

BEST TARGETS

BEST Targets Shooting Team After Action Report (AAR)

Event: 2016 MPA / Core Precision Rifle Series Match

Date: May 14-15, 2016

Location: CORE Shooting Solutions, Baker, FL

Websites: www.precisionrifleseries.com
www.coreshooting.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 R9b / R9c

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

Facility Notes

This was my first trip to the CORE Shooting Facility in Baker, FL. It's a very nice facility, similar to K&M in Tennessee, with lots of shooting positions, generally parallel shooting lanes, in a very nicely manicured facility. The staff was first-class, and the event was extremely well-run.

Event Format

The first day we arrived at the facility was a "train-up" day. Competitors could opt to use the facility and review the obstacles and shooting positions. Match stage notes were not available yet so the details of the stages were not revealed to us. Like at most matches, I took the chance to confirm zero and chrono some ammo. I was surprised that my gun was shooting nearly 50 fps faster than the last time I chrono'ed it at the last match I shot. Although the conditions were slightly hotter than the last time I chrono'ed, most of the gain was due to the barrel continuing to break in and get faster and my data tracked with the change. I was very glad I checked my data before I started the match.

I also had a chance to review some shooting positions, practice a bit on the mover and look at the targets. With a limited amount of ammo available I did mostly dry-fire practice but I also sent about 75 rounds down range. For this purpose I burned through some older ammo which I thought was suspect and, indeed, I had a single case-head failure during this practice. The most memorable part of the practice day was a bit of trigger control advice shelled out to me by Brandon Green – one of the top shooters in the US Army Marksmanship Unit.

This match included 18 stages, most of which were only a few yards apart. Many of the shooting lanes were essentially parallel, minimizing down time between stages. This fast pace was both a good and bad thing. It let competitors get in a lot of shooting in a single day but it certainly eliminated the character of the matches which occur on larger facilities where each stage takes place in a unique landscape.



The first stage we shot was PRS STAGE 2 (1). On this standardized stage a barricade with four positions required 2 shots from each position on a single 12" circle placed 400 yards downrange. 4 of the positions were shot kneeling and 4 were shot standing. I scored 6 hits, missing one shot from each position. Even with a good hit ratio I felt like I struggled with stability in both positions. Tyler Payne, from the US Army Marksmanship Unit, suggested I work on getting the stock onto my Wiebad bag while in the kneeling position rather than using it to support my arm which is holding the back of the rifle.

CAR LANE (2) was a simple stage shot off a stable rock platform. Six targets were placed among cars at 263, 428, and 654 yards and each could be engaged twice for a total of 12 shots. With a stable position and very generous targets this should have been a simple stage but the wind simply ate my lunch. I scored 3 hits out of 12 and the spotter told me all my shots were off to the right. This stage highlighted my need to put more effort into spotting my own misses.





SHOOT HOUSE 1 (3) was a stage shot from the 2nd story of CORE's beautiful urban simulator. 3 windows and a railing were the positions to engage 3 targets from at 210, 450 and 368 yards. The nearest target was at a severe angle to the window making the positions even more challenging. I connected with 7 of my 10 shots using holdovers of ½ mil, 2 mils, and 1 ½ mils. I had issues with the front bag sliding forward – an issue I've had before and never resolved. I need to have a solution for this – SOON.

The fourth stage, PICNIC TIME (4), included 6 targets at different distances from 350 to 840 yards. The shooter was required to engage all six from the strong side and then all 6 from the weak side. I had a very good plan to climb in behind the table and shoot but I missed one important point – you had to also switch tables when you switched sides. I never would have made the plan I did had I known this. After hitting 5 of my 6 shots from the strong side position I made a very quick transition to the weak ... only to be told by the RO that I had to switch tables. I lost a lot of time moving out of my weak side position and to the other table. I only got one more shot off and missed it. Read the stage brief carefully!!

