



## Rich Mertz' 2007 1,000 Yard Cold Turkey Shoot (500, 750, and 1,000 yards)

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“I’ll try to zero you to the prevailing condition,” I told Ernie Bishop of Gillette, WY. It was windy, no doubt about it, and switching slightly from 3 to 6 o’clock...at least from our shooting position. What it was doing between us, and the targets situated a cool 1,000 yds. distant was a bit more of a guesstimate. You ever wonder about that word—guesstimate? I know I have. It’s commonly used when shooters get together and talk about long-range shooting. I actually looked it up in Webster’s recently, and here’s the definition, “An estimate based largely on incomplete information.” That about sums it up. When shooting long-range in the wind it’s usually part guess, and part estimate—often enough for me though it seems it’s a lot more of the first than the second.



*Ernie Bishop (sitting) and Eric Brewer (standing) spot for Riley Brewer as he prepares to shoot for score at 1,000 yards Albert Mertz monitors his time in the background.*

I kept watching the custom wind flag Vern Seeley out of Sundance, WY had graciously put up for us all to use. It seemed the prevailing wind was 10 mph from about 3 o’clock. When the downrange flags looked about right I told him to send it—no change. I watched through the big Leupold spotting scope as the 7mm 180 grain JLK VLD impacted the upper left corner of the 24” silhouette next to the 1,000 yard scoring target. “Give me  $\frac{3}{4}$  minutes right and 1 down,” I called out. Ernie applied the correction to the custom high-powered long-eye relief Leupold 36X Benchrest scope he had mounted atop the big M.O.A. Magnum handgun chambered in a beltless 7mm Magnum cartridge.

Seconds later another big JLK was airborne, it's needle-like nose cutting a precise path through the elements as it made it's way downrange. Correction was called, and applied several more times before the Range Officer (RO) called a ceasefire. Ernie got set up with five rounds for score, and waited until the RO started his stop watch for the five minute scoring period. Gusting winds up to 10 mph made for some tricky shooting especially through the broken country between us and the targets way out there. I watched through the big Leupold and attempted to call the wind holds as well as I could. After the 5<sup>th</sup> and final shot arrived downrange, I called a good hit when the dust arose from the backstop in as nearly the same spot as it had for the previous four. I thought the group would be good, and when Rich Mertz, director of the shoot called it at 19.75" it was good enough for first place in the 1,000 yard stage of the competition.

This was the first ever Cold Bore 1,000 Yard Long-Range Handgun Competition put on by M.O.A. Guns in Sundance, WY. Rich Mertz, proprietor of the custom handgun company had set the plans in motion more than a year in advance of the shoot. There were three stages to the event—a 500, 750, and 1,000-yard group shoot. Participants were allowed five minutes for an unlimited quantity of sighters, and five minutes for five scoring shots.



*Competitors (standing l-r) Vern Seeley, Albert Mertz (Range Officer/Time and Score Keeper), Eric Brewer, Carroll Pilant, Riley Brewer, Ray Prager, Eric Bishop (kneeling l-r) Steve Mertz, Ernie Bishop, Patrick Auer, Steve Hugel. Missing from photo is Gary Morris.*

Unfortunately, due to work constraints I couldn't arrive until the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the event. This meant that I missed Ray Prager's winning score of 4-9/16" for the 500 yard stage with none other than a custom T.C. Contender in .223 Ackley Improved. Ray shoots the 75 grain Hornady A-Max out of the rig built by On Target Technologies. Ray's been playing at this game for quite awhile now, and has a Contender world record (as far as we know) to his credit with a 775 yard prairie dog shot using the same rig. It was built using an old used 7.7-twist AR-15 barrel that had already had over 2500 rounds down its barrel, even before it was "contenderized." But it still somehow finds a way to

win competitions and shoot varmints a ways out yonder. Awesome performance really--possibly the most noteworthy of the entire competition.

Carroll Pilant, from Sierra Bullets shot a borrowed custom XP-100 in 6mm-284 Win. to win the 750 yard leg of the competition with a group size of 5.25" --truly amazing performance, especially from a borrowed handgun. Early rounds didn't seem to help much really, as wind was pretty consistent at 10-15 mph from 3 to 6 o'clock about all day long.



*(l-r) Ernie Bishop (1,000 yard winner), Carroll Pilant (750 yard winner), and Ray Prager (500 yard winner) stand with Rich Mertz.*

Custom rigs certainly were the norm as one would expect, the most popular of which were Rich's M.O.A. Maximums, chambered in various configurations; and of course the ever-popular XP-100's, in a number of chamberings, as well. Ray shot his custom Savage Striker in .338 Win. Mag. at 1000 yards—a handful, no doubt.

Optics ran the gamut with the 3-12X Burris LER, of course, being the most popular, followed by a few big Leupold VX-III's and Mk. 4's, the big Burris 8-32X Black Diamond, and even a high-powered Bushnell with mil-dot. Ernie had a very specialized 36X Leupold BR that renowned scope customizer, Wally Siebert, up in Washington state had converted to long eye relief with target turrets and custom reticle.

Now the trophies that Rich made up were in a league of their own really. They were simply big slabs of flat rock with a special sandblasted engraving system that made for some of the most beautiful trophies I'd ever laid eyes on. I hope to get me one of 'em myself this year.

Evenings were spent at Rich's place feasting on the Mertz' fixins'. And fine they were thanks to his wife Theresa. Entertainment was supplied by Carroll Pilant, Ernie Bishop, and yours truly. No high heels/short skirt dancing types here though--just several talks on handloading for long-range shooting, long-range hunting, and reticle-rangefinding respectively. Shooters certainly seemed to enjoy themselves at the event, and the prize table had to be seen to be believed. Even consolation prizes, such as 250

Nosler 6.5 140's that I got were significant, which darn near covered the entrance fee of \$50.

This year's competition is scheduled for June 12-14. There will be some changes this year also such as a couple of divisions based on weight and barrel length limitations. So if you've got a nice specialty pistol stashed away somewhere collecting dust, then get it out slap a big scope on top, and come on out to picturesque Sundance, WY this June. We'll keep the light on and the range open for ya'.

**CONTACTS:**

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