

## PETE EVANS

Just one thing left to do, make a choice of which one is best for you.



# A MATCHED PAIR

Pete Evans starts a mini series giving some suggestions on scope choice for differing rifle types

I am a firm believer that a telescopic sight (scope), should not only serve the purpose of the user, but also suit the gun to which it is fitted. Now, we all know that provided the correct mounts are used, there is nothing stopping you from fitting almost any scope to any gun, but how does that affect balance, and is that degree of magnification really essential for the purpose?

During the next few months, it is my intention to explore some of these issues, and highlight ideas that you might wish to consider.

To help us with our quest, the good people of Hawke and Deben – Jamie Ransome and Yvonne Jenkins, respectively, agreed to supply me with some models of my choosing, to illustrate the points I am attempting to make.

### HAWKE

It's hard to believe that Hawke has only been around for the last 15 or so years, to me it seems much longer. During that time, there has been a meteoric rise in their popularity, and I will attempt to outline what I believe the reasons for this to be – and Hawke did not approach me to write these features – I chose them!



### BALANCED USE

Most of my own shooting centres around informal targets, with a dash of hunting thrown in, the majority of this with a sub-12 ft.lb. rifle, hence I am something of an evangelist in the use of scopes at the lower magnification range. I have been having quite a lot of fun recently with the Weihrauch HW99, which you will see in more detail in future articles, the key features of this gun being its relatively light weight, and compact dimensions. Another new acquisition is an Air Arms S200, a handy carbine-length rifle, the handling of which I would loathe to compromise by fitting a large scope.

For these rifles I have two top picks; the Vantage 2-7 x 32 for the HW99, and the Airmax of the same magnification for the S200. Two similar magnification scopes with enough

*“This reticle seems finer in appearance than those on older Vantage models”*

differences to warrant their existence, but a shared virtue – compact size, which will do nothing but enhance the handling of these two guns. Let’s get on and take a look through these two candidates and see what they have to offer.

### GET THE AD VANTAGE

The Vantage range might be the entry level, but expect performance beyond that which you would expect to find on a scope at this price point. Within the Vantage range there are a huge number of models – consulting the Hawke 2020 catalogue, I counted no less than 47 Vantage models ranging from £49 - £349, more than enough choice for anyone, but to narrow the field a bit, we will be considering the Vantage 2-7 x 32 parallax adjustable illuminated reticle model, coming in at £105.

Starting with the basics; the scope is 292mm long and weighs 450g, so from the outset we can see we are dealing with a relatively lightweight compact scope, which is going to be important if we want to preserve the balance of our gun.

On the subject of size, the two mounting areas on the scope body measure 30mm and 40mm, front and rear respectively, which could lead to problems using a one-piece mount if the centres are too far apart, the tube itself being 25mm. In practice, this was easily overcome by using a set of double-strap, two-piece mounts, which meant the scope could be positioned perfectly for eye relief.

### SCOPING OUT THE FEATURES.

Starting at the objective lens, we have a 32mm diameter lens, parallax adjustable from 30ft to infinity, which for airgun use is a very useful feature. This will mean the target can be accurately focused at any range, which in turn will aid accurate target acquisition no end. The adjustment is smooth, and has a contoured surface with just enough stiffness to ensure that it doesn’t move of its own accord.

Moving rearward and on to the capped adjustment turrets, which I would describe as semi-low profile; the adjustment comes courtesy of knurled, finger-friendly dials with very positive increments, and 1/4 MOA adjustment.

Turn through 90 degrees from the vertical adjustment turret and you get the rheostat for the illuminated reticle, which gives a choice of red or

green, with five brightness settings in either colour. Each step is positive, and importantly, the battery cover is not overly tight – a problem I have encountered on other scopes.

Last port of call, the eye bell, which features the zoom ring, equally smooth, and the fast-focus eye piece.

