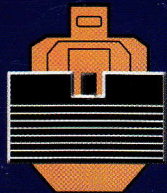


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3-GUN RIFLES — MOVING MAINSTREAM



STORY AND PHOTOS BY
JAMES TARR

Unless you've been living under a rock you've seen the huge explosion in popularity of 3-Gun competition, especially on cable TV shooting shows. The USPSA Multigun Nationals and FN's 3-Gun Nation are getting the most press these days, but there are a myriad of other matches big and small going on around the country, and major firearm manufacturers have finally realized there is some money to be made there. This is a good thing for all of us.

Gone are the days when only JP Rifles made an AR specifically designed for 3-Gun competition. While any reliable magazine-fed semi-auto rifle will

The Stag 3G Competition Rifle is a well-thought-out game rifle for those people who love one-stop shopping. Equipped with an 18-inch stainless free-floated barrel, it has a number of features (including a Geissele Super 3-Gun trigger) that make it a good choice.

get you through a match, when it comes time to compete, steadying weight and accuracy at a distance are requisite factors in a 3-Gun rifle. A good rifle stage will not only have cardboard silhouettes scattered about at pistol distances but also small steel targets at the max distance available at your range, targets that you may have to try to hit after sprinting a short distance. Let's take a look at two new factory rifles just introduced, one specifically marketed toward 3-Gun competition, the other

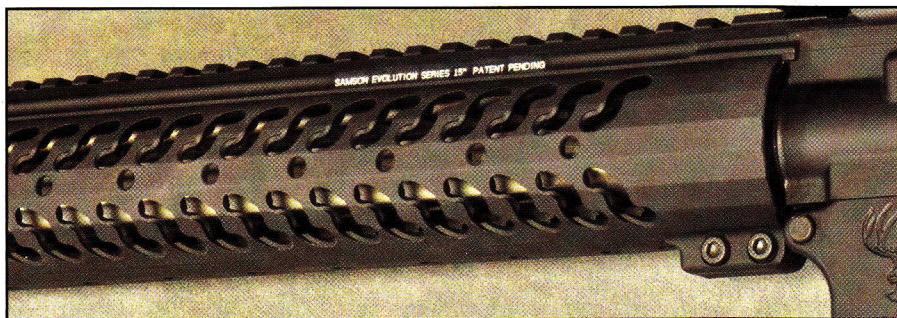
not, and see how they'll play the game.

STAG 3G COMPETITION RIFLE

Stag Arms's purpose-built 3-Gun rifle hit the market in 2011, and you've probably seen the huge ad push for them in the last few months. Stag Arms (www.stagarms.com) makes good rifles, but they're known more for their Mil-Spec designs and left-handed ARs than any specialty rifles. The Super 3-Gun Comp is a departure.

Working with their newly formed 3-Gun shooting team, Stag has produced a built-from-the-ground-up 3-Gun competition rifle. Just looking at its features shows me that it was designed with serious input, not by some guy who has never been to a match.

Over the years, competitive 3-Gun shooters have discovered it is easier to hose close targets with a long, heavy rifle than it is to ding plates at 300 yards with a short, light gun. The Stag, like most modern 3-Gun rifles, tries to find



The Stag's handguard is a 15" Samson Evolution, which does not add a lot of weight. Its gripping surface is more refined than a lot of handguards, and it offers a lot of attachment points for accessories.

a balance between length and weight.

Stag's 3G rifle is a direct-gas impingement design and features a heavy 18-inch fluted stainless steel barrel with a 1/8 twist and 5.56 NATO chamber. This twist rate is preferred because it works for a wide range of bullet weights. The fluting theoretically speeds up cooling but its greatest value in my opinion is weight reduction without sacrificing accuracy. The barrel has a rifle-length gas system not just for reliability but because longer gas systems



Note the offset sights on the Stag 3-Gun rifle, above. They're made by Dueck Defense and can be had as an option for \$100 more. They are fully adjustable and work as advertised.

usually make for a softer recoil impulse.

The barrel is free-floated underneath a 15" Samson Evolution handguard. This handguard is round, with a top rail, and is as light as any other handguard you'll find. The modular design allows you to bolt on rail sections, sling mounts or bipods, and it's long enough that you'll be able to put your support hand way out there if you like to muscle the gun from target to target Bennie Cooley style. If you're wondering why I didn't say "Magpul style," just where do you think the SF guys learn most of their stuff? Most spec-ops troops in Afghanistan are running around with rifles that would be right at home in Tactical Division.

The Stag features a Magpul MOE pistol grip and ACS stock. The ACS features several compartments for batteries and may seem out of place on a competition rifle, but its purpose is to counterbalance the heavy barrel. That's why you see a lot of boat-anchor-heavy

Magpul UBR stocks on 3-Gun rifles, so they'll still balance somewhere near the middle of the rifle. As the ACS is adjustable, it fits every shooter.

