

# BEST TARGETS

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

**Event:** 2015 Guardian Long Range Competition  
**Date:** April 25, 2015  
**Location:** Bangsteel, Wytheville, VA  
**Websites:** <http://www.guardianlongrange.com/>  
<http://bangsteel.com/>  
<http://www.bethany.org/>

**Shooter:** Scott Whitehead  
**Rifle:** Stiller Action / Brux Barrel / KRG X-Ray Chassis Rifle in 6.5 Creedmoor by Clowdis Precision  
**Ammo:** Custom Loaded Ammo, Hornady Brass, H4350 Powder, 140gr Berger Hybrid, Lot #R6b  
**Gear:** Vortex PST 6-24x, TPS Rings, Harris BiPod w/ Kahntrol Pod-Mod Adapters, Wiebad & MidwayUSA Bags

### **Facility & Event Notes**

The Bangsteel facility is an active cattle farm with a gorgeous hillside view and permanent steel targets setup ranging from 100 yards to past 1 mile. The view is spectacular and the winds are tricky. The land owner and the school owner Dan Newberry make a beautiful facility available for events, schools, private practice days, and matches all year long.

The Guardian Long Distance Competition is a charity match to support Bethany Christian Services. Bethany Christian Services is a global nonprofit family preservation and child welfare organization caring for orphans and vulnerable children on five continents. Bethany is recognized as a prominent leader in social services worldwide.

### **Event Format**

The event started with a simple and harmless sounding timed 10-dot drill. Ten  $\frac{3}{4}$ " dots are arranged in a line, and you have 60 seconds to shoot them. Just the night before, I had found a zero shift in my gun based on some 100yd shooting, and I was somewhat nervous that the shift was "real" and that my 100yd zero was good. I was determined to make the first shot count, and correct from there if necessary. When the start signal was issued, I quickly broke the first shot, called it good, and watched it punch the first dot dead center. Outstanding! But as the shooting continued, I discovered the real challenge of this stage. The 8 shooters lined up in my group, including the 300 WinMag shooter next to me, almost all had large muzzle brakes. The concussion of the other shooters made cleanly breaking shots almost impossible. Often times I would be waiting for the scope to settle on target, and a concussion would move the rifle enough to make me point at someone else's target. Several times I was initiating a trigger press to the rear, and a concussion made me break the shot early. What seemed easy was far from it, I came away with a 6/10 score, even though with a good zero I could shoot this drill 10/10 during practice with no issues. Even the best shooters shot around an 8/10, highlighting the challenges of the stage.

After the first stage was completed, shooters were welcome to go to any of the six remaining stages in any order they wanted to. My shooting partner, Gehrig Austin, and I made a plan and we moved to the top of the hill to start our day. I found this method of managing the stages was very enjoyable – you could choose when you shot what stage, and with whom. It was certainly more "fair" than the tee time strategy at some matches.

Stage 3, 'The Rock', was a relatively simple 3-target array. The targets were on the hillside - close enough to each other that they didn't require a major shift in shooting position between shots. The catch however, was the rifle needed to be placed on a very narrow painted area of a rock outcropping. This outcropping would have made a very comfortable position for a left-handed shooter, but for a righty it was a challenge. Making the best of twisted-up position, I moved the rifle forward on the down-sloping race face, lengthened my bipod legs, managed to get a rear bag under the buttstock of the KRG chassis, and concentrated on keeping the rifle isolated from my body, because as twisted up as I was, my legs and core were not stable at all. Holding mild left wind ranging from 0.5 mil to 1.0 mil, I was able to hit all three targets in quick succession at 702, 803, and 933 yards. Perhaps most satisfying was my elevation dope was spot on – I had compensated all my DOPE for my new zero, and was watching carefully to see whether that was the right move or not.

Stage 2 was 'The Loophole'. In this stage, shooters had to engage three targets at 818, 803, and 706 yards. The loophole was actually a fairly large opening, around 8" x 6", so no real loophole compensation was necessary other than a simple awareness of your height over bore. Again my adjusted elevation DOPE was spot on, but I mistakenly called one shot high, and wasted a lot of time before I realized that the high call was just dust that had been blown behind the target and appeared over top of it. I hit all three targets, but one was right at the buzzer, and the scorer didn't give it to me.



