

CONTROLLED vs. PUSHED
WHICH RIFLE ACTION FOR YOU?

BLADES OF FALL 17 HUNTING KNIVES
FOR SPORTSMEN

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**BIG BORE
ARs**
CARTRIDGES
THAT DELIVER
POWER & SPEED

**LOOKS
CAN
KILL**

.....
**STRASSER'S
RS14 EVOLUTION**

NO MORE MISSES! 5 WINGSHOOTING MISTAKES
AND HOW TO FIX THEM



Straight and to the Point

“Given that the rifle offers a ton of versatility to begin with, the fact that even with all those moving and removable parts it delivers accuracy of this magnitude is a testament to the design.”

The Strasser RS14
Evolution wears a creatively unique design with a long list of excellent features tucked into each nook and cranny. ■ PHIL MASSARO

The bolt-action rifle has been in the hands of shooters and hunters since the late 19th Century — the Mauser 98 and its clones still reign as the most popular. Known in Britain as a “turn-bolt” action, the operation is simple and effective: The bolt handle is raised — disengaging the locking lugs — and the bolt is worked rearward and then forward to load a cartridge into the chamber. Fire, rinse and repeat.

There are those who have sought to create a faster bolt-action rifle by eliminating the need for the upward turn, and thusly designing the straight-pull action: The bolt is simply pulled rearward and pushed forward to operate the firearm. The design has become popular of late, and it's very fast indeed, even if it may seem to go against the instincts of the older turn-bolt mechanics. I recently had an opportunity to spend some time with Strasser's RS14 Evolution, a straight-pull rifle, chambered in .308 Winchester.

The Unique Design

The Strasser RS14 Evolution is a clever modular system: Barrels, bolt heads and magazines can be interchanged to create a multi-caliber system, using the same stock and receiver for a number of different cartridges. The trigger housing is easily removed via a small button under the bolt at the rear of the receiver, and in that trigger housing is stored a small Allen key which is used for assembly.

The barrel is attached by sliding it rearward into the receiver, ensuring that the barrel indexing pin is inserted in the hole in the barrel flange. A lever is then rotated to lock the barrel into place. The forend is then slid onto the receiver and locked down with the 4mm Allen key. Replace the key into the storage clip at the front of the trigger housing, insert the trigger housing back into the receiver, and the rifle is fully assembled.

Iron sights may be screwed onto the barrel should the shooter prefer them, but the RS14 comes with an integral Picatinny rail on top of the receiver. A detachable steel magazine snaps into the receiver and is held in place by two small round buttons on either side of the receiver.



The Strasser receiver is capable of handling both long-action and short-action cartridges.

The Strasser RS14 Evolution uses a rotating mechanism in the bolt to seal the chamber. Essentially, the bolt is rotated at the end of the forward stroke, instead of being done by hand as it is on the downstroke of a traditional bolt-action rifle. The bolt handle pivots forward and back, cocking the bolt during the natural motion of cycling the action. A red cocking indicator at the top rear of the bolt shroud pops up when the rifle is cocked, letting the shooter know the rifle's condition at a glance.

The bolt — with its angular body — is released by a small button on the left side of the receiver, underneath the bolt shroud, and revealed when the bolt is pulled rearward. Simply depress the button to reinstall the bolt.

The RS14 trigger is an adjustable, single-set trigger — there are three “normal” trigger pull weights to choose from, and pushing the trigger forward sets it to a very light weight. The main trigger weight is adjusted between the three settings by moving a small lever inside the trigger housing between one of three detents, and the set trigger weight can be adjusted by rotating a tiny knurled knob on the weight selector lever. If you wish to un-set the trigger, simply work the action.

All in all, the RS14 trigger assembly is well designed, easily adjusted in the field without the need for tools. Should you want a truly crisp and light trigger, it's easily possible with the RS14 design, yet it may be easily

set to traditional hunting weights — the choice is up to the shooter.

The Strasser rifle comes with a safety located at the rear of the bolt, which can be operated ambidextrously, with the trigger-hand thumb. A lever, with a silver-colored button in the center, is pushed upward to put the rifle in the “fire” position, revealing a bright red space, and it's pushed downward to put the rifle on safe. That silver button in the center will release the bolt while keeping the rifle on safe, for unloading purposes.

