

BEATING THE GONG

**MILLER SHOOTING RANGE AND
IMPACT XTREME SHOOTING HOST A
SUCCESSFUL GONG SHOOT**

BY JACO HEYNS

Myself and Brendan Fike decided to meet up with Miller Shooting Range to hear what they thought of hosting a long-range shoot. They have all the facilities you can imagine, from 25 m to 800 m target boards, as well as fixed gongs from 100 m to 1000 m and eight stations with benches to shoot from. Gary and Sammy were more than happy to host such a shoot in conjunction with Impact Xtreme Shooting, and assisted in providing the best facilities ever.

So, the day of the shoot finally arrived, and what a beautiful day indeed! The sun was shining, with no wind at all. But the range was ready to prove most of us wrong. Some locals who knew the range told us it would be an easy one because most of the time the wind always comes from the same direction, and most of the targets sit in a straight line with the previously-installed targets ...

Hence most of the participants arrived, went through the entry process, and then straight off to check the zero of their rifles. We then declared the range closed, so Marinus and I could go put up the targets, where we hid them in the grass.

RANGE IS 'HOT'

Finally, we could begin with the shoot. The Range Officer (RO) had a briefing with staff, and then a briefing with the participants. Thereafter the RO declared the range 'hot', and the course of fire started. We had three ranges with three targets each:

- Target 1 was between 700 to 800 m
- Target 2 was between 800 to 900 m
- Target 3 was between 900 to 1 000 m

You got three shots per target, where your first shot counted the highest, and the last shot the lowest, to obtain your final score for the range.

Continues on page 54





EASY? BOY, WAS I WRONG!

I said to Marinus earlier that morning that it'd be an easy one. Boy, was I wrong! The first range we arrived at, the wind was calm. It was 9:13. The wind started blowing in different directions, with no constant to work from, or to call the shot. The direction kept changing from north-east straight to east and back again.

At the target, the wind was blowing in the opposite direction, from right to left. All of a sudden there was no wind at the target, while the wind was blowing 23 mph by the shooter! There were times where I said to my partner shooting with me: "Don't ask me what the wind's doing. I don't know, and I don't know how to correct for it." Some other participants had it just as bad, saying they simply couldn't understand it.

A HARD RANGE

To be honest, the wind was not a joke on the day of the shoot, and no one's friend in the end. As every one finished their last range, bothered by the wind, and stored their rifles, we gathered at the kiosk for some cold refreshments, awaiting for the scores to be processed for the prizegiving. As the results came through, I thought back on the locals saying "It's going to be easy!" I wondered what their results would have been like on that day. Nonetheless, it was a very hard range, and never in my life have I experienced such a challenge.

Individuals

- 1. Dries Van Lingen
- 2. Danie Pienaar
- 3. Andre V Schoor

Ladies Individual

- 1. Mariska Roos

Teams

- 1. Danie En Dries
- 2. Riaan En Andre
- 3. Heyns Team

Ladies' Team

- 1. Mariska And Danielle

Continues on page 55



Sammy Miller from Miller Shooting Range gives us her insight into the gong shoot.

Overall, it was a hugely successful day. We could not have asked for any better result. Impact also had a wonderful experience working with the Miller team, and we can't wait for the next shoot! We would like to thank Garry Miller, Sammy Miller, Sharon Miller and Marinus Olivier for all the professional help provided to Impact, as well as the top-quality facilities on offer.

At the beginning of the year, Jaco approached us to arrange a gong shoot in February. We accepted immediately, and from then on the organising was in full swing. While everything was put in place, I was stressed because we had suffered from not having rain all summer, then in February we had a huge downfall. However, on 23 February it was clear skies.

BRIGHT AND EARLY

That morning most shooters were there bright and early. Having enjoyed coffee and rusks, everyone was anticipating getting started. There was a delay, but we started the briefing at around 08:30. After that, all the participants geared up, carrying huge gun bags and scopes from their vehicles up to the firing line.

There were three stations, each with a spotter. Everyone worked in teams, helping each other with each shot. But the spotter had the final say of whether it was a hit or a miss. The day started great, and the hits were building up. You could hear that wonderful 'dong' sound with each successful shot.

