

The GCPD MSP

- a precision hunting rifle

by Daniel O'Dea



The GCPD MSP rifle may look like a futuristic target rifle but Daniel O'Dea found it comparatively light and comfortable to carry afield.

The face of the modern sporting bolt-action rifle has been changing for some time now. Post-World War Two, the sporting market was dominated by converted surplus rifles, basically cut-down or modified ex-military Mausers, Enfields, Springfields and so on. Into the 1970s and 1980s, newly manufactured sporting bolt-action rifles from Remington, Winchester, Ruger and others, mostly based on the Mauser principal action design with dual opposed front locking lugs and mounted in timber stocks, became the predominate style.

By the end of the century and into the beginning of the next, modern synthetics had taken over from timber when it came to stocking bolt-action rifles. It is perhaps hard to believe now but there was a day when no self-respecting rifle shooter would ever even consider a rifle with a 'plastic stock'. It took a while but the benefits of

inert modern synthetics combined with the accuracy provided by alloy pillar bedding and internal chassis systems finally overcame any apparent prejudice - although, of course, we all still have our own preferences

Today, the face of the bolt-action rifle is going through another revision. Somewhere along the line the concept has developed that you maybe don't even need the synthetic stock part but only the alloy chassis system, hence the birth of what could be called the modern 'modular' chassis rifle.

Basically, you have an alloy chassis (or receiver, if you like) that holds the action and essential parts such as the trigger and magazine and from there most other items are 'bolt-on' parts. Fore-end, buttstocks, pistol grip and rails, although possibly factory supplied in the first instance, can be easily swapped out or customised by

the owner. This trend has been picked up by most all the major firearms manufacturers with many new variants along these lines or at least hybrids following the same theme. It has also meant the latest custom boutique gunsmiths and manufacturers are more likely to be at home with a computer numerically controlled (CNC) machine and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) software than a wood rasp and stock pantograph.

GC Precision Developments (GCPD), based in the ACT, is an Australian company at the cutting edge of this new trend in firearms development, offering custom-built precision-grade rifles for most applications, be it target, hunting or law enforcement and military. Recently, I was given the opportunity to review a GC Precision Developments rifle for these pages, eagerly receiving one of the latest models, the MSP Gen 1 hunting rifle. This particular rifle was

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built utilising the popular Tikka T3x action but that's only where the magic starts.

At the heart of the MSP rifle is the in-house-designed and -manufactured chassis system. Starting with a billet of 6061-T651 aircraft-grade aluminium, GCPD utilises the most up-to-date CAM software and production techniques to create a base chassis CNC-machined to exacting tolerances. As a further custom service, the same base chassis can be manufactured in magnesium alloy for the ultimate in lightweight field performance.

The rifle supplied included such features as a tubular fore-end made from 6Al-4V titanium, a Hardy Match Grade carbon-fibre wrapped barrel and an adjustable proprietary buttstock featuring both comb and length of pull adjustment. All these items combined to provide a comparatively lightweight precision-designed hunting rifle. The reality has always been that many of these chassis-styled rifles are usually heavier than synthetic-stocked more traditional designs, so the combination of these lightweight components and the precision skeletonisation of the base chassis itself are critical in keeping the weight down and GCPD claims this to be one of the lightest of such platforms available.

The rifle was a matte black in color with all alloy parts hard anodised to MIL-A-8625 specification. Color choices include olive green, purple, blaze orange and gold. All other components feature PVD titanium/

The GCPD MSP rifle's chassis is cleverly recessed and skeletonised to reduce weight while maintaining strength.



aluminium nitride coatings that are three times harder than hard chrome plating. The action and trigger mechanism are straight factory Tikka T3x, although in this case GCPD has spiral fluted the bolt and utilised a well-oversized recoil lug manufactured from 6Al-4V titanium.

The Tikka T3 is a platform most readers would be familiar with as it has previously been well covered in this publication. I have personally reviewed the Tikka T3 in its own right and know it to be both a solid and

inherently accurate action design. As such, with the GCPD MSP rifle, the tang safety location and operation remain the same as the donor action and although it has its own integral flush-fitting magazine release on the forward edge of the chassis housing it still utilises all standard compatible Tikka magazines.

The Hardy Match Grade carbon-fibre wrapped barrel is a story in itself. For those unfamiliar with such a barrel, the manufacturer starts with a 416R stainless

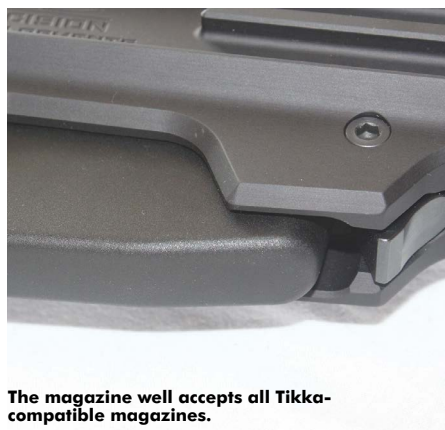
Daniel O'Dea believes the GCPD MSP Gen 1 rifle could just well be the new face of the modern bolt-action rifle.



