

Valdada's New Benchrest Rifle Scope

By: James Mock

Industry Optic Romania (IOR) of Bucharest has introduced a new scope in their line of Valdada riflescopes (PS Advertiser). This new model is the 36X Competition/Benchrest model and its US headquarters are in Littleton Colorado.

After seeing their ad in this magazine some months ago, I contacted them and asked for one of their new scopes for testing. I promptly received one and mounted it on my BAT competition rifle. (See Photo #1)

Many of the Valdada competition scopes come with a 35mm tube, but this one is "Americanized" and features a 30 mm tube. I used Kelbly 30 mm rings and Davidson bases to attach this scope to my rifle.

Along with the 30 mm tube, other features include; 42mm objective lens, 3.4 inch eye relief, -4/+4 dioptical adjustment, 40 MOA reticle adjustment, 1/8 MOA click value, side parallax focus, and it is 15.5 inches long with a weight of 24 ounces.

Another noteworthy feature is a "mag-lock" support system on the erector tube (Photo #2 shows this feature). It is similar to that used by Nightforce on their Benchrest scope line.

The optics used by Valdada in this scope may well be the outstanding feature. The finest glass from Schott Glaswerk of Germany features MC-7 wide band coating. This 7-layer antireflex coating is found on all lenses and virtually eliminates glare while maximizing light transmission.

Having used many quality scopes, I can say without reservation that the optics in this scope are as good as any I have seen and better than most. The image is sharp to the extreme edges and it is very bright for a scope with a 42 mm objective lens.

Several shooters have looked at the scope and remarked..... "If it were only available in 40 or 45 power, it would be perfect".

I guess that the 36x was chosen because of the 42mm objective, and the 42mm lens was to save weight. Trying to make a perfect scope for Benchrest shooters is quite a chore, and I think that IOR has done an admirable job. As stated above, this scope weighs 24 ounces and one must be careful if he/she plans to shoot it in the Light Varmint or Sporter class. I can shoot it with a barrel that weighs 4# 14oz.. This is with a 7.5 inch BAT rifle/Terry Leonard stock/Kelbly rings (double screw on front and single at the rear).

This riflescope will operate in any weather condition from -40 degrees to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. The tube is airtight and filled with nitrogen/argon and the reticle is glass photo engraved.

This model offers the shooter only one reticle. It features a floating 1/8th MOA dot that floats in 1/16th MOA crosshairs. 1 MOA hash marks are found on both the vertical and horizontal crosshairs. They are very useful in the 600-1000 yard shooting that is so popular today. (Since a picture is worth a thousand words, Photo #3 shows this unique reticle.)

Testing in Competition

The first chance that I had to test this scope in actual competition was a 100/200/300/400 yard score shoot at Howard Prince Memorial range in Goodwill, LA. This is a new range and it has various matches each weekend. The two that interest me are the 100-400 score match and the 600 yard match. There are also several .22 rimfire matches held each month.

This match was held on August 14th 2010 and the weather was typical for Louisiana in August. The temperature was near or over 100 degrees and the humidity was very high.

Having finished second to my friend Bobby Wroten in the last two of these matches, I had high hopes of winning this one. (Bobby had surgery two days before the match and was unable to attend.)

The targets used are typical 6-target / ½ MOA ten-ring for 100 and two hundred yards. For 300 yards, the older 2-target one with 1.5 inch 10-ring is used. This same target is used for 400 yards, but the 1.5 inch 10-ring becomes the X. The old 9-ring is used as a 10 at this longer distance. (Photo #4 shows 5 shots in the "X-ring at 400 yards. This was shot with a good measure of luck.)

Not knowing what to shoot, I chose the 6 PPC for its extreme accuracy at the two closer targets. I thought about trying the Dasher, but decided to use the PPC. Bobby Wroten has won with a 6mm BR using 108 grain Berger bullets and XBR powder.

My load for this match was 29.2 grains of N133 and Richard Milton's 68 grain boat tail bullets and Federal 205 primers. Not wanting to shoot the life out of my newer barrels, I selected a 2007 model that I got from Joe Krupa. It came with the rifle when we traded rifles at the Super Shoot a few years ago. It is a 13.5 twist Krieger that is just less than 22 inches long.

Sorry for the rambling, but I get several calls from readers wanting to know the equipment that I use. I appreciate the PS readers who take the time to let me know that they read my babble.

There was no chance for me to shoot out to 400 yards, but I knew about how many clicks it would take to get on target at the various distances. The problem with shooting in Louisiana in August is MIRAGE.

