

# BEST TARGETS

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

**Event:** 2022 Snipers Unknown Challenge  
**Date:** September 21-23, 2022  
**Location:** Clinton House Plantation, Clinton, SC  
**Websites:** <https://www.snipersunkown.com/>

**Shooter:** Scott Whitehead (Primary)  
**Rifle:** Mausingfield Action, Hawk Hill Barrel, KRG C-4 Chassis in 6GT by Joel Pendergraft  
**Ammo:** 6mm GT Handloads Lot# R2b: 155gr DTACs, 35.3gr H4350, CCI BR4 primers  
**Gear:** Vortex Razor Gen III 6-36x scope, Vortex Precision Rings, Kahntrol muzzle brake, Ckye-Pod bipod, Vortex Fury 5000 Laser Rangefinding Binoculars, Vortex Radian Tripod, Armageddon Gear "Schmedium" CZ75 Phantom by Cajun Gunworks, Vortex Venom red-dot, Safariland holster, Blazer 9mm ammo Eberlestock LoDrag pack, Custom gear by Sunrise tactical, RS3 rifle cover  
Clothes by Vortex, Exoficio, Wild Things, & Patagonia. Altra Lone-Peak 4 shoes.

**Shooter:** Andy Slade (Secondary)  
**Rifle:** Lone Peak Fuzion action, Hawk Hill barrel, MDT ACC chassis, 223 Rem, built by Ice Rifles,  
**Ammo:** .223 Handloads: 75gr Hornady ELD-M, 25.5gr Varget, CCI 450 primers, IMI Brass  
**Gear:** Vortex Razor Gen III 6-36x scope, MDT scope mount, MDT Comp Brake, Ckye-Pod single pull bipod, Vortex Fury 5000 AB Laser Rangefinding Binoculars, RRS 33 Series tripod w/ Anvil 30 ballhead, Armageddon Gear (AG) Pint-sized heavy-fill gamechanger, SiCo Omega Suppressor S&W M&P 9mm, Tactical Tailor pack, Clothes by Vortex & KUIU. Altra Lone-Peak shoes.

### **Event Format**

The Snipers Unknown Challenge is an annual event put on by the Snipers Unknown consulting group. This year they were joined by the CR2 Solutions (<https://www.cr2shootingsolutions.com/>, Chris Roberts and Chris Rance). In the words of SUC owner, Gamaliel Ortiz:



*"The Snipers Unknown Challenge is a multi-day team shooting event designed to test competitors as a team and individually. Traced back to its roots, this event will test teams both physically and mentally. Stages are designed for each shooter to utilize skills used by military and law enforcement snipers.*

*Teams are comprised of a primary shooter and a secondary shooter that must be mentally and physically prepared to complete all stages of this event. Unprepared teams will quickly be identified and their success in the event will suffer.*

*This event is not exclusive to military and law enforcement. Civilian competitors are welcome, but understand that this is not a PRS match.."*

Following a great event at the GTI facility in 2021, The Clinton House Plantation was chosen to host the SUC in 2022. Clinton House is located in Clinton, SC and houses a huge complex which includes hunting lands, multiple shotgun clay courses, and numerous rifle and pistol bays. It's a great location to hold a match because it offers a wide array of shooting positions and physical obstacles.

The match was setup a little differently than many team matches. All the stages were scored "Time+", so hitting all the targets simply meant you got to protect your time from additional penalties, but speed still mattered! This added an extra element of stress to the match for sure!

## Dedication

We don't normally dedicate AARs, but in this case, we want to dedicate this AAR to Ian Hall. Ian was an RO at Snipers Unknown for many years, and he defined the spirit of the match during that time. He was energetic and motivating, and was a person we just loved being around. He made everyone at the match feel special. We lost Ian on January 1, 2023, and he will be sorely missed and remembered.

