

Bistoli's Mk 2 Shooting Mat

by Daniel O'Dea



Fully extended, the mat covers an area of about 2 sq m, which is ample room to stretch out.



Fold back the Velcro overlap and unzip the heavy-duty zipper.

Occasionally in this business, you come across a product that is so well thought out for the intended use that it borders on genius. This pretty much summed up my thoughts as I recently unwrapped the new Bistoli Mk 2 Shooting Mat from the Australian importer, Teznic Australia.

There is no doubt that in recent years there has been somewhat of a resurgence in shooting sports disciplines revolving around longer range target shooting. To this end, many manufacturers have developed off-the-shelf longer range target rifles of quite large proportions, handling equally large flat-shooting Magnum calibres, topped off with huge optics almost capable of watching the moon rise on Venus! Likewise, component manufacturers have been at it, catering to the custom market producing like rifles.

Handling, storing and transporting these

larger-than-life rifles create their own series of issues. In the past few years, on more than one occasion, I have had in my possession rifles of such proportions that they simply wouldn't fit in a standard gun bag or rifle case, be it because they were too large or long or purely as a consequence of the size of the optic. Similarly, due to the basic heft of such rifles, most are generally designed to be fired from the prone position, so when you do get to the firing mound, you'll be looking to spread out the old picnic rug or groundsheet prior to going prostrate in the dirt.

Depending on how you want to look at it, Bistoli has a product that is a gun bag looking to be a shooting mat or a shooting mat doubling as a gun bag. Either way, it's ingenious. Made from heavy-duty 600D polyester, on first appearance, you are presented with what appears to be a very



Open the first fold.



Open the second fold.



Fold down the lower flap and hey presto, your favourite target, varmint or hunting rifle appears and is laid out and ready to go!

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large gun bag of the style developed to lug around large target rifles. It is well padded and comes with several carry options including: double carry handles with a Velcro cuff; a single detachable carry-strap; a pair of detachable shoulder straps should you wish to carry the whole thing as a backpack; and a fixed strap that can either be employed as a waist-strap when in backpack mode or as an extra security strap around the bag when in carry mode. All the detachable straps are connected by heavy-duty spring-loaded clips connecting to equally heavy-duty double-stitched D-rings attached to the bag.

A thick overlap protects the concealed heavy-duty zipper and is strategically held in place with sections of Velcro. The zipper itself can be lockable with a small padlock (not supplied) if desirable. The whole package measures about 1310mm long and 330mm wide, but it's when you lie it down and unzip it that the magic starts.



On first unfolding it, there is an internal third padded flap that folds outwards to the right. This uncovers a fourth flap that runs the full width of the now appearing shooting mat that is hinged from the bottom edge. This fourth flap is backed with a ground-sheet-like plastic and folds downwards to complete the mat, which now covers a total area of around 1x2m, which is quite a generous area to work with.

Inside the unfolded mat at the front is a muzzle sleeve, while at the opposing end are two adjustable clip-straps for holding the rifle's buttstock. Once the muzzle is in place in the sleeve and the straps tightened on the buttstock, your rifle is locked in place. To the left side, running against the seam of the main bag, is a long pocket to store your cleaning rod.

Other storage solutions include a bipod bag that could equally store a bolt or other items, which is attached again by Velcro to stop movement while in transit. Two forward flat pockets, one with a clear



window in the front, are held in place the same way and would be great for storage of range cards, logbooks and other paperwork. The clear windowed pocket is perfect for protecting a range card in inclement weather. Another clever addition is a rolled lip at the front end of the mat to secure bipod legs from slipping forward off the platform.

As mentioned, the lower flap portion of the mat is backed with a heavy plastic, which is basically where you would be standing when positioning yourself to go prone on the mat, so it makes great sense. Likewise, the centre section, where your elbows are located once in the shooting position, is both carpeted and the most padded, making it extremely comfortable once in the prone position.

At the time of testing the shooting mat, I was still in possession of a Sako TRG-42 fitted with a Steiner 5-25x56 scope ready to be returned after review. This combination is typical of some of the larger target-styled combinations available and is undoubtedly the target market of such a product. I've got to say that in this case, with the additional length of having the muzzle brake fitted to the TRG-42, it was a tight fit, but a fit all the same. It was a bonus to have somewhere to store the detachable bipod off



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the TRG-42 as well, which, speaking from experience, might otherwise be mistakenly left behind at home on occasion.

Although an obvious choice for target shooters, this shooting mat/gun bag will equally find a home among longer range varminters, who may have to carry afield into their favourite varmint patch. I lot of the same principles would apply here: heavier rifles with long barrels and large optics. It sure would be handy to backpack in, and then be able to lay out and unfold a comfortable work platform to address the

job at hand. Beats lying in the dirt!

The Bistol Mk 2 shooting mat/gun bag retails for around \$195. For more information, contact your local gun dealer or visit www.teznic.com.au ●

All straps have heavy-duty spring-loaded clips attaching to double-stitched D-rings to safely secure the load.



The Mk 2 Shooting Mat cum gun bag offers ample carry solutions from dual carry handles with Velcro cuff, to a shoulder strap, right through to backpack shoulder pads and waist-strap.



Pockets either side provide storage for notes and other items. The windowed pocket is perfect storage for a range card.

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