



Daniel O'Dea lines up behind his Remington 700 in .308, fitted with a Wyatt detachable magazine system. Note the long single stack 10-round magazines.

It's a long shot - and well worth it

by Daniel O'Dea

As it is with any other sport, when it comes to shooting, to achieve the best results it takes both developed skills and practice. But where do you start? And for experienced shooters how can you improve? For many, shooting skills are relatively self-taught. A few pointers from dad, uncle, relative or fellow club member when starting off, followed by some reading, research or perhaps just practical experience slowly built up over the years. But the best way to hone your skill in any sport is to learn from a professional.

Over the years I've considered myself fortunate enough to have been able to participate in several training classes in various shooting disciplines. Be that shooting clay targets with ex-Olympic medalists or practical pistol classes with

world champions, every time I've come away a better shooter and grateful for the opportunity to have such hard-earned knowledge and skills imparted.

With this in mind I was excited to learn of 365 Precision Training, based just out of Gunnedah in northern NSW. 365 Precision Training is a veteran owned and operated school, specialising in long-range shooting courses for hunters and precision match shooters. I gladly accepted the chance to attend a class on behalf of *Australian Shooter*.

Owner and chief instructor Mitch Brewer and his team have all served their country at elite military level, combining multiple overseas deployments between them. They have developed classes aimed specifically for civilian applications using both the fundamental and advanced level skills

acquired though their military service. There has been a growing interest in long-range shooting with modern developments in firearms technologies such as precision rifles along with optics, range-finding, ballistic programming and so forth meaning the distance envelope for practical engagement keeps being pushed out. The further your target the more variables that come into play, especially once you go out to 1000m and beyond.

The two-day class I would be attending was long-range basic with the course brief covering system set-up and equipment, theory (atmospherics and ballistics), personalised rifle data, atmospheric and ballistic sensors, ballistic solvers, practical shooting to 1000m, wind assessment, firing positions and alternatives.

The equipment list included a suitable

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rifle fitted with a bipod, an appropriate optic on at least a 20MOA base (so you had plenty of turret elevation for longer ranges), a shooting mat, rear bag for your buttstock, 200 rounds of ammo, eye, ear and sun protection, notepad and pen, scope bubble and instructions to download a ballistic program on your iPhone or android.

I thought it would be good to shoot the course with one of my own rifles. A few years back I picked up a secondhand Remington 700 in .308 Winchester. It's probably not the first choice in calibre for really long-range shooting, but the rifle has a few improvements including a recent bedding and recrowning job and a GC

Precision Developments muzzle brake. It also carries a Bushnell 4.5-30 x XRS Elite Tactical riflescope on a 20MOA rail so I'd have enough glass for the job. I had a Harris bipod but had to swap it for one with a cant swivel and also had to round up a scope bubble, which in all my years of shooting



Owner/instructor Mitch Brewer makes adjustment on a client's Sako TRG 42.

I thought I had no need for until now. As we'd be shooting out to 1000m, ammunition choice for the .308 would be highly important. Ideally you'd want something that remains supersonic at that range for optimum accuracy. Just a week out from the event and with no time to even consider working up some handloads, I was advised the ballistically-efficient Hornady 178gr ELD-X Precision Hunter would be up to the 1000m task in factory ammo. Tony Abela from Horsley Park Gunshop in Sydney came to the rescue, generously donating the required amount for this review. Much appreciated.

The venue and home base for 365 Precision Training is the Nioka Range about a half-hour drive north of Gunnedah. The range is well presented with sighting target frames at 100m and target berms with metallic plates at 200, 300, 400, 500, 900, 1000, 1200, 1350, 1450, 1550 and 1600m (one mile). The 1200 and 1550m were not in play for the course. Attendees are welcome to camp at the range grounds, which has some basic on-site amenities.

Held over a long weekend, I arrived on Friday afternoon and rolled out my swag. There would be a total of nine in the training group with attendees travelling from all points, one as far as Perth. The bulk of the group had arrived from the ACT, all clients of precision rifle manufacturer GC Precision Developments. A familiar face in the shape of Gareth Crook, owner of GCPD, was also in attendance.

The course kicked off with introduction to instructors Mitch,



365 Precision Training is held on the Nioka range just north of Gunnedah in country NSW.

Field to Fork

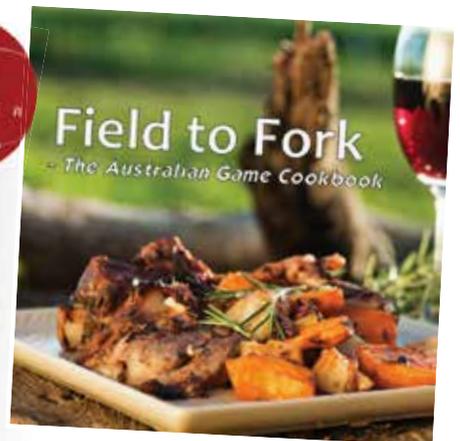
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Rob and Matt, followed by a sign-in and safety briefing before we hit the range, shooting a five-shot group to check zero (we were shooting prone). The instructors took notes on your shooting position, trigger manipulation and so on. Each course section finished with a debrief and reviews of results and observations. In this case, targets were individually addressed with notes made for any adjustments required as well as feedback on your shooting.

