



**W**hat might it feel like to be the best in the world at something? I likely annoy my wife better than anybody else on the planet. However, as it concerns stuff that is cool, desirable or unique, I doubt I'm really the best at anything. Nineteen-year-old Chris Barrett, however, is indeed the best in the world at something awesome. As regards the U.S. Practical Shooting Association Steel Challenge, Chris is the fastest gun alive.

How exactly does one claim that title? In Barrett's case, he broke a world shooting record. Chris was the first guy on the planet to successfully shoot a U.S. Practical Shooting Association Steel





# RIMFIRE PHENOM

## MEET CHRIS BARRETT AND HIS MAGNUM RESEARCH SWITCHBOLT

BY WILL DABBS, MD

Challenge in less than 60 seconds. This gun can run a gun.

### PRACTICAL PARTICULARS

The Steel Challenge is designed to balance shooting speed against accuracy. The format allows competitors to compare apples-to-apples performance without having to shoot side by side. There are nine categories for handgun shooters and another four for long guns. Chris broke 60 seconds total in the RFRO (Rimfire Rifle Optic) competition.

The course of fire consists of eight different stages. Each stage consists of five steel targets that are repainted between each competitor. There are no restrictions on the number of rounds,

and the last target stops the clock. As expected, only hits count.

Add the total times for your best runs on each stage. For years, 80 seconds total seemed the unbreakable barrier. As is the case with any human endeavor, however, the pressure of competition drives performance. Chris Barrett running his Magnum Research SwitchBolt rifle is now the guy to beat.

### EXTRAORDINARY RIFLE

The Magnum Research SwitchBolt rifle is custom designed for competition. While the SwitchBolt would make for a superb plinker or general-purpose utility gun, its true calling is speed. Comfortable, reliable, accurate and fast, the SwitchBolt is a precision instrument.

The SwitchBolt begins life as the Magnum Research Magnum Lite forged 6061-T6 aluminum receiver. To really optimize the SwitchBolt experience, you build your own through the Magnum Research custom shop. Start out on the Magnum Research website ([magnumresearch.com](http://magnumresearch.com)).

Select your favorite stock style and configuration. The website renders a depiction of your particular rifle so you can see what it will look like. Choose from among 10 different barrel options in either aluminum or carbon fiber. Then, optimize your trigger from one of seven different versions. Add a muzzle brake if you'd like, and you're done. The result is a reflection of your personality.



## SPEC BOX

# MAGNUM RESEARCH SWITCHBOLT

CALIBER:	.22 LR
BARREL:	16.25 inches
OA LENGTH:	32.75 inches collapsed/ 36.5 inches extended
WEIGHT:	4 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	MLSTB
SIGHTS:	C-More Aluminum Railway
ACTION:	Blowback-operated semi-auto
FINISH:	Matte black
CAPACITY:	10+1
MSRP:	\$952 (as tested)



The Magnum Research SwitchBolt is the ultimate customizable .22 LR competition rifle. Choose from scads of different barrel, stock and trigger options, and the artisans at Magnum Research will build up your dream rifle to your individual specifications.

Chris helped me with my build. His record-setting rifle features a Magnum Lite Rimfire stock made from MLSTB stock material. He runs a straight carbon-fiber threaded barrel atop a KIDD single-stage 2-pound trigger. A superb C-More 6-MOA Railway optic keeps things pointed in the right direction.

## BREAKING RECORDS

The resulting customized SwitchBolt is remarkably lightweight. The reversible oversized bolt handle reciprocates on the left, so you can run the gun without taking your firing hand off of the grip. The SwitchBolt feeds from standard Ruger 10/22 magazines, so dozens of options for feeding devices are at your fingertips.

Once you log a little trigger time on this extraordinary competition rifle, it starts to feel like a part of your anatomy. In world-class competitions, mechanical failure is simply unacceptable. The SwitchBolt is the most reliable rimfire rifle I have ever hefted.

I ordered my SwitchBolt with a Magnum Research high-efficiency muzzle brake. It's not like .22 LR recoil is really a thing, but every tiny increment shaves time off of your runs. The resulting rifle shoots like a laser beam, is functionally recoilless and excises the mechanical uncertainty from your performance. The SwitchBolt is also markedly less expensive than comparable custom target guns.

## TRIGGER TIME

I meticulously recreated the superb Magnum Research SwitchBolt rifle that Chris Barrett used to become the fastest steel challenge shooter in the world. I arrayed a set of steel targets on my backyard shooting range, got a good night's sleep, ate a hearty breakfast and psyched myself up for maximum performance. Then I hit the range, burned a bunch of bullets and didn't do anywhere near as well as Chris does.

The reality is that Chris Barrett is a world-class competitor who logs hours of trigger time each week honing his skills. He is young, fit, hard and dedicated, blessed with perfect eyesight and exquisite reflexes. By contrast, I am an old guy with more than half a century



The Magnum Research SwitchBolt rifle ate everything we fed it without a hiccup. A world-class competition rifle such as this one must be completely reliable.



The C-More aluminum Railway optic offers a crisp red dot in the most uncluttered, minimalist chassis in the industry.

on my eyes, limbs and brain. However, while I am no Chris Barrett, I did shock myself with how well I could run this remarkable gun.

The rifle swings effortlessly thanks to its paltry mass and superb ergonomics. The solid yet ethereal KIDD 2-pound trigger breaks like a prom queen's heart and keeps the gun chattering like a crack-adled chipmunk. The carbon-fiber barrel is all but weightless, and the brilliant C-More optic is the perfect complement

to such a rarefied piece of machinery.

