



MY JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT RIFLE

Dirk Klaver

Finding the perfect rifle can involve many trials and tribulations – including cashing in the kids' study policies and selling a kidney! However, the superb end product, built by American gunsmith, Ian Kelbly, made all the sacrifices worthwhile.

I started competition shooting quite late in life but I have always been fascinated with rifle accuracy. I bought my first rifle, a CZ .222, when I started working with the aim of target shooting. Soon after that I bought my first hunting rifle, a Remington .30-06. I suppose that is where the journey started for me.

A friend of mine introduced me to reloading, and from then on I was always keen to get the best accuracy from the rifles I owned. This resulted in constant changes (itchy-ass syndrome!) to my rifles and scope combinations. I sold the Remington and built a custom .30-06 on a K98 action. I immediately found that the accuracy improved and that I had a very accurate hunting rifle.

Then I was introduced to Veldskiet, so a new rifle was needed. I built a 308 on a K98 action but soon found out that this was not a suitable combination for *veldskiet*. My brother and Willem Immelman were shooting 6XC with Nightforce scopes – at that stage a revolutionary calibre-and-scope combination in South Africa – so my next rifle, a 6XC, was built for *veldskiet*, unfortunately also on a K98 action.

As I learnt more about barrel twist rates, trigger lock time, BC, seating depth and all the other factors that make a rifle accurate, I upgraded once again to a Savage 6XC. This was a very good rifle and I could shoot through the same hole at 200 m, which was the ultimate test of a rifle's accuracy for me. I chose a 1:10 barrel twist and was shooting the Berger 69 bullet, which was great. However, it was affected significantly in the wind as it was fast but had a low BC.

I changed, yet again, this time to a Broughton barrel with a Berger 87VLD. This combination was great and ticked all the boxes, so I spent the next few years fiddling with stocks and scopes. The rifle specification stayed the same.

Then came the big 50, and as I sat reflecting on my shooting journey, I realised that I had limited years left to do competitive shooting. I decided to build the best rifle I possibly could. I am not a fan of cars or other toys; my rifles have always been my favourite hobby.

I spent the next two months doing extensive research into what the top shooters were shooting with and what equipment they were using. I used America as my research base as I think that they are on the cutting edge. I also focused on the PRS series as there is a lot of stats and information, and it is also the closest shooting discipline to our *veldskiet*.

I eventually decided on a McMillan A5 stock with a Bartlein barrel and a Kelbly Atlas tactical action. My first idea was to import the parts and have someone build the rifle here, but this was quite complicated as the parts came from different suppliers. So I decided to get the rifle built in America. I contacted Ian Kelbly from Kelbly's Inc and asked him if he could build me a rifle using my preferred components. And so the process began.

I chose to build two identical rifles in 6XC and .260 Rem calibres – the XC for *veldskiet* and the .260 for long-range and PRS shooting competitions.

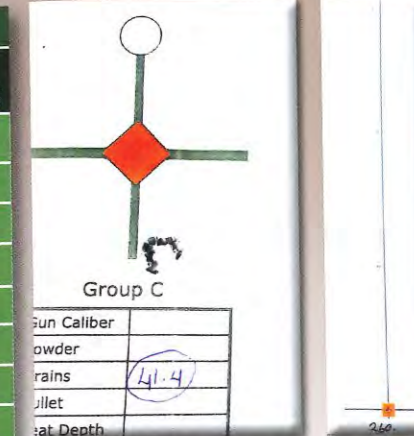
For the 6XC, I chose the following specifications:

- Atlas tactical repeater action with a .308 flat bolt face and a fluted bolt. TG mechanical ejector
- 20 MOA Picatinny rail
- Shilen top safety trigger
- Metal finishes – black nitride action, sanded barrel
- CDI precision DBM- 5rd AICS magazine
- Pillar bedded into McMillan A5 stock
- Colour – two-colour, speckleton granite finish
- Bartlein #4 Bull Sporter barrel with 24" length
- Std. neck with 1-9" twist

For the .260, I decided on the following specifications:

