

Magnum Research's SwitchBolt Rifle – The Record Breaking Advantage

By Steve Foster

Pictures by Doug Frazier Photography

There are quite a few shooting disciplines for people to enjoy from Precision Rifle Series (PRS), to the run and gun action of the United State Practical Shooting Association (USPSA). For those with a need for speed, there is no other faster competition with a firearm then the USPSA owned Steel Challenge. Competitors from all over the world test their training in firing 5 shots as fast as they can while striking each plate across eight pre-determined stages. What was previously thought to be unthinkable was realized by a young shooting phenom and sponsored shooter for Magnum Research, Chris Barrett. Chris broke the long coveted 60 second barrier. In the modern era of Steel Challenge, there have been a few low 60's times recorded at major matches, but no one has shot a sub-60 until the 2019 Alabama Steel Challenge Championship at the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) range in Talladega Alabama.

In the competition community, it is commonplace to hear stories of the temperamental nature of guns and gear, specifically rimfire rifles. When you are shooting at the highest level of competition and pushing the edge of shooting capability, you need to take advantage of all shooting string opportunities. One malfunction, on one string, can be the determining difference of first and not placing on the podium. I was able to meet up with Chris Barrett to review his rimfire rifle setup that he trusts with which he set the unprecedented and coveted record. Chris uncased his SwitchBolt Rifle chambered in .22LR. It is a sleek rifle with a familiar feel based a proven design. As I took control of the rifle, it was noticeably light yet well balanced weighing in at 4lbs. The tone of the rifle is sleek being black with accents of silver. The receiver is nestled in a Blackhawk Axiom stock with a satisfactory length of pull adjustment and an angled cheek riser that surprisingly fits various face types. The integral Picatinny rail on top of the receiver makes mounting the optic of your choice flexible and effortless. This rifle was outfitted with a 6MOA C-More sight. The bolt handle of the rifle is a 'Switchbolt' so as a shooter you can switch the appropriately sized bolt handle from one side of the bolt to the other. As a right hand shooter, I find the bolt handle on the left side of the bolt to aide in manipulating the rifle to insert or remove a chamber flag or to perform reloads between strings of fire. Below the receiver is an optional KIDD Trigger offered by KIDD Innovation design. The business end of the rifle is an accurate Magnum Research carbon barrel which has an optional threaded muzzle for a compensator or suppressor for increased recreational fun.

The first time I racked the bolt, it was smooth and effortless with a gliding feel you find on high-end custom guns. You could feel the attention to detail and craftsmanship of the rifle. As I chambered a round for the first time, I was anxious to see what sort of times I could post with a new rifle and setup. As the sound of the timer rang out, the familiar feel of the design was easy to transition to. As I turned to Chris, a smile appeared on my face, and I told him I was impressed. Every single shot was exactly where I intended the placement to be. The rifle was fast and accurate. We commenced our training session of shooting several Steel Challenge Stages as the sun went down. Chris and I shot over one thousand rounds in our training session, and there was not one single malfunction. Not a one. At the conclusion of the session, I determined the 2018 released SwitchBolt Rifle to be lightweight, accurate, and reliable.

With the popularity of colorful and custom rifles, Magnum Research released a website catering to all shooters where they can design their own custom SwitchBolt Rifle. If you want to shoot what the fastest professional shooter in the world shoots, visit www.customrimfirerifle.com to design your own rifle.



Chris Barrett