

A top quality rifle deserves a scope with similar attributes.



PERFECTING PAIRINGS

The mini-series draws to a close with Pete Evans a step further up the optics ladder

PART 3

To close this current foray into the world of optics, I thought I would feature something a bit special, in the form of the Hawke Sidewinder 4.5-14 x 44. For a scope of this quality, it's worth pairing it with a rifle that will

exploit its enhanced optical quality, to allow accurate shot placement at range.

The Daystate Regal has been with us for a few years and is a product of evolution, starting with the Huntsman, and now for the present,

culminating with the Revere. Many shooters the world over value its compact size, unobtrusive weight, and excellent balance. So smitten was I with the Regal that I ended up buying two, one in .177, the other .22 FAC



The Regal needed high mounts to clear the magazine.



Those dials lock in position to maintain zero – just pull up and adjust as the range varies.



Those targets will always be in focus with that sidewinding adjustment; reticle illumination is also just a turn away.

specification running at 30 ft.lbs.

There are distinct advantages to using rifles at this power, but believe it or not, shooting at extreme range is not one of them. However, I do shoot this rifle at ranges I wouldn't consider with a sub-12 ft.lbs. gun because the extra power gives confidence to extend the range to around 50 metres, dependent on weather conditions.

At this extended range, it is important that the scope gives a clear image, to ensure pin-point accuracy in regard to shot placement – high power doesn't give licence to sloppy marksmanship. With the brief set, let's take a look at this top model from Hawke and see what it has to offer the hunter.

INVESTMENT

They say it's rude to talk about money, but there is no getting away from the fact that this scope is a fairly major investment – priced at £459, it costs roughly half the price of the rifle, but we have already established that it is false economy to fit a cheap, poorly performing scope to

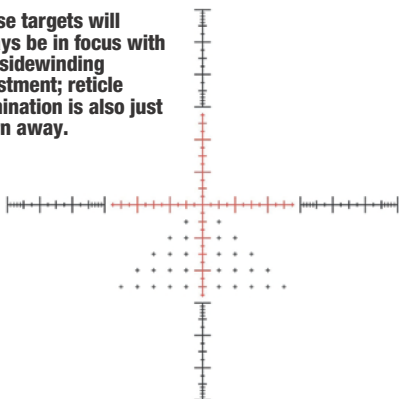
an expensive rifle, so to my mind, half the rifle price seems quite well balanced.

The Sidewinder model has been available for some time now, and the model I have for test is the latest to roll off the line. It offers some significant improvements over the older models. The original models were very good indeed, so I'm looking forward to sampling the changes. Time to get on and see what the Sidewinder has for us.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Coming in at 680g in weight and 339mm in length, this new model weighs less than the previous model, which might at first suggest that Hawke has cut corners in the manufacturing, which couldn't further from the truth. The 30mm diameter mono tube is made from 6061-T6 aluminium, which to you and I equates to aircraft-grade material. This will account for the scope's weight loss. It has also been subjected to hard heat treatment, which means that it will be stronger than its predecessors and because of the material used, it will be more resistant to corrosion, even if the surface layer is damaged. All things considered, it appears that Hawke has designed this scope for the long haul, with the rough and tumble of field use carefully taken into account.

Those targets will always be in focus with that sidewinding adjustment; reticle illumination is also just a turn away.





Zoom ring has a finger grip, but also has a lever which can be fitted in minutes to enhance the feel.



It focuses fast, but won't move position, thanks to the locking ring.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Image quality will always be governed by the quality of the glass used, and in this case the Sidewinder has the new Hawke System H5 optic, which I am sure you are keen to learn more about.

Hawke make use of crown glass, which is a high quality glass used in precision optical tools. It removes distortion at the edges, and guards against chromatic aberration. All this means that the user can expect a very clear sight picture even at the edges, with vivid unblurred colour. The lens itself is subjected to 18 layers of coating to ensure the highest levels of light transmission, whilst guarding against damage.

MULTIPLE AIM POINTS

Through that ocular lens you will see the 10x half mil reticle, which has multiple aim points, together with extra windage aim points on the lower section of the reticle. If you are into your mil spacings, you will love this one and as the title suggests, at 10x magnification the mil spacing will be accurate. The model featured is second focal plane, whereas the 4-16 x 50 and 6-24 x 56 are first focal plane.

As you might expect, the reticles are illuminated red, offering six levels of illumination dependent on the application, the step-wise control means you can pre-select the brightness level, switching it on and off as required.

LOCKED IN

Adjustment for the vertical and horizontal comes courtesy of target-style turrets, which first pull

Nice to see a useful set of accessories included.



up to make the adjustment, and push down to lock into place. Once zeroing is finalised, it is possible to reset the turret to read zero, and then dial in a zero for differing range, and then return to zero again. The vertical turret also has an indicator to let you know how many adjustment revolutions have taken place, saving having to count. All these adjustments offer very positive clicks, and with the locking facility there is no chance of altering zero inadvertently.

“the step-wise control means you can pre-select the brightness level”

Adjacent to the illumination control is the parallax adjuster, which allows adjustment from 9m to infinity; the 44mm objective lens model comes with a 65mm diameter sidewheel, whilst the 50/56mm model has a 100mm size.

FAST FOCUS

Fast focus ocular lenses are now common on many scopes, but are criticised for their ability to change position whilst being jostled in a gun bag. Although the Sidewinder has a fast-focus lens, it can be locked into position by using a knurled collar, meaning its position will always be preserved.

I have already mentioned the inclusion of a sidewheel, but there are other useful extras included. These include; a 100mm sunshade, elasticated lens covers, lens cloth, and zoom ring lever. That latter feature is a stubby threaded lever which screws into the zoom ring allowing some extra leverage, which could be important if a person has dexterity problems, or perhaps in cold weather. To facilitate its use there is a hex blanking screw to remove first – a hex key and some spare screws are also included.

OUT AND ABOUT

All these features sound impressive, but what of performance in the real world? There's only

one way to find out, so out into the field we go.

Following an initial zero of 50m, I engaged targets at that range and beyond, in varying light situations. The image quality really has to be experienced to be believed. It really is that good, adding so much confidence for those distant targets – the crown glass and extra coatings really earn their keep.

Repeatable accuracy was the theme, with no loss of zero when winding through the adjustments, and importantly, no shifting zero

as the magnification was increased. There is nothing flimsy or loose about this scope; everything feels well engineered and built to last, and is covered by the coveted Hawke lifetime warranty, of course.

REWARDS

I've already said that this was not a cheap scope. I've mentioned it in terms of investment, which speaks of something that returns profit – not that selling your Sidewinder will increase your bank balance, but rather profit your shooting. Good results come from natural talent, practice, perseverance, and using equipment of the highest quality. Mark my words, the Sidewinder is a very impressive piece of equipment – my only complaint is that I have to return it! ■

INFO

■ Hawke Sidewinder 4.4-14 x 44.
RRP £459
■ Hawke Optics UK. www.hawkeoptics.com. Avocet House. Wilford Bridge Road. Melton. Woodbridge. Suffolk. IP12 1RB.
Tel: 0345 345 5555.