CLOSE COMPETITION

We immediately thought that this was going to be a close competition. All until late morning, when the wind started picking up. Now it suddenly became tough. There were looks of concern and worry at the wind. Each team stood with their wind meters trying to compensate for the next shot. It definitely mixed things up.

Even though the wind was a challenge, everyone still enjoyed every moment of the shoot. Impact Xtreme Shooting made for a truly amazing day, and we are very grateful for all of their help. After all, it's not always about being the best. It's about learning, and experiencing the thrill and mostly the love of the sport that is long-distance shooting.

MILLER SHOOTING RANGE

The Miller Shooting Range was established in 2016. It started off with just a few local members. We are now reeling in more members each day, plus occasional shooters, with more people coming from afar. We are an accredited shooting range, including SAPS accreditation.

We are happy to accommodate each shooter according to their needs. And we have great facilities, so the whole family is welcome. We will be hosting several events throughout the year. •

CONTACT:

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ZULULAND GONG SHOOT 2019

BY BRENDAN FIKE

There are few things these days that really succeed in unleashing that youthful exuberance and anticipation. For me, it comes by twice a year, and goes by the name of the Zululand Gong Shoot (ZGS), hosted by Nico Harris and Konrad Visser.

Personally, I believe it to be one of the most beautiful areas in South Africa, sporting hilly, undulating geography interspersed with timber plantations, sugar cane fields, rugged grassy slopes, and narrow forestry dirt tracks.

The base camp for the two-day event from 22 to 23 February was the comfortable Mtonjaneni Lodge nestled on a hilltop a mere 10 km inland of the quaint KwaZulu-Natal town of Melmoth, along the Zululand Heritage Route 66 and Zululand Birding Route.

RELAXING IN THE LODGE

Rina Harris and Nico Harris (Snr.) run a tight ship. The rooms and facilities are always clean, and the food is delicious. After a long, hot day out shooting, it's always a treat to return to the lodge for a few cold ones, and to relax in the spacious surrounds of the lodge.

It all started on 24 February 2018, my first-ever ZGS. Very new to the Long Range (LR) game, this was my second-ever shooting event to date, with the lessons learnt from the Fort Mistake shoot a month prior still fresh in my mind.

BIG LEARNING CURVE

A big learning curve was the steep shooting angles, and having to contend with the wind employing its cruel deception on any bullet daring to traverse the valley divides. For the first time, I saw how rising air below an 800 m target can retard the bullet drop on my 300 gr projectiles by as much as 1 MOA.

This same event also gave birth to the 'King of 1 Mile' competition, which started off as a single 1 m diameter round target placed at 1 752 m at the top of a long, undulating valley. Shooters paid R25 per shot to engage the target, with all proceeds donated to charity.

'KING OF 1 MILE' EVENT

Fast forward a year later to 22 February, and the familiar faces were back, as well as quite a few new ones. The ZGS 'King of 1 Mile' event is now held on the Friday, and consists of four targets placed at about 1 148 m, 1 303 m, 1 449 m and 1 602 m respectively from the designated shooting position.

The shooter fires three shots at each target, and must achieve at least one hit in order to proceed to the following target. Failure to make a hit on any target within the allocated three shots results in immediate disqualification.

FIRST-ROUND HITS

Shooters are rewarded handsomely when achieving first-round hits, and penalised heavily for not. The further the target, the more points are awarded for achieving first-round hits. For example, a first-round miss could mean the difference between 6th and 2nd overall position.

Upon their arrival at the 'King of 1 Mile' event, competitors can zero on paper at 100 m, and thereafter a healthy selection of conventional and antelope silhouette gongs laid out from 160 m to 820 m allow you to check whether your ballistic solver is still in tune with your rifle's performance.



TEMPTING ANTELOPE TARGETS

The antelope targets are too tempting not to let some lead fly their way though, just because! A new addition this time was a permanent roof structure covering the shooting range position. It's great to see the proceeds from previous shoots being put back into the event to make it better and more comfortable for competitors. Once happy with your zero, you volunteer your name to the list for your one-mile attempt.

