

PRECISION

RIFLE SHOOTER

UINTAH PRECISION 6.5 CM

BOLT-GUN WITH
AR LINEAGE

Sightmark
Presidio
3-18x50

8.6 BLK

The case for a new cartridge

OPTICS GALORE

- Sightmark Presidio
- Burris Veracity
- Vortex Strike Eagle
- Leupold Mark 5HD
- Trijicon Tenmile
- Burris Signature HD

13 STEPS

TO DIAL IN YOUR
HUNTING RIFLE

P.112

A CUSTOM MOUNTAIN RIFLE
SQUARES OFF AGAINST A MODERN
CHASSIS GUN. FOR HIGH-COUNTRY
HUNTING, WHICH ONE WINS?



AVAILABLE AT PARCS

BY D. FAUBION PHOTOS BY EMILY ROBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

RIFLES INC. LIGHTWEIGHT 70

Unless you're wealthy or an Alaskan or Canadian, a sheep hunt is a special occasion. When my buddy drew a bighorn sheep tag in Idaho, it only made sense to build a specialized mountain rifle. As it turned out, I went crazy and commissioned two 6.5 PRC rifles for this once-in-a-lifetime adventure.



ZERMATT TL3 BUILD

Zermatt TL3 Action
zermattarms.com

MDT HNT26 Chassis
mdttac.com

PROOF Barrel
proofresearch.com

TriggerTech Trigger
triggertech.com

Seekins Rings
seekinsprecision.com

BONE Bipod
bone-bipod.com

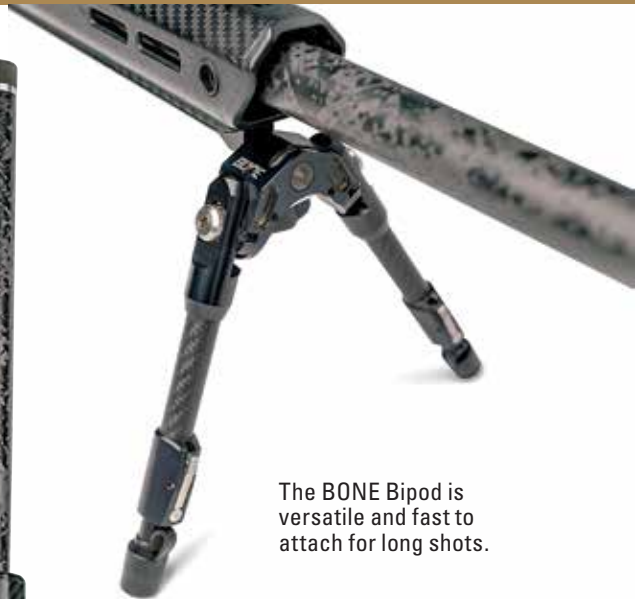
RIFLES INC. LIGHTWEIGHT 70: TRADITION MEETS PERFORMANCE

Lex Webernick of Rifles Inc. is a master at building custom, lightweight rifles. All Rifles Inc. guns are surgically accurate and ooze charm. While Webernick specializes in Remington 700 builds, the version seen here is called the "Lightweight 70."

It began life as a stainless Winchester Model 70 Classic in .300 WSM. Webernick worked his magic on the action and then spun on a 20-inch Benchmark barrel chambered in 6.5 PRC. The barreled action was glass bedded in his ultralight yet rigid handmade stock, and the factory trigger was replaced by a Timney. The Leupold 2.5-8x36mm VX-3i features a custom Tactical Milling Reticle and is held in place by lightweight S&K scope mounts. The final addition was a flush-cup adaptor installed in the stock for a glorious Javelin Bipod. The result is a drool-worthy mountain rifle that weighs 6-pound, 12.5-ounce unloaded.



For backpack hunting, volume is always a concern. MDT's HNT26 chassis folds to take up less room during travel.



The BONE Bipod is versatile and fast to attach for long shots.

