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STRASSER'S ELITE-CLASS STRAIGHT-PULL RS 14 EVOLUTION STANDARD IS THE LAMBORGHINI OF BOLT-ACTION RIFLES.

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

IMAGINE YOU'RE A DIE-HARD FAN OF superb Italian sports cars. Lamborghini, Ferrari, or Maserati, pick your poison. If you're lucky, you might own one, maybe two in your life because the cost is around 10 times that of a common car. Now think in terms of fine rifles. Strasser's straight-pull, Austrian-built big-game guns are the Lamborghinis of the shooting world. Or Ferraris. Or Maseratis. The cost, like that of a fine Italian racing car, is around 10 times that of a common rifle. You'll drop four grand, at least. Probably more.

However, unlike a Lamborghini, which is excessively good at just a few things, a Strasser rifle is versatile. It's good at every hunting task conceivable.

Strasser rifles have interchangeable barrel systems, bolt systems, and magazine systems. You can swap calibers in minutes. You can change from a right-handed

rifle to a left-handed rifle in seconds. Strasser rifles fit every shooter. Assuming correct cartridge selection, they are suitable for any game that walks the planet.

The Strasser RS 14 Evolution's unique receiver is machined of high-grade aluminum. The bolt assembly fits into the top rear of the receiver and rides straight forward and rearward in the action. A massive but streamlined bolt shroud contains the mechanics of the straight-pull design. On its rear is a two-position safety. Centered, it's properly ambidextrous. A red "cocked" indicator protrudes from the top of the bolt shroud when the cocking piece is rearward and ready to fire.

Up front, a floating bolthead is surrounded by four retractable locking lugs, which surround the

Strasser rifles are entirely convertible. Swapping calibers among like-size case heads is as simple as changing the barrel (a matter of two minutes). Stepping up or down in case head size requires a bolthead swap (a 10-second operation) and a different magazine.



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bolthead like the felloes on a wagon wheel. When the straight-pull bolt handle rotates forward into battery, an inner cam locks the lugs out into the locking lug recesses.

The entire bolthead assembly may be removed in literally seconds and exchanged for a head for a different cartridge family. For instance, you can swap from a .30-06-size boltface to a belted magnum boltface. Or go the other way and swap out for a .223 Remington. New boltheads cost \$325.



A Picatinny rail is machined integral with the top of the action and makes mounting a scope easy. Because of the design of the rear of the action, a right-handed bolt assembly can be switched for a left-handed version with no fitting or tuning required.

Strasser receivers have an integral Picatinny-spec cross-slot-type optic rail. It’s a bridge type, and there’s an ejection port machined into each side of the action. This has the beautiful side effect of making every rifle convertible. Shooters may purchase a left-handed bolt assembly from Strasser and simply slide it into their existing right-handed rifle. Including a new boltface, a left-handed bolt assembly costs \$717. (Of course, you could simply purchase a rifle equipped with a left-handed bolt if you prefer.)

One of my favorite characteristics of the RS 14 is the magazine. I’m not a big fan of detachable box magazines because losing one in the backcountry turns your repeating rifle into a hard-to-load single shot. However, Strasser’s magazine system is impressive. To release the single-stack magazine, you must press dual release buttons, one on each side of the outside front of the action. Said buttons are discreet yet tactile, making it nearly impossible to drop your magazine by accident yet easy to eject on purpose.

It’s important to note that while most Strasser magazines work for several different cartridges, for big changes you’ll need a different mag. For instance, the rifle I used for this report came with two barrels (6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win.).

Because these rounds have the same size bolthead and function from the same size magazine, nothing but a barrel swap is required. However, were I to get, say, a .300 Win. Mag. barrel, I’d need a different magazine and bolthead.

Strasser magazines are made of tempered steel and machined aluminum, and that high quality is reflected in the price (\$180 for a spare). Cartridge capacity is three rounds for standard-size cartridges based on .30-06 and .308 family cases and two rounds for magnums. However, extended-capacity mags designed for hunters shooting driven wild boar are available. The cost, at \$333, is higher, but you get six rounds in standard cartridges and five in magnums.

The trigger is equally impressive. A beautifully contoured trigger bow encircles a trigger that’s part of a superbly built cassette-type assembly. It’s fully adjustable without tools. Plus, it’s a single-set trigger design. Ignore that function, and you have a wonderfully crisp 2.5-pound pull without a whisker of over-travel. Push the trigger shoe forward to set it, and the result is

an 8-ounce hair trigger. That’s as tested, just the way ST’s test rifle came from Strasser.