Weather conditions were fairly favourable throughout the day. Cloud cover kept the ambient temperature within tolerable levels, and the wind velocity was confined to single digits. This was in stark contrast with the previous event in September 2018, where winds of 23 mph were recorded from mid-afternoon onwards.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Braam Smith emerged a clear winner, achieving the only full score of the day with his Truvelo .338LM. Second place went to Simon Steyn, while Jacques Ferreira proudly took third position.

Mtonjaneni Lodge was abuzz with excitement and laughter, occasionally interrupted by the clinking of icy cold beer bottles, followed by the characteristic 'CHEERS!' For me, one of the most enjoyable parts of a shooting event like this is meeting new people, and catching up with friends who all suffer in various degrees from the same apparent addiction to gun smoke. Most kept the night short, and got the necessary rest, as Day 2 was going to be a long hot affair.

TEAM EVENT

The format for 23 February (Day 2) was as follows. Primarily a team event, competitors were split into five groups, ranging from eight to ten people. There were five ranges consisting of three gongs each, a near Gong (400 to 600 m), a medium gong (600 to 800m) and a far gong (800 to 1 150 m).

Each competitor would fire three shots at each gong within a strict time allotment of 20 min per team. The scoring system employs a weighting factor to allocate additional points for hits on the medium and far gongs, with more points for first-round hits. The shoot is held in a large wildlife area, so suppressors are mandatory to keep any disturbance to a minimum.

▲ Front
Brendan Fike
Truvello CMS 338 Lapua Magnum
S&B Pmii
300Gr Berger Hybrid at 2800ft/s

Back
Werner Goosen
Nimrod 338 Lapua Magnum
Sig Sauer Tango 6
250Gr Berger at 2850ft/s



▲ Hannes de Kock getting some ranges



▲ Group 1 at range 4. The massive valley in the background is the one we shoot across. Left to right - Andrew Pickles, Andre Nel, Louis Cronje, Ben Richardson, Hein Vorster, Recus Jansen, Erhard Breet, Johan Vorster, Nico Harris, Frans Badenhorst, Chrisjan Diedericks, Simon Steyn, Konrad Visser



FEB 2019 - KING OF 1 MILE TOP 10 RESULTS + EQUIPMENT LIST

POSITION	COMPETITOR	POINTS	CALIBRE	MAKE & MODEL:	LOAD	SCOPE	BIPOD
1	Braam Smith	1500	338 LM	Truelo CMS	300gr Lapua Scenar	Nightforce ATACR	Phoenix
2	Simon Steyn	1300	338 LM	Sako 85 Long Range Hunter	285gr Hornady ELD-M @ 2750fps	Swarovski x5	Henry Rempel
3	Jacques Ferreira	1250	300 winmag	Winchester Model 70	208gr ELD-M @ 3070ft/s	Burris XTR	Sinclair Tactical
4	Chrisjan Diedericks	1150	300 winmag	Custom	215gr Berger Hybrid @ 2800ft/s	Swarovski x5	Phoenix
5	Martin Slabbert	1010	6.5 wsm	Custom	130gr Berger @ 3150ft/s	Nightforce ATACR	Sinclair F-Class
6	Brendan Fike	900	338 LM	Truelo CMS	300gr Berger Hybrid @ 2800fps	Schmidt Bender PMII 5-25x56	Phoenix
7	Nico Harris	780	300 wsm	Tikka Super Varmint	178gr ELD-M @ 2870ft/s	Nightforce NXS 5.5-22x56	Sinclair Tactical
8	Bernadette de Klerk	650	6.5 Creedmoor	Howa	130gr @2960ft/s	Kahles 624i	Tier One
9	Konrad Visser	620	300 WSM	Tikka Varmint	178gr ELD-M @ 3050	Nightforce ATACR	Joy Pod
10	Hannes de Kock	610	6.5 asm	Custom	150gr SMK @ 3000ft/s	Sightron S IV	F-Type