## Background

This is the first time that Andy and Scott have teamed up for a match. Andy is a former Marine, a competitive PRS shooter on Team MDT, and the owner of Rifleman's Path (<https://riflemanspath.com/>). Rifleman's Path offers long-range training catering to hunting, PRS competition, and tactical field matches, and Andy carries his personal experiences and his competition success into his training, which has a proven track-record of turning out champions. Scott represents both Vortex Optics and KRG. Andy and Scott both have a lot of experience shooting matches of this type, but communication is always key, and we started talking constantly a few weeks before the match to build trust and focus as a team. As the weekend progressed, and Scott and Andy found themselves on the same page under stress, that communication paid off big.



## DAY 0

Andy and Scott traveled to SC on Friday morning, to spend a long relaxing day at the range. This gave us plenty of time to check zero, confirm dope, visit the vendor area, meet with friends, and then get our game faces on. Arriving at the range at the last possible minute, rushing through registration and zero, and then pushing all your "social" time to the first day of the match is a recipe for stress and failure, and leaves no time for adjusting gear or resolving issues that might come up. We had a stress-free trip to the zero range, and both rifles proved their dope out to 1000yds. Once we had confidence in our equipment, we visited the sponsor area. Highlights included shooting an incredibly tiny Derringer, visiting the Lanxang tactical guys, and getting to play with some really cool NVG and Thermal technology at the AGM Global booth (more on that later!). At the Friday night brief, we found out that the stage briefs had been posted, and we met with Shannon and Jennifer (a team that we had both been working with in training) to discuss the briefs and go over stage plans.

## DAY 1

### Stage 2. Lethality Matters. 202 sec (240 sec par time)

On our first stage of the match, both shooters started by running to a pistol box, and shooting one shot each at an IPSC paper target covered in a shirt) at about 20yds. These shots were for score, and only A zone hits counted. After one shot each, shooters reholstered their pistols, and moved behind some large rocks, at which point five Marathon autonomous robot targets begin moving across the range at speeds from about 2mph to about 6mph. The team had to work together to engage all 5 of these targets, and then they could move back and shoot one more shot each with their pistol. Finally, the cycle repeated itself, with another engagement on the movers, and two more pistol shots. The rifle shots did not count for points, so only the 6 pistol shots (if you had time take them all) were for points.



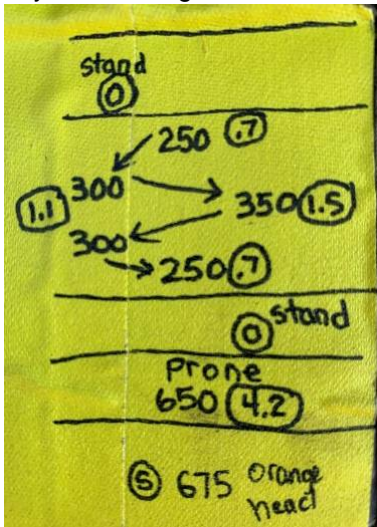


Andy and Scott moved quickly through the stage, with good planning and communication about how we would split up the movers to avoid wasted time, and even discussion on who would be on what side, so we didn't have to cross over each other during movement. We shot modified prone off the rocks taking advantage of the adjustability of our Ckye-pods. One of the hardest challenges of the stage was going back and forth between fast shooting of the movers, and fast movement between positions, but then "throttling back" when you got the pistol position, and taking a few seconds of visual patience to break a perfect shot. Combined with some smooth strong shooting at the movers, and some excellent pistol shooting, we cleaned the stage in 202 seconds – the fastest time in the match.



### Stage 3. Quantifier. 109 sec (180 sec par time)

Our second stage of the match was a stage developed by Ash Hess and the Quantified Performance team for the QP series. The primary shooter had to shoot one standing off-hand target, five targets off a step-ladder, one more standing off-hand target, and then one prone shot. Once the primary shooter hits (or taken 3 shots and missed) all his targets, the Secondary shooter may, off a tripod, pick up any missed targets and then hit his own 675yd target to finish the stage.



