

# BEST TARGETS

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

**Event:** Guardian Long Range Competition

**Date:** April 2, 2016

**Location:** Frontline Defense, Warrenton, NC

**Websites:** <http://www.guardianlongrange.com/>  
<http://frontlinedefenseusa.com/>

**Shooter:** Scott Whitehead

**Rifle:** Stiller Action / Hawk Hill Barrel / KRG Chassis / Kahntrol Muzzle Brake in 6.5CM by Clowdis Precision

**Ammo:** 6.5 Creedmoor Handloads. Berger 140 Hybrids, 42.6gr H4350, Lot R9a

**Gear:** Vortex PST 6-24x, Vortex Precision Rings, Harris BiPod w/Kahntrol Pod-Mod Adapters, Wiebad Bags

### **Facility Notes**

Frontline Defense is North Carolina's newest firearms training facility in Warrenton, NC and every time we go there we are more and more impressed. Recent additions include more cleared land, more rifle lanes and another 1000 yard range in progress. Paul Smith is really doing a wonderful job building one of the newest shooting and training facilities in NC.

### **Event Format**

The Guardian Long Range Competition is a charity shooting match to support Bethany Christian Services. Bethany Christian Services is an organization that helps place foster children in Christian homes. 100% of the funds raised by this competition will help reduce the orphan crisis by helping offset the financial cost for parents considering adoption through Bethany Christian Services. Ashbury Precision Ordnance is the title sponsor of this event and they do an AMAZING job of supporting this match. Vortex Optics and BEST Targets are also among the very strong and lengthy sponsor line-up.

Between our strong team finish at the Mammoth Sniper Challenge and this Guardian match I had to re-barrel my rifle. I was at 2400 rounds on my Brux barrel and, although it was shooting fantastically well, I knew it was a ticking time bomb. It might shoot 5 more rounds well and then fall apart or it might shoot 500 more – I had no way to tell. I worked with our friend Shawn Burkholder at Hawk Hill Barrels to spin up a 26" barrel for me and had it installed by Blair Clowdis at Clowdis Precision. Prior to the match I did a little bit of load development but I had never shot this barrel past 100 yards so I was going completely off of simulation based data – I had no real data to fall back on. My goal this weekend was to learn about how the rifle was performing and ensure it was ready for matches later in the year.



I started the weekend with a little chrono and zero time. I made some very small adjustments to the zero and chrono'ed 15 rounds with the help of Matthew Peterson from Ashbury Precision Ordnance and his labrador. The new ammo was running well but it showed that it still needed just a bit of fine-tuning to the load. I'll have to play with seating depth a bit and see if I can get it shooting a bit tighter groups. On this day, groups averaged a bit under 1/2" for a 5 shot group at 100yds.

The first stage we approached was Stage 7 – NOAH'S ARK. A small boat had been suspended from straps on a frame, and was free to sway and rock – simulating being on the water. Once the clock started, shooters needed to approach and climb into the boat, grab two stuffed animals to use as shooting supports, build a position and send 10 – 2 at each of 5 targets. Time was not the only challenge here – it was raining heavily and visibility was poor. I quickly found the first target (288 yards) and second target (388 yards) and hit them both twice. Finding the third (488 yards) was difficult and one of my shots went wide as the boat swung. I had a tough time finding the fourth target (590 yards) in the fog – I could see it's sign board but didn't see it until the very end. I had time to break one shot at it.... HIT! I only scored 6 points in 7 shots on some fairly easy targets due to time and visibility and I knew this stage was not a great start.



Our second stage of the day – SECOND COMING, was a straightforward prone stage, engaging targets from 200 yards to 1000 yards. With good dope and minimal wind this is an easy stage. For us the wind was merciful but my DOPE was not as good as it needed to be. I started at the 200 yard target and hit it easily. Moving to the 300 yard target I scored a hit but heard “WRONG TARGET!” from the R/O. Oops – that’s a costly mistake. I moved to 400, 500, 600, 700, and 800 – all hits but at 800 I noticed I was a bit low. Pulling the trigger at 900yds yielded another hit but almost at the bottom of the plate. As I located the 1000 yd target I immediately had to decide if this was a test session or a critical match. In a critical match I would have held high but I needed to know just where my DOPE was putting the shot so I held center. Just as the 800 yard and 900 yard hits had suggested it went just under the target. I had another miss but I also had a very important piece of information on my new rifle configuration. For the last shot at 1000 yards I held at the shoulder and hit dead on. My long-range DOPE was low, and I had scored 8 out of 10 on this stage. Lesson learned.



Up next was stage 5 – WALL OF JERICHO. In this stage a single target was placed 347 yards downrange and a barricade was in front of us with multiple shooting positions. Some positions needed one shot and some needed two. The positions could easily be broken down into “high prone”, “kneeling”, and “standing”. This was a rather straightforward barricade stage and I performed well – I had time to get 10 shots off and hit on 8 of them. I would have liked to have run this clean – it was definitely a cleanable stage – but both misses were shots that broke early. That’s what dry-fire practice is for!