ZERMATT TL3 BUILD: MODERN CHASSIS GUN

This DIY precision hunting rifle began with a Zermatt Arms TL3, an action built to such tight tolerances that companies offer prefit barrels. The 24-inch PROOF Research barrel is also chambered in 6.5 PRC, a round built for mountain hunting.

Additions include an MDT HNT26 chassis built of magnesium and carbon fiber, TriggerTech trigger, Seekins Precision rings, and a Bushnell LRHS 3-12x44mm scope. For stability, a BONE Bipod and M-LOK mount was added. For the modern mountain hunter, this 9.5-pound rig sacrifices a bit of weight for long-range capability.

MOUNTAIN RIFLE BATTLE

A mountain rifle is a specialized tool for backcountry hunting. It must be reliable, accurate, shrug off abuse and weather, and easy to carry. That's a lot to ask for. Let's see how these rifles compare in the categories that matter.

1. RELIABILITY

It's hard to stop a bolt-action repeater. There's just not much that can go wrong. Forced to choose, the Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70 gets my vote for reliability, but this has nothing to do with the legendary controlled-feed Model 70 action. In my experience, push-feed actions are every bit as reliable. However, I give the nod to the Lightweight 70 in this category due to its one-piece stock and blind magazine. There's just less to go wrong or lose on the multi-day hunt in the mountains.

On the custom chassis rifle, MDT's HNT26 is a marvelous addition. Crafted from lightweight carbon fiber and magnesium, it's impervious to weather, adjustable for fit, and has a folding stock, which makes it easy to carry on a pack. The downsides to the chassis are moving parts, a host of screws, and a detachable magazine that could get lost.

Compared to the Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70, which has two action screws and sling swivels, the HNT26 chassis adds five handguard screws, one grip screw, and a pair each for the adjustable cheekpiece and M-LOK bipod adaptor. Even with Loctite, there's more pieces to worry about on a mountain hunt. When you add in the potential for debris lodging in the folding stock hinge, it's hard not to pick the Lightweight 70 for reliability.

Winner:
Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70

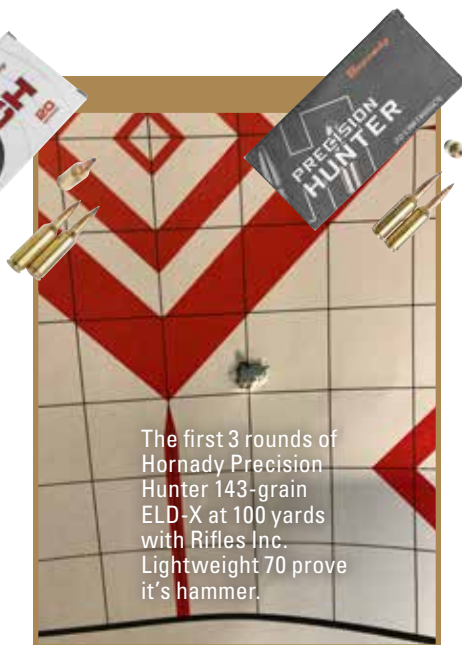
2. ACCURACY

I'm not sure there's a difference between the two rifles in mechanical accuracy. In fact, they both shoot better than me. But let's give this a stab.

With the Lightweight 70, the first three shots of Hornady's 143-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter were touching at 100 yards. Webernick has made a

RIFLES INC. LIGHTWEIGHT 70

- Rifles Inc.**
riflesinc.com
- Winchester Model 70**
winchesterguns.com
- Benchmark Barrels**
benchmark-barrels.com
- Leupold Optics**
leupold.com
- Timney Triggers**
timneytriggers.com
- S&K Scope Mounts**
scopemounts.com
- Hornady**
hornady.com



The first 3 rounds of Hornady Precision Hunter 143-grain ELD-X at 100 yards with Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70 prove it's hammer.

career of building hyper-accurate rifles, so this is no surprise.

The Zermatt TL3 build was done by me, and I'm the exact opposite of a talented builder. Despite this, the TL3 has proven to be the most lethal rifle I've owned. Quality components obviously matter, as does the added weight and adjustable chassis that fits the shooter, but the Zermatt TL3 makes long-range shots easy. It's a boringly accurate hunting rifle that's proven sub-half-MOA with factory ammo.

