

STALKER GEN 2.308

**DRAKE ASSOCIATES,
RPA AND CADEX
TEAM UP TO BUILD
A COMPACT SWS
POISED FOR
LONG-RANGE DUTY!**

BY DAVID BAHDE



Many precision rifle makers are now moving to modular chassis systems. I remember when they first arrived they were slow to catch on, that is until shooters actually used them. Like all new or foreign things, modular chassis systems had their detractors—many would not budge from stocks and actions that were “bedded” to fiberglass stocks. But much like first-focal-plane scopes, these systems had been fielded in Europe for years and garnered fantastic success. Over time, the systems moved into the American market, where they have quickly progressed. What once was an exotic import is now, in one form or another, a state-of-the-art system.

The concept of “combat necessity” has led to the production of systems that will accommodate all the latest equipment—night vision, lasers, thermal sights and the like that permeate the modern battlefield. The days of a guy and his gun with a fixed 16X scope are long gone. Technology has grown in leaps and bounds, and rifle systems have changed in kind.

In response to military contracts and end-user demand, precision rifles now include railed forends, shorter barrels and a modular chassis that requires no bedding. Actions are fast and slick and have triggers that can be adjusted in the field. Rear stocks are adjustable and foldable for carry or concealment. Long barrels are being replaced by shorter ones with

The Drake Stalker Gen 2 represents the latest generation in precision rifles. With a design based upon lessons learned from real-world deployment, it delivers superb accuracy, ergonomics and adaptability suited for the urban police marksman or soldiers.



The short throw bolt facilitates fast follow-up shots with very little movement while the AICS magazine ensures smooth operation.



Side rails will accommodate lights and combat lasers, while the top rail will accommodate just about any type of scope.

SPECIFICATIONS

DRAKE ASSOCIATES STALKER GEN 2

CALIBER:	.308
BARREL:	16 inches
OA LENGTH:	34.8", 26.25" (folded)
WEIGHT:	12.4 pounds
STOCK:	Strike Dual 30
SIGHTS:	Picatinny-rail
ACTION:	Bolt
FINISH:	Black or Flat Earth Tan
CAPACITY:	10+1
MSRP:	\$4,975



greater rigidity, different rifling and other long-range enhancements. These innovations have resulted in some very accurate rifles that have excellent fit—duct-taping padding to the stock should be a thing of the past. Featuring new, top-quality composites with user-friendly adjustments, these rifles can be reconfigured in the field in minutes (with no tools).

STALKER GEN 2 SWS

New kid on the block—a solidly built sniper rifle developed by Drake Associates in cooperation with our brothers in the UK, Rangemaster Precision Arms (RPA) and CADEX of Canada. RPA builds a complete line of hunting, competition and tactical rifles, while Cadex of Canada is the designer and supplier of the Strike Dual Series chassis systems. The Stalker Gen 2 SWS is now available in the U.S. and Europe.

The Stalker is a stealthy, compact sniper system that is true to its name. It starts with an RPA action and mates to the Strike Series modular chassis system. The Stalker has a quick-throw bolt action utilizing a four-lug system, which offers the closest thing to straight-back bolt manipulation while maintaining rock-solid engagement. The internal extractor is strong and positive and utilizes a push-feed action: with the AICS center-feed magazine and almost straight-

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Barnes 175 OTM	2,738	0.44
Federal Gold Medal SMK	2,744	0.51
Hornady 155 AMAX	2,790	0.21

NOTE: Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 100 yards.s.



The Stalker makes for a surprisingly compact package, even with its stock extended. The Leupold 1-8X scope was a perfect match.

in feeding, it is very smooth without regard to the type of ammunition used. A large, round bolt handle provides a firm grip. The trigger is an RPA two-stage trigger that is adjustable for distance and overtravel and can be set from 1 to 4.5 pounds, making proper trigger access possible regardless of hand size. The trigger adjustments are accessible from the bottom of the action, and the safety is in a position similar to that of a Remington 700 action.

The Cadex Strike Dual Series chassis system allows for “no-tools” field adjustments for LOP, cheekweld and buttstock height. To adjust the length of pull, simply lift a lever on the right side of the stock, adjust, then push the lever back. It sits flat so as not to interfere with a left-handed shooter. For the cheekweld, pinch two activators on the left side, adjust, then let go. (It is large enough on both sides to accommodate shooters of either hand.) A knob on the right side of the stock releases the buttpad, to move it up or down. The stock folds easily and remains

“ THE BARNES LOADS MEASURED 2,738 FPS OUT OF THE STALKER’S BARREL...WHILE MUZZLE REPORT WAS LOUD, RECOIL WAS QUITE TAME. ”

secure: a button will release it from the folded position when pressed, and a lever will fold it back when pulled. Both operations can be accomplished with one hand.

A slight flare to the Stalker’s magazine well made insertion of the magazine easy and positive—it released via a large paddle at the rear. The trigger housing is large and will accommodate gloved hands easily. An oversized rubber grip was included, but I used an AR-type pistol grip. A continuous top rail running from the action to the forend accommodates scope mounts, night vision and other accessories: there are mounting positions on the front of the stock at the 3-, 6- and 9-o’clock positions, and rails of various lengths can be attached at points along the top rail to accommodate lasers and lights.