Andy and Scott came equipped with heavy bolt-action rifles balanced for barricade shooting, and shooting these rifles standing off-hand, is a real challenge – especially when the stage is timed. The team agreed Scott would "burn" three shots at the target – not wasting time to get the perfect sight picture – in order to give Andy time to make the shots up off the tripod (which would make them very easy shots). Scott rushed through his off-hand shots, connected on all his other shots, and gave Andy plenty of time to clean up both off hand targets and connect with the 675 target to stop the time. Scott communicated to Andy his wind hold on his final 650yd target so Andy could connect quickly on his final target. We rehearsed our plan, stuck to it, executed smoothly, and cleaned the stage with 11 seconds to spare – the 4<sup>th</sup> fastest time of the match.

We were both happy with the results of this stage, but there is room for improvement here. Scott could definitely practice off-hand shooting more, but even with more skill here, we wonder if wasting the time on these shots is a good plan or not with a heavy bolt gun. All our other positional shooting was good.

### Stage 4. Memory lane. 217 sec (240 sec par time)

The team starts by traversing a path with several military items on it. The team had to remember these items, and then cross a large river bed, climb up the other side and find and engage rifle targets as a team. Finally, once all 5 rifle targets were located and impacted, the team could use their pistol to engage targets on a board which represented the items they found on their hike in.

Andy and Scott moved down the path, each taking one side, and identified their items – a gas mask, radio handset, backpack, flak vest, and canteen. As we moved through the stage, we took turns reciting the items to each other, to build them into memory. We used the rope to help us climb out of the river bed, and Scott build a rifle position on the hood of a truck while Andy set up his Fury 5000s on the tripod.

The stage brief was a bit confusing, calling out the targets as needing to shot "Right to Left, Near to Far", but in fact they needed to be shot as a mix between the two. Three targets were easily identifiable on the left of the range in a long cut, and two were hidden inside the treeline more the right. Andy did an excellent job of finding the targets and talking Scott on, and we put rounds down range. However, we had to make up several shots because Right to Left and Near to Far were not the same thing, and we had to guess which was right. Some targets were tough to range, and we just guessed and corrected, but this strategy worked out. As soon as we finished the rifle targets, Andy moved to the pistol shooting box, Scott grabbed the binoculars, and we worked out what targets Andy needed to shoot (which were sometimes hard to see with the naked eye). We cleaned this stage in 217 seconds.

The combination of a KIMS (Keep In Memory System) game and communications made this a fun stage – even if the rifle shooting was rather easy. Andy and Scott both communicated well, but if there was one thing we needed, it was just a little better faster comms, which comes with time practicing as a team. Andy's pistol shooting was spot on and this was yet another stage where simply being a good rifle shooter was not enough!

## **Stage 5. Sniper Employment. 240+60 penalty (240 sec par time)**

In the Sniper Employment stage brief, we were told there were multiple IPSC/torso targets on the range, one of which would provide a more “immediate threat” than the other. Shooting them out of order would be a penalty, and missing a shot - even if it was made-up - would be a penalty.

When we moved into the small hide we had trouble finding the left lateral limit, and we only found one torso target. Without any sign of it being an “immediate threat” we judged this was the second target, and decided not to shoot it because the penalties for missing were too severe if it was in fact the “second” target. We left the hide at 4:00 without taking a shot.

Afterwards, we found that the “immediate threat” target was not an IPSC, but a Ghillie suit blended into the scenery. Once you knew to look for it, it was rather obvious, but we were told to look for IPSC targets, and that’s what we were locked into finding.

Because of the size of the blind, and the fact that the Primary had to be the shooter, Scott went in first, but that left very little space for Andy to work from. Andy mentioned this, but maybe we should have swapped positions at that point – even if it meant Scott coming off his gun. This is a tough decision on a stage where we knew so little about how the stage would go, but for sure it was a communication failure.



## **Stage 6. Blow-Out 96 sec (180 sec par time)**

For this stage, the team would start in a sniper’s blind, and was compromised by danger-close targets. The team needed to exit the blind, and shoot pistol targets, bound back to more pistol targets, bound back again to more pistol targets, and then engage several rifle targets while kneeling offhand.

Scott exited the blind first, and managed to pull a muscle in his leg exiting, making his first pistol shots a little shaky, but he quickly gathered up and engaged his pistol targets. Andy got his as well. Then we bounded back twice, each time engaging more pistol targets. Our pistol shooting was fast and efficient – we were making good paced accurate shots, without rushing. When we both sat back and build a kneeling position, Andy went to a non-traditional rifle on knee position, and Scott went with a traditional elbow on knee position. Both of us went 2-for-2 on these targets, completing a fast, efficient, and clean run through this stage.

