

BEST TARGETS

BEST Targets Shooting Team After Action Report (AAR)

Event: Precision Rifle Series – Steel City Precision Rifle Challenge
Date: November 12-13, 2016
Location: National Security Associates, Cusseta, GA
Websites: www.precisionrifleseries.com
www.teamnsa.com

Shooter: Scott Whitehead w/ David Cape
Rifle: Stiller Action / Hawk Hill Barrel / KRG X-Ray Chassis Rifle in 6.5 Creedmoor by Clowdis Precision
Ammo: Custom Reloads, Lot #10c, Berger 140gr Hybrids, Wolf LR-M Primers, 42.6gr H4350 Powder
Gear: Vortex Razor AMG, Harris BiPod w/ Kahntrol Pod-Mod Adapters, Wiebad & Reasor Precision Bags

Facility Notes

National Security Associates is a military training facility located adjacent to Fort Benning. The 700 acre complex is complete with ranges equipped to do all sorts of firearms and explosives training and even an extensive tank maneuvering / firing range. The facilities, especially the shoot-houses and the urban structures that were available at this match, certainly added a great amount to the match as a whole.

Event Format

The Steel City Precision Rifle Challenge was run like a “field course” PRS match. There were numerous locations on the grounds where stages would be held. Shooters had to move from location to location during the course of the two days.

The Match

Our squad started on Stage 1, NEW HEAVY BREECH. This was a blind stage. All we knew is that there were 4 targets hidden among several buildings and that once we got to the firing position we needed to build a position, shoot all four targets, move to another position and shoot all four targets again. We were the first to shoot this stage and the RO suggested to me that one position needed to be kneeling and one needed to be standing. While he didn't intend this to be a hard rule I misinterpreted it as such and shot 4 shots from a kneeling position off a barricade made from fallen trees and 4 from a standing position using a tree branch for support. I scored 6 hits total out of 8. Unfortunately, just after I shot, it was clarified to us that any position was okay within the shooting area and most guys sat for their first four shots, moved laterally just a few inches to qualify as being in a new position, then shot them again without ever breaking their position. I'm sure I could have done better if I had done this. Oh well.

For HOSTAGE HARD COVER HUSTLE we shot from the exact same shooting position at hostage targets at 366 yards. This time I sat, using the fallen trees as support, and was MUCH more stable. Hits on the hostage were a deduction in points and every miss or hostage hit meant you needed to “move positions”. Having learned from the last stage, I now knew this meant I had to scoot my butt about one inch and keep shooting. I scored 8 hits – the stage maximum score – in 9 shots.





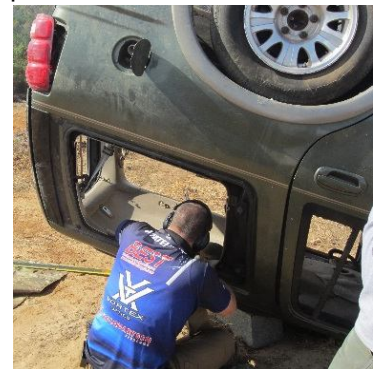
Stage 3 was BODY ARMOR DRILL. From a prone position, we had to engage 5 targets which each had a torso and head target area. On each target we had to first hit the body, then the head, then move on to the next target. The ranges were 232, 325, 387, 474, and 579 yards. I cleaned this stage with 10 hits in 10 shots holding no wind even though there was a few crossing winds around us.

Stage 4, BARRICADES AND BUNKERS, was a pretty straight forward barricade stage. Three targets inside buildings at 358, 458, and 582 yards had to be engaged three times each from three positions on the barricade. I tried to get fancy and use a tripod for rear support, but this hurt me. I didn't pay attention to my front support and I didn't notice the gun was resting on nothing but the rear position bipod stud and rocking on it. I thought it was a poor rear grip on the tripod but it was not. I only took 4 points away from this stage out of a

possible 9. I should have shot this stage more straight-up rather than getting fancy. I know using a rear tripod support at a barricade is a more stable way to shoot this position but I need to carve out enough time to practice it rather than try it in a match for the first time.



Stage 5 was UKD – [nearly] my biggest catastrophe of the match. The targets were downrange, of unknown distance, and you had 10 shots to hit each one up to three times for up to 9 points. Shooting position was prone and there were no other complicating factors to the stage. I ran this stage, and literally scored 0 - ZERO. By six shots in I had already decided to use my mulligan on this stage and re-shoot it so I was just trying to see some shots. I simply could NOT get a wind call. When I re-shot it I scored 6 points – a well spent mulligan. After the stage was over I estimated that the targets were at 765, 810 and 880 yards.