Under the forend is a 16-inch fluted barrel with a 1-in-10-inch twist rate and topped off with an RPA muzzle brake threaded to 5/8x24 tpi to accommodate most .30 caliber suppressors. Unique in shape, the barrel proved to be very effective. Note that, while this test rifle utilized the standard barrel, all subsequent production rifles will be using the tactical heavy barrel (also fluted and with the same twist rate). UK military snipers have been using the tactical heavy barrel



The folding stock on the test rifle was very solid. It locked into place nicely and never came loose during the testfire.

The unique muzzle brake worked particularly well, eliminating a great deal of flash and making for a very soft-shooting rifle.

out to 900 yards and have seen excellent accuracy and only a very small addition in weight. The tactical heavy barrel is currently available in 7.62x51mm but will eventually come in other calibers.

GLASS ENHANCEMENTS

I added a Leupold Mark 8 CQBSS scope to the Stalker, a rock-solid optic built to mil-specs, with a 1-8X range that’s perfect for any urban operation. This scope is equipped with

an M118LR bullet-drop compensator (BDC), making for quick work at longer ranges. The glass is crystal clear and contains a lighted M-TMR reticle. Elevation and wind adjustments are accomplished using pinch-and-turn, low-profile knobs, both measured in 0.10 mils to match the reticle. Its absolute-return-to-zero feature makes it impossible to lose your place when turning the knobs at distance. The objective is 24mm, allowing for easy mounting of night vision and close

proximity to the bore line. And being housed in a one-piece 34mm tube, the scope is nearly indestructible. I’ve used this scope at a couple of schools and for numerous tests, and it is very precise, incredibly consistent and dead-on accurate.

I mounted the Mark 8 in a GDI P-ROM L-Model. This is a solid mount with 25 MOA of elevation. It uses a quick attach system and has a return-to-zero feature. I had recently tested the mount at a Rifles Only



The Stalker proved to be comfortable to shoot. It was at home in the field, easily working around typical obstacles that lawmen encounter in the urban environment.

class: I fired at 700 yards, removed and reattached the scope, then fired again with no change in impact. And watching the owner Jacob Bynum do this repeatedly attested to its consistency. This mount was equipped with an adapter kit that allowed the attachment of a Trijicon RMR micro dot at the 1-o'clock position on the front ring. When all's said and done, it sights from contact distance out to the limits of the cartridge.

Lastly, a Long Range Accuracy (LRA) tactical bipod was attached to the lower rail of the rifle. The LRA is a bit more compact than the F-class model, and instead of wobbling atop the bipod it swivels, keeping the barrel more centered. The LRA's legs lock in place, which allowed me to mount the bipod in reverse (to keep the system compact) while getting forward pressure when shooting. The LRA is one of the most stable and smooth bipods I have ever used.

The Stalker and all its trimming came in a black nylon rifle case that resembled cases used for M4-style rifles. The Stalker is very compact when folded and fits easily in a car or trunk.

RANGE REPORT

Barnes Bullets has developed ammunition especially for short sniper rifles. This ammo was impressive firing out of a 12.5-inch barrel on a rifle I recently tested, so I was curious to compare that with the Stalker's 16-inch tube. To begin with, Barnes' low-flash powders kept the Stalker very clean. The Barnes loads measured 2,738 fps out of the Stalker's barrel—pretty impressive—and while muzzle report was loud, recoil was quite tame. At 12 pounds, the Stalker was no lightweight, but the muzzle brake worked, improving the rifle's accuracy. The Barnes' 0.44-inch group wasn't the best of the day, but it was no slouch either. Pursuant to its velocity and bullet weight, it most certainly would be as effective as any

other .308 round, at just about any range.

The Stalker was very precise, as one would expect in a sniper rifle. The best group was a clean 0.21 inches with the Hornady 155-grain AMAX—about as close as this shooter gets to same-hole accuracy. Considering this was accomplished from prone, the group was pretty impressive. The Gold Medal Match was not far behind at 0.51 inches. For the longer ranges, mostly steel was used, and given that the rifle was created for urban environments, I limited shots to 400 yards. With the 175-grain Barnes, the BDC on the Mark 8 was pretty close. There was no wind to speak of, so, except for a few shooter errors, I never missed the steel. Because of the muzzle brake's effectiveness in taming recoil, hitting the 18-inch steel targets started to get repetitive.

Setting up the Stalker and making the occasional adjustment in the field was easy. (And given my build, it was nice to be able to adjust the length of pull when shooting prone.) Once in place, the rifle never came loose during shooting or while moving it in and out of the truck. Folding the stock was also quite simple and accomplished one-handed. Running the rifle from my offhand side (left) was not an issue: the bolt ran under the cheekweld, so there was no interference. This process was very quick, butter smooth and completely reliable. Just for kicks I zeroed the RMR at roughly 25 yards and fired: it was dead on, though you wouldn't want to hold this rifle in the pocket for a length of time. The Stalker truly is lethal at contact distance and beyond.

Drake Stalker SWS' are available in .308, .300 Win. Mag., .338LM and .416 Barrett/.50 BMG versions. For more, visit drakeassociates.us or call 631-749-1100. 