

Forbes Rifle Model 24B



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Forbes Rifle Model 24B
Westbrook, Me.

John Haviland

When I first hefted a new Forbes Rifle Model 24B, the full-size rifle nearly floated in my hands, and I envisioned the rifle substantially easing my burden climbing elk mountains. Then I wondered whether a rifle that weighed 6 pounds with a scope would walk its bullets up a target when the barrel heated up; however, after shooting the Model 24B .270 Winchester with a variety of loads, the light rifle alleviated any fears of inaccuracy.

Every rifle shooter is familiar with the name Melvin Forbes and his New Ultra Light Arms Company

(NULA) that has proven thousands of times during the last 25 years that lightweight rifles can shoot very accurately. Forbes, though, is looking toward retirement. With no heirs to continue New Ultra Light Arms, Forbes recently partnered with Titan Machine Products in Westbrook, Maine, to keep the Forbes name on rifles and provide service for owners of Ultra Light Arms in the years to come. Forbes Rifle is the name of that partnership, and the Model 24B rifle is the company's initial product. Forbes furnished the design pattern and manufacturing plan for the rifle during the startup. He now supplies the stocks for the rifles, while Titan performs all the metal work. The rifles are assembled at Forbes's shop in Granville, West Virginia.

The Model 24B is nearly a copy of the NULA Model 24, and parts will interchange between them; however, the 24B has no options. It is chambered in .270 Winchester and .30-06 with a 24-inch barrel and black matte finish on the metal. The Forbes Rifle 24B's retail price, though, is \$1,400 compared to \$3,500 for the NULA Model 24. You would think such a savings would drop the demand for the NULA's Model 24. "But there hasn't been," Forbes said.

Facing page, the Forbes Rifle Model 24B weighs about 6 pounds with a Leupold VX-II 3-9x 33mm Ultralight scope in Talley mounts. Titan Machine in Maine builds all but the stock.

The first time I shot the Model 24B with an assortment of factory and handloaded .270 loads from a benchrest, a couple of loads put two bullets touching at 100 yards and a third bullet off to the side an inch or so. After three shots the barrel was cooking hot, and I was certain the heat had strained the thin barrel and caused the bullet to wander, but that was far from the case. The problem was the rifle did not particularly like that load and/or operator imprecision caused a bullet to stray.

Another day I shot seven, five-shot groups at 100 yards with Berger 150-grain VLD Hunting bullets and 61.0 grains of Magnum powder, which averaged 1.06 inches with absolutely no sign of bullets drifting off aim. That's excellent accuracy from a feathery 6-pound rifle. Of course, the stability of a bench and wedging the rifle stock between a couple of sandbags helped steady the rifle.

How well a rifle shoots from hunting positions, though, is a true sign of its worth. The 24B's stock has a rather thick grip for my hand. Still, the flute on the nose of the stock comb placed my hand so there was no stretch of my index finger to reach the trigger, and the grip angle positioned my wrist straightly. The stock's forearm was wide and deep enough to fill my forward hand and provide a firm grip.

From the sitting position with the rifle supported on shooting sticks, three Nosler 130-grain Ballistic Tips printed in 1.45 inches at 200 yards. The stock comb is relatively high with only .5 inch of drop at the nose and straight with a fall of only a few eighths of an inch at the heel. That kept my head erect while shooting prone with the rifle over a backpack, and I was able to put three Ballistic Tips in .50 inch at 200 yards. That was a great group, but surely my wobbles at least somewhat compensated for my wiggles.

This accuracy is the result of what Forbes calls straight line geometry. For a rifle to shoot accurately, especially when it heats up after repeated firing, everything must be straight in a line from the bolt in the receiver, the locking lugs in their seats and the barrel screwed into the receiver. If they're not, the various parts can twist and bend against each other and create inconsistent vibrations when a cartridge is fired. "Now add a second set of vibrations from the bullet going down the bore, and they might get crosswise with the first vibrations and really produce conflicting vibrations," Forbes said.

Forbes said when he designed the actions for his NULA rifles he knew their narrow diameter and light weight would result in the loss of some of their rigidity and ability to handle vibration stress. "But a stiff stock can make up some of that loss," he said, and the stocks Forbes makes for the NULA and Forbes rifles

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are stiff. They are made of Kevlar/graphite composite cloth, but surprisingly a finished stock weighs only 1.5 pounds with a one-inch thick, hard-rubber recoil pad and sling swivel studs.

The Model 24B's stock has an aluminum pillar that the front action screw passes through. The pillar has a dished-out head approximately .65 inch wide that locks the stock to the rounded bottom of the receiver. NULA beds each stock to a particular 24B action, and the last three numbers of a rifle's serial number are stamped in the bedding behind the recoil

lug mortise. The interior of the 24B's stock is glass-bedded beneath the tang, along the upper sides of the receiver, bottom of the front of the receiver and complete

cent actions, with narrow receiver openings that add stiffness to the receiver. The Model 24B receiver opening makes it easy to load the three-round magazine and for fin-

Right, the Model 24B has no bottom metal other than the trigger guard to reduce rifle weight and make the stock stiffer.



Left, the entire barrel channel is bedded for full contact of the barrel. Below, an aluminum pillar prevents overtightening of the front action screw.