Stage 6, UNDER ASSAULT, had 8 targets from 870 yards all the way back to 235 yards. The first five targets were engaged prone and the next three were engaged through an overturned vehicle from a very awkward position. With only 10 shots for 8 targets I had to make sure I didn't waste lots of shots at the far targets – and end up leaving myself nothing for the closer easier, targets. The prone position was good and I found a stable position inside the SUV window using a bipod and rear bag. With a renewed focus from my humbling last stage, I cleaned this stage with a near perfect performance.



The next two stages were shot across a large valley very similar to the valley at Rockcastle that foils so many wind calls. Stage 7, COUNTER SNIPER, involved three pairs of "sniper" targets at 946, 950 and 969 yards shot from an elevated "hide" platform. With a wind call just above 1.0 mils right, I made contact three times in 10 shots – disappointing, but about average for our squad.

Just a few feet away we shot at one of the previous targets off a car in IED AMBUSH. The shooter had to move positions between the hood, roof and trunk between each shot. Most people only got off 4 or 5 shots at most. The changing of positions and the challenge of getting the rifle level on these various platforms made this stage really tough at such a long range. I scored a zero on this stage getting confused on wind calls. I did not shoot this stage well at all.

Stage 10 – TRIPOD SKILLS 2, (which was shot before Stage 9) was a simple tripod stage with 5 targets that needed 2 hits each at 305, 415, 415, 460 and 505 yards. I borrowed an RRS tripod from Brian Dennis to shoot this stage, using the RRS VYCE clamp to attach to my KRG chassis, and I sat with a Wiebad pillow under my arm. This position was super stable – far more stable than my tripod would have been. I scored 9 hits in 10 shots and my only miss was a wind miss which gave me a wind call for the rest of the shots. Most other shooters who used a high end tripod scored very well here while shooters who used other tripods struggled. Interestingly, I held the bipod leg with my support hand to control elevation against the tension of the tripod. I'm not sure if this is the best way to do this but it worked.



Stage 9 was another TRIPOD SKILLS stage. In this stage you were shown three different “sniper” targets on a piece of paper and the order they needed to be shot. You had to memorize these and the first and second were VERY similar. Without seeing the shooting position, the buzzer went off and you needed to advance, find the targets, shoot them from a standing tripod position in the correct order and then neutralize three pistol targets. As soon as I started I had a magazine feed malfunction and ended up dropping the magazine and going to my backup mag. When I started scanning for targets, I found a target that might have been the first or second target. With no point loss for shooting the wrong target I engaged and hit it but the RO said “out of order”. Good, I got the information I needed. I found the first target, hit it, hit the second target again and then hit the third target. I switched to pistol and easily hit the three pistol targets. I scored the stage max 9 points with only one “miss”. Excellent. Again, even standing, the RRS tripod was super stable.

Stage 11 was the first of four stages in a small MOU (Military Operations on Urban Terrain) village. The KIMS SHOOTHOUSE was a pistol-only stage. After gearing up with a helmet, eye pro and a plate carrier, each shooter had to move through the live-fire shoot-house and engage targets that ranged from 1 yard to about 20 yards. You had 90 seconds to clear the entire complex – with one twist. At the end of the stage you had to write down all of the “items of value” you saw, each with one “descriptor”. Each KIMS item was worth one point with a good descriptor and target misses were a loss of one point. I had a clean stage here, engaging all the targets, and I remembered seven KIMS items – an outstanding score for this stage. My keywords included “Loaded RPG, Black SKS Rifle, ‘I love ISIS’ Laptop, Silver camcorder, Wood-handled revolver, etc...” Gearing up and shooting in this environment was enough fun that it was easy to enjoy yourself and lose the task at hand and lots of shooters did this. This was a really fun stage.

In the next shoothouse, Stage 12, SHOOTHOUSE 2 was similar to the previous stage but you started with a carbine and switched to your secondary (pistol) as soon as you ran out of ammo. There were no KIMS items in this stage, it was just run-n-gun! This was another fun and memorable stage. Even though two stages in a row didn't even employ my “Precision Rifle”, I think the Steel City crew did a FANTASTIC job of integrating stages in the match that were fun, unique, and took advantage of the facilities without making them stages which had a huge influence on the final score.