Like a few other stages, this one had a bit of a 3gun feel to it, but was a lot of fun to execute. We lost a few seconds here and there, but we were happy with our performance.

## **Stage 1. Talk-on. 202 sec (240 sec par time)**

In Talk-on, the team split up, moving to two different vehicles. The primary shooter had to work from the back of an SUV, and had to shoot off the provided tripod. The secondary found at their vehicle photos of the 5 faces, and the order in which they had to be shot. Each target downrange had a face next to it, and the secondary needed to communicate that to the primary via radio. Shooting even a single target out of order resulted in a zero for the stage, something we badly wanted to avoid.

Andy did a flawless job of ID’ing the targets and communicating them. In the prestage discussion, we decided we would take our time and talk back and forth on each target, confirming everything before each shot. Our goal was to shoot this clean – even if it took us a little longer to do it – to avoid a potentially disastrous zero for the stage. In the interest of taking a bit of extra time to be 100% sure of each target, Andy ran a Vortex Razor 20-60x spotting scope, to be able to fully see every detail on the targets. Scott’s Razor Gen III scope on 36x was also hugely valuable, as we heard from many other teams that they did not have the tools needed to see that targets well enough. Andy used target locations first, and facial characteristics as a second confirmation to make sure we were always on the same target. Before each shot, we would confirm an engage command, to make sure we were always working together.

As it turned out, we finished with 38 seconds left, and were less than 1 sec off the fastest time for this stage. We were happy to shoot it clean, and the speed was a nice bonus for us. Our communications both ways were good and efficient. Scott spent a few extra seconds securing his rifle in the hog saddle, and we definitely lost a bit of time confirming things each step of the way, but it was all time well spent. We made a plan and stuck to it here, and we both performed well.



## End of Day 1

At the end of Day 1, we found that we were in the lead by a significant margin. We had shot really well all day, and many other teams struggled on the same stage we did. It was still anyone's match, but if we did our job on Day #2, we would come away with win. But it was time to put that knowledge aside and shoot 4 more perfect stages.

We again met with Shannon and Jennifer over some "Tacos & Bla Bla Bla" to discuss each stage we shot, and then we reviewed the stage briefs for tomorrow.

## DAY 2

### Stage 10. The General. 93 sec (240 sec par time)

In The General, we had a scenario where we had 5 Marathon autonomous targets simulating a General and 4 guards. We knew the General would be dressed differently than the others. We also knew that once shots were fired, the General would attempt to flee, and failing to shoot him before he completed an Exfil would result in a zero.



At the buzzer, we entered the hide and set-up two positions sitting on tripods next to each other. We had decided we would do a quick scan to ID the general, and if we located him, we would start the engagement with a Simul-shot on the General to ensure he was down, and then we'd get the guards. But after about 20 seconds of scanning, we only saw two active targets, and they seemed to be dressed the same. Our game plan had to change. We quickly decided the general was not in view at the time, and we would each drop one of the slowly moving guards and then watch for the general to leave while shooting any other targets of opportunity.

Our first two shots both found their mark. Two guards dropped, and two other guards quickly appeared and started moving quite quickly. Without concern about who might be the general at this point, Andy started working on one, and Scott started shooting the other. Andy found his mark on his second target after a few shots, but Scott was struggling to get a bead on the erratically target on the top of the hill. As Scott was shooting, he noticed movement behind a vehicle that looked like a head, but that quickly retreated behind the car door. Andy moved to the top left target to clean up

what Scott left, and Scott sent one shot through the car door – finding it's mark on the hiding general, and ending the stage.

Situations like this are hard to prepare for, and that's one reason we love the Marathon Autonomous targets. We had targets that were reacting to our shots, and the downrange changes made our planning quickly fall apart – which simply meant we needed to communicate flawlessly to change our game plan, and we did exactly that. We both shot well here, and I really enjoyed the dynamic nature of this stage. I only wish I had the opportunity to shoot this type of mover more often. We were the 5<sup>th</sup> fastest team on this stage.