My one gripe with the Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70 is stock fit. It has too much drop at the comb for my long neck, so it takes more work to print tiny groups. With the Zermatt TL3, it's easy for anyone to shoot well.

Winner:
Zermatt TL3



3. ABUSE/WEATHER

Weather resistance is a tie. Both have impervious stocks and stainless-steel and coated barreled actions. It would take extreme salt spray to phase either of 'em.

As for abuse, an experience in Texas made the winner of this one easy. It was largely my fault, but it could have gone bad.

Last fall, Joel Moore used the Zermatt TL3 build on his first aoudad hunt. An opportunity at a mature ram occurred after three days of bouncing around in a side-by-side on gnarly ranch roads (see where this is going?). After a long stalk, his shot was 356 yards, a perfect one-shot kill with Hornady's 147-grain ELD-M. The ram never took a step.

After the shot, he handed the chassis rifle to his guide, who noticed the barrel was loose — 3/4-turn loose. Yikes! Because the TL3 action is easy to swap barrels, I only installed it hand tight. Unfortunately, I didn't pass that along to Joel.

How he hit within an inch of his point of aim at 356 yards with a loose barrel will forever be a mystery. The next morning, I retorqued the handguard screws (also loose) and hand-tightened the barrel before checking zero. It was spot on. That night, my cousin Andy killed his aoudad ram with the TL3 at 406 yards, another one-shot kill.

Kudos to Zermatt and PROOF, because my error could have resulted in a \$5,500 lost animal. Due to the simplicity of the Rifles Inc. stock, it gets my vote for durability.

Winner:
Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70



An aoudad may not be a true sheep, but it's close enough. This ram was stoned by a single 147 ELD-M from the Zermatt TL3 at 356 yards.



4. EASE OF CARRY

A mountain rifle is carried a lot more than it's shot, so this should be easy. The Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70 is 2.5 pounds lighter. In the mountains, that matters. Plus, the blind magazine makes it easier to carry in the hand when navigating rough terrain or taking quick shots.

That said, the folding stock on the TL3 spoils you. It enables the rifle to go unnoticed while strapped to a pack. In the same scenario, the fixed length of the Lightweight 70 means the barrel can catch branches while hiking below tree line, which doesn't happen with the TL3.

This is a close one, but I must give ease of carry to Rifles Inc. Weight matters, and while backpacking, 2 pounds equals food for a full day or a sleeping bag. Since mountain hunting occurs above tree line, the added length isn't significant.

Winner:
Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70

THE RESULTS

With three wins to one, the clear winner of this mountain rifle battle is the Rifles Inc. Lightweight 70. Even though it sacrifices distance and precision to the Zermatt TL3 build, the Rifles Inc. 6.5 PRC is lighter, more durable, and easier to carry on a mountain hunt above timberline. This explains why we brought it along on the Idaho sheep hunt. Even though we never killed a ram, the rifle was an excellent choice for a 32-mile hike at 10,000 feet in the most brutal country I've hunted.

In fact, for most mountain hunts (deer, bear, elk, goats), it would be hard to pass up the Rifles Inc. 6.5 PRC, as it's built for the task. But as a lightweight backpacker, it pains me to say that if I were to hit the lottery and draw a big-horn sheep tag, I'd pack the heavier Zermatt TL3 instead.

For a once-in-a-lifetime hunt, I can control my fitness level, so a few extra pounds of rifle won't kill me. What I can't control is shot distance on a dream sheep hunt.

Someday, I hope to have one opportunity at a bighorn ram. In that dream scenario, either rifle would likely work fine. However, I'd kick myself if the shot were long and the Zermatt TL3 wasn't in my hands. **PRS**

The Benchmark Barrel is wispy compared to PROOF's carbon-fiber version, but they both stack rounds with regularity.

A flush cup adaptor for the Javelin Bipod was permanently mounted into the Lightweight 70 stock to keep it trim and lightweight.

