

BEST TARGETS

BEST Targets Shooting Team After Action Report (AAR)

Event: Big Dog Steel TNPRM
Date: December 5, 2015
Location: Cookeville, TN
Websites: www.bigdogsteel.com
Shooter: Scott Whitehead (with Chris Andrews)
Rifle: Stiller Action / Brux Barrel / KRG X-Ray Chassis Rifle in 6.5 Creedmoor by Clowdis Precision
Ammo: 6.5 Creedmoor Handloads. Berger 140 Hybrids, 42.5gr H4350, Lot R7c
Gear: Vortex PST 6-24x, TPS Rings, Harris BiPod w/ Kahntrol Pod-Mod Adapters, Wiebad Bags

Facility Notes

This was the first annual Big Dog Steel TNPRM. Cookeville, TN was nearly a five hour drive from Charlotte, NC but it was an easy, all interstate trip. The event wasn't held at a shooting club or a private/public range – instead the stages were spread across a huge cattle farm that allowed for plenty of range and shooting position possibilities.

Event Format

Ryan Brandt from Big Dog Steel hosted this match, and Chris and I decided it was a perfect fit into our calendar. The match was originally scheduled for two days, but it was changed to a compressed one day format. This ended up affecting some stages, but it was definitely a good decision from Ryan.



In the first stage, BUS TO BUS, we started by moving into a bus to build a position to shoot about 100 yards into another bus. Then we had to move to a nearby barn, and build a position off a fence to shoot at several gongs 322 yds away through a loophole in the barn hole wall. As I built my position and ran the bolt in the bus, I sent a shot earlier than I intended and missed, but hit the next two shots, and missed my last one. In the fence position, there was a wall right behind you, forcing the rifle to be much farther forward on the fence that was ideal. I ended up having the fence post (from memory) just in front of the magazine, and I think this was causing problems for me because any forward loading would push the magazine out of position and push it back into the mag release, resulting in two magazines on the ground by the end of the stage. I hit 5 out of 6 shots in this position, but the whole stage made me feel sloppy – like I had never handled a gun before. I ended up with a score of 7 on this stage, but

between early shots and dropped magazines, I had to clean up my game quite a bit.

On the second stage, BARRICADE BLITZ, there were three multi-tiered barricades leading to a target 350 yards away. Shooters had to start by taking two shots from the first position on the first barricade, then move to the second position on the first barricade and take two more shots, and then run the 2nd and 3rd barricades and repeat. Positions ranged from a very slow twisted sitting (similar to how I shoot a blue barrel on it's side) to a very high kneeling position. After missing the very first two shots, I was able to finish with 9 hits out of 12 shots – a very good score.





The third stage, **TARGETS IN THE OPEN**, ended up being dropped in the final standings, but was still a fun stage and a very good learning experience. On this stage, you had to locate and shoot at six targets in a clearing below us, with two shots each. There was a lot of confusion here about what order to shoot the targets in, and some of the targets already had a lot of the paint shot off them and were hidden in the tree line, making them hard to locate even when you were looking right at them. Also complicating the stage was the rule that you only scored points if you hit the target with **BOTH** shots you engaged it with. I was able to locate the first four targets with little issue, and I hit each one with

both shots. Then I started looking for the fifth target. I located the stand it was hanging on, but even though I was staring right at it, I could not see it. I caught a glint of light colored metal, and sent two shots at it knowing I had very little time left. I hit whatever I was shooting at, but it wasn't the target, it was the bracket on the stand. Oh well! I ended with 8 points out of a possible 12, even though the stage didn't count toward the final score.

The next stage, **ACROSS THE POND**, was a sort of **KYL** stage with gongs ranging from 12" to 6" at 615 yards. Shooters had 9 rounds to engage any target they wanted, with target values ranging from 0.5pts to 2.0pts. A clear boiling mirage up and to the right gave away the downrange wind, and I connected with several shots holding from 0.6 to 0.8 mils left. I didn't do as well as I would have liked, but I did walk away with 7.5 points on this stage.

ON THE RUN was a stage with three barricades lined up. The shooter had to move to the first barricade, shoot a single target at 416 yards with two shots, then move to the other two and do the same thing. Once that target has been engaged twice from each barricade, then move to the other position on the last barricade and shoot a closer target (222 yds) and work your way back to the first barricade. A total of 12 shots were taken if time didn't run out, and I managed to get 7 hits. This was another stage I didn't feel too good about, but I shot it at least as well as most others around me. Still, these shots were not hard.



The final stage of the morning was **SHUFFLE ON THE DECK**. Two targets at 1010 yds and 1086 yards were set out, and you had to alternate two shots at each until the 12 shot limit was reached. Time limit was 90 seconds, so you have time, but you had to keep moving. After seeing one of my misses, I got a reading on the wind, and connected with a total of 5 shots out of 12 with wind calls between 0.5 and 0.9 miles left. This was a decent score on the stage, and I was pretty happy with it.



