inside 250 yards. Chris hit (4) rifle targets inside 250 yards off the spool as well. One success here was that one of Chris' rifle targets was a rectangular target hidden behind a LaRue falling target. Scott spotted it and called it out so that Chris could send two rounds at the LaRue dropping it AND hitting the target behind. The pistol targets were (4) torsos each ranging from 33% to 75% in size. This was a fast stage that we cleaned with about 30 seconds to spare.

Our third stage was "Snipers Hide" at 5 minutes long. The team had to run up a hill to two side by side pistol positions where each had to drop (3) pistol poppers with unlimited rounds. After clearing and abandoning safe pistols the team had to move into a wood and brush hide with a short opening out the front. The primary shooter had (4) torsos available to engage and the secondary shooter had (4) diamonds available to engage. After dropping the pistol poppers we moved into the hide and found, ranged and scored points on three of the torsos. We didn't score any secondary points. We weren't happy with our score but later found out that we tied two teams for the Mechanized division high score of 18 here.



Our fourth stage was "LMTV" at 5 minutes long. The team was required to carry a litter and 75# punching bag about 25 yards to a LMTV. Teams had to load the 75# bag and all gear into the back of the LMTV where two shooting positions were marked with red and blue paint. The primary shooter had (4) round targets to engage and the secondary shooter had (5) square targets to engage. Our movement into the LMTV was smooth and we found and ranged targets well here scoring a Mechanized division high score of 16 here. Scott was able to use the ARCA rail on his KRG Whiskey-3 chassis to slide the bipod back and build a stable position on the shallow metal bench.



Our last stage of Day 1 was "Rock Pile" at 5 minutes long. Each shooter had (3) round pistol targets to engage before moving to their rifle positions. The primary shooter was to be prone under two large spools and the secondary was to be anywhere on a large pile of rocks. The primary shooter had (4) torsos to engage and the secondary had (4) circles to engage but the secondary could only engage them after the primary had finished and moved with all gear to the rock pile. This stage was our first train wreck of the match. We struggled to find targets and struggled to communicate target locations to each other. Afterwards we realized that the height and angle of the positions were intentionally chosen to make targets difficult to see, and in some cases, it was impossible for the Secondary to see the Primary shooter's targets.



DAY 2

We met to load up on the trailers at 6:30 am for the ride out to our first stage "LMTV2" at 5 min. 30 sec. long. The team had a short movement around and into the back of the LMTV, where the primary had to engage (4) torsos, and the secondary had to engage (2) squares and (2) tall skinny BEST Targets rulers, all from the prone position. We moved into position quickly and found and engaged enough primary and secondary targets to score 24 points here – the fourth best score in Mechanized.

Our second stage of the day was "Firefight" at 5 min. 30 sec. long. The team started in the front and back seat of a Tahoe with only rifles and rifle shooting gear. After a short blast down a gravel road the team had to jump out and take positions off the trunk and hood of a car, simulating coming to the aid of a friendly team already engaged in a firefight. Each shooter had (4) separate targets to engage off either green or orange posts. The fast ride to the stage was a new, fun element and as an added stressor there were several staff members yelling and firing blanks off the roof of the car spraying brass down onto the shooting positions. Although the targets were hard to find they were all inside 300 yards and we cleaned this stage with time to spare.

The next stage was the "Kraken" at 5 min. 30 sec. long. The team started at a pistol position where there were (3) torsos that needed to be engaged by both shooters. After clearing pistols the team had (2) 25# sandbags to carry up a hill before getting into position in the back of a Unimog type vehicle. From the bed of this vehicle each shooter had (4) targets to engage. Scott cleaned his pistol targets here but Chris struggled with the longer distance targets and bailed out after scoring only one hit. We moved efficiently into the Kraken but once again we struggled to find targets here and scored only 10 total points.

The fourth stage on Saturday was "Tires" at 5 min. 30 sec. long. From a blind starting position, we had to move into a shooting area outlined by blue ribbon that contained five tires and a wooden spool. We were instructed that (4) primary shooter diamonds and (4) secondary shooter torsos could be found over a berm and that seeing the targets required building a shooting position with what was in the box. We moved into the box and built a stack of tires quickly but with Scott behind his rifle and with Chris on the Vortex binos we found only one torso. We panned and searched until there was only 1 minute remaining and Chris tapped Scott out of the shooting position to score our only three hits on one torso. This was a frustrating stage coming right after the "Kraken" because our inability to find targets was costing us big points.

Our final stage of the day was "The Ladders" at 5 min. 30 sec. long. After shooting (3) pistol torsos we had to move into position on/around a dirt pile that included two ladders built from wooden pallets. The primary had (4) torsos downrange and the secondary had (4) diamonds. We moved thru the pistol targets quickly, got into position on the ladders and started finding and ranging targets. Scott scored many first round hits here and cleaned many targets with all three rounds. Chris' shooting position was not as stable as it should have been and he had a few rounds blow off the left edge but scored many points regardless. We felt good about our performance here and while leaving the stage several staff members complimented us on our communication and efficiency – which was a nice way to end the day.