We then spent some time reviewing equipment, set-up and preparation before a more in-depth look at shooting fundamentals and marksmanship, covering correct position, setting up for 'natural point of aim', sight alignment and sight picture, trigger manipulation and follow through.

Then we went back to the shooting line to dial in any required adjustment from the last engagement and put any other corrections from instructor observation into practice. This was before shooting a 10-round group and concluding again with group debrief and individual review.

My biggest takeaway from this first set of exercises was the use of the scope bubble. In almost 40 years of shooting I had never used one. I had to source one just the week before to fit as it was required in the equipment list. My first group was high at 12 o'clock with my cross-hairs squared up on the target, but I hadn't checked the bubble which was pointed out by my instructor, Rob. Turns out there was a slope on the range and the target frames purposely were not levelled. When the bubble was used, the cross-hairs showed a distinct cant and when corrected for the next group, the point of impact shifted at least 50mm to the left. Just five degrees of cant can potentially shift your point of impact .5mil or 50mm at 100m. That could mean missing the target by half a metre on the 1000m plate!

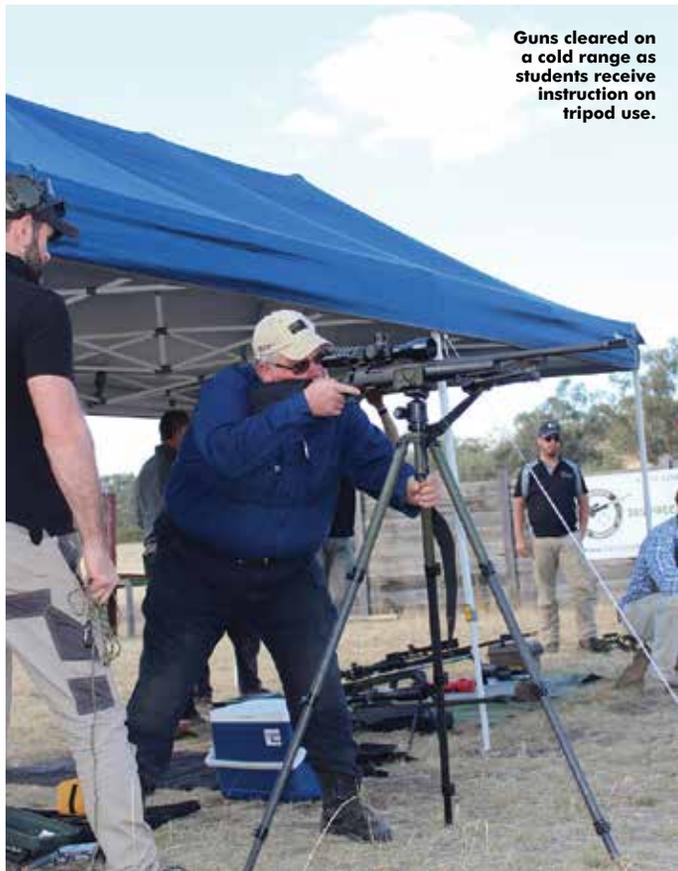
More theory included explanations of mils versus MOA for



Owner/instructor Mitch Brewer demonstrates correct position.

measurement, first and second focal plane scopes, using scope turrets, effects of scope cant, relevance of ballistic coefficients, explanation of G1 and G7 BCs, effects of supersonic/transonic/subsonic flight, effects of temperature, pressure and humidity and more. This might sound like theory overload but that wasn't the case. Mitch and Rob kept the course flowing and interesting.

Next step was to establish individual muzzle velocity with each shooter running 10 rounds over a MagnetoSpeed chronograph.



Guns cleared on a cold range as students receive instruction on tripod use.



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This would be required for when we moved into setting up personalised rifle data. Debriefing on this one included covering the topic of standard deviation or the high to low variation on muzzle velocity and its effect on downrange accuracy. Another more critical lesson focused on reading wind strength and direction using different methods at various ranges and included how to use heat mirage to make wind calls.

Day two had us starting with some more set-up and both dry and live fire to confirm sights before learning how to use ballistic software. For iPhone users this meant downloading the Ballistic AE app. Mitch and Rob took us through step-by-step on how to make the most of these programs, inputting exact data from Kestrel weather

meters. We then put together our personalised rifle data chart for all the target distances we'd be engaging on the range out to 1000m. This included data for wind at 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12km/h. We then put our new-found skills and data charts to use over several exercises shooting various steel targets out to 1000m.

Other parts of the course included shooting from tripods and different methods that can be used to stabilise shooting positions. We finished off with a few fun challenges to again make good use of the lessons learnt.

I really enjoyed my experience with 365 Precision Training. Mitch and his team run a great course which is heavy in content but flows freely and is always kept relevant and interesting. The course I attended

was the long-range basic. I would highly recommend it for anyone interested in long-range shooting.

Mitch also offers a practical rifle course and a 500m advanced hunters course. Long-range hunting is not without ethical challenge. It is one thing to own a long-range rifle but that in no way diminishes your responsibility to cleanly despatch your given quarry. This would be a good choice for shooters looking to stretch their shots on game but ethically stay within their limits.

For further details or to book a course you can email Mitch on mitch@365precisiontraining.com or visit the website at 365precisiontraining.com ●

End of course class, from left, instructors Rob Wood and Mitch Brewer with students Dave, Kai, Attila, Daniel, Dave, Gordon, Matt and Gareth.



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