To remedy this situation, I got to the range early and shot 400 yards first and noted the setting on the scope. (This scope has a provision for one to set the windage and elevation knob at zero.) Next, I shot 300 and noted that setting. Although I did not have a chance to shoot 200 and 100 yards, I was confident that I could see the bullet holes at that distance.

At match time the wind picked up slightly, but 100 yards went well with 50/4X. Over confidence may have been a factor, but 200 yards was more difficult, but I managed to stay "clean". Three hundred yards found me battling the wind, and the grouping was good, but was low and left....costing me 2 points.

I was surprised at my ability to see the bullets strikes at 300 yards, but now I was at 400 and had to put my faith in the zero that I got earlier in the day. I put in ½ MOA of windage to cope with higher wind velocity. To my surprise I thought that I could see a hole in the X-ring, so I quickly fired my five shots and the result was 5 X's.

Without a scope that repeats its adjustments as well as this one, my results would have been much worse.

The next Saturday following the 100-400 yard match was the 600 yard match. This one has given me problems in the past. As a "point-blank" group shooter, I have trouble while shooting "blind".

My equipment for this match consists of the same BAT/Leonard/Valdada platform with an 8.25 to 7.75 gain twist Bartlein barrel chambered for the 6mm Dasher.

My load features 32.0 grains IMR 8208 XBR and a 105 Berger VLD bullet. I use Federal 205 primers and Lapua 6mm BR brass formed in a Hornady hydraulic die. (CAUTION... This load is safe in my rifle, but it should be worked up in each individual rifle. It is a warm load.)

Again, I did not have a chance to practice at 600 yards before the day of the match. From previous experience with the Dasher, I need to be 11 inches high at 100 yards for a 600 yard zero. This has to be tweaked a little, but allows one to get on target.

At the 600 yard distance, we are allowed to shoot an 18" gong to determine bullet strike. This is a great help. Each target has its own gong, and one can shoot it as many times as needed. The person who manages his gong strikes best usually comes out on top.....IF he has a rifle capable of hitting the 3-inch 10-ring consistently. I have such a rifle, but my guidance is often faulty.

The course of fire is four, 5-shot targets for score. (200 points possible) Normally, I load 50 rounds for this course of fire, and that is how many I carried this time.

After arriving about an hour early, I put out my flags and shot a few practice shots. The elevation was good but a strong left to right wind pushed my bullet about nine inches to the right. With gusts there was even more displacement.

I decided to zero my rifle to cause the bullet strike to be one MOA down wind. This proved to be a good decision because a dead on zero will tend to cause one to be "burned" by a let up.

The Valdada's unique MOA reticle allowed me to hold the first hash mark dead center on the bullseye. This is a definite advantage over counting rings. There was so much mirage on this 100 degree day that no one could see the rings.

The ten o'clock hour came and the first target was posted. After a couple of shots to ascertain zero, I proceeded to fire my record shots. I did notice that the wind picked up slightly, but did not return to the gong.....big mistake.

My rifle grouped its shots well, but they were on the right side of the bull with one 10, two 9's and two 8's. Six points were dropped on the first target...what a start.

When preparing for the second target, I adjusted the scope by moving the windage knob three 1/8th MOA clicks to the left. This put me back to shooting 6 inches (1 MOA) to the right.

I used this zero for the next three targets and shot three 48's. Without the reticle in this scope, I don't think that I could have managed a win under the adverse conditions.

Summary

The IOR Valdada scope is everything that one can expect from a premium rifle scope. Its adjustments are crisp and accurate, and its side focus adjusts the parallax out with minimum effort. Perhaps the greatest quality of all is the superb glass. As stated above, the optics are as good as any I have seen.

Different folks have looked at the scope, and most are favorably impressed. Some do not like the reticle, and others say that it is too heavy. I personally like the reticle, and can manage to shoot it in the Light Varmint class (10.5 #) when mounted on my BAT rifle with 21 inch LV barrel.

Another intangible is the perception that it is a "lucky" scope. So far, I have entered two matches and have won both. Perhaps there are some other factors involved in winning these two matches. One such factor is the low turn out of shooters in a mid-summer match. The 600 yard match shot today had only ten brave souls.

The short range "Nationals" are coming up late September, and if I win anything there, I will know for sure that it is a "lucky" scope. I am going to submit this review to the editor before going to Kansas City. When you read this, I will have shot it at the Nationals. Then I must make a decision as to whether to buy it or return it the distributor in Colorado. At the present, I am leaning toward buying it.

If you are looking for a fixed 36X scope that holds point of aim and adjusts exactly 1/8th MOA for each click, then the Valdada is for you. Good shooting,
James Mock

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