

BEST TARGETS

BEST Targets Shooting Team After Action Report (AAR)

Event: 2020 Snipers Unknown Challenge
Date: October 23-25, 2020
Location: Government Training Institute (GTI), Barnwell, SC
Websites: <https://snipersunknown.com/> <https://gtitraining.org/>

Shooter: Joe Burdick
Rifle: Barnes Machine AR15, Krieger Custom Barrel
Ammo: .223 Handloads, 77gr SMK, 8208xbr powder
Gear: Vortex Razor Gen II 4.5-27 Scope, Badger Scope Mount, Kahntrol Solutions brake, Ckye-Pod bipod
Vortex Razor 4000 Laser Range Finder, Cole-Tac & Reasor Precision shooting bags
Sig-Sauer P320 X5 handgun, Vortex Venom red-dot, Comp-Tac holster w/ QLS, 147gr FMJ handloads
Eberlestock Lo-Drag pack, Rock Solid Shooting Solutions (RS3) rifle cover.

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, Cole-Tac "Cheat Sheet" data holder.
CZ P10F handgun, Vortex Venom red-dot, Safariland holster w/ QLS, Federal Syntech ammunition
Eberlestock LoDrag pack, Rock Solid Shooting Solutions (RS3) rifle cover.

Event & Facility Notes

The Snipers Unknown Challenge match is a relatively new match which started in 2018 in response to the surge of team-based blind-stage field matches such as the Mammoth Sniper Challenge and Vortex Team Sniper Challenge. This year they moved the event to the Government Training Institute (GTI) in Barnwell, SC. GTI is a former nuclear facility which was completed but never "fueled" with active nuclear material and later purchased by it's current owners to be used as a training facility.

The facility offers things that no other place in the country offers – a massive live-fire industrial complex with every sort of challenge. The facility can handle CQB all the way to long-range and high-angle shooting and hosts quite a bit of LEO / SWAT and military sniper training.



Pre-Match

We arrived on Friday with the intent of having a relaxing day to get settled and go through our gear one last time. For matches like this, it's important for each shooter to be familiar with what both shooters are carrying and where and it's also important to discuss all sorts of contingencies and plans. So after we arrived, we checked in, spent a little time at the zero range, did a little last-minute pistol practice and then went to the room to pack.

After some confusion about the morning start-time and waiting for a few shooters who needed to zero on Saturday morning, we had a very short morning brief and we were off to shoot our first stages of the day. The plan was to shoot 6 stages on Saturday, each about 5 minutes long. We did not know anything else about the challenges in front of us.

Stage 2 – DEPTH



The first stage required the teams to move into a room they were not familiar with and take up a position on a raised platform to locate and shoot 6 targets. Like most stages in this match, no prone positions were allowed. Unlike many PRS/NRL competitions, we had no chance to assess the positions of the targets or the shooting position, so we discussed some possibilities, got our gear ready and took up our starting position.

The platform was a metal grate floor, which made tripod use very tough, but both quickly found a stable position and started looking for targets. Joe worked off the pipe railing using a tripod as rear support and Scott worked off the corner of the pipe railing using the side railing for rear support. There were six targets, ranging from about 150yds to 500 yds, and each shooter could take three shots at each. You had to shoot “near to far” and once you left a target you could not return to it.

We quickly found 5 targets and estimated that they were T1, T2, T4, T5, and T6. We each hit T1 with three shots and T2 with three shots and spent the next two minutes or so looking for T3. The stage brief led us to believe we had to find T3, but after time expired, we were told we could have skipped T3 and moved on to T4, T5, and T6 which would have been a much better strategy. A combination of a poor stage brief and us not thinking to stop and ask the question cost us our single biggest points loss of the match first thing in the morning. (12pts / 36pts max)

Several teams skipped rounds off the horizontal I-Beam forward of the firing position. Not paying attention to muzzle position would be costly for many teams this match. Luckily, no one hit the I-Beam squarely, which may have deflected rounds back into the room – a potential safety issue.