DAY 3

Day 3 started with another trailer ride at 6:30 am and then a quick match brief at the covered shooting bay where Joe made it very clear to everyone that there was to be no spotting glass or range finders out of bags in this staging area.

Our first stage Sunday am was "Log Roll" at 3 minutes. Shooters were to move into position along a line of logs with the secondary on the right and the primary on the left. The secondary was to engage (3) sniper heads and the primary was to engage (3) torsos. Target distances were given as 484, 468 & 584 for the secondary and 909, 925 & 905 for the primary. Because the RO told us in the brief that the targets were easy to find and because of what Joe mentioned in the morning brief we moved into position with only our rifles ready to go and our binos packed away. As soon as we got into position we realized that the targets were not easy (for us) to find. Chris found one sniper head and called it out to the scorer as the "far left sniper head" but after hitting it with one round we realized that it was not the far left sniper head. He panned left and hit the far left sniper head with three rounds then went back and scored two hits on the middle sniper head before tapping out. Scott got into position quickly but didn't score any points here. We made a few mistakes here – not bringing binos to the line, not finding targets quickly enough and not tapping out the secondary shooter while struggling to find targets when the primary shooter's targets were visible with the naked eye. Regardless we had the third highest Mechanized score on this stage.

Sunday's stage two was "Golf Balls". Primary and secondary shooters from all teams lined up in a firing line and shot single rounds and golf balls hanging at 47 yards and 87 yards. This was a fun, quick stage and most people that scored took home their golf ball with a bullet hole in it. We both hit both golf balls maxing out our score here where many did not.



Our third stage was "1, 2, 3" at 1 min. 30 sec. per team member. This stage included (3) torso targets - a 95 yard torso from a standing position, a 213 yard torso from a seated position and a 396 yard torso from a prone position. The only shooting aid allowed here was a sling – no bipods, bags, partners etc ... Scott did very well here nearly cleaning the stage and Chris shot well standing and seated but failed to find the later target from the prone position.



With the shorter stage times Sunday was moving quickly and our fourth stage was "POSLRF" at 3 minutes. We were told that there was (1) 24"x24" square for the primary and (1) 12" circle for the secondary downrange that needed to be mil-ranged and engaged with (3) rounds. We thought that we were well prepared for this so we moved into position, measured target heights in our Vortex Razor riflescopes, looked up distances on our pre-made tables and started shooting at the secondary target. We hit it on the first round, but did not get the "IMPACT!" from the RO we expect. Turns out there were TWO round targets on the range and we had spotted, ranged, and shot at the wrong one. After shooting this target and scoring no points we moved on to the

primary target where Scott sent three rounds but scored no points. This was a frustrating stage for us because of the circle target confusion. Many other teams had the same issue here and very few scored any points here at all.

Our final stage of the match was "Get Close" at 3 minutes. This was a partner assisted stage where the support partner must have their butt and two feet on the ground. Each shooter had (1) diamond to engage at 335 and 432 yards. One very clear requirement here was that the rifle could only be loaded and charged after it was in contact with the support team member and that the rifle must be unloaded and cleared before losing contact with the support team member. We got into a solid position quickly and Scott missed three shots at the first target then panned right and missed three shots at the second target. Chris's position was not as stable as he would have liked but he did score 3 points on the first diamond before running out of time. After the fact we realized that Scott's elevation turret did not get returned to 0 after shooting the 1100+ yard target on the previous stage – it got returned to 10. Although we've made this rookie mistake before it happens and we need to work on our process here to be sure that it doesn't happen again.

Things Done Well

Thanks to field experience from matches like the Mammoth Sniper Challenge, both Scott and Chris were well prepared with all the gear required to be competitive including glass from Vortex Optics and solid shooting rifle/ammo combinations. Even after not shooting together for two years, our strategy and communication picked up right where they left off and we moved thru stages efficiently and scored points on nearly every target that we engaged.

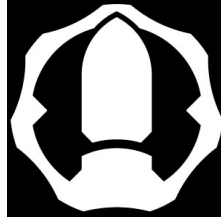
Results & Lessons Learned

Although we brought home the third place finish in Mechanized division it wasn't without one more hurdle. When the scores were posted we were shown in 4th place but we noticed that our score on the sheet was left blank for the "Get Close" stage. After meeting with the scorer during the arbitration period our score was corrected placing us in 3rd. The valuable lesson here is to record your own score after each stage and check the final standings to be sure they're correct.

Our biggest downfall of the match was finding targets – which is not something that most people practice often. We definitely need to figure out how to get better at this. Another thing we need to work on is probably Chris' pistol shooting. Although it only cost us 4 points it cost us more in time where it took him many more rounds to either score the points or decide to move on. Finally, we need to be more conscious of our process when we have the time do so. There is no excuse for mistakes like being "a rev off", and we need to reduce those as much as possible.

Summary

The Bushnell Elite Sniper Challenge is a great event for all three divisions. The Clinton House, Arena Training Facility and Coleman's Creek Training Center have all been great venues and we're already looking forward to next year's event. When Vortex Optics gave Scott and Chris an opportunity to represent the brand and get back together after two years off they couldn't miss it and they'll definitely be back at it again soon!



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