



PRECISION is precisely what you get

Con Kapralos

While many hunters and shooters will opt for rifles straight off dealers' shelves, there's increasing demand for items made to order. This requirement is born from the fact that factory-made rifles don't meet specific requirements for the intended application or purpose, whether that be a lightweight mountain rifle, hybrid hunting/target alternative or serious long-range or PRS (Precision Rifle Series) firearm.

It's true there are credible gunsmiths in Australia who turn out such outfits but Precision Defence Industries (PDI), which

incorporates Bolly Composite Stocks, has been quietly meeting the needs of sports shooters who not only demand high-quality custom rifles, but accessories to complement them. Head design engineer Mark Bourne has an extensive background in the aeronautical and mechanical engineering industry and the technologies it encompasses. The use of carbon fibre for aero components through subsidiary Bolly Aviation led to the manufacture of ultralight carbon fibre rifle stocks and hence the formation of Bolly Composite Stocks.

So Mark was not only content to provide top-shelf carbon fibre rifle stocks but also

a custom rifle-building service, being authorised Australian dealer for a number of highly respected brands such as Proof Research barrels, Tangent Theta, Vectronix Terrapin X, Delta Optical and more. Being Adelaide-based, PDI turn to leading Clare Valley gunsmith Jerome Ziersch to build their custom rifles, supplying components once the customer has discussed their requirements and had a blueprint drawn up.

PDI approached *Australian Shooter* with a request to review one of its custom rifles, a unit built around the Tikka T3 action and a hybrid hunting/long-range target rifle in .243 Winchester. The gun came supplied with a Delta Optical Titanium HD scope and was furnished in a superb Bolly Composite Stocks carbon fibre stock and Proof Research carbon-wrapped barrel.

At a glance

The rifle is 1165mm in length and weighs 3.87kg with the Delta Optical Titanium HD 4-24x50 riflescope on top. It is characterised by the Bolly ultralight carbon fibre stock, carbon-wrapped Proof Research barrel and APA Gen II 'Little Bastard' muzzle brake. Subtracting the weight of the scope and mount the bare rifle tallies 3.03kg.

Barrelled action

Heart of this build is the Tikka T3 action (.243 Winchester) in stainless finish. It encompasses the standard bolt, factory trigger and three-round polymer magazine but has had the action refaced prior to



The only components used from a standard Tikka T3 - receiver, bolt, trigger and three-shot polymer magazine.

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The APA Gen II 'Little Bastard' muzzle brake certainly tames muzzle flip in the .243 Winchester.

having the barrel chambered and fitted. The barrel is a Proof Research carbon-wrapped unit, the Sendero, with 24" (610mm) varmint profile in a one-in-7.5" twist and has a stainless steel inner tube to which layers of carbon fibre are wrapped around its length, making it strong but light.

To the eye the 610mm barrel with varmint profile would indicate a heavy one, yet it weighs the same as a standard 22" (560mm) Tikka sporter. It's fitted to the action by Ziersch Custom Rifles (ZCR) with headspace checked on a 'go gauge', the chamber polished and inspected with a bore scope as well cutting the x24 TPI muzzle thread and fitting the APA Gen II 'Little Bastard' .30-calibre muzzle brake. The twist barrel is intended to shoot projectiles upwards of 100 grains (and target ones at that) but in the review briefing, Mark asked that I view this firearm as a hybrid stalking/long-range varmint rifle and range test factory ammunition with bullet weights around 100-105gr.



The left-hand side of the Tikka T3 action with milled dovetail on the receiver top and angled profile of the flats.



Stainless barrel shank is engraved with the calibre and twist rate as well as the gunsmith's initials ZCR - Ziersch Custom Rifles of Auburn.

Triggerguard/detachable bottom metal

The triggerguard/DBM on the custom Tikka T3 was also replaced. The factory polymer unit will, over time, wear out the front lever which results in the magazine not being properly aligned at the front end, meaning feeding issues. While the polymer unit weighs just 30g, its replacement in the

Lumley Arms DBM for the T3/T3x pattern magazines is 82g and made from alloy/titanium. It's a drop-in fit and extensive testing in the T3/T3x platforms has given no feeding issues. Additionally, the trigger-guard loop is replaceable so you can convert to a larger trigger loop for use with gloves if desired.

Stock

This is the feather in the cap for Bolly Composite rifle stocks. Let's start with the weight - at 721g it's light, attributed to extensive use of carbon fibre for the skeleton and being of the featherweight specification is inletted for a right-hand Tikka T3 action and factory DBM. The barrel channel is profiled for a #6 contour and exterior of the stock is finished with 'ruff tuff' coating, which feels like a solid rubber sponge but grip is excellent and leaves other rubber rifle stock finishes in its wake.

An AirTech LimbSaver recoil pad is fitted and dampened recoil beautifully. Accessory-wise, two flush cups are fitted to the stock - one on the left of the fore-end tip and one at the toe - and anchored the GrovTech Mountain sling well and had me thinking how 'old-hat' standard sling swivels are compared to flush cups and press-fit sling swivels.

Finally a BT34 rail (2.05" long) is fitted to the underside of the fore-end tip as



The stock-mounted flush cups and corresponding swivels are mated to an excellent GrovTec sling swivel.

Con Kapralos puts the custom Tikka T3 to the test.



The Lumley Bottom Metal encompasses a triggerguard, magazine well and retaining clip.

provision for a spare stud for attachment of a Harris-style bipod. Some may balk at paying around \$1000 for a rifle stock but when it's of Bolly quality it's worth every penny, especially if building a lightweight stalking/mountain rifle.

Scope and mount

The supplied scope is a Titanium HD 4-24x50 by Delta Optical, a Polish firm which has in recent years been at the forefront of designing top-quality scopes suited to long-range applications. The Titanium HD and Stryker models are made in Japan and highly regarded by shooters who know their optics. Englishman Richard Utting of Sharpshootinguk.com is a huge fan of the Delta marque and this is testament to the quality of their optics, coming from a man with access to the best optics on the market.

While a detailed examination of the Titanium HD isn't part of this review, the 4-24x50 lived up to its reputation with crisp, clear images out to 300m, turrets beautifully designed and positive in their movements with excellent illumination. The scope was fitted to the rifle using a quality Spuhr mount which attached directly to the Tikka T3 dovetail and fastened via three screws. Made of aircraft-grade aluminium, the Spuhr mount encompasses 30mm rings and base in a single unit and is made with ultra-precise tolerances. Expensive yes, but it's the best scope-mounting hardware money can buy.

Range test

The rifle was a proven performer with handloaded Berger target projectiles, grouping three shots into 0.3 MOA. This

range test would be looking specifically at factory loads with projectile weights of at least 100gr and upwards, so factory .243 Winchester ammunition was procured from Winchester, Remington, Hornady, Norma (all 100gr soft-point) and I also had some GECO Teilmantel 105gr soft-points.

Mark did stipulate projectile length would be more of a contributing factor (especially in 100gr loads) and this was duly noted. From the outset, at 100m the GECO 105gr Teilmantel loads shot superbly with three shots into 0.5 MOA easily. With 100gr factory loads it was a different story, the Winchester Super X, Remington Core-Lokts and Norma Oryx shooting well at around 1 MOA but the Hornady American Whitetail did poorly, with groups around 2 MOA. For general hunting applications any of the tested loads, with the exception of the Hornady, would be acceptable but this rifle deserves custom handloads and it would be easy to procure a 105-107gr hunting projectile and develop some serious long-range hunting loads.

I did manage to take the custom Tikka out for a deer hunt and it carried beautifully. If the rifle was my own I'd prefer a barrel which would stabilise projectiles in the 80-100gr range and I'd also omit the muzzle brake. But the rifle as supplied would find favour among many long-range, PRS and hunting sports shooters alike.

Summary

Precision Defence Industries can build the hunter or shooter a firearm tailored to their exact requirements and, using top-notch components, the end result is a rifle which will be a pleasure to own and use on the range or in the field. The custom

Tikka T3 in .243 Winchester was a superb example of the rifles PDI build and Bolly Composite stocks are some of the best on the market, currently offered for the Tikka T3/T3x, Lithgow LA102 and Schultz & Larsen actions, to name a few. The price tag is \$6500 but with premium components and optics, it's an investment in quality and performance. More at www.precisiondefenceindustries.com ●

What you get

Bolly Featherweight Tikka T3 right-hand rifle stock with Tikka T3 inlet, factory DBM inlet, 2x flush cups, 'ruff tuff' coating, AirTech LimbSaver recoil pad, BT34 rail.

Lumley Arms Titanium/Alloy T3 DBM.

Tikka T3 stainless action in .243 Winchester with factory trigger and three-round polymer magazine.

Carbon-wrapped Proof Research barrel (Sendero) 24" (610mm), 1:7.5 twist, .243 Win.

APA Gen II 'Little Bastard' brake - 30-calibre x24 TPI.

Gunsmithing: Reface action, chamber and fit barrel, headspace, polish chamber, install muzzle brake.

Spuhr Tikka scope mount (SCT-3001A) T3 (30mm).

Delta Optical Titanium HD 4-24x50 with interchangeable turrets and illuminated reticle.

GrovTec mountain sling.