Stroke the trigger as the crisp, uncluttered C-More dot bears on the target. The satisfying ring of lead on steel renders instant feedback. Practice a bit and you really can hammer those steel targets with amazing speed.

## LIVING A DREAM

I live to shoot. I like shooting anything from airsoft guns to grenade launchers. In the Magnum Research SwitchBolt

# CHRIS BARRETT INTERVIEW

### What's your typical training regimen?

I shoot three days a week, maybe 600 rounds per session in two or three stages with four or five guns. I try to shoot all eight stages each week and burn 1,000 to 2,000 rounds per week. I also keep my trigger finger loose. If I have a match coming, I lay off the X-Box.

### How long can you be away from a trigger before it starts to take a toll on your performance?

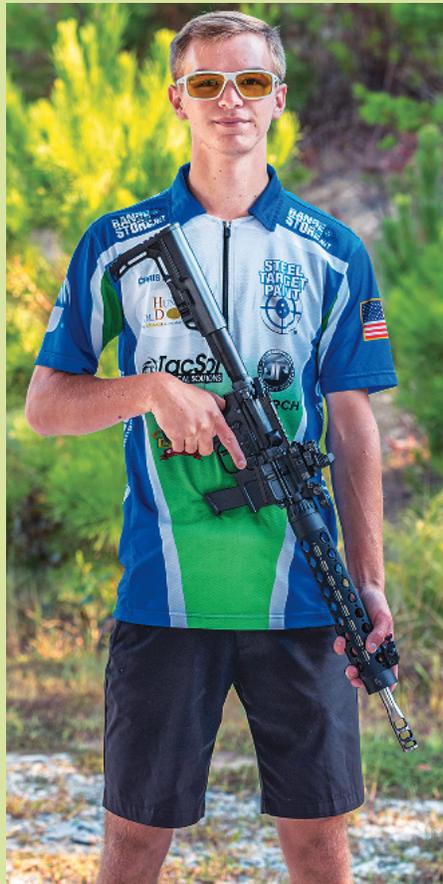
Anything over a month is a long time not to touch a gun. After that, you have to relearn your trigger. Those are definitely perishable skills, but it's nice to know you can get back to it with the right amount of work.

### Has your family been supportive?

Super supportive. My grandpa did Cowboy Action Shooting when he was younger—that's where I started out. He drove me into shooting competition. We were all into guns, and we all like shooting. It's pretty cool having that kind of family.

### How did it feel when you landed the Magnum Research endorsement?

Oh man, I don't know what words I could use. It was a pretty incredible moment. That a company of that size and caliber was interested in somebody like me was a dream come true. You're out having fun, and then you find out you're being sponsored by this huge company. It's pretty amazing.



### What sort of difference does your equipment make? Does wielding a really nice rifle substantially enhance your performance?

I'd say 50 to 60 percent is your equipment. Does it go bang every time you pull the trigger? Does it hit the same spot every single time? You can shoot crummy equipment, but not being able to rely on

it really hurts your performance. Nicer equipment and nicer triggers on a more reliable platform can seriously drop times. The big draw about the SwitchBolt is the price point. It's less expensive than most high-end guns, yet it still performs better than most of them.

### Who is the most interesting person you've met in the shooting world?

That a pretty hard one. I traveled around a great deal and have met some of the most amazing people. If a competitor has a gun that breaks, another will pretty much destroy his own gun to get the other guy that one part he needs to finish his match. I don't know of any other sport where someone would destroy their baby and give it to somebody else.

I've had a few mentors. Steve Foster is about to start shooting the SwitchBolt rifle, and he's really helped me a lot in finding that next level. Now we're buddies and train together all the time. It's nice to have somebody to bounce ideas off of.

Even my grandpa years ago when I was 12 or 13, he helped me get started. He taught me how to do grips, how to do safety—the really important stuff. That carries on until now.

I meet a lot of kids at these matches. That's one of the things I like most about this rifle. I can hand the SwitchBolt to a kid, a 10-year-old, and they can shoot the gun as light as it is. It's always so enjoyable to watch young people shoot and see their eyes light up.

## PERFORMANCE

### MAGNUM RESEARCH SWITCHBOLT

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
CCI 40 Polymer-Coated	1,211	0.15
CCI 40 Segmented Mini-Mag	1,206	0.20
Winchester 45 Subsonic	1,045	0.35
Winchester 40 Wildcat	1,191	0.45

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best four out of five-shot groups at 15 yards.



rifle, I have discovered a recoilless lightning-fast target rifle that yields remarkable performance even from an old guy.

I found this rifle frankly addictive. Luckily, .22 rimfire ammo isn't expensive, and the facilities required to do these kinds of drills aren't extensive. Behind an optimized Magnum Research

SwitchBolt rifle, I really can—for a few moments, at least—imagine myself as a world-class competitor.

Chris Barrett is a heck of a nice guy with some seriously mad skills. He works his butt off to perform at that level. Thanks to my Magnum Research SwitchBolt rifle, I get to taste a little bit of that secret sauce, myself.

**Editor's Note:** *In late 2020, Barrett again set world records at the 2020 World Speed Shoot Championships. His lowest overall score at the match won him a world title in the rimfire rifle open division. His score of 56.57 captured first place in the division. Barrett's shooting netted him three total score world records and 13 individual stage world records.* 🏆