Stage 13, BREAK CONTACT, was probably the most complex stage of the match and required every bit of “Mental Management” that Lanny Basham has to offer. From the starting position, you had to climb two staircases to the first shooting position where you engaged three torsos through a window at about 350 yards. When you were done, you picked up your gear and military ammo can full of rocks that you needed to carry through the rest of the stage. We went down a flight of stairs to a second position that required two shots on a small torso at 100 yards standing offhand. The third position called for three shots at the three 350 yard torsos and then it was down another flight of stairs to two final shots off a railing at the 100 yard target. It was a lot to do in the 2 minute time limit and the last two shots were easy, so getting to them was critical, but what was perhaps most important was the ammo can. If you didn't carry it to each station and have it with you at the end of the stage you scored a ZERO. I ran through the stage smoothly, thanks to lots of mental rehearsals, and only missed my two standing offhand shots. An 8 out of 10 was a good score for this stage, and I still had the ammo can with me - Phew! I really enjoy super-fast, dynamic stages like this. This was a lot of fun.



Stage 14 – CLEAR THE COURTYARD was another fun dynamic stage. Starting outside the courtyard, you had to enter and engage all the steel pistol targets on your way to a final firing position (FFP). When you got there, we had to engage three targets any way you wanted using a ladder for support. Our squad (like most others I'm sure) found a small clear lane in the grass and most of us shot this stage prone. These shots were easy and most people cleaned this stage but it was another fun, dynamic stage in the MOUT village.



Stage 15 – The ACCU-SHOT challenge is the traditional playing card challenge, this time it was worth 5 points and it was the first of 3 paper stages. Shooters were allowed to pre-place their rifle, but had to back away from it, and had only a few seconds (less than 10) to get behind their rifle and break the shot. Although I pulled the shot a bit, I easily got the points.

The next stage, 1 MOA OR BETTER was a paper stage that started with a minute of jumping jacks and a 100 yard run. After that, you had 45 seconds to break 6 shots at a circle and a square, each 1". The entire squad shot this together so dealing with your neighbors muzzle blast was a key factor. I had landed 5 of my 6 shots. I pulled due to a shot blast next to me. My zero proved to be a bit high and right.

The final paper stage, POSITIONAL RIFLE SKILLS, was a 60 second stage with two shots each standing, sitting, and prone at a target 75 yards away. The only support allowed was a sling (including no bipod while prone!). I connected with all of the shots except my very first shot standing. I had one of the highest scores in my squad on the three paper stages.



The next two stages were PRS skills stages - and the wheels came off. Stage 18, PRS SKILLS STAGE 3, was an 8-shot target array of rather small targets at 326 and 505 yards and I was only able to connect on the very first shot. The second shot at 505 yards simply eluded me – with the berm being hard to “read” wind calls on and a switchy wind.

Stage 19, PRS SKILLS STAGE 4, was more of the same. Four targets from 326 yards to 556 yards had to be engaged once each then we had to move to a position about 10 yards back to retrieve another magazine and engage each target again. In a very generous 90 seconds I only got 4 hits. It was another miserable performance. After this stage I asked the RO where my misses had gone and he said I was almost always low on both of the last two stages. I have no idea why.

The very last stage, OH SNAP!, was another standing offhand shooting stage. Starting prone with a stage gun, two shots were taken at a close plate then you had to retrieve and load your own gun and take five more shots standing off-hand. I connected with 2 out of 5 shots standing for 4 points.

Results & Lessons Learned

I finished 26th out of 108 shooters – a performance I was very happy with. Some mental mistakes and some areas of weakness held me back from doing better, and there are a lot of take-aways from this match, including several things we know I need to work on in practice:

- Overall, I shot very well. My barricade work continues to be a weak point for me. I need to practice various methods and have more confidence in what methods work for me and my weapons system. (#4)
- While the AICS magazines have greatly improved the situation, I still have occasional feed issues and it's almost always the first round of a magazine. (#9)
- The elevation problems I had I simply cannot explain. My DOPE was on all weekend. After the match I checked zero and chrono and both were a bit off but not nearly enough to explain this. (#18 and #19)
- My offhand shooting was decent this match but it still needs work and I have the perfect resources to practice it.
- Consistency wins matches. Just a few points from the three major melt-down stages I had would have put me in the top-10.

Summary

I have to go out of my way to congratulate the match organizers. This was an outstanding match at a great facility and they made great use of everything they had available to them. The match was challenging, fun and had lots of twists and turns. Overall, it was one of my favorite matches I've shot lately. Our squad was great to shoot with and we had a great time. I'll be back to Steel City in 2017 – that's for sure.

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