While not quite as fast as swapping a bolthead or magazine for a different size, changing a Strasser barrel is easy, too. First, remove the free-floating fore-end by loosening the hex-head screw that secures the fore-end to the hanger. Contained inside the fore-end

RS 14 EVOLUTION STANDARD	
MANUFACTURER	Strasser hms-strasser.com
TYPE	Straight-pull, switch-barrel, bolt-action repeater
CALIBER	6.5 Creedmoor (tested)
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	3 rounds (standard)
BARREL	22 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	7.75 lbs.
STOCK	Walnut
LENGTH OF PULL	14.75 in.
FINISH	Black anodized receiver; plasma nitrogen hardened bolt
SIGHTS	Barrel sights are optional; Picatinny rail machined integral to receiver
TRIGGER	Single-set; 2.5-lb. pull (as tested); 8-oz. set pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Two position
MSRP	\$4,056

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is a small rod. Insert it into the barrel lock lever and rotate the lever 90 degrees. Open the bolt and pull the barrel forward out of the receiver. It's as simple as that.

Install the alternate barrel by reversing the steps. It's worth noting that if you have a large objective bell on your riflescope, you may need to pull the scope off the receiver to allow the barrels to go in and out freely. Otherwise, the angle of the objective housing can contact the barrel taper at the chamber area and cause the barrel to hang up on its way out of the receiver.

Being able to swap barrels—or, really, calibers—is nice and is at the root of the RS 14's adaptability. It's also nice to be able to take down your rifle and transport it in a box the size of a violin case.

Barrels may be ordered with or without barrel sights and fluting. Available chamberings run from .223 Rem. up to .375 Ruger. Barrel prices range from \$820 to \$1,000, depending on options. Muzzle threading is also available for those who want to install a suppressor or muzzle brake. Be aware, however, that the threading is metric.

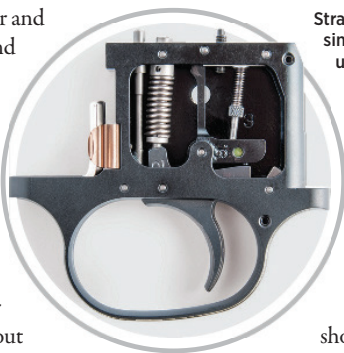
Each barrel blank is purchased from a premium European maker, then shaped, fitted, and chambered in-house by Strasser. An ultra-tough PlasOx coating—a space-age nitride—protects against corrosion and abrasion.

Strasser stocks have distinctly European styling, and that styling is purpose-built to favor fast, instinctive shooting. Hunting driven wild boar, roebuck, red stag, mouflon, and other game species is a national tradition in Europe, and rifles are required to mount well, balance properly, and point instinctively.

Letting this Thoroughbred Run

To work out the Strasser RS 14 Evolution Standard, I mounted a new Trijicon Credo HX 2.5-10X 56mm scope. It's a top-shelf optic with an excellent elevation turret. Offering 20 MOA of adjustment per full revolution, it has a nice solid zero stop; a side focus knob for parallax adjustment; and an illuminated, second focal plane, ballistic reticle graduated in MOA.

With a meagre handful of favorite 6.5 Creedmoor loads, I headed to the range to test accuracy and reliability. Temperature was mild, and a light breeze drifted across the range. I fired three consecutive three-shot groups for average with each load. All five produced averages of less than 1.5 MOA—pretty good for factory ammo. Hornady's Precision Hunter ammo with the 143-grain ELD-X bullet edged below one MOA, and Norma's 130-grain HPBT match load was within a couple hundredths of an inch of one MOA.



Strasser triggers are adjustable without tools and feature single-set capability. From the factory, the sample rifle used for this report came with a 2.5-pound standard pull weight and an 8-ounce set-trigger pull weight.

Just as important in a rifle designed for speed when the action is fast and furious, the RS 14 never hiccupped. Reliability was stellar, and the straight-pull bolt was incredibly smooth

Then I stepped away from the benchrest and shot casually, working the bolt fast and transitioning from target to target. The RS 14 had a nice between-the-hands feel and leapt effortlessly to my shoulder. Balance was nice, and the ability to track one's target and maintain follow-through while whipping the bolt aft and then forward again was excellent.

I know that a Strasser RS 14 Evolution Standard rifle is not for everyone. However, just as there will always be car guys who want Lamborghinis and Ferraris, there will always be riflemen who want distinctive rifles—something out of the ordinary that looks, feels, and shoots like a million bucks and can take on anything from a prairie dog to an elephant. For those people, a Strasser RS 14 rifle is pure nirvana.

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Best accuracy was obtained with Hornady's 6.5 Creedmoor 143-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter ammunition. Average group size was just under one MOA.

STRASSER RS 14 EVOLUTION STANDARD ACCURACY & VELOCITY				
AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	100-YD. ACC. (IN.)
6.5 Creedmoor, 22-in. Barrel, 1:8 Twist				
Barnes 120-gr. TTSX	2792	87	27	1.30
Norma 130-gr. HPBT Match	2742	30	12	1.08
Federal Fusion 140-gr. SP	2670	24	10	1.46
Hornady 143-gr. ELD-X	2637	21	9	1.02
Black Hills Gold 147-gr. ELD-M	2662	42	16	1.57
NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, three-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of 10 rounds measured 12 feet from the gun's muzzle. Temperature: 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Wind: light.				