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GCPD manufactures its own custom muzzle brakes from tool steel, which is heat treated to 60 Rockwell hardness.



The magazine well accepts all Tikka-compatible magazines.

As the GCPD MSP's chassis utilises a Tikka action and trigger group, the safety location and operation remains the same as the donor rifle.



steel blank that is CNC gun drilled, precision reamed, button rifled, stress relieved, hand-lapped and CNC contoured. The raw contour leaves the barrel thinned between the knock form and the muzzle before being laid up with a low-resin, high-strength, pre-impregnated carbon-fibre cloth. The end result is not only a very light barrel but also a barrel with properties including dampened harmonics, fast heat dissipation and an extreme level of shot-to-shot consistency - this even from that all-important first cold bore shot.

The barrel is semi-match chambered, meaning the chamber tolerances are tight

but not so much so that chambering factory ammunition will be difficult. Likewise, the throat is not excessively long either for dependable performance and reliability with all types of projectile weights and shapes. All this translates to the rifle theoretically being able to accept most all breeds of factory ammunition of the correct calibre while still providing premium-grade accuracy. The pointy end of the barrel was finished with GCPD's own tool steel high-efficiency muzzle brake. The nitride finished brake is heat treated to 60 Rockwell hardness for 75 per cent less erosion at the blast faces of the brake.

The rifle looked great, if not a little futuristic, and ergonomics were very good as well. The design of the stock means it is intuitively easy to make good use of the adjustments. The modular pistol grip allows for one-handed control, which is great if you are juggling your rifle in the field and using your free hand for whatever else circumstance dictates. I find this style of pistol grip assists in maintaining safe muzzle discipline while holding a rifle one-handed as well. The overall relationship between barrel, chassis and stock provides a reasonably straight alignment, meaning a design inherent of all the right properties for a reduction in felt recoil. This proved correct when it came to shooting the rifle, which felt relatively soft recoiling comparative to calibre and weight.

On the range, the rifle did not disappoint. The test rifle was supplied with both some reloading data and components as well as some different breeds of factory ammunition. This, combined with my own supply, provided a generous array of ammo types to try.

In keeping with the lightweight hunting theme, the rifle was supplied scoped with a Nightforce NXS 2.5-10x42 compact rifle-scope set in Nightforce six-bolt ultralight 30mm rings. The Tikka T3 action is provisioned for a Picatinny rail system for optics mounting to which the rings attached and the Nightforce NXS looked right at home. This scope's power range would provide ample magnification in any practical hunting application and although a little more would be preferred for accuracy testing, I didn't feel underdone as I set the rifle up on the bench.

Accuracy proved to be very good, as would be expected considering the quality of both workmanship and components that goes into the production of this rifle. Federal Match 168-grain factory ammo shot ½ MOA (minute of angle) - 0.5" at 100 yards (13mm at 90m) for a five-shot group,



Daniel O'Dea gets to work testing the GCPD MSP rifle on the range.

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while if measured at the best of three, the group would be tighter than half that, at just 0.2 MOA.

Winchester Palma Match provided similar results again with three shots producing ¼ MOA group. One of my own brews of 45 grains of 2208 behind 168-grain Hornady Competition projectiles also shot better than ½ MOA again for three rounds. Even budget-priced 150-grain Sellier & Bellot soft-point hunting ammo performed well, joining the better than ½ MOA three-shot group club. Overall, the rifle produced excellent accuracy for its intended purpose and should provide great confidence to any hunter in the field, regardless of what ammo it is fed.

GC Precision Developments, as mentioned, is located in the ACT and the rifle tested is just one in its range of hunting and target models. GCPD also offers its modular chassis system as a stand-alone item along with fitting

instructions for those already with their own donor rifle. Likewise, the company can provide fitting and customised gunsmithing services. To learn more about the products, visit the website at gcpdarms.com or contact GCPD direct at info@gcpdarms.com ●



Specifications

Manufacturer: GC Precision Developments

Model: MSP Gen I Hunting

Action: Bolt-action Tikka T3x

Trigger: Tikka single-stage, 2-4lb (0.91 - 1.81kg) adjustable

Calibre: .308 Winchester (tested)

Capacity: All Tikka-compatible detectable box magazines

Barrel: 20" (508mm), 416R stainless steel, one in 10" twist rate, Hardy Match Grade carbon-fibre wrapped

Overall Length: 42.13" (1070mm) as tested, minimum set length of pull

Sights: Integrated rail for optics mounting

Length of Pull: Adjustable

Finish: Chassis hard anodised to MIL-A-8625, parts PVD titanium/aluminium nitride

Stock: Adjustable length of pull and comb height

Weight: 7.5lb (3.41kg)

RRP: \$5480



Apart from the list of practical advantages, the carbon fibre-wrapped barrel looks great and contrasts well against the matte finish.

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