FEB 2019 - ZULULAND GONG SHOOT TOP 10 INDIV RESULTS + EQUIPMENT LIST

POSITION	COMPETITOR	POINTS	CALIBRE	MAKE & MODEL:	LOAD	SCOPE	BIPOD
1	Johan Vorster	1406,7	300 wsm	Tikka Super Varmint	178gr ELD-M @ 2870ft/s	Nightforce NXS 5.5-22x56	Sinclair Tactical
2	Simon Steyn	1275,7	338 LM	Sako 85 Long Range Hunter	285gr Hornady ELD-M @ 2750fps	Swarovski x5	Henry Rempel
3	Brendan Fike	1246,2	338 LM	Truelo CMS	250gr SMK @ 3108fps	Schmidt Bender PMII 5-25x56	Phoenix
4	Jacques Ferreira	1195	300 winmag	Winchester Model 70	208gr ELD-M @ 3070ft/s	Burris XTR	Sinclair Tactical
5	Erhard Breet	1174,7	260 Remington	Tikka Super Varmint	140gr ELD-M @ 2750ft/s	Nightforce ATACR	Sinclair Tactical
6	Martin Slabbert	1155	6.5 wsm	Custom	130gr Berger @ 3150ft/s	Nightforce ATACR	Sinclair Tactical
7	Braam Smith	1114,8	300 wsm	Custom	Not available at time of print	Nightforce ATACR	Phoenix
8	Nico Harris	1114,6	300 wsm	Tikka Super Varmint	178gr ELD-M @ 2870ft/s	Nightforce NXS 5.5-22x56	Sinclair Tactical
9	Marko Matakovic	1095,1	6XC	Mojet	115gr DTAC @ 3120ft/s	Nightforce ATACR	Harris
10	Craig Millingham	1094,4	6.5 Creedmoor	Ruger Precision Rifle	108gr ELD-M @3100ft/s	Leupold LR	Sinclair Tactical



▲ Front - Johan Vorster
300 WSM
Tikka Super Varmint
G&G Varminting bolt knob
Kalifi Creek stock
Tier One scope rings
Nightforce NXS 5.5-22x56 MOA reticle
Accuracy First level
Sinclair tactical bipod
Warrior medium brake
Legionnaire cover
178gr ELD-M at 2870ft/s

Rear - Nico Harris
300 WSM
Tikka Super Varmint
G&G Varminting bolt knob
Kalifi Creek stock
Tier One scope rings
Nightforce NXS 5.5-22x56 MOAR reticle
Accuracy First level
Sinclair tactical bipod
SUS-TAC
Legionnaire cover
178gr ELD-M at 2870ft/s
Kalifi Creek stocks are locally made top quality stocks for long range and F- class

▲ Catelyn Britnell, Warren Britnell, Etienne de Beer, Natasha Britnell, Conner Britnell, Braam Smith, Charleen Muller, Domien Van Buynder, Jan-Adam van der Westhuizen



▲ Etienne de Beer
7mm RSAUM
Vortex Razor
183gr Sierra Matching
Sinclair tactical bipod

WILDLIFE AREA

The wildlife area is very scenic and picturesque. The generous rain this season was clearly evident, as everything was lush and green. The first shots could be heard as early as 07:30, and the gong impacts echoed across the steep winding valleys. It's a good sound. When combined with the smell of gun smoke, it just elevates it to a greater experience.

The time limits imposed this time made the transition between the five ranges relatively smooth, without any long delays waiting for the group in front of you to finish. The wind threw in a few blunders though, as the target flags would blow one way, with the mirage halfway to the target indicating the exact opposite, while the wind at the shooter's location would be from 12 o'clock.

VALLEY SHOOTING

Such is valley shooting. One starts to eventually learn what type of effects geographical features impose, and the effect of the wind early in the morning versus once the earth starts to heat up.

