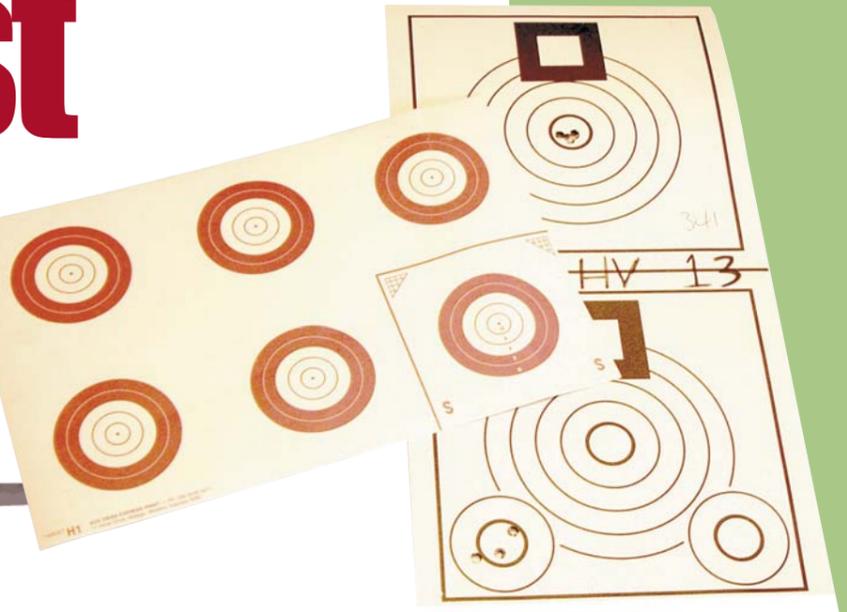


1 Benchrest

A brief description

Benchrest shooting is a rifle sport, where the shooter attempts to place five or ten shots into the smallest possible group at distances of 50, 100, 200 and 300 yards. Rifles are fired from rests which comprise a front rest to support the fore-end of the rifle, and a rear sandbag to support the butt. There are six classes of rifle for group shooting comprised of four centrefire and two rimfire.

Benchrest Hunter Class is shot for score, and has categories for both centrefire and rimfire.



The target

The official target for benchrest group competition shall contain five concentric rings, an aiming mark and a border surrounding the rings and aiming mark. Sighter targets shall have the addition of two concentric rings in each lower corner, and the letter 'S' in one other corner.

Benchrest Hunter Class targets shall have six 'bulls' per target, one of which shall be a sighter, which consist of five concentric scoring rings. There is an X ring in the centre of the ten ring.

The range

Benchrest is shot from solid benches, usually made of concrete. A range holding benchrest competitions is required to provide a covered firing line, and a number of wind indicators at set distances. Target frames must be set at 50 metres, 100 yards, 200 yards and 300 yards, depending upon which competition is to be contested. Full requirements are set out in the current rule book.

Ammunition

Centrefire benchrest shooters load their own ammunition between targets. This allows for any minor adjustments to be made. Most competitors use the 6mm PPC, which is a target round developed from the 220 Russian case. Bullet weights of anywhere between 62 and 70 grains are popular, and ADI powders are used almost exclusively by Australian benchresters. Rimfire competitors use match grade rimfire ammunition, usually determined by testing various makes and batches to find one that the rifle shoots well. Rimfires are fussy about ammunition and considerable testing is sometimes necessary.

The rules

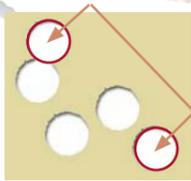
It is strongly recommended that a rule book be obtained either from the range or from the SSAA Merchandise Section as advertised in the AS. This will clarify any queries. Some of the rules are:

- A full match shall consist of five targets at each yardage, with aggregates calculated for each yardage and a grand aggregate of both. The smallest aggregate in each is the winner of the match.
- The time allowed in which to shoot a five-shot group shall be seven minutes, with an extra three minutes for the first target of the day, or yardage.
- Competitors may place their own wind indicators on the range, as long as these indicators do not interfere with any of the range's equipment, and do not obscure any other competitor's targets.
- Competitors may take home their targets after a match, unless the targets are the subject of a dispute or appeal, or may constitute a new group or aggregate record.

Scoring

Group sizes will be determined by measuring from the centre to centre of the two widest shots in the group. This is normally done with a reticule rule specially designed for measuring groups to three decimal places. The ultimate group of .000 inches has never been achieved, although the sport has only been around since 1948.

For Benchrest Hunter Class, one shot shall be fired on each of the scoring bulls. 'Best edge' scoring is used, in that if a shot touches or covers any part of a scoring ring, then that score shall be given. The maximum score possible is a yardage of 250, and a grand of 500 points.



Wind flags

Competitors are free to make their own, and experimentation of any kind in this area is encouraged. Alternatively, they may be purchased from several sources in the USA.



Shoot benchrest

Most SSAA ranges have an active benchrest section. Persons interested in taking up benchrest shooting should contact the benchrest captain for further guidance.

Major benchrest shoots in Australia are:

- National Championships - held every Easter on a roster system around Australia, where ranges are available. All classes are contested over five days.
- Australia Day Matches - held in Canberra at the end of January, usually for light and heavy varmint.
- NSW State Championships - held over two weekends, usually in July and August.
- Harry Madden Memorial Shoot - held at Belmont Range, Brisbane, usually in November, for light and heavy varmint.

The rifle

Rifles are custom built from the finest components. Currently in Australia there are several custom benchrest gunsmiths who can build a winning rifle. Ask the benchrest captain, or some of the competitors for details. Some components, such as high power scopes, have to be imported, but others are obtainable locally.



Stocks

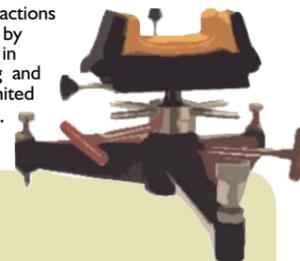
Usually made from carbon fibre, for strength and light weight. A wooden stock would be a rarity in modern benchrest.

Trigger

The most popular triggers available are made by Arnold Jewell in the USA. Since they became available a few years ago, leading competitors will use nothing else.

Actions

Most of the top competitors have custom actions imported from the USA. Stolle actions are by far the most popular as these are available in many configurations. They are light, strong and very 'fast' to use. Other actions used in limited numbers are Farley, Nesika Bay and Shilen.



Barrels

Imported barrels by Shilen, Hart, Turbo and Lilja are used by many, but the Australian barrels produced by Maddco and Tobler have proven to be the equal of the imports. Select match stainless barrels are the only ones used, usually in 6mm with a 1 in 14 twist rate.

Spotting scope

These are strongly recommended for those classes where there is a scope power restriction.



Competitions

Experimental Class

Any rifle that has a safe firing mechanism and a barrel of not less than 18 inches, measured from the bolt face to the muzzle. Scopes of any power are permissible, rests are unrestricted and may be clamped to the bench if necessary. Ten-shot groups are required in this class.

Heavy Varmint Class

Any rifle that has a barrel of not less than 18 inches measured from the bolt face to the muzzle, and a safe manually operated firing mechanism that does not incorporate the use of hydraulics, gas or remote control. Electric triggers are permitted, but all accessories including batteries must be incorporated within the rifle and the weight limit. The width of the stock

shall not exceed three inches at any point. Scope power is unrestricted. The total weight of the rifle must not exceed 13 lb 8 oz. The rifle must be fired from restricted rests, that is, a front rest and sand bag with no guiding means.

Light Varmint Class

Any rifle with a total weight of 10 lb 8 oz, but otherwise meets the requirements of the heavy varmint class.

Sporter Class

A uniquely Australian class, for any rifle that does not exceed 8 lb 13 oz and has a restriction of scope power of 12 magnifications, but otherwise meets the requirements of the heavy varmint class.

.22LR Rimfire Benchrest Class

Any rifle chambered for the .22LR rimfire only, which does not exceed 7 lb 12 oz in weight and has a restriction of scope power to six magnifications. The stock may not exceed 2 1/4" at any point, but the rifle in all other respects meets the requirements of the heavy varmint rifle.

Custom .22LR Rimfire Benchrest Rifle

Any rifle chambered for the .22LR rimfire only, which does not exceed 14 lb in weight, but otherwise meets the requirements of the heavy varmint rifle.

Centrefire Hunter Class

Any rifle with a weight not exceeding 10 lb, and a scope power of not more than six magnifications, with a functioning magazine that will hold, feed, chamber and extract two or more cartridges, but otherwise meeting the requirements of the heavy varmint class.

Rimfire Hunter Class

As for the rimfire benchrest class, but must have a magazine as described for the centrefire hunter rifle.

Custom Rimfire Hunter Class

As for the custom rimfire benchrest class.