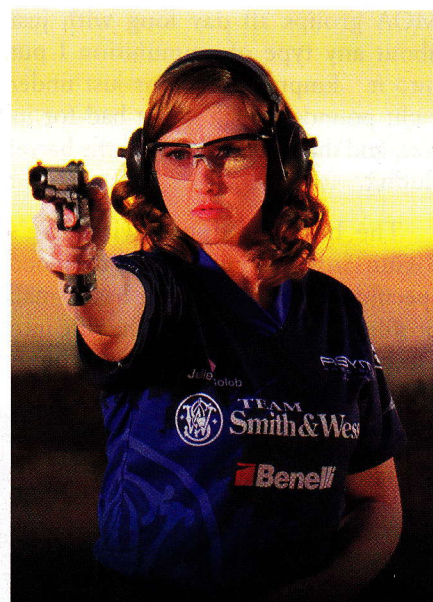
Mil-Spec AR triggers are, as a rule, heavy and gritty, and will completely eliminate any improvement in accuracy a match barrel might give you. Stag knows this and replaced the stock trigger control unit with a Geissele Super 3-Gun trigger. This is advertised as a hybrid trigger, somewhere between a single and double stage, with a break that is "more like a carrot than a glass rod."

I have used triggers with lighter and crisper pulls than you'll find on the Geissele Super 3-Gun or any of their other models, but to tell you the truth I won't put them in any of my rifles any more. I've had adjustable match triggers un-adjust during matches and turn my rifle into a Class-3 weapon. That won't happen with a Geissele trigger. Bill

Geissele is somehow able to work his magic without adding any additional parts to the trigger system. Triggers from Geissele Automatics are rock-solid dependable, which is why they are popular not just with competition shooters but with Orwell's "rough men" who deal with targets who shoot back. The quickest way to ID a Geissele trigger without breaking open a rifle is the G marked on both sides of it.

Stag offers a left-handed version of the 3G, the 3GL, for only \$20 more. Also available as an option are Dueck Defense Rapid Transition Sights (RTS), offset iron sights which clamp onto the rail and are angled at 30 degrees. Sure-fire's Barry Dueck is an accomplished 3-Gun shooter, and his sights work exactly as they're supposed to.

So how does the rifle shoot? Well, the trigger makes hitting tiny targets easy, and in combination with the free-floated stainless barrel I can shoot 1-1.5



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MOA groups all day long with just about any type of ammunition I put into it. Empty, the rifle is just under eight pounds, which is not bad for its size, and that is due mostly to the barrel fluting.

The barrel is tipped with Stag's 3-Gun Super Compensator designed specifically for this rifle. It has a small profile, and will not bump the rifle into Open Division like many larger comps

would, yet it is very effective. Actually, it's a little too effective—the muzzle was dipping for me with each shot. Now, I realize everybody shoots a rifle differently, but I know three other experienced shooters who also got a little muzzle dip with the Stag when it was loaded with a full magazine and mounting an optic. The 3G, which is more than 10 pounds when loaded and mounting an optic, is a tiny bit overcomped with factory ammunition.

The MSRP on the Stag is amazingly low when considering the retail cost of all its features and accessories—only \$1459. When they first introduced the rifle at an industry event, and mentioned the cost, I told one of the Stag employees it seemed like they were throwing in the upper and lower receivers for free.

Is the rifle perfect? No. The comp is a little too effective, and I would have preferred an oversize charging handle such as the BCM Gunfighter or the Parabellum Armament ADF. That said, if you're looking to buy one rifle that is as close to perfect out of the box for 3-Gun as possible, that won't bankrupt you, the Stag 3G is for you.

DEL-TON TRX16 RIFLE

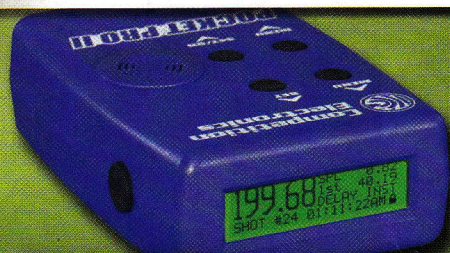
If you don't peruse the ads in Shotgun News you might never have heard



The author did a lot of shooting with the Stag and Sure-fire's new 60-round magazine. The combination worked fine for 150 rounds before having feeding problems, which may have had more to do with the blowing Kansas dust and steel-cased ammo involved.

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While aimed at the tactical market, the Del-Ton TRX has a lot of features, including a free-floated barrel, that many 3-Gun shooters are looking for. It is loaded with Troy Industries accessories.

Chambered in 5.56 x 45mm, the rifle features a 16" me-

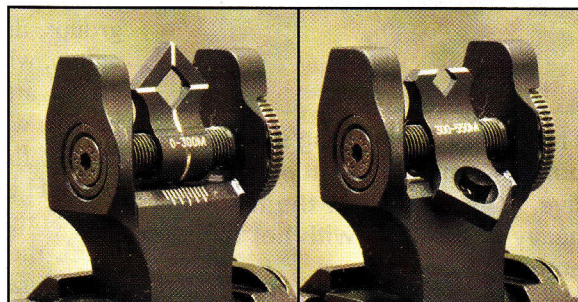
medium weight chrome moly vanadium 1/9 twist barrel tipped with an A2 flash hider. The barrel has a mid-length gas system and the Troy Industries low profile gas block.

of Del-Ton (www.del-ton.com), but the fact is they have been making high-quality AR uppers and parts for years. They also sell complete rifles, and their newest model is the TRX16. While it is not being specifically marketed toward 3-Gun shooting, with its combination of features I thought it merited a look.