The RS14 Evolution comes with two stock options: the Standard (tested), which is a checkered walnut, two-piece stock, or the Tahr, which is a laminate wood design with an adjustable cheekpiece. The test rifle I received had a very nice piece of walnut, both front and back, and a European profile to it, in that the comb is a long sweeping curve, dropping at the butt.

The forend is reminiscent of the Schnabel design, and there are sling studs and swivels at the front of the forend and at the bottom rear. A ½-inch black rubber buttpad keeps the Evolution firmly on the shooter's shoulder, and the crisp, pressed checkering affords a good grip on the rifle, even while wearing hunting gloves. A squared-off cheekpiece creates a comfortable feel, and the comb — while perhaps a touch low for the higher mounted riflescopes — gave no issues under recoil, even from the bench.

The RS14 has a length of pull of 14 ½ inches — common to many European

rifles, and longer than our American 13 ½- to 13 ¾-inch models — which fit me well, but it might feel a bit long for the average shooter. I prefer a longer length of pull because it allows my shoulders to relax. I also think every shooter should be properly measured at one point in their shooting career ... you may be surprised to find what actually fits best. The RS14's forend is slim, even narrow, and feels much like a vintage lever rifle; I like the way the stock feels, especially shooting offhand.

At The Bench

To test the Strasser RS14, I mounted a Leupold VX-3i 3.5-10x40mm scope, in a set of Talley rings — yes, they're making them for a Picatinny rail now, and they're excellent — and grabbed an assortment of hunting ammunition. Strasser uses one magazine length for both the .30-06 Springfield and .308 Winchester family of cartridges. Though there was a bit of play

in the magazine for the .308 Win. and its offspring, the rifle fed all the cartridges without issue.

It's actually a smart design: One magazine length will serve a good number of cartridges. Should a hunter want to use a .243 Winchester for varmint and deer, a .30-06 Springfield for elk, caribou and larger game, and a 9.3x62 for grizzly and moose, one magazine will suffice. Different barrels, same magazine, same receiver and stock — what's that saying about a man who owns but one rifle?

At any rate, both feeding and extraction in the Strasser were flawless, no matter how fast I worked the bolt. I spent a half-hour trying to get the rifle to fail by loading different bullet profiles, as well as loading the cartridges at different points in the magazine, as one might do in a hurried hunting situation. Alas, I couldn't get it to fail to feed. The three-shot magazine worked perfectly,

The bolt face of the RS14, with typical push-feed configuration, and a plunger ejector.

no matter the number of cartridges in the magazine. The polymer magazine follower keeps the cartridges at the slightest uphill angle, helping to feed the cartridges reliably, and the magazine is tight enough to keep the cartridges properly aligned.

That single-set trigger was a dream from the bench. According to my Lyman digital trigger scale, it breaks with just 6 ounces of pressure. In the lightest hunting mode, it broke at 2 pounds, 5 ounces, and at the heaviest it broke at 4 pounds. There was no creep or over-travel; it behaves just as a trigger should behave.