### OUT AND ABOUT

To get a proper feel for things, there is no substitute to getting out with some targets and getting an idea of how things come together in real-life situations. The first observation was the appearance of the duplex-type reticle, with mil-dots placed on the vertical and horizontal axis. This reticle seems finer in appearance than those on older Vantage models – in fact, I

**Sights and a whole lot more, also available on-line.**



Over the years, I have used and owned many Hawke scopes and I’ve always been impressed by their quality, features, and strong customer service. I think that it is important to judge a company on how it deals with problems, which will occur with anything that has moving parts. Only on one occasion have I had to put Hawke to this test, and on that solitary occasion, I have to say, they came up trumps. Hawke scopes purchased after January 2018 feature a ‘no-fault lifetime warranty’, which gives immense peace of mind to the original purchaser – just remember to keep proof of purchase. They are a large company, so they have an extensive product range, certainly enough to suit everyone’s tastes and pockets, not to mention specific ranges developed with the airgunner in mind – several good reasons for me to choose Hawke.

do have an older version of this very scope, and the difference is noticeable.

Personally, I favour a finer reticle because I always feel they offer greater precision, although some would argue that a fine reticle can get 'lost' when tracking quarry through trees, or in low light conditions. With these thoughts in mind, I took the combination out into the woods, and also used them inside the farm buildings, where the illumination could get a workout.

I was very encouraged to find a very clear sight picture under all conditions, and not once did I lose that reticle! Indeed, the illuminated reticle came into its own inside the dimly lit buildings, I found that best performance was obtained by keeping the illumination to lower settings.

There is no doubt that Hawke take their lens preparation seriously; these Vantage scopes have 11-layer, multi-coated optics, which nitrogen purged to ensure that they stay fogproof, of course. The optical quality on this scope is a definite improvement on previous models, which is to be expected from a company that prides itself on technological advancements. Overall, I was very impressed by this scope, and found it a superb accompaniment to the HW99.

*"I am not a fan of over-complicated reticles, some of which leave you wondering"*

## TAKE IT TO THE 'MAX

With the title 'Airmax', you would rightly assume that this range of scopes was developed with the air rifle shooter very much in mind. Key features, such as adjustable parallax, feature on the whole range and you can expect to see several permutations; scopes with zero eye relief, those with super-compact length, not forgetting high and low



When lying in wait, a fast handling combination is an advantage.

magnification ranges.

The little Airmax 2-7 x 32 has a few outward differences from the Vantage; it's a bit shorter,

gravity pretty quickly after leaving the muzzle.

As well as mil-dots on the horizontal and vertical axes, you are also given extra half-mil-dot spacers on the lower vertical reticle, as well as hollow bars on the vertical and horizontal. The reticle itself appears to float because there is no sensation of it being attached at any of its four ends, and I am pleased to report that it is fine so won't obscure your target.

All this sounds rather fussy in appearance, particularly given my ham-fisted description, but I assure you it is not, and to prove this I have included an image. Personally I am not a fan of over complicated reticles, some of which leave you wondering where exactly the primary aim point is, and Hawke has got the balance just right with the AMX, enough to keep us

(23mm), a little heavier (22g) and lacks the illuminated reticle rheostat. The principle difference is only apparent though, when you look through it.

## AIM POINT CITY

It is clear that the AMX reticle has been designed for specific airgun use, fully embracing the fact that pellets drop under