We started the afternoon with **LONG WAY AROUND**. This was a prone stage with a variety of targets hung in front of us. You had 11 shots, and had to hit each of the first four targets before finishing with any remaining rounds on the fifth target. I had trouble with the first two small targets at 255 yds and 360 yds – and had to hold high on both to connect – which was odd. The next two targets, **IPSC** torsos at 660 yds and 720 yds were not an issue with center holds due to the lack of wind. I ended up with 6 points of out 11 shots, and I was behind the curve to several shooters in my squad on this stage. Why I had to hold high on both the spinners, I don't know.

In **WEAK STEP**, you had to alternate between two barricades with three positions on each. The catch was when you shot the right barricade, you could shoot strong side, and when you shot the left barricade, you had to shoot completely weak side (weak shoulder, eye, and trigger). Had someone offered me six points on this stage, I probably would have taken it. All the shots were on a single target 310 yds away. Shooting right into the sun as it set only made this tougher. After the buzzer I got two quick hits on the first barricade's lowest position with the strong side, and moved to the weak side. I concentrated on building the exact same position in reverse, got somewhat stable and **CONNECTED WITH BOTH SHOTS**. I was elated as I moved back the strong side barricade's middle position. At the second position I hit twice, and moved back to the weak side barricade. I remember thinking that I had to do the same thing – build the mirror image of my previous position. I took a bit more time on these shots, and continued a perfect track record. At this point, I was 8-for-8 and was absolutely thrilled, but I knew time was running out. I shot two shots from the highest position on the strong side barricade and hit both, and rushed to get to the weak side barricade. Knowing I only had a few seconds left, I rushed two more shots, and didn't connect with them, but I was thrilled to have scored 10 out of 12 points. I think this was the best score of any shooter on this stage, and it was a highlight.



CAUGHT IN THE OPEN was shot from a very nice barricade that included angled sides and a ladder in the middle, with seven shooting positions and seven possible points on a target 310 yds away. There was confusion about how to shoot this, and I scored 6 points out of a possible 7 on this stage. The biggest challenge on this stage was the blinding sun right in our eyes. I changed over a Boonie hat in my bag, and I continue to find that the most important part of my sun plan is that hat to block out light getting between my scope and my eyes. I played with a sunshade and partially covering the end of my scope, and nothing made my situation better like the Boonie hat.

The final two stages were both prone stages shot in failing sunlight. LONG RANGE MASSA was a stage 5 targets to be engaged with 2 rounds each for a 10 round total. Targets included 10" gongs at 422yds and 515yds, a 45%

IPSC at 550 yds, a 50% IPSC at 660 yds, and a 66% IPSC at 730 yds. I hit all 8 of the first shots with no wind call at all. I contacted the first target twice, but for some reason missed the second target both times. This should have been an easy target, and I honestly have no idea why I missed it. I then hit the final six shots of the stage, for a score of 8 out of 10 available points. I was pretty happy with this stage, but the target I missed continued to haunt me. It was another miss from a super-stable position on a windless range that I can't explain.

We ended the day on the CASTLE stage. On this stage, five targets ranged from 427 yards to 880 yards. We had 11 rounds and each target could be hit twice. I hit the first four targets which extended out to 650 yds with 8 hits, but then missed the last three shots – even on the large full IPSC at 880 yds. Another set of missed shots that I can't explain.

Things Done Well

I really enjoyed this match. There were several unique challenges to the stages, and I shot pretty well. I surprised myself in a few areas, and avoided any major catastrophes. My DOPE continued to be pretty good, with a few exceptions. I was happy to connect with several shots past 1000 yds. I'm getting more and more comfortable with the KRG chassis and the way I have it set-up, and the Vortex PST continues to impress me.

Results & Lessons Learned

I won this match overall – my third match win. A few takeaways:

- Pay attention on barricades to how it loads the magazine and mag release. Make sure the magazine is always FULLY seated whenever I'm allowed to start the stage that way, and investigate what can trigger the magazine release.
- There were several misses I can't explain, and that frustrates me. When I miss because I'm not stable enough, or because I miss a wind call, then at least I know what to work on.
- I need to embrace new challenges a little better. My initial response to the weak side stage was a little disappointing in hind sight, but I was thrilled I was able to make the best of that stage, and make it a high point of my match.
- Small bits of gear, like my Boonie hat, continue to come in handy in my bag. I may tend to pack on the heavy side, but it so often comes in handy that I hesitate to thrift my bag too much.



Summary

It always makes for great memories when you can win a match. Ryan ran a good match, and made a hard call to change it to a one-day match – but he stepped up to make it happen. I shot well, learned a little more about myself as a shooter, and came away with a cool trophy for the collection.

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