The final stage of the morning was MOSES. In this stage you needed to pick up a baby doll, carry it to the firing position and use it for support. There is no need to call Child Protective Services here but the baby is the only support off the barricade (a large log) you were allowed to use. The stage required six shots from the log using a low folded-over seated position, a move of the baby to “safety” then a climb onto another log pile to get 4 more shots off. Ranges were from 180 to 536 yards and conditions were pretty still. The rain restarted just as I came up to the line but I had good mental focus and cleaned this stage with 10 hits. The baby made a decent front “bag” support, and I used the bipod on the log pile without issue.



After a great lunch supplied by the Guardian match we moved to the other side of the range for our first stage of the afternoon – TOWER OF BABYLON. In this stage a unique set of obstacles was arranged with 9 different shooting positions. Shooters had to pick 5 positions to use and shoot two shots from each chosen position at a single target 411 yards away. I made an effort to mentally “rehearse” this stage more than some others because this stage was primed for “mistakes” – lots of shooters skipping a position they meant to shoot, shooting the wrong position, returning to the same position twice, etc. Unfortunately I didn’t finalize my plan soon

enough so I didn’t get to plan quite well enough but the planning I was able to do still paid off. I chose the five most stable positions and cleaned the stage with a perfect score. I was able to move quickly from position to position – partly because of my Wiebad Ultra-Lite rear bag. Most positions on this wall needed a rear bag and this rear bag is attached to the back of my rifle with a QD making it impossible to leave behind when I moved from position to position. This keeps your hands free for movement and bolt manipulation – which is just what you need!

Our next stage of the afternoon was SAMSON. I really liked the creativity of this stage. It started with the shooter standing facing downrange with a wall of blue barrels standing upright in front of them. At the buzzer the shooter needed to knock over all the barrels and shoot off of them wherever they landed. This made the shooting positions unpredictable but made for a fun stage. There were five targets ranging from 132 yards to 441 yards and five barrels and each target needed to be engaged twice. I had a great run going here but I was just a bit too slow to break some of my shots. The buzzer went off as I was prepping the trigger for the last shot and I scored 9 out of a possible 10 points here.





STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN was a learning stage for me and it had nothing to do with shooting – it had to do with making good reloading decisions. On this stage a staircase was in front of the shooters facing downrange and five targets were downrange from 460 yards to 633 yards. The shooting position off the staircase was nearly prone and it was a cleanable stage. My first shot was a miss as I got the wind and the second shot was a hit ... but as I ran the bolt something was off. I didn't even try to load the next round but immediately looked in the ejection port. The scene was not good. The case head had completely separated from the brass case. There was nothing I could do within the 99 second stage time limit – I essentially took a zero for the stage. It took a cleaning rod to clear the brass from the chamber for the next stage.



The final stage of the day – MY BROTHER'S KEEPER was a chance to get my mental focus back after the catastrophe of the last stage. In this stage you climbed into the back of an SUV, used a dummy for support for the front of the rifle and shot 10 shots at five targets ranging from 413 yards to 490 yards. As the last shooter of the squad and the last shooter of the day it was hard to keep focus on this stage. I had another good stage here with 9 hits out of 10 shots. It was good to end the match on a high note.

## Things Done Well

The Guardian match is a fantastic match for a great cause. I came to this match with some new equipment to sort out, and I learned a lot. I shot well for most of the day – strong enough for a top-3 finish before the ammo malfunction.

## Results & Lessons Learned

I definitely took away some good lessons from this match:

- Make smarter reloading decisions. Batch R9a, the lot of ammo I shot at this match, used range pick-up brass. I picked up this brass over a few weekends late last year and after shooting it all once I figured it was okay to use for match ammo once it had “proven” itself with one firing. I was wrong. This was a foolish place to save money. Brass that I don't know the FULL history of needs to be PRACTICE AMMO ONLY.
- Knowing and having confidence in the performance of your rifle and it's DOPE, is critical to these matches. Bringing a new rifle was an unavoidable detriment to my score this weekend but it proved to be an invaluable data collection session. I'll know to keep an eye on the elevation of my shots at longer distances during the next few matches based on the results of Stage 8.
- More dry-fire practice will help get me more in touch with the trigger. I had some trigger slips in some of the early stages of the event.
- Time coaching is a major asset in a match like this. I didn't have that without a shooting partner. That probably cost me a few points throughout the day.
- The Wiebad Ultra-Lite bag is a great bag for situations where multiple positions require a rear bag. If you don't have one get one, practice with it and keep it handy!
- Have confidence in your DOPE and trust the bullet. When you miss and have called a good shot try something different. There is no reason to take the same shot again.

## Summary

This was another great match by Paul Smith, the owner of Frontline Defense, and Gary Larson, the coordinator of the Guardian Long Range Competition matches. We enjoy being part of the Guardian family as shooters, sponsors and as friends. There are at least two more Guardian events this year. Find one and get a shooting slot as soon as you can.

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