The TRX is loaded with accessories from Troy Industries (www.troyind.com). Troy is very popular with the "tactical" crowd, and for good reason. They make the flip-up iron sights against which all other AR sights are judged, and their free-floating handguards are as good as any you'll find. The Del-Ton TRX rifle is offered with either black or Flat Dark Earth Troy furniture.

The barrel is free-floated underneath the distinctive 13" Troy TRX Extreme Handguard. This is a round, relatively narrow (2" diameter) handguard with a top rail running its whole length. Its gripping surface is very aggressive. From the factory the handguard has three rail sections bolted on at the front—a 4" section on the bottom, and 2" rail sections on either

side, all at the end of the handguard. The factory does this because installing those rail sections is a LOT easier before the handguard is installed on the rifle. If you decide you don't want them there you can take them off easily, but getting them back on without taking the handguard off takes three hands and a monkey.



The TRX rifle comes with Troy DOA/STD flip-up sights, seen here with its 300-550M, and 0-300 meter apertures deployed. The diamond apertures are just as fast as standard round ones even if you're not used to them.

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The rifle is equipped with folding sights, the Troy DOA/STD rear and their M4/HK front. It has a standard A2 pistol grip and Mil-Spec internals, including the trigger group, which means the single stage trigger pull was typical GI—6 pounds and gritty. The



The author found Stag's purpose-build 3-Gun comp a little too effective. The muzzle on the medium-heavy rifle dipped with hot factory ammo.

rifle features a HPT/MPI tested bolt, and the interior of the bolt carrier is chrome lined. The TRX16 is supplied with one of Troy's new polymer BattleMags and comes with a nice hard-case.

On the rear of the rifle you'll see the new Troy Battle Ax CQB stock. This stock has a very thick aluminum buttplate which folds down to reveal a large storage compartment. It features QD sling swivel sockets at 3, 6, and 9 o'clock, and one QD swivel. I'm not sure if the engineers at Troy designed the Battle Ax stock as an impact

weapon, no matter its name, but the thick aluminum buttplate adds a noticeable amount of weight. I know I wouldn't want to get hit with it.

Empty, the TRX16 tips the scales at 6.8 lbs, which, combined with its 16-inch barrel, is closer to what I prefer in a 3-Gun rifle in length and weight. Even with the stock trigger, the rifle would do 1.5-2 MOA groups, depending on the ammo, which is not bad at all for a standard factory barrel. With no comp, just the A2 flash hider (and a heavy H buffer, something the Stag doesn't come with), the rifle has a little bit of muzzle rise, but not much. Recoil was very smooth and soft.

Suggested retail on the Del-Ton TRX16 is \$1250, and that price reflects the cost of the pricey Troy accessories. I wish it came with a better trigger, or an oversize charging handle, but those are easily replaced.

Many of the new "tactical" ARs (such as the Del-Ton) are moving away from quad rails, which are bulky and heavy, to rounded free-floating modular handguards, something pretty much standardized on competition rifles in the last century. Competitive shooting doesn't teach tactics, but everyone is



The Troy Battle AX CQB stock adds a lot of weight to counterbalance the front end, and might come in handy if you have to butt-stroke some targets at a zombie match. It also has a huge compartment, and sling swivel sockets at 3, 6, and 9 o'clock.

spected in the "tactical community" as it is possible to get. Among other things, he was with Delta in Somalia in 1993....so he ought to know what equipment works well enough to be used when lives are on the line.

So which rifle is "better" for 3-Gun? That's as much personal preference as anything else. Neither rifle malfunctioned, and while the Stag was more accurate, for their price range they both produced acceptable groups. The Stag is specifically designed for 3-Gun, and has that look, while the Del-Ton/Troy has a much more tactical flavor.

If I bought the Stag I'd buy the version with offset iron sight, buy a better charging handle, and continually wish it was a pound lighter and two inches shorter. If I bought the Del-Ton I'd install a Geissele trigger, Magpul pistol grip, better charging handle, and a muzzle brake. The two rifles would end up costing me about the same amount of money. I'd recommend either one of them as a good 3-Gun rifle which won't cost you thousands of dollars.



For all its high-end accessories, the Del-Ton TRX comes with a Mil-Spec trigger group, which would be the first thing the author would fix. The bolt is MPI/HPT tested.

starting to realize that's where you find out what works. Viking Tactic's (VTAC) handguard is a mildly altered version of the JP Rifles' design. Kyle Lamb, founder of VTAC, works closely with JP Rifles, and is as well re-