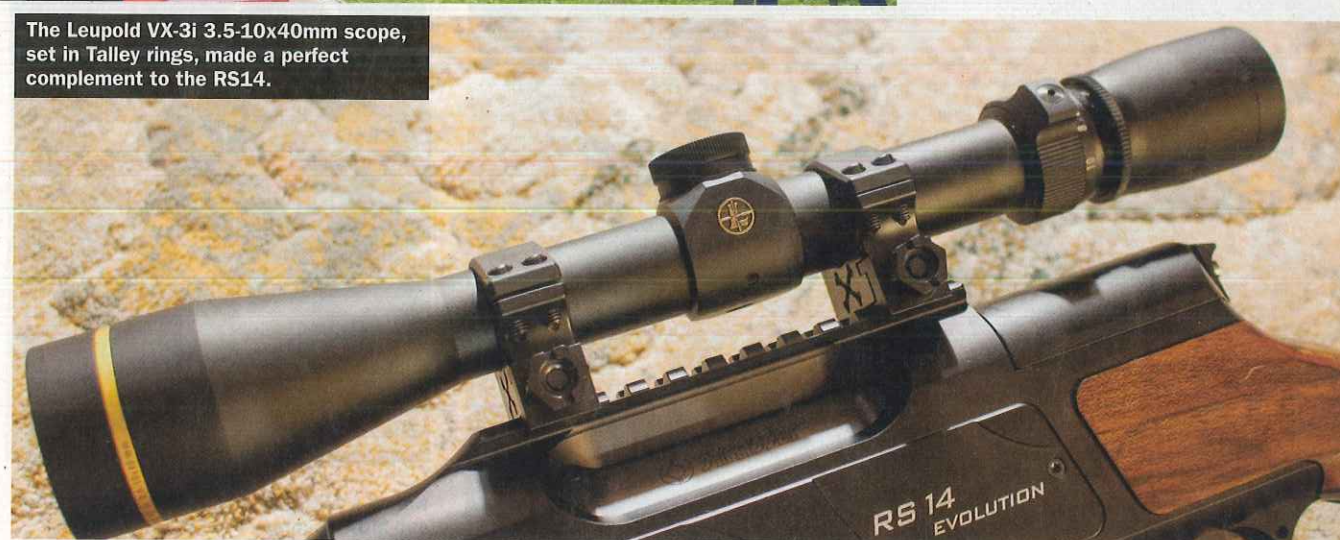
Of the loads I tested, the RS14 absolutely loved the 175-grain Federal Edge TLR and the 150-grain Norma EcoStrike, putting them at or just below 1 MOA. The Browning BXC 168-grain load printed at 1¼-inch at 100 yards, and while that level of accuracy isn't eye-opening, it certainly will suffice for any sane hunting range. Norma's Tip-Strike gave 1½-inch groups, which isn't exactly horrible.



As proven at the bench with the RS14, the author discovered exceptional accuracy in addition to stunning beauty.



The RS14 breaks down quickly, either to switch barrels or for compact travel.



The Leupold VX-3i 3.5-10x40mm scope, set in Talley rings, made a perfect complement to the RS14.



Of the loads tested, Norma's EcoStrike and Federal's Edge TLR gave the best accuracy — right at 1 MOA.

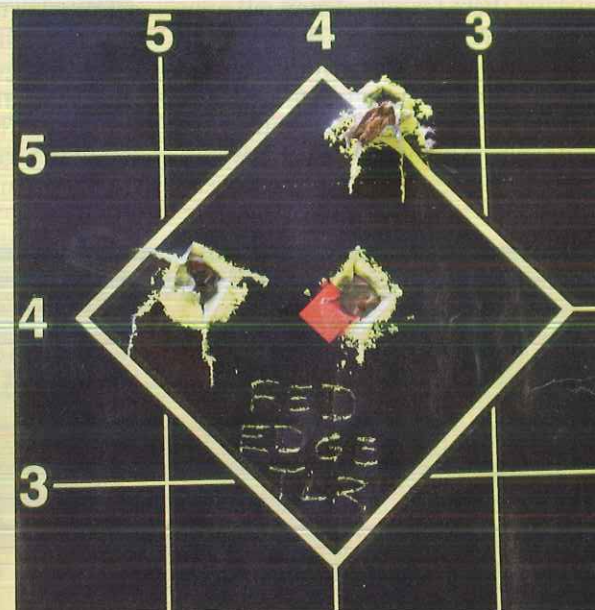
Undoubtedly, the RS14 is a perfectly adequate hunting rifle. Velocities — measured on my Oehler 35P — ran pretty close to the advertised velocities of each load, with the Norma and Federal stuff moving at 15-20 fps faster, and the Browning ran 15 fps under, the stated 2,820 fps. There was not a single issue with feeding or extraction, and the recoil was not even mentionable: I like the Strasser stock design from the bench. Given that the rifle offers a ton of versatility to begin with, the fact that even with all those moving and removable parts it delivers accuracy of this magnitude is a testament to the design.

