



IHMSA NEWS

Official Publication of the International
Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association, Inc.

Volume 19 • Issue 5

AS SEEN IN
IHMSA NEWS

The Ranging Shot

ALPEN #745 20-60X60



by Todd Spotti

All new silhouette shooters, or those who are just thinking about getting into the sport, are faced with a common dilemma i.e. how much money do they really want to spend on this thing? Even the bare basics such as a gun, dies, powder, bullets, blast shield, elbow pad, etc. etc. can send costs shooting beyond the orbit of Mars. If the new person doesn't have any reloading gear, the situation becomes even worse. Now some of these costs can be reduced by buying previously owned gear from other shooters, but even so, getting into our sport is darn expensive. In these days of economic uncertainty, someone interested in silhouette shooting is likely to be very cautious about how they spend their hard earned cash.

One of the "must have" pieces of gear in every silhouette shooter's equipment bag is a good quality spotting scope. The

question now becomes "How much does the new shooter have to spend on a spotting scope in order to effectively see their hits and misses on the silhouette targets."

It's no secret that a super premium spotting scope (Lieca, Swarovski, etc.) can cost as much or more than a Freedom Arms revolver and a TC combined. Even a high quality spotter such as a Kowa etc. can easily cost more than the shooter's gun. There's no doubt that those mega dollar scopes produce brilliant, distortion free images. However, is that rarified level of optical efficiency really needed by the new shooter? I would say that in the great majority of cases that it's not.

The 80mm plus premium scopes shine best when seeing conditions are poor i.e. heavy overcast, targets located in deep shade, very dark backgrounds, etc.

There's no doubt that such conditions exist at a number of ranges, however, in my experience I would have to say that those ranges are the exception rather than the rule. Most ranges by design give good, unfettered viewing of the targets, and that most matches are shot in sunny or bright overcast conditions. That being the case, I would say then that the typical new silhouette recruit doesn't need a near thousand dollar or more scope with a massive objective lens to play our game. Now if they have the cash and want to spend it, that's great. However again, I would say that would not represent the typical new silhouette shooter who is usually a hard working family person that has to carefully watch how they spend their money.

A number of years ago I did an article on modestly priced spotters. Considering the large amount of email it generated (even from a couple of foreign countries) I'd say that the article was well received. This indicated to me that there was considerable interest in the subject. (BTW, the article is available on line at LASC.US). Well, I recently came across another fairly inexpensive spotter that I thought that might be of interest. It's the 60mm, Model 745 from Alpen (alpenoutdoors.com). It sells for around \$210 in most places on the internet. The first thing that hits you about the scope is the unusual design. It kind of looks like a lazy letter "L". This is because the scope body itself is bent into a 45 degree angle

rather than the usual practice of taking a regular straight body and slapping an eyepiece on the end at forty-five degrees. I like the 745 as the angled part of the scope is longer than on most and therefore gives the shooter more flexibility on where to place it, especially when shooting from the Creedmore position.

This Alpen is a 20-60X type that is 100% waterproof, not just water resistant like some much more expensive scopes I could name. Consequently it can be fully immersed in water. Some may say "so what", but life is funny in that it throws a surprise at us every now and then. For instance, while on a camping trip long ago I dropped a non-water proofed spotting scope into the water while unloading a canoe. That was the end of that spotter. The interior of the scope was now permanently fogged up. In desperation, I even tried to bake it in the oven (at very low heat) to drive out the moisture from the inside, but all I did was to cause the coatings on the lenses to change color to a kind of pink and purple. (Oh well, desperate men do desperate things.) At any rate, 100% waterproofing is a good thing. You never know when you might need it.

To be honest, I think that 60 power on

Continued on Page 12

the RANGING SHOT

with
TODD SPOTTI



Continued from Page 1

scopes with a 60mm objective lens is way too much magnification. Even my premium quality 60mm spotting scope with ED lenses only goes up to 45X. In my experience, when one cranks up the power to 60X on a 60mm objective, the image is darkened excessively and the resolution goes to pot. However I have to admit that I'm definitely in the minority on this subject as there are a ton of people out there who like lots and lots of magnification power. So with the 745 it's there to be used if you want it. If you don't want to use it, just dial the magnification down to whatever suits you best. For me, I like to have all of my scopes normally set on around 25 - 30X to get optimum resolution and brightness and still have plenty of magnification.

For the money, you really get quite a bit in the way of technical features with the Alpen. As mentioned, there's full water proofing, it's also fully multicoated, and it uses BaK4 prisms, which is the best type. Additionally, there's also a tripod mount rotation collar around the scope's body. When fastened to a tripod, the collar allows the scope to be rotated right and left around its axis to any position you like by simply loosening a thumb screw. Most people find this to be very useful and it's something that all 45 degree type scopes should have. At 100 yards, the 745 gives you a little over an eleven foot field of view at 20X, and a five and a half foot FOV at 60X. It will also focus down to 15 feet. There's a nice sliding sun shade and a rubber fold down eye cup as well. Soft rubber lens caps are also included, although they're not tethered. Lastly, although the specifications don't mention it, the scope is fully rubber armored. When combined with the rugged body, the armor makes the 745 a scope that's very resistant to bumps and hard knocks.

The only disappointment in the optics department was the amount of eye relief available. In order to get the widest field of view that the scope provided, I had to remove my glasses and move my eye forward to where my eyebrow was nearly touching the eyepiece. If I wore my glasses, I started to get the "tunnel effect". However, one can't expect a low priced spotter to be perfect.

The 745's optical performance out at the shooting range was very good. Interestingly, changing the focus was a little different with this scope. Instead of turning a ring on the eyepiece, the viewer turns a knob located about half way down the scope body. Actually, I liked this arrangement better because it seemed to cause less scope shake when making adjustments. In full sunshine, the image was both bright and contrasty. Additionally, I wasn't able to detect any distortions even out at the edges of the image. After I returned home I pointed the scope at an electrical tower some 300 yards away and had no problem seeing a half dozen sparrows sitting on the very top cross member. I could also easily see bolt heads and rust streaks around the structure as well. Just for fun, I then compared the 745 with another manufacturer's 60mm scope that I had on hand and which cost \$65 more, and found that under the same bright, sunny conditions, I couldn't detect any difference between the Alpen and the more expensive scope.

In summary, the Alpen 745 is a capable, inexpensive spotter that will nicely fill the bill for most typical spotting conditions. It even comes with a little bench tripod and a nylon carry bag with strap. The new silhouette shooter or anyone else on a budget would do well to take a serious look the Alpen 745.