At this point, Gehrig and I felt like we had a good feel for the predictable and non-gusting wind, so we went to the longest distance targets that were left. 'The Barn', Stage 7, required shooters to engage 3 targets at 1033 yards – one pig silhouette, and two 66% IPSC torsos. My first shot was a bit too much wind hold, but when I backed it off for my second shot, I watched the impact on target, and I hit the next two with two subsequent shots. I was thrilled with a 3-for-3 performance once I had the wind call. The most notable thing about this stage was your shooting position was downhill, and you were shooting up onto the opposite hillside. This meant you needed a LOT of elevation on your bipod. I saw shooters placing their bipod on top of their pack, on top of hard-shell pelican cases, and even shooting off another shooter's back. One shooter had to dig out a small hole in the ground for his stock to sit in to get enough elevation. Thankfully, I had just received a set of KahnTrol Solutions Pod-Mod Adapters the week before. They made

it super easy to attach a set of 3" extensions to my bipod in seconds, and I was able to shoot this stage with a solid bipod pre-load, a firm cheekweld, and a good amount of rear bag, and that stability certainly contributed to my performance on this stage. At this stage, Gehrig made a classic mistake – having his dials one round off. Since spotters could not help the shooter during the stage, I could not tell him this, and could only watch in frustration as his rounds fell far short. Nearly every experienced shooter has done this at some point.

Stage 4, 'The Spool', was a challenging stage. You had two targets, one very small one at 515 yards, and one slightly larger at 756 yards. You could engage them A-B-A-B, but had to switch shoulders every time you switched targets. My hit on the 515yd target with my strong side came quickly after my initial missed wind call, but the hit on the second target using my weak side shoulder, trigger finger, and eye came right at the buzzer. I had planned on putting a half-loaded magazine on the table as a spare, and loading a 10-rd magazine from my belt at the line. I mistakenly loaded the 5 round magazine at the start, and then had to move away from a very awkward and hard-to-replicate weak-side position to hunt the magazine I had left on my belt, and reload. This mental mistake cost a lot of time. Just finding the correct eye relief in this barricade supported position on my weak side also wasted a LOT of time. I hit each target only once, which was not a score that was going to keep me with the front runners.

Stage 5, 'The Barricade', was a simple multi-level wood barricade. From any position on the barricade, you had to shoot three targets, three times. Each target could only be engaged with one shot before moving on, whether a hit or a miss, so it was a 9-shot, and up to 9-hit stage. While shooting these targets, you could not touch your dials, so they needed to be shot with hold-overs. By this time in the day, the targets were no longer painted at all, and VERY hard to spot against the grassy hillside. At one point I could not find a target, so I just put a shot into the hillside, so I could "move on" to another target that I knew I could see. Another poor barricade performance.

My last stage of the day was Stage 6, 'The Gate'. A wobbly gate was the only support allowed for an A-B-A-B sequence on two targets. The height of the opening meant a reverse kneeling position, with my Wiebad Todd Tac-Pad on my right elbow. Although I felt like I had a relatively stable position, the wind seemed to taunt me on this stage, and I'm sure my position was not as stable as I thought it was. I was rewarded with only two hits of a possible 4.

## Things Done Well

During this match, with only one exception, I trusted my elevation DOPE, and it paid off. I "trusted the bullet" the night before when I corrected a wandering zero, and adjusted my DOPE, and it worked well for me all day.

## Things Done Poorly / Lessons Learned

- Barricade shooting is a weakness of mine. I need to practice that more.
- On barricades, manipulations such as running the bolt need to be done without disturbing the sight picture.
- Never carry a half-loaded magazine to the line. Every magazine should be identically ready to do the job.
- Binoculars need to be easily accessible and used more often to watch other shooters, and learn from them.
- Practice wind-calling
- Check your dials before each stage, and always use zero-stops to count out your rotations.

## Results

I finished 20<sup>th</sup> in a very competitive field of over 60 shooters. The level of experience at this match is quite high.

## Notable Names

Best Targets shooting team sponsor Kahntrol Solutions was there with a booth set-up, demonstrating their muzzle brakes and Pod-Mods. Also Guardian title sponsor APO had on display some very impressive rifles, and were amazingly generous, along with all the sponsors, in donating to the event to help this great cause.



## Summary

We intend to shoot every Guardian Long Distance Challenge we can possibly attend. It's a great match with some great people. Gary Larson runs a great event, and it was a privilege for BEST Targets to make and hand-out the trophies to the top shooters! I learned a few hard lessons, which will guide my practice and shooting in the near future. Time to get to work!

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