Continues on page 50

FEB 2019 - ZULULAND GONG SHOOT TEAM RESULTS

POSITION	TEAM	POINTS	SHOOTER	SHOOTER
1	Baard 300 WSM	2521,3	Johan Vorster	Nico Harris
2	Boer en Soutie	2401,2	Brendan Fike	Martin Slabbert
3	Rings my Gong	2159,4	Simon Steyn	Chrisjan Diedericks
4	Rooibees	2128,8	Erhard Breet	Andrew Pickles
5	Mamparas	2098,1	Konrad Visser	Frans Badenhorst
6	Lebombo	2019,3	Braam Smit	Etienne de Beer
7	Gun Warrior	1988,1	Warren Britnell	Natasha Britnell
8	Legionnaire	1907,1	Ben Richardson	Louis Cronje
9	Dasher Bashers	1786,6	Hein Vorster	Recus Jansen
10	Fam Fury	1687,2	Martin de Klerk	Bernadett de Klerk
11	CMH	1665,5	Marco Matakovic	JC Robertson
12	Long Gongs	1625,8	Domien van Buynder	Jan Adam van de Westhuizen
13	Gringos	1585,7	Craig Millingham	Barry Looock
14	Gong Base	1464,5	Hannes de Kock	Theo Strydom
15	Bitter Einders	1404,4	Johannes Klopper	Werner Goosen
16	Blitz Vinnig	1395,8	Herme Smit	Rinda Smit
17	Gun Smoke	1344,7	Norbert Hellberg	Sakkie Folscher
18	Plathonde	1195	Jacques Ferreira	Johan Liebenberg
19	Buskreit Bende	1102,3	Henry Grobler	Clyde Millingham
20	Team Tury	1043,1	Le Roux Fourie	Johan Fourie
21	Q&N sharp shooters	913,1	Quintin de Klerk	Natasha de Klerk

In this environment there is no substitute for experience and trigger time to help one progress from being a good shooter to a better shooter.

An invaluable and necessary piece of equipment for a shoot like this, over and above your rifle gear, is a gazebo. On my first gong shoot I really didn't know what to expect, and so arrived with rifle and ammunition in hand, only to have to endure a full day's sun. I ended up dehydrated, with a complementary pounding migraine and a good dose of sunstroke. Lesson learnt the hard way!

ESSENTIAL TO A LONG DAY'S SHOOT LIKE THIS IS STAYING HYDRATED

MAINTAINING IONIC BALANCE

Essential to a long day's shoot like this is staying hydrated with a sports drink that replaces electrolytes like sodium and potassium, which maintain your body's ionic balance. It's also necessary to snack on foods that maintain your energy levels. There is an assortment of hydration sports drinks on the market, and an array of energy-packed snacks to choose from.



▲ Back - Johan Liebenberg, Jacques Ferreira, Norbert Hellberg, Brendan Fike, Martin Slabbert, Werner Goosen, Johannes Klopper. Front - Sakkie Folscher



To be honest, I am guilty of not taking the time to prepare adequately for shoots like this, and I really felt it on the last range where my concentration levels were rock bottom, resulting in a drastic decline in performance. Simply translated, you are doing yourself a huge injustice, as you will not achieve results that are in line with your capabilities.

▲ Jan Adam van der Westhuizen
Sabatti 7mm SAUM
Kahles 525i
Sphur unimount
Tier one evo carbon fibre bipod
Stevens silencer

BODY FORM

Body form is really a major contributor separating the top shooters from the rest of the field. Shooting events or competitions are not only about the rifle, ammunition, BC, ES, and the rest of the gear and jargon.

These factors only work when the person in control of the platform is physically and mentally able to execute the fundamentals of marksmanship consistently throughout the day, up to the last shot.

An excellent performance by Johan 'Vossie' Vorster saw him take top individual honours, followed by a solid performance from Simon Steyn in second place, and Brendan Fike in third. Congratulations to Teams 'Baard 300 wsm' (Johan Vorster/Nico Harris), 'Boer en Soutie' (Martin Slabbert/Brendan Fike) and 'Rings my Gong' (Chrisjan Diedericks/Simon Steyn) for taking the top three spots respectively. Top Junior prize went to Connor Britnell, with Natasha Britnell walking away with the Top Woman's trophy.

Congratulations to Nico Harris and Konrad Visser on yet another successful and memorable event. Thank you for being non-negotiable regarding our safety. We look forward to the next event in September! •



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