



A GUIDE RIFLE

SPOTTING SCOPE

by Dave Scovill

The common definition of a “guide rifle” is a rifle a guide carries while escorting clients around on a big game hunt. In Alaska or Africa, the guide’s rifle is more often than not a backup rifle used in pursuit of dangerous game, such as bear or Cape buffalo.

When the hunt does not require the guide to carry a rifle or when the law prohibits the guide from having a rifle, the guide’s rifle is usually a “camp” rifle that is available for a client who chooses not to go through the hassle with firearms in airports, or whose scope or action fails, or when time restraints don’t allow him to submit the paperwork required for a hunt in another country.

The latter is how I wound up with Bobby Campillo’s (Campillo Brothers Trophy Hunting) Remington Model 700 7mm Remington Magnum several years ago. It was ready to go when we arrived in camp northwest of Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. All I had to do was shoot a few rounds to make sure I knew how the trigger was set and where it was shooting. It also helped to know that Bobby



While folks might debate the merits of the ideal big game rifle, the Dan Pedersen custom Model 700 7mm STW proved quite useful for the hunter lucky enough to draw a mule deer tag on the Arizona Strip.

(Roberto) used that rifle to put a couple of monster mule deer in the SCI record book.

That’s about what the discussion of a guide’s rifle boiled down to nearly two years ago when Chad Smith (Vaquero Outfitters, PO Box 1633, Chino Valley AZ 86323) and I were dis-

cussing the ideal “Arizona” big game rifle.

As Chad saw it, when the mule deer, pronghorn or elk of a lifetime is on the line, he wanted to be able to range the shot and tell the hunter exactly where to hold, out to 600 yards. So the rifle should hold .5 minute of angle at extended ranges, with a cartridge and bullet that pack enough clout to drop the biggest elk in Arizona, which assumes the rifle would qualify for deer and pronghorn as well.

So, for Chad at least, the basic idea of a guide/outfitter rifle was based on the fact that few hunters have the opportunity to practice with their favorite rifle out to 600 yards, and as a result, have no idea of where to hold at extended ranges, or anything much over 300 yards. But the client should be able to practice at home with

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The fluted bolt is manufactured by Pacific Tool & Gauge. The Swarovski scope is mounted in Burris rings and bases.

question was: "What cartridge/bullet is capable of taking a 1,000-pound, 380 to 420 B&C bull elk at 600 yards?"

Well, we sort of knew the answer to that question after Chad had a Titanium Remington Model 700 .300 WSM made up a few years back for his wife, Shawn, who promptly used it to take a 417-class bull elk at something close to 575 yards.

In time, we narrowed the cartridge selection down to a big .300 or 7mm. We discussed them all, from the WSMs to the Weatherby lineup. After several months of debate, Chad decided on the 7mm STW loaded with a Berger VLD (Very Low Drag) in a Remington Model 700.



The Remington stainless Model 700 action was originally chambered for the .30-06 but easily accommodates the longer 7mm STW.

his rifle, arrive in camp, fire a few rounds at various ranges to verify trajectory with the pre-

sighted "company" rifle while becoming familiar with the trigger and scope, and go hunting. The

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7mm STW Loads

| bullet (grains) | powder | start charge (grains) | start velocity (fps) | maximum charge (grains) | maximum velocity (fps) | fill ratio (percent) |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 168 Berger VLD | RL-25 | 71.5 | 2,891 | 75.3 | 3,022 | 95.8 |
| | MagPro | 71.0 | 2,838 | 75.0 | 2,994 | 89.6 |
| | H-1000 | 72.5 | 2,827 | 76.5 | 2,981 | 94.1 |
| | Norma MRP | 69.5 | 2,897 | 73.0 | 3,025 | 89.5 |
| | VV-N170 | 74.0 | 2,742 | 78.0 | 2,895 | 98.2 |
| | Ramshot MAG | 74.5 | 2,883 | 78.7 | 3,047 | 93.1 |
| | IMR-7828 SSC | 69.0 | 2,894 | 72.8 | 3,041 | 89.7 |
| | Retumbo | 74.0 | 2,888 | 78.1 | 3,029 | 98.3 |
| | RL-22 | 69.0 | 2,884 | 72.5 | 3,013 | 90.8 |
| | RL-19 | 65.5 | 2,823 | 69.8 | 2,978 | 89.3 |

Notes: Loads fired from a 26-inch barrel. Cartridge overall length is 3.600 inches.

Be Alert - Publisher cannot accept responsibility for errors in published load data.

RCBS dies were used to assemble 7mm STW handloads with Berger 168-grain VLDs.



With that in mind, I dredged up a stainless Remington Model 700 and Danny Pedersen (Classic Barrel & Gun Works, 339 Grove Avenue, Prescott AZ 86301; e-mail: dan@cutrifle.com) offered one of his cut-rifled 26-inch fluted barrels. To help keep weight down, the rifle balanced nicely with a High Tech Specialties synthetic stock (Mark Bansner) that Brownells donated to the project, and a LimbSaver buttpad. Since the Model 700 had a standard bolt head size, Pacific Tool & Gauge (598 Avenue C, White City OR 97503; www.pacifictoolandgauge.com) supplied a custom bolt to fit the belted case.

Dan Pedersen fit the High Tech stock and glass bedded it to the Remington action, then gave it a

professional paint job with Zolaton, a rather slow-to-cure paint that leaves a durable, flat gray finish. With pronghorn season fast approaching, the rifle was topped off with a Swarovski 3-10x scope, and Gregg Bardsley, one of Dan's employees, worked up a load with 168-grain Berger VLDs using load data courtesy of Berger Bullets, LLC. Shortly thereafter Chad's hunter used the rifle to drop a respectable pronghorn, and another hunter took a trophy-class mule deer on the Arizona Strip.

No doubt, some folks might enjoy a lively debate as to whether or not a Model 700 7mm STW that launches a 168-grain Berger VLD with a ballistic coefficient of .671 at just over 3,000 fps is ideal for anything. We do know at this point, however, that it is quite useful.

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