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length of the barrel channel for full contact between the action, barrel and recoil lug. That tight fit diminishes vibrations, allowing the rifle to shoot more precisely and enabling bullets from different loads to hit closely to the same point of impact.

The Model 24B's action looks like a Remington Model 700 with the same recoil lug between the front of the receiver and barrel. The Forbes Rifle action, however, has been shortened and significantly thinned and weighs only 24 ounces, hence its model designation. The Model 24B's action has a rather wide loading and ejection port compared to several more re-

gers to reach in and clear the action in case a cartridge jams – because there is no floorplate to remove cartridges out the bottom of the action. The omission of a floorplate reduces rifle weight and without a cut in the stock adds strength to it.

The rifle's two-position Timney trigger actually has three positions. Pulled to the rear or "safe" position, the sear is blocked and the bolt is locked. With the safety in the same position, pushing down on the safety knob still blocks the sear but allows opening the bolt. Pushing the lever forward to the "fire" position enables the trigger to trip the sear. The Timney trigger's pull was 3.5 pounds. Its pull weight is easily adjustable down to 1.5 pounds by turning a screw on the front of the trigger housing, but I left it alone as that weight was fine, and it had no creep or overtravel.

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Above, the Timney trigger has a two-position safety. Below, pressing down on the safety in the rear position unlocks the bolt and allows it to open while the sear remains blocked.



The bolt body is a narrow .590 inch in diameter and weighs only .5 pound with a slim handle brazed on. The extractor is a Sako or AR-type. "I call it the shotgun extractor, as that design has been on Winchester shotguns for decades," Forbes said. A plunger ejector protruding from the left side of the bolt face throws extracted cases

There is a plunger ejector on the bolt face and a shotgun-type extractor on the rim.



and cartridges well clear of the rifle.

E.R. Shaw barrels are used on the Model 24B. "I've heard they might be a bit rough and that they foul pretty easily, but they shoot," Forbes said. I shot 60-plus .270 rounds through the rifle without cleaning the barrel. The last three bullets of those cartridges landed in .54 inch at 200 yards. A lot of powder fouling did come out of the bore when the barrel was cleaned, but there was no glint of copper fouling. The barrel is 24 inches long and 1.05 inches in diameter in front of the receiver. An inch or so forward, the barrel gradually tapers to .615 inch at the muzzle.

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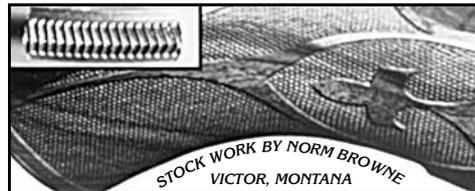
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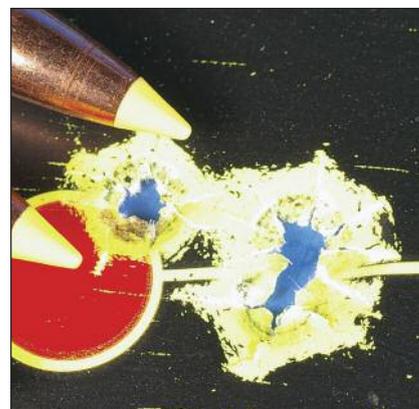
Forbes Rifle Model 24B .270 Winchester Loads					
bullet (grains)	powder	charge (grains)	velocity (fps)	accuracy (inches)	comments
130 Barnes Triple-Shock	RL-17	53.5	3,074	.97	
130 Berger VLD Hunting	Hunter	56.0	3,057	1.43	
130 Nosler Ballistic Tip	H-4831	58.0	3,051	.65	
				.50	200 yards prone
				1.45	200 yards sitting
150 Berger VLD Hunting	Magnum	61.0	2,853	.65	
				1.06	7, 5-shot groups
120 Norma Kalahari factory load			3,242	.77	
130 RWS H-Mantle factory load			2,904	1.09	
150 Winchester Supreme Elite XP3 factory load			2,757	1.66	

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

A nice touch is the Talley aluminum one-piece bases and rings that come with the rifle. Forbes actually designed these mounts years ago and sold the rights to Talley. "They only weigh one and a half ounces per set," Forbes said.

The Model 24B by itself weighs 5 pounds, 4 ounces. Adding a Leupold VX-II 3-9x 33mm Ultralight scope in the Talley mounts brought the weight of the complete rifle to a tad over 6 pounds, according to my fish scale.

The normally mild .270 Winchester developed some noticeable re-



The Model 24B .270 Winchester shot well at 200 yards from the prone position.

coil in the light rifle. The straight comb directed the kick pretty much straight back, but the rifle's hard-rubber recoil pad did nothing to soften the sting. If I could change one thing on the 24B it would be to swap out the tractor tire pad and replace it with a Pachmayr Decelerator.

No doubt the future will include an expansion of cartridges available in the production Model 24B rifle made by Titan Machine Products, and perhaps other mass-produced rifles based on NULA rifles, such as the Model 20 Ultimate Mountain and Varmint, Model 28 Alaskan and Model 40 African. "When Jonathan Brawn [COO of Titan Machine] called, I decided to transfer the technical information to make my Model 24. Now that information will be in a production rifle and available when I'm gone," Forbes said.

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