- Atlas Tactical Repeater Action with a .308 flat bolt face and a fluted bolt. TG mechanical ejector

| 23 April 2017 | | Broederstroom | | Time Constraint: 12.1 | | |
|---------------|----------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------|---------|
| No | Name | Surname | Cartridge | Number of hits out of 26 | Point | Ranking |
| 1 | Etienne | De Beer | Howa Varminter .308 Win | 16 | 7.26 | 6 |
| 2 | Kedaf | Rossouw | RSA .308 Win | 12 | 8.09 | 9 |
| 3 | Kobie | Griesel | K98 Action .308 Win | 22 | 10.09 | 2 |
| 4 | Cobus | Frey | Remington 700 .270 Win | 4 | 10.40 | 12 |
| 5 | Werner | Schoeman | Ruger RPR 6.5 Creedmoor | 18 | 10.35 | 5 |
| 6 | Nicholas | Manias | CZ 550 .308 Win | 13 | 12.26 | Time |
| 7 | Charles | Cassel | Howa Varminter .308 Win | 15 | 10.14 | 7 |
| 8 | Shaun | Peplar | Savage LRP .260 Rem | 14 | 10.50 | 8 |
| 9 | Dirk | Klaver | Kelby .260 Rem | 22 | 8.08 | 1 |
| 10 | Jaco | Breytenbach | Howa Varminter .308 Win | 8 | 10.52 | 11 |



100 m 3-shot grouping and on the right a 100 m Tall Test – 3 groupings in same hole 2 shots

- 20 MOA Picatinny rail
- Shilen top safety trigger
- Metal finishes – black nitride action, sanded barrel
- CDI precision DBM- 5rd AICS magazine
- Pillar bedded into McMillan A5 stock
- Colour – two-colour, speckleton granite finish
- Bartlein #12 Heavy Palma barrel with 26" length
- Std. neck with 1-8" twist
- Little Fat Bastard muzzle brake

After about five months, the rifles were ready to ship to South Africa. I obtained the required permits, cashed in the children's study policies, sold a kidney and the rifles were on their way!

My first impression was that the rifles had a great build quality and that the attention to detail was superb. In my opinion American gunsmiths are able to build a better quality rifle thanks to their advanced machinery and cutting-edge technology.

The rifles were beautifully finished off and the actions were as smooth as silk. In fact, they were definitely the best rifles I ever had the privilege of holding in my hands.

I mounted my scopes and set off to the range to break in the barrels. Even as early as the break-in I could feel and see that the rifles were going to be something special

as both were exceptionally accurate from the start.

I decided to change from S365 to Vihtavuori N550 powder and HBN (Hexagonal Boron Nitride) bullet coating, and these two changes had immediate results with both rifles shooting through the same holes at 100 m and grouping very tightly up to 400 m. The Vihtavuori powder is very consistent and the speed difference is single digit, which leads to greater accuracy.

I entered the first long-range competition with the Kelbly .260 and had a fantastic shoot, winning the competition – my first-ever win – with a score of 22 / 26 gongs in 8 minutes. The range started from 388 m, extending to 1 050 m with gong sizes from 1 to 2 MOA at the different distances.

To me it was a great achievement and gave me a real sense of accomplishment – as well as a feeling of justification for embarking on the project.

I am enjoying the Kelbly rifles tremendously and am delighted that I had them built. I have no regrets (even though my wife is still not talking to me and I am still sleeping in the dog house!) and am glad I did not wait, or decide to do it at a later time. Life is too short and we don't know how long we will be able to enjoy the things that we really like doing.

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| DATE: | 23/04/2017 |
| NO.: | 16 |
| NAME: | Dirk Klaver |
| RIFLE: | |
| CALIBRE: | |

| DISTANCE | STANDARD CLASS | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------|----------|
| | TARGET 1 | TARGET 2 | TARGET 3 |
| 388 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 465 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 500 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 540 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 608 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 834 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| 1,054 m | X X X | X X X | X X X |
| HITS / 26: | 22 / 26 | | |
| TIME: 12 MINUTES | 8.08 | | |