### Stage 7. Unknown Chaos. 126 sec (180 sec par time)

This stage was a speed shoot, but was anything but "Unknown". We all had the chance to view the targets before the stage started, so it felt again like a fast 3gun stage. On the buzzer, the first shooter would climb the stairs to a Conex container and engage 5 targets with 15 shots in a pre-arranged sequence. The first four targets were right under 100yds, and were in a row, maybe 30 yards apart. The far target was under 300yds. After the first shooter was complete, he kicked a traffic cone off the Conex indicating he was done, and the second shooter climbed the stairs and repeated the sequence.

Initially this was a 2-minute stage, but it was changed to 3 minutes. Scott probably let this stage get in his head a bit too much, but we pushed through, planned a strategy, and worked through it.

Scott moved up the stairs first, with a sandfill "Schmedium" Gamechanger bag and built a good position. Scott was a little jittery trying to rush a bit too much, but was connecting quickly with smooth shots. After about 8 shots, Scott had a "bolt-over mag failure, and had to work through it, costing a few extra seconds, but he did so with a mag change which was

(42) Overall Results		
Slade, & Whitehead ()		
1 / 100.00%		753.2192
Waite, & DeWitt ()		
2 / 93.13%		701.4685
Greytack, & Martland ()		
3 / 91.45%		688.8106
Jimmy Top, & Pending ()		
4 / 91.03%		685.6253
Livingston, & Sherve ()		
5 / 90.31%		680.2392 <b>1</b>

going to be necessary anyway to complete the stage. Scott finished up quickly and got the cone down after going 15-for-15. Andy came up the stairs and was smoother, but dropped one shot at the far target, and also had a mag issue. To work through the mag issue he dropped his mag, and Scott quickly inserted the next one, saving a few valuable seconds. Andy finished up dropping only one shot.

Although there was a little mental failure on Scott's part here to shoot without emotion, we got through this stage very well, with good quick shooting and no major mistakes. But it goes to show that neither of us is above equipment issues, and I think we both worked through it as quickly as possible. Without those, we might have put down an absolutely blazing run. For Scott's part, he learned that cleaning the ARC (American Rifle Company) mags every night is simple required, and some feed lip and spring tuning is going to be in order.

### **Stage 8. Big & Small. 110 sec (240 sec par time)**

Big & Small was a PRS stage. We got to see the positions and the targets ahead of time, so we both had a good developed game plan. The primary shooter would start by moving to a pile of logs and shooting two targets ("Big" & "Small") at about 250 yards. Then move to the rocks and do the same thing. Then repeat that on a rooftop simulator, and then a metal grate. Then, when he was clear, the secondary had to do the same thing. This stage was all about quick movement, quick position building, and breaking clean shots.



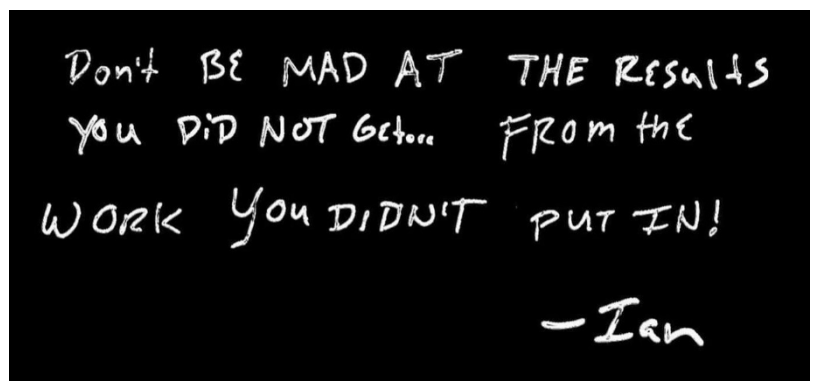
Scott started, using only a Schmedium on a Grey Ops plate on each position. Scott ran through the stage clean, and then Andy very quickly did the same. At this point we both knew we were in the hunt to hold onto the win, and I think we were both focused on smooth runs, not record-breaking times. We had some good discussions about our strategy here, but we both basically shot this as individuals, and we both did what we needed to do here.