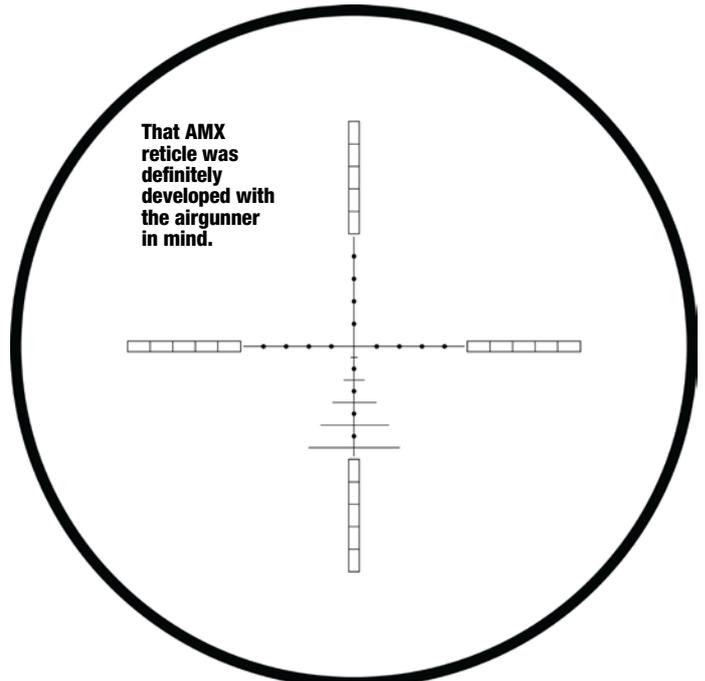
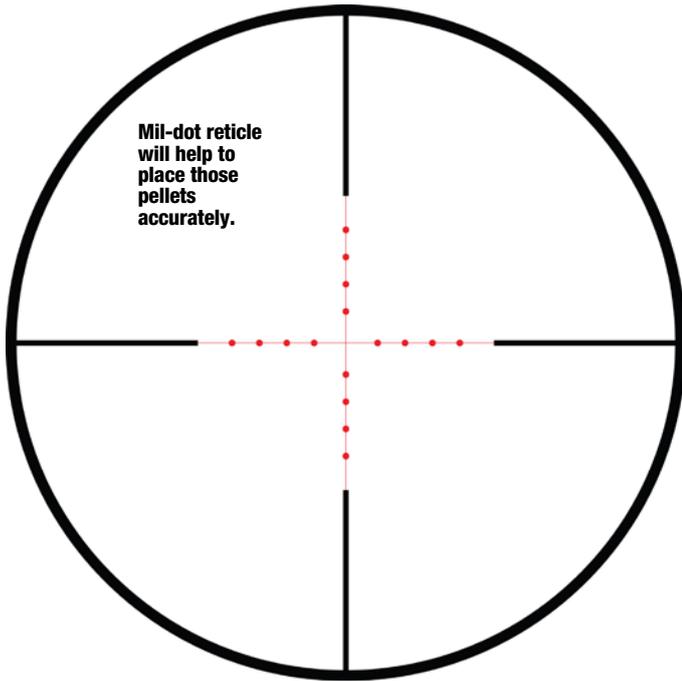
A large sight does the job, but what does it do to the balance?



Because the Airmax is a compact scope, it might be necessary to use a two-piece mount.



Need a little illumination? The Vantage gives a choice of red or green.



happy without over complicating matters. In practice, I got on extremely well with it, and can see how this would contribute toward accurate shooting out in the field.

**I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW**

The second noticeable difference is the enhanced optical quality of the Airmax, over the Vantage. When using both in bright

manoeuvrability of the gun, ensuring that if required, it could be carried all day without breaking a sweat.

**CHOICES ...**

So two scopes from the same manufacturer and the same magnification – which one do you buy? Well, buy either and you won't be disappointed. I suppose it comes down to

reticle. In a nutshell; if you own a compact lightweight rifle, make sure you don't upset the apple cart by fitting an oversize optic, and make sure these two little crackers figure on your short list! ■

*"I would feel more confident with the increased clarity and definition afforded"*

sunlight, I grant you that the difference is less marked, but turn the lights down a bit and the difference is clear to see. Using both out in the woods under a leafy canopy, the ability to track squirrels through the trees became a whole lot easier with the Airmax, and although on this occasion I was not looking to shoot them, if I were, I would feel more confident with the increased clarity and definition afforded by this scope.

I had a brief conversation with Jamie, from Hawke, about this, and he confirmed that the Airmax gets 16 layers of lens coating, as opposed to the 11 of the Vantage, so the difference, my friends, must be in the coating.

I have already mentioned that this model lacks an illuminated reticle, so does this detract from the overall effectiveness of the scope? It is my considered opinion that it doesn't. The upgrade in the optics goes a long way in compensating for this, and having used it in all conditions I can confidently say that I didn't miss the feature. The compact length and weight suited the lightweight S200 admirably, doing nothing to upset the balance and overall

which features mean the most to you. For me, the outright winner would be the Airmax, on the basis of image quality, and the AMX

**CONTACTS**

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**UNDER REVIEW:**

Hawke Vantage 2-7x32 IR AO RRP £105.  
Hawke Airmax 2-7x32 AO RRP £139.

