

BR Shooter Profile

Dan Opel – Spruce Grove, Alberta



1. When did you start shooting BR? Which range did you attend your first registered match at and what was your equipment?

I started in 1999/2000. My first match was a score match at Namaka, shooting a 40X .223 Rem, with preloaded (Danzac) bullets.

2. Who was your mentor when you started and why did you choose BR over other disciplines? Were you shooting another discipline before BR?

The closest person(s) to a mentor I had was Rick P. and Larry Ivany. Rifle accuracy overcame several other disciplines including handguns.

3. How many rounds a year do you shoot and how many would you recommend to stay competitive?

The round count depended on the year, some years I travel and shoot a lot (5000 rounds), but last year was one of my least number of matches (2000).

To be competitive we need to shoot as many matches as we can early in the year, the folks we compete with in the South have a much longer season to work with. Typically us northern shooters do not get enough rounds in for the year to truly compete against the South. IF one was to get 5000 rounds a year under ones belt (mainly in competition) you would see an improvement in ones rankings.

4. If someone were just starting what advice would you have for the newcomer?

Find a mentor; shoot as many matches as possible and at as many new venues as possible.

Get the best equipment you can afford (barrels, bullets, scopes) use wind flags that are common in your area. As you may have noticed the travelling shooter (US bound) are using very similar wind flags (Graham's). This enables shooters to double up on 1st and 2nd relays using the same flags at bigger matches. Another benefit is that when/if you look at the field you will see something familiar when checking incoming conditions.

5. List 3 things about BR that you think are the most critical to small groups and small aggs.

The single most important thing about this game is the mental strength you need to work through the many variables that are thrown into completing a match. Most equipment can be made to work; it is the ability to see/feel change and makes good choices as to what solution will keep you in the match.

Ex: load tune, flag conditions that work, understanding what effect conditions at that range on that day are having on your bullets.

Most everyone can and will shot small groups, but it is the ability to not shoot the big one, which determines the place in the agg. This is what we are striving for in this game.

6. What direction do you see the sport taking?

This discipline is competing with more shooting disciplines then ever before, and it is so very hard to excite an individual to the format, but if one is bitten by the accuracy bug, then we have the hook set. Only a person's time and financial state will compete with this bug.

In our small part of the BR world, we are seeing better than average growth, this may be due to in part, to the growth in other shooting disciplines that require shooters to strive for accuracy.

Another influence in the last few years has been the reasonably open information exchange on the internet by several BR shooters, Jeff Wardlow and Tony Gauthier come to mind, and now Rick with the Benchrest.ca web page. This kind of advertising will continue to get individuals interested in the BR game, but again getting the hook set is the kicker. Once that happens and we get the individual to the matches the rest of us can work at convincing them that this is the place to spend their hard earned money and time.

If we could find ways to encourage past participants to return to the game, we would grow the numbers more readily. That means folks like Joe M. I love to see new shooters come out, and I do try and spent time with as many of them as I can, to make the steep learning curve somewhat less slippery. I don't think that I am any different in this regard than anyone else. If we all could/would use the free advertising space

on BR.ca or GunNutz to get equipment etc. out in the open for those with fringe interests, it would help get those folks one step closer to trying.

-Dan Opel