Stage 3 – URBAN ROOM

This stage was a huge 6th floor industrial room with only a pile of furniture and other objects to build a position from. You could use any gear you brought, but no bipods and no prone. Targets were outside a huge “window” (more like a missing wall) between two compass azimuths we were given, and we had 3 shots per shooter, per target.

When we got to the position after the start buzzer we elected to ignore all the furniture and build two seated tripod positions. This worked very well and we quickly found most of the targets. We fired a total of 33 rounds and scored 29 points, one of the highest scores of any team on this stage. I think we timed out here, and one of us didn't find one of the targets. (29pts / 36pts max)



Unfortunately, a series of miscommunications, target failures, and mis-routed teams led to a very long delay in the day here. We finished stage 3 at about 11:30am and it was nearly 5 hours before we took our first shot at the next stage. This led to a lot of frustration within our squad and a lack of food and water compounded that.

Stage 4 – CONVOY



From the roof of the tallest building in the complex, shooters needed to locate and engage targets in and around cars on the road below. Ranges were between 450 and 500 and the exact number of targets was not known. Because of the location of the cars, we knew we were going to need to shoot from two different positions on the rooftop.

Our first position was with Scott seated, shooting with his KRG Whiskey-3 rifle chassis clipped into a carbon tripod, and with Joe shooting off the rail behind / over Scott. We found three targets at the first car and after a quick wind adjustment we hammered on all three targets. We then moved to vehicle #2, which we knew we could see from either position, and located and engaged one target with several hits.

To see the third car, we needed to move. At the other position on the roof Scott again shot seated and Joe switched a standing tripod position. We located and engaged two more targets with three shots each. We spent the rest of the stage time scanning both vehicles we could see, looking for more targets, but learned we had found every target. We had a few more misses than we wanted, but we had a good cadence and good communication here. (27pts / 36pts max)

Just as important, we didn't make any mistakes here. We had good solid position in each location - lots of shooters struggled with that because they didn't know their gear well enough. Several teams shot the railing, effectively getting a stage DQ. Once again being aware of our height over bore we avoided that. And finally, several teams made mistakes as simple as resting the barrel on the railing or shooting the targets out of order. Avoiding these kinds of mistakes is the way to consistent performance and that consistency helps us finish at our best.



Stage 5 – HIGH ANGLE



At the top section of the same roof, we were told there were 6 targets ranging from 50 to 1300 yards. The two closest targets HAD to be hit to move on. Once again, we were not allowed any prone or bipod use.

When we ran up to the shooting position the two closest targets were very close and quite easy. We had discussed a plan to set-up a tripod to get hits on those targets but as soon as we moved up we realized these targets did not justify that and we just shot them off the railing. We cleaned both targets rapidly with no lost time between last shot from Scott and first shot from Joe. The rest of the targets were well hidden and we miss-identified one target as it appeared black and therefore out of play. We actually used it as a TRP location in wide open field as a reference point to talk each other on to nearby target. L to R wind was

tough and all but one of our 6 shots missed to the right. The 1300-yard targets were painted orange but we chose to concentrate on higher percentage near targets as we could not assume a more stable prone position and we never found quite a few of the targets here. (13pts / 36pts max)

Stage 1 – HUSTLE

This stage was our first to incorporate pistol and we were anxious to make gains from our practice with a slower, more controlled pistol shooting pace. We had to run to one room, where we engaged 4 pistol targets 4 floors below us, then run to a balcony which we had not seen yet, locate 3 rifle targets and engage them.

We hit approximately 20 of our 24 alternating pistol shots, which we were happy with, and moved to the balcony – a very small platform on a roof which did not give either of us room to work AND with a janky pipe run across and down platform making any position difficult. Joe got low and Scott straddled him with a tripod shooting standing. We did a good job finding targets, ranging them with our Vortex Fury 5000 LRF, and hitting them but Joe could not find one target. We applied the lesson we learned from our previous failure to continue to targets we could both clearly see. As it turns out the missing target could not be seen from a low position. We missed 3 points on the target Joe could not see but collected 6 more making hits on one we both could identify. We need to realize that when one guy is not finding a target the other clearly sees it is probably due to an obstruction and a decisive position change is recommended. (34pts / 42pts max)



Stage 6 – SCRAMBLE



Stage 6 was supposed to shot on Saturday but the delays pushed this stage to Sunday. On this stage the team started by climbing a long staircase on the side of a building and quickly engaging a rifle target from the angled railing. After each shooter engaged it, both shooters moved to the far side of the roof to engage a set of 4 pistol targets for 1 hit per plate, per shooter. Finally, the shooters returned to the near side of the roof and built a position on some large HVAC piping to engage 4 rifle targets with up to 3 shots per shooter.