MOVER CHOAS (5) was shot prone starting with a shot on the 500 yard mover, then alternating shots between 4 static targets, 4 more shots on the mover and finally 3 more shots on the mover. I connected with all four static targets from 250 to 481 yards while holding under but had trouble with the mover. I never got the lead quite right – maybe not holding enough. During the practice day I connected with the longer coyote target at 1.25 mils of lead but on this day my 1.25 to 1.5 lead just never worked. My shots were certainly not good and even if I was 100% sure of my hold I probably only would have hit 4 or 5 of the 8 shots. There is a large element here of technique and smoothness in tracking the mover and a large piece of it is watching the misses to figure out my hold. I failed on both counts.



After practicing a bit on the rock pile the day before, we got to ON THE ROCKS (6), and I had some confidence again. Shooters picked three positions and shot three targets at 250, 350 and 735 yards from each position. I chose to avoid the higher positions, established three low positions and got plenty stable. I connected with 8 out of 9 shots. As always, practice pays off!

For the second PRS STANDARDS STAGE 2 (7), shooters started prone and engaged three 12" targets spread about 100 yards apart at a 400 yards distance in a 1, 2, 3, 3, 2, 1 sequence. I ran this stage clean in 27.7 seconds. I was very happy with my performance on this stage.

On the stage HUNTER (8) shooters shot off a raised platform at 5 animal targets. Two prairie dogs (at 273 and 343 yards) and three coyotes (at 425, 580 and 700 yards) were engaged with two shots each. After hitting the first prairie dog twice, I missed the second one off the right edge and then hit it holding left edge. I had my wind call and moved to the coyotes hitting with 4 of my 6 shots. I missed the 580 yard Coyote twice, both times high, and I have no idea why. Many other shooters said they missed high as well.



BARREL RACER (9) included 5 targets down range (between 377 and 795 yards) which had to be engaged first prone then from the top of a 55 gallon drum. I knew from practice that my rearward bipod position would work well here and I connected with 9 of my 10 shots using hold-overs. Once again, practice pays off. Just a little bit of practice on a barrel at home really helped and gave me confidence arriving at this stage.



Just a few feet over was TIRE RUNNER (10). Three targets at 392, 415 and 492 yards were to be engaged from three different large truck tires laying on their sides. I ran the stage clean in 75 seconds dialing a single dope between the 1st and 2nd targets and holding up ¾ mil for the third target.

THE DUNKIN (11) required quickly moving from prone to a barricade position and back, 5 times. 10 shots were taken at the same 400 yard target, never from the same position twice in a row. Time here was made by getting into the barricade positions quickly. I got off 9 shots and connected with 5 of them. I still need more practice on barricades!





The 5 POSITION SCRAMBLE (12) was shot off a barricade built from wood and a single large truck tire. There were 4 positions on this barricade and then one more off a nearby scaffold. Each required two shots at the scaled down IPSC target at 395 yards. I got off 8 shots and 5 hits from the first four positions but never got a shot from my last position. Surprisingly, the positions off the tire were the most stable, where I could get two solid points of contact, and I went 4 for 4 from them.

Woody's – shooting "tree frog" style with my hips square to the rooftop, a small front bag and my large Wiebad bag in the back. The position worked well and I connected with 7 of my 10 shots.



Day 2 started on the stage SENTRY (13). Ten shots were taken from a classic rooftop simulator. I shot this stage using my recent discovery at



ROOFTOP MOVER (14) was a stage I had worked up in my head as difficult and my earlier performance on the mover only made that mindset worse. Shooters had to take 2 shots from each of 5 different rooftop simulator positions and while questioning both my lead and my technique I managed only 1 hit. On several of the positions I thought I called some good shots but I still never figured out where I needed to be.

In the stage ROADBLOCK (15) an orange road barrier defined six shooting positions and shooters had to choose five of them and take two shots from each position at two targets – a torso at 485 yards and a plate rack at 515 yards. The windows were low and required a low sitting or turtled up position. The low seated position is something I usually do well at and I was looking forward to this stage. I didn't shoot well at all here. I can't really say why. I only got two hits on this stage and that cost me dearly.



