

# Precision Airgunning: A Powder Burner's Perspective



by Vince Edwards

Technical innovation and advancement are as much a part of American life as apple pie and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. The sport of airgunning is no exception and provides a niche and a path of progression for beginners to world class shooters alike. Centerfire and rimfire rifle shooters, also known as powder burners, are among the most dedicated members of the shooting sports. While many powder burners began shooting some form of CO<sub>2</sub>, break barrel, or multiple pump airgun as youngsters, those early experiences firmly place airguns in the “low-power” zone. This series of articles will chronicle my journey through multiple phases of airgunning and how the sport has made me a better overall shooter.

My evolution as a shooter can be considered typical for a youngster growing up in the South. I was a little over 10 years old when my paternal grandfather taught me how to shoot a Sears and Roebuck tube-fed .22 short rifle in his back yard. I will always consider those lessons of sight alignment, breath control, and trigger squeeze as the foundation of my success as a rifleman. Grandfather’s back yard was around 30 yards long and we progressed from shooting soda cans to bottle caps. In over a 15-year career of long gun competition including two-gun, three-gun, F-class, and Precision Rifle Series (PRS), I have turned in some noteworthy performances. I have managed a few impressive shots, but none is more memorable than the pigmy rattlesnake I shot in the head at 30 yards from a sitting position in that beloved back yard.

My Dad grew up on a farm and was the quintessential outdoorsman. On my 12th birthday, he introduced me to a Remington 700 chambered in .223 and was impressed at how quickly I became adept at tagging targets out

to 100 yards. That time shooting with my father will always be some of the fondest memories of my life. Shooting that rattlesnake gave me somewhat of a blood lust and I began to beg my father to take me hunting. He and several college buddies went on an annual weekend hunt in the Alabama woods and as a reward for my proficiency with the .223, I was deemed worthy to accompany them. I read every scrap of hunting literature I could at the local library, specifically hunting at that time the preferred game of the Southern sportsman...the whitetail deer. We traveled the better part of a day and upon arrival at our hunting camp my hopes of bagging a whitetail were dashed. It soon became apparent my dad and his friends used this time away from their families (specifically, their wives) as a relaxing bro-bonding thing and had no intention of doing any serious hunting. My dad eventually felt bad and took me out one morning with the .223 and we took a eight squirrels. Back at camp, he taught me how to skin and clean the “tree rats” and we enjoyed squirrel stew in a cast iron pot over a campfire.

Fresh from my hunting/bro-bonding trip I was eager to get back in the woods and concentrated on becoming the best hunter I could be. As my firearm accuracy increased, so did my determination to become a responsible and safe



The author's baby: a customized Texan in 308 that pushes a 135 grain SP at 1069 fps (300 bar fill).

hunter. As a reward for my dedication, my dad loosened up a bit and much to my mother’s chagrin, allowed me to hunt with his friends and their kids. Two months after my sixteenth birthday, I bagged my first whitetail with a broadside head shot at 85 yards from a scoped Marlin 30/30. Although I dropped the six point like a rock, the experience

***“My powder-burning buddies were freaking out and several took turns tagging the steel. I’ll tell anyone that will listen that becoming a good air gun shooter will enhance your abilities to shoot powder burners. Given that ammunition and components are becoming more and more scarce, quality precision air rifles become more of a viable option.” - Vince***

was not what I thought it would be. At that point I grasped that I was more in love with the idea of hunting than hunting itself. I realized I did enjoy punching paper and that began my transition from the hunting world to the target one. I became a member of my city’s only outdoor range and encountered several rifle disciplines that interested me. The first discipline I tried was 3-gun as the lure of competing with an AR, shotgun, and pistol in the same match appealed to me. In no time I branched out to skeet, trap, and several pistol sports. I

became fixated with competing and as I lived in Florida, I had the opportunity to shoot a match each weekend of the year. I was happier than a pig in slop until that fateful Saturday.

As I left the range following an action pistol match, I passed the club’s 200-yard rifle range and noticed a friend shooting at a bench. Intending on stopping to say a brief hello, I complimented him on his beautiful rifle. This led to an hour-long discussion about precision rifle shooting and its essential equipment. His rifle was a custom .22-250 built on a Remington action with a gorgeous, brown laminated thumbhole stock with a gleaming stainless heavy barrel. Mike explained he used the rifle for annual prairie dog hunting trips to the Midwest. He then asked the question that changed my life, “Do you want to shoot it?” I looked at him, lifted my eyebrows indicating the ridiculousness of the question, and took a seat behind the rifle. This was the first time I’d sat behind a bolt action rifle and following an overview of its basic operation; I was ready to shoot. I placed three shots in the center of a one-inch Shoot-N-See at 200 yards and was hooked. Three weeks later, I ordered a Remington 700 SPS in .223 and the rest, as they say, is history.

In my next article, I will discuss my success in the powder burner competitive world, my introduction to airgunning, and how shooting PCP airguns helped me to become a better shooter.

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