Design Decisions

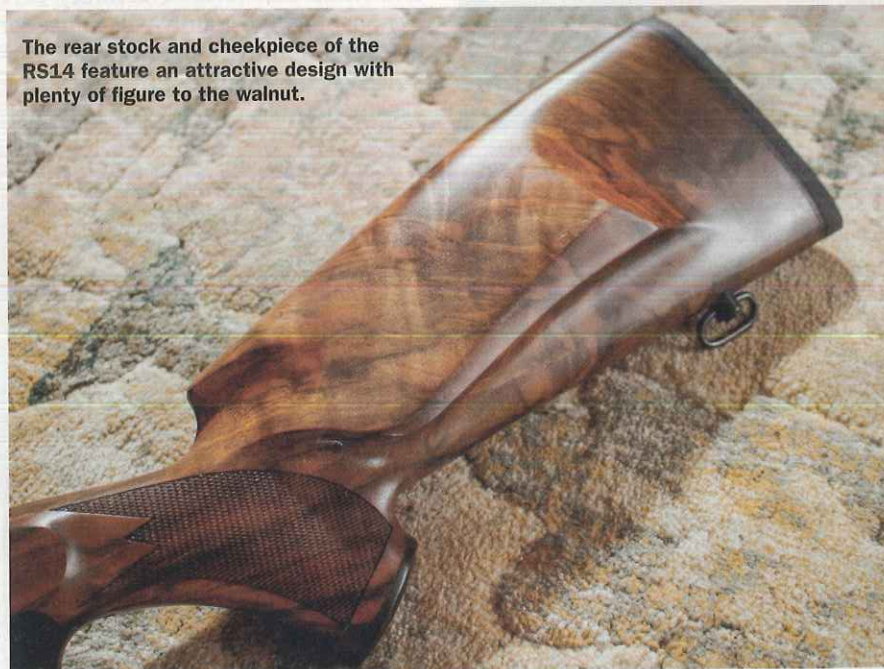
Is a straight-pull rifle for you? That's

going to ultimately be a personal decision; I know I have the bolt throw of a Mauser-based design ingrained in my psyche, but that doesn't mean I couldn't spend a season with a straight-pull rifle in-hand.

Strasser is based out of Austria, and the driven hunt is extremely popular throughout Europe. The speed of a follow-up shot on a driven hunt makes or breaks



Federal's 175-grain Edge TLR gave 1-MOA accuracy, and it makes a great choice for quickly anchoring big game.



The rear stock and cheekpiece of the RS14 feature an attractive design with plenty of figure to the walnut.



Norma's 150-grain EcoStrike ammo created sub-MOA accuracy from the RS14.

STRASSER RS14 EVOLUTION

MSRP: \$3,500

Overall Length: 43 in. (with 22-in. barrel)

Standard Calibers available: .308 Winchester (tested), .22-250 Rem., .243 Win., 6 XC, 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5-284 Norma, 6.5x55SE, 6.5x65RWS, .270 Win., 7x64, 7 mm-08 Rem., .308 Win., .30-06, 8x57 IS, 8.5x63, 9.3x62

Magnum caliber: 7 mm Rem. Mag., .300 Win. Mag., .375 Ruger, .338 Win. Mag.

Weight: 7 lbs. (un-scoped)

Magazine capacity: 3+1 detachable steel magazine

Stock: Two-piece checkered walnut

Barrel: 22-in. steel (24-in. magnum calibers)

Sights: Barrel drilled and tapped for iron sights (non-provided), receiver with integral Picatinny rail

Rings tested: Talley Tactical (1 inch)

Scope tested: Leupold VX-3i 3.5-10x40mm, duplex reticle

the taking of multiple animals, and in more than a few countries autoloading rifles are outlawed. So, with fire-power being paramount on a driven hunt, the speed of a straight-pull rifle is appreciated.

Mix that style of hunting with the numerous spot-and-stalk opportunities, as well as stand hunting (it's referred to as a "high seat" in Europe), and you can see where the flexibility of the Strasser RS14 is appreciated. I can easily see it being a wise choice for the hunter who wants the precision capabilities of a set trigger for longer shots on elk, pronghorn and caribou, yet something fast-handling for a deer drive or a running buck in the dense woods.

The Strasser design is not, by any means, the first straight pull rifle. I've shot others, by Blaser and Heym, which gave excellent performance. That said, the Strasser exhibits excellent construction — the fit and finish were consistent and lines were clean — and it's as good a straight pull rifle as I've used. It offers the flexibility of multiple calibers, extreme adjustability of the trigger, and a sensible yet attractive look. If the switch-barrel rifle appeals to you, take a long look at the Strasser RS14. It'll serve you well. **GDTM**

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