



# A CUT ABOVE

AT FIRST GLANCE, BERGARA'S NEW BMR MAY LOOK LIKE JUST ANOTHER BOLT-ACTION RIMFIRE RIFLE. IT'S ANYTHING BUT.

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

**D**OMINANT POPULARITY OF PRS-TYPE competitive shooting has brought bolt-action .22 rimfires back into favor. Like other manufacturers, Bergara has a .22 Long Rifle model designed specifically as a training rifle. Named the B-14R, its dimensions, weight, and operation mirror full-size centerfire competition rifles, right down to AICS-size magazines. While invaluable for crossover training, the full-size nature of these rifles can be off-putting to hunters and recreational plinkers.

Bergara has proven adept at listening to consumers and responding with appropriate products that admirably fit demand, and the BMR (Bergara Micro Rimfire) is a classic example. While it has centerfire quality and ergonomics, it's sized properly for diminutive rimfire cartridges.

## Not Your Granddaddy's .22

This is not, however, your grandfather's bolt-action .22. It's positively dripping with modern features. Better yet, it's available in a full complement of popular rimfire cartridges: .22 Long Rifle, .22 WMR, and .17 HMR.

The bolt's dual extractors ensure reliable extraction, and a svelte tactical knob on a long handle provides plenty of leverage while functioning the action.

The stock is made of a tough composite and finished in Tactical Gray with black specks. It's impervious to moisture and is engineered to be rigid, a characteristic vital to consistent accuracy. Just as important, its ergonomics blend the line between classic, aesthetic contours and modern, precision-shooting stock design. Up front, the fore-end is generously free-floated around the barrel, eliminating any chance of contact that could affect barrel oscillation and change point of impact. Plus, the bottom of the fore-end is subtly flat, enabling it to ride comfortably and consistently on sandbags. On the other end, a cushy recoil pad provides a secure connection with the shooter's shoulder.

Unlike traditional bolt-action rimfires, which typically have relatively long barrels, the BMR is built with several configurations of barrel, all of them relatively short. Specifically, the steel-barrel .22 LR versions are 18 inches, and the .17 HMR and .22 WMR versions are 20 inches.

At this point it's worth noting that there's also a carbon-barreled version available in all the same cartridges and barrel lengths. It's lighter than the steel-barrel version by a few ounces and oozes cool factor. However, it's a bit more costly, too, posting a suggested retail price of \$659 compared to the lesser \$565 for the all-steel BMR.

Why the shortish barrels? Shorthand, the answer is this: Suppressor compatibility. Digging in deeper, while any appropriately threaded rimfire barrel can be mounted with a suppressor, short barrels minimize



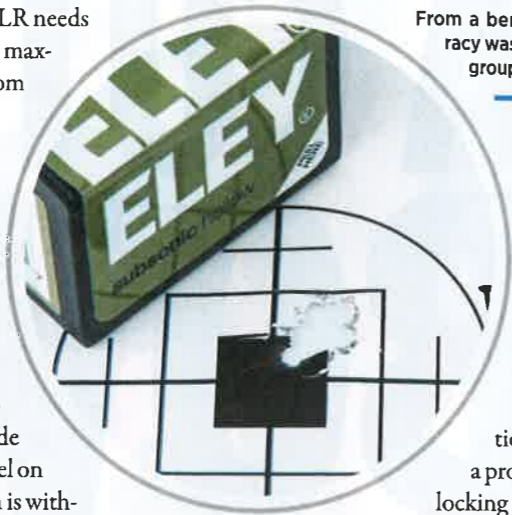
## A CUT ABOVE

the excessive-length factor. Plus, the .22 LR needs only about 16 inches of barrel to achieve maximum velocity, so it benefits not at all from a longer barrel.

On a related note, longer barrels are not more accurate, either. Quite the contrary. The longer a barrel, the greater the oscillation. In a given diameter, a short tube is stiffer than a long one. The traditional conception that long barrels are more accurate stems from the fact that with iron sights, a long sight radius makes them easier for fallible humans to shoot consistently. Aside from the slightly odd look of a short barrel on a bolt-action rifle, the abbreviated length is without doubt right for Bergara's BMR.

Barrels are machined to a No. 4 taper out of 4140 chrome-moly steel and are rifled with a twist rate of 1 turn in 16 inches for the .22 LR and 1 turn in 9 inches for .22 WMR and .17 HMR. Muzzles are threaded with a standard 1/2-28 pitch and are compatible with most rimfire cans. Chambers are cut to match-grade dimensions and tolerances.

Now we come to the really exciting part: the action. It's sleek and well finished, like a nice centerfire big-game rifle. It's really nice



From a benchrest at 25 yards, the .22 LR BMR's accuracy was splendid. Overall accuracy for three, five-shot groups each with seven different loads was 0.49 inch.

to handle a bolt-action .22 that doesn't have that economy feel that's plagued the type for decades.

A petite bolt release allows the bolt to be removed from the action. Said bolt is not your average rimfire bolt, either. Dual extractors at 3 and 9 o'clock ensure reliable extraction. A robust, fixed ejector tosses empty cases out the ejection port with ease. Lockup is achieved via a proven method, using the bolt handle as the locking lug.

Tactical but tidy, a small-scale bolt knob enables easy, sure function of the bolt, even for small hands. My son Henry (age six) works it confidently and without fumbling, even without lowering the rifle from his shoulder (this is with the fore-end resting on shooting sticks).

Behind the bolt, a well-contoured bolt shroud adds to the upper-crust look. When cocked, an indicator protrudes from the rear, a red band warning that the cocking piece is eared back and ready to fire.

As for the safety, it's a two-position, rocker-type affair. It does not lock the bolt. Importantly, the action has a Remington 700-type footprint and utilizes Bergara's "Performance Trigger." Because of that footprint, if desired, you can replace it with any aftermarket Model 700 go-switch. However, I doubt you'll feel the need to; it's user adjustable, and the trigger on ST's test rifle came set at an icicle-crisp 2.5 pounds. Pretty hard to improve on that.

Down below, well-contoured "bottom metal" protects the trigger and contains the magazine. I use quotation marks because it's not actually made of metal—rather, it's a tough, light composite. Think, Glock frame material. The trigger bow has aesthetic, modern lines and is generous enough for use with winter gloves.

BMR	
MANUFACTURER	Bergara Rifles bergarausa.com
TYPE	Bolt-action repeater
CALIBER	.22 LR
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	5, 10 rounds
BARREL	18 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	36 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	5.5 lbs.
STOCK	Composite
LENGTH OF PULL	13.5 in.
FINISH	Matte black metal, gray stock
SIGHTS	None, 30-MOA optic rail included