### **Stage 9. Ambush. 196 sec (240 sec par time)**

Ambush seemed like a rather easy stage. We each needed to impact three specific targets among a sea of targets downrange, and we each had 10 shots to do it. We had to alternate these impacts, and these were some of farthest shots of the match.

With one stage to go, what we needed to do was not make a huge mistake, and we came frighteningly close to doing that. We initially had a discussion to ID the targets, and we did not communicate well enough - and we ended up misinterpreting what the "middle" target was and we didn't know it. We discussed the starting range, and Scott took his first shots, missing his initial wind call by quite a bit. After two corrections ending in a .5L call (a surprise given the visible mirage), we realized the embarrassing mistake - we had dialed "close" to the dope we needed based on a guess, but Scott did not go back and fix the elevation to the correct range after we called it out, and the shots were all low but close enough to be believable (Mental Mistake #1). For his 4<sup>th</sup> shot, Scott fixed his dope, but went back to his initial wind call (Straight Up), which was Mental Mistake #2. On his 6<sup>th</sup> shot he connected with his first target, and luckily had the presence of mind to communicate his wind call to Andy. Further on in this stage, we had another issue with the closer target, in which Andy ID'ed and ranged the wrong target, but we quickly recovered from that mistake as well.

We ended up cleaning the stage in 196 seconds, but mistakes were made throughout. Rather than being in the same mindset, we had several distractions before the stage started (Leaving bins on the previous stage, getting distracted in side conversations, letting the "don't blow your lead" mindset sneak in, etc.) and that mindset clearly cost us. We both made mistakes here that were preventable. Luckily, we worked through them, and it didn't cost us too much. But this is a stage that justifies some hard self-assessment. Shooting stages needs to be done without emotion, and the emotion got in the way on this stage.





## Results, Lessons Learned and Things Done Well



We lost a little ground on Day 2, but we still came away with the win by a significant margin. We were thrilled to take the win among such a talented field of shooters.

### Things Done Right

- Andy's beard. Definitely something "done right".
- We both came prepared with good equipment. Both weapon systems were dialed in, with good zeros, good data, and good data cards.
- The rest of our gear was similarly well prepared. Both pistols were great. Our Vortex optics were consistent and reliable, from our Razor Gen III rifle scopes, to our Fury 5000 LRF binoculars. You simply can't shoot matches like this competitively without great gear.
- We had several small gear decisions that paid off. Scott decided to bring his heavy sand-filled bag, which was definitely the right decision in hind sight. We decided to have our Razor spotting scope available, which really helped on the Talk-On stage. Andy prepared an iWatch with a great timer app, which helped us several times. And Scott's magnet add-on to his KRG C4 chassis saved a few valuable seconds several times. We had no way of knowing exactly how these gear decisions would play out, but we made good ones and benefitted from them.
- We ate, drank, slept, and planned. We ate well, drank lots leading up to and during the match, got good sleep, and planned every aspect of our weekend. That physical and mental preparation lead to good mental alertness and flexibility.

### Things to do better

- Our communication was good, but not perfect. Although we had some time to get used to working together, it's not a substitute for shooting with the same partner over and over again, and knowing and trusting them 100%. When Andy suggested he was having issues seeing downrange, Scott should have moved immediately. But Andy didn't know Scott well enough to just TELL Scott to get out of the way, and Scott didn't know Andy well enough to interpret his comments and just DO IT. Spending more time shooting together would help us work through this. When all the teams can shoot well, trust and communication can win matches.
- Keep building the mental game. Our fragility on the last stage of the match shows that while we're getting better at this, we're not there yet. Our communications got sloppy when we started making mistakes because we were not mentally bullet-proof. This has to go away.

## Summary

We had a great time shooting this match, and it was fun seeing so many friends and great teams. We especially want to thank the sponsors who put our prizes on the prize table, including Daniel Defense (<https://danieldefense.com/>) and AGM Global (<https://www.agmglobalvision.com/>).



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