As day 2 moved on, PLATE RACK (16) required us to take 5 shots off an orange barricade laid parallel to the direction of fire and then 5 more shots at the same plate rack (at 735 yards) off a high position on the rock pile. The barricade in that direction was about as wide as a bipod and I was worried that the bipod legs would slip side to side so I ran a large Wiebad bag in the front. I got very stable on the barricade but missed all five shots from that position as I hunted the wind. On the very last shot I got a very clear wind call – and it was in the opposite direction that I had originally dialed! The wind we could see was obviously not the dominant wind. I moved off the barricade, climbed up the rock pile and quickly got into position. I shot three hits in a row! Just as I was about to break my 4th shot, the buzzer sounded. I just needed a few more seconds to get the last two shots off – DAMN!



The second to last stage of the day was CAR TROUBLE (17). We had four positions to shoot from – the hood, roof, trunk and back seat of a car. Everyone shot the back seat last because it was not only the most awkward but it also took the most time to get in and out of. As I watched shooters before me go, I saw very few get meaningful shots from the back seat – most timed out. Many shooters were missing easy shots from the other positions in a rush to get through the stage. I chose to break clean shots from the first three positions and not plan beyond that. I also decided to use the Wiebad bag in the front since the shooting positions all sloped down to one side or the other and I didn't want to have to worry about fighting the bipod tension to chase leveling the rifle. Just as I planned, I connected with all 9 of my first 9 shots. Already ahead of the game, I moved into the back seat, fought a bit to get stable and just as I was going to break a shot the buzzer sounded. Sure, I would have liked to have gotten those last three shots off, but my score of 9 was very good for this stage and I was happy with how I approached it.

The final stage of the day was WINDOW LICKER (18). This was shot from a school "Short Bus". Two targets were down two different mowed lanes. The right side target was a KYL rack. From each of the five windows shooters had to shoot the lone target in the left lane and then the "next" target in the KYL, returning to the first KYL target after a miss. I have never shot out of the side of a bus at this type of an angle but another shooter had a great idea which the whole squad benefitted from – we all used a small soft front bag laying on the window and laid a tripod across the seats in front of us for rear support. The position was plenty stable but the time element was still there and some of my shots were definitely rushed. I got off all 10 shots but only connected with 7. This was an excellent chance to learn a new technique from another shooter. Unfortunately, I don't recall whose idea it was originally so I can't give credit where credit is due.



Things Done Well

Overall, I didn't shoot my best. I made a few mental errors but mostly this match brought out a lack of practice compared to the top competitors I was shooting against. As always the US Army Marksmanship Unit shooters in our squad were truly top-notch shooters. You can learn a ton from watching those guys – and I hope I did.

Results & Lessons Learned

I finished 48th out of 110 shooters. I definitely took away some good lessons from this match:

- Shooting a match without first zero'ing and chrono'ing is almost a waste of a match. This needs to be part of my standard routine. There is too much to lose from not doing this.
- Trigger control is still valuable. As Brandon Green pointed out, I'm getting off the trigger too quickly and not following through in live fire. This goes along with shot-spotting. I need to consider this while dry firing as well.
- My technique with the Wiebad bags is something that is worth working on. Tyler Payne pointed out a better way for me to do this and I need to keep that in mind.
- I need to find a place to practice movers.
- Barricade practice is still something I need to work on. My .22LR trainer will be great for this. Whether it's blue barrels, a PRS Standard barricade or any other obstacle, I need to work on my improvised shooting positions.
- I need a way to retain the front nose bag when the bipod is not in place – STILL.
- Always read the stage briefs carefully. You never know when a detail could get by you because you THINK you understand the stage. Read them again and again.
- On stages which call for it, take the time after breaking the shot to watch the impact. I'm usually too quick to run the bolt and get back on the trigger and I'm losing valuable information. The few times I really forced myself to do this I got a wind call and shot better because of it. I don't do this often enough. I need to build this into my dry-fire routine so that it becomes a part of every shot.



Summary

What a fun match! I was part of a great squad which dominated the top-10 positions and it's great to learn from such fantastic shooters. I finished the match 48th out of 110 shooters, which was a little disappointing, but the talent pool was insanely deep at this match.

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