

# ECONOMY COMPETITION COMBINATION

## – The Stirling 1400 TS and Nikko Targetmaster Scope

The Stirling1400 TS (Target Silhouette) is designed for target shooting as indicated by its model designation. This rifle and scope combination is a good choice for budget minded shooters with an interest in shooting paper as well as fur.

There are a number of enjoyable rimfire rifle competition events that are SSAA sponsored, including Three Positional, Field Rifle and Metallic Silhouette competitions where the rifle is basically shot offhand. The rifle can also be used in bench rest style competitions such as the IRB but don't expect it to seriously challenge the dedicated benchrest rifles. All of the above competitions allow and realistically require the use of a scope. A scope once fitted becomes an integral part of the combination, so if either scope or rifle is not up to standard the combination cannot produce the required accuracy.

This Stirling's suitability for the range certainly does not exclude it from the hunting field. In fact, it makes an ideal varmint and a good general hunting rifle where the emphasis is on hunting and shooting rather than long walks or difficult terrain. This is simply because the rifle has the basic requirements for a typical hunter, a repeating rifle with good accuracy and balance for offhand shooting positions. The fact that a rifle designed for the range could be also suited for the field is not at all surprising as target shooting originated from a desire to practise and improve hunting and military skills. The Three Positional, Field Rifle and Silhouette target disciplines that this rifle is suited to are typical examples of such development. The 1400 TS is chambered only in .22 Long Rifle.

The Stirling has a distinctive appearance with its steeply raked long pistol grip, deep



Author shooting the Stirling combination on the Silhouette Range.

stock and short cut back fore end. The long parallel barrel seems to exaggerate the short and deep appearance of the stock. The look of the rifle matches its intended purpose as a heavy barreled target sporter.

Functionally the stock works very well for average sized shooters. It has a generous cheek piece and a typical 355mm or 14 inch butt to trigger length. The long and steep

pistol grip, a potential area of weakness, is strengthened by a steel pin insert. The fore-end could be longer, particularly for long limbed shooters who use the unsupported elbow shooting style. The fore end could also be deeper. Shooters who use the supported elbow would prefer as deep a fore end as they can get away with, which is a maximum 57mm below the centreline of the bore,



BELOW: Five shot groups shot with the respective ammunition at 50 metres.



ABOVE: The left hand side shows the clean, purposeful lines of the combination with a high Monte-Carlo type comb.

if the rifle is to qualify for the above mentioned target disciplines. The Stirling fore end is at least 12mm short of this maximum depth, possibly disappointing some shooters. After shooting the rifle in various offhand positions, the overall impression is that the stock is much better for target work than the average hunting stock would be.

The action is typical of most rimfires and uses the root of the bolt handle as the locking mechanism. The bolt has a cocking indicator and twin extractors. A ten shot magazine and the trigger mechanism are both located in a cast alloy housing. The 22mm diameter, 580mm long barrel is pinned to the receiver and the muzzle is threaded to take a barrel weight or barrel tuner. The protective cap for the thread also protects the muzzle.

Now for the all important question, how does it shoot? At first a little bit all over the place. This did not make sense as a solidly built rifle with a substantial barrel just had to do better than that. A quick look at the barrel to stock fit showed hard contact between the barrel and the top front edge of the barrel channel.

Disassembly and reassembly and we were back to square one, barrel still hard up against woodwork. Part of the problem seemed to be the lack of precision inletting – much of it done by hand and not too precisely at that.

This is one rifle that could benefit hugely from a good bedding job including free floating of the barrel. Quite out of the question on a review rifle, but there are ways... Upon the second reassembly two 30mm wide strips of target paper cardboard were placed under the barrel just ahead of the action and the screws re tightened. The cardboard lifted the barrel just enough to clear the stock, i.e. free float as the maker had originally intended, and things changed dramatically.

To check the accuracy potential five shot groups were shot at 50 metres over sandbags in conditions of switching breezes with no attempt to "read" the wind. The trigger was quite heavy, – much too heavy for competitive shooting – but no adjustment was found so it stayed that way. The testing was limited to four readily available brands of club level target ammunition simply due to practical limitations.

Choice of ammunition is a critical external factor in rimfire accuracy and there may be other brands or grades that could give significantly better results than the four used. The pictorial results speak for themselves and show real potential for this rifle. The nine ring is about 26mm in diameter on the targets used.

A Nikko Stirling 4-16 X 44 Targetmaster scope was supplied with the rifle. It is a large scope, 375mm long with a 30mm tube. The scope came with flip up dust covers to protect the ETE Mirolux coated lenses and a 100mm sunshade. The Targetmaster certainly looked the part with large finger adjustable turrets, highly visible graduations and chunky non slip adjustment surfaces. The scope was a good match for the purposeful appearance of the rifle. There are no protective covers for the adjustment knobs indicating that the scope was designed more for the rifle range than for carrying around in the bush. The method of operation is basically to pull to operate and push to lock, and this prevents unintended adjustment. The coin slotted screws on the knobs, just like the ones many hunting scopes use for adjusting the cross hairs, are there to allow the zeroing of the thimble graduations once the cross hairs are correctly adjusted. Just back off the coin slotted screw, carefully turn the thimble zero to an arrow mark and



LEFT: The 1400's receiver is grooved for dovetail mounts. The safety is located immediately behind the bolt and the rifle comes with a 10-shot magazine.

BELOW: The 4-16X Targetmaster scope shows the clearly marked graduations and positive grip grooving on all the adjustments.