The 220-yard shot from the railing proved easy, and we moved up to the pistol targets. These were plates hanging about 3 stories below us that were hanging straight by chains - which to us was an extreme angle making them even smaller. We had unlimited pistol rounds to

make these hits and we did miss several shots but we collected all the hits on these targets and moved to the pipes.

The position from the pipes was very tight and uncomfortable. There was very little space and with each shot the insulation from the pipes blasted up and got in your face. We dropped several shots here and timed out without ever finding one of the targets but we were able to secure 9 of the 24 points available at this last position. (22pts / 38pts max)

Stage 8 – RELIEF IN PLACE

Several stages were removed from the match and we still had two of the original Sunday stages to shoot. The first of these was "Relief In Place". We started down a hill and had to run up to a pistol barricade and each make 5 pistol shots on small popper targets. All these targets HAD to be hit to move on. Then we would have to move to a position around the corner of the building to engage rifle targets.

With no threat of running out of shots we both shot these pistol targets too quickly, and missed too much, costing us some time. After moving to the table, we asked if we could stand it up and we were told we could not.

We struggled on these rifle targets. Several were obscured by branches and brush, meaning it was nearly impossible to get a good range. The wind was moving quickly and through the brush it was hard to spot misses. We were not able to get any rifle hits in this stage losing lots of valuable ground to the leaders. (10pts / 28pts max)



Stage 7 – AMBUSH

The final stage was the easiest, but also maybe the most stressful. Both shooters started buckled into a passenger van with their gear in the back. On the buzzer, shooters needed to climb out of the seats and into the back of the van, dispatch two pistol targets and then each secure one hit on hostage target with a single shot. Rifle shots were worth 10 pts, ten times as much as any other shot in the match, and ANY rifle miss would secure a ZERO for the stage. The shots were easy, but the stress was real.

We agreed to crossover when we climbed in back, preventing the van doors possibly getting in the way of our pistol shooting, and we quickly hit both pistol targets. We then ranged and shot

both hostage targets, at 180yds & 288 yards, to clean the stage. Interestingly, many teams had issues ranging these targets, getting a ~410yd reading from the trees behind. (22pts / 22pts max).



Things Done Well

We definitely wanted to do a little better at this match than we did, but we can't be completely disappointed. We shot well with both pistol and rifle, worked well as a team and our experience and preparation paid off.

Based on lessons from the Mammoth Sniper Challenge earlier in the year, we decided on and "froze" the configuration of our rifles much earlier this year and that helped us. Both of our rifles ran well and shot well all weekend and our dope was spot on. We gave up some points by choosing to use a .223 rifle for the Secondary shooter but this decision was made to keep our rifle pairing the same throughout the winter team-match season. Both of our pistols also ran well and our commitment to practicing a slower more deliberate style of pistol shooting also paid off with fewer lost pistol points.

Results & Lessons Learned

We need to keep working on our ability to find and range targets. Learning more about the many modes of the Vortex Fury 5000 LRFs will certainly help us because we failed to use that functionality when we should have.

Despite our experience, we still made a few mental mistakes. Being even more conscious of the details of the stage brief will always help us avoid mental mistakes.

Summary

We were very happy to finish 5th place in the 2020 Snipers Unknown Challenge. This match is an important practice opportunity for us. We had some successes and some failures but we are now even better prepared for our next match. We'll be back to GTI in only a few weeks for the Guardian Long Range Team Match!

[facebook.com/BestTargets](https://www.facebook.com/BestTargets)
www.beststeeltargets.com