

September 20, 2020 Rimfire Benchrest Match Report
Simon Bailey

If you are a regular reader of these articles, you will know that Rimfire Benchrest shooters generally complain about the wind as it is the one factor that you can do nothing to change and has a huge effect on both precision and accuracy. An almost imperceptible 1 mph breeze will shift a .22lr match round $1/10^{\text{th}}$ of an inch at 50 yards and $4/10^{\text{ths}}$ at 100 yards. While this might seem like a small number, with the 50 yard X as small as 0.04" diameter and 0.135" at 100 yards, this displacement is huge.

While River Bend is known for challenging wind conditions, Sunday September 20th took the cake for wind at a scheduled Rimfire Benchrest match. While a typical match will see periods of tricky wind, Sunday was nothing but strong 10 to 15 mph winds, incredibly variable with tree bending gusts. Trying to wait out the wind was pointless with the Match Director tying this technique late in the match. With seeming impossible conditions and complaints of "wasting ammo", this was one of the most fun matches the author has fired in some time. Shooters posted some great results while sharing the experience of the wild winds.

While the tournament was originally planned to be four cards at 100 yards, the conditions meant that only two cards were fired at 100 yards before retreating to 50 yards – more on that later. Seventeen competitors were on hand for the mayhem, equally split among the four classes.

All 100 yard stages were fired on the IBS 200 yard Hunter Rifle target with best edge scoring which allows for a maximum of 5X's per card. In the Unlimited class, Grant Toman was using his awesome rifle "Enigma" an X-III action and Broughton barrel and the only rifle (and shooter) to ever shoot a perfect score of 750 at a previous match. Toman started well posting a 247-3X. With the wind flags going in every direction with tails completely horizontal, this was quite a feat. Unfortunately for Toman, Simon Bailey with his 2500X/Mullerworks setup managed to best him by a single point to score 248-2X.

In the Premium class, Steve Gould and John McBrayer were again locked in a battle of the Vudoo V-22's with McBrayer firing a 236-2X to take a slight lead over Gould's 232-1X. In the Semiautomatic class, a superb effort by Angelina Lemley and her Ruger 10/22 put her in 1st with a 228-2X followed by Shaun Forgacs and his 10/22-Green Mountain rig with a 224-1X. In the second relay the five factory shooters took the line with Bob Morris and his restocked Kimber G82 posting a 238-0X over Robert Powers 226-1X using his Tikka while Neal Shadden lost his first sighting shot high, out of the sighting target, to score a miss on a record bull. Disappointed at the handicap, Shadden learned if you miss, miss big!

When the first relay returned to the line the wind was even worse with the big trees really bending and the wind flags spinning in circles – and not the propellers the whole flag tail and all! Making matters worse was that none of the flags, even on adjacent fining points, were pointing in different direction. The mirage was useless as it was totally washed away, so the trick was to pick the flag or two that seemed to agree with the shot placement and ignore the antics of the rest.

The conditions led to lots of laughter, groans and banter as shots either defied the wind by hitting point of aim or went wild. Conditions were swapping so rapidly that it was easy to miss a change and loose a shot by several inches – an odd feeling for a Benchrest match!

In the Unlimited class, scores dropped a few points with Toman shooting a 242-1X and Bailey staying slightly ahead with a 244-2X. In Premium, Gould shot a 235-2X to close the gap to McBrayer who

managed a 233-1X. Semiauto shooter Forgacs recovered a point on Lemley by shooting a 227-1X to Lemley's 226-2X. Lemley's hubby Paul twinned Angelina's 226-2X.

The second relay brought the Factory class to the line again where Bob Morris fired a 237-1X to stay ahead but was bested by Shadden and his Savage BTVS who shot a 237-2X. Shadden confirmed that his rifle likes to put the first shot high, ending his issue with bad sighter shots costing him points.

After two cards, the targets were pulled back to the 50 yard line with the mistaken belief that the 50 yard targets would be more shootable. The Unlimited and Premium shooters were given the unforgiving RBA 50 target while the Semiauto and Factory shooters got the IBS 50 yard target (the big green monster) – a more forgiving target. While moving to 50 yard line felt like a good idea, in practice it was just as hard to shoot accurately as the targets are much smaller and the conditions just as crazy.

Over the next two cards, the wind continued to whip, but a few occasional steady conditions did begin to develop with all flags pointing in the same direction for short periods. Very fast shooting during the readable conditions gave good results, but it was also easy to miss a changeup and throw a shot. Plenty of groaning and laughing could be heard up and down the line. Still, attempting to wait for readable conditions did present its own set of issues. Beginning the third card, the author waited over 6 minutes and fired only one record shot and realized that waiting out the conditions was not a viable option.

In Unlimited, Pat Patterson and his Myers/Broughton rifle found a shootable lot of ammo and started to tighten the gap with a 240-12X and a 247-15X. Toman fired a 242-9X and a 247-13X while Bailey shot a 244-11X and, giving one point back but tallying a great X count, a 246-17X. Bailey took 1st Unlimited with an aggregate 982-32X over Toman's 978-26X.

In Premium and the battle of the V-22's, Gould shot a 232-5x and a 238-7X to McBrayer's 234-2X and 235-4X, leaving McBrayer as 1st Premium one point ahead of Gould, 938-9X to 937-15X. In the Semiauto class, Forgacs continued to shoot well, posting a 227-4X and very solid 245-4X. Unfortunately for Forgacs, Paul Lemley made a strong 50 yard showing firing a pair of 239-5'x to take 1st Semiauto on X count - Forgacs ended with 923-10X and Lemley 923-12X!

In the Factory class, Alan Rauber took a 0 on the third card due to mechanical issues on his Kimber 82G (a loose screw in the bolt) to drop out of competition. Tightening the screw did get him back in the action for the final card. Phil Bettis did well at 50 with his CZ 457, posting a 239-2X and a 241-2X to finish as 2nd Factory with a 930-5X. Morris made it look easy by firing a 247-9X and a 245-0X to take 1st Factory with a 967-10X.

At the conclusion of the match and after the scoring and tabulating was complete the finish positions were announced and the prize money was awarded: \$15.00 for a 1st place finish, \$10.00 for 2nd.

A hearty congratulations to all winners. For the full results, please see the Match Bulletin posted on the Match Results page of the website.

Unlimited 22 – 4 competitors

Simon Bailey 982-32X – 1st Unlimited

Premium 22 – 4 competitors

John McBrayer 939-9X – 1st Premium

Factory 22 – 5 competitors

Bob Morris 967-10X – 1st Factory

Semiautomatic 22 – 4 competitors

Paul Lemley 923-12X – 1st Semi-auto

This was the last match of the 2020 season, so to join in the fun – and this match really was fun – look for the schedule for the 2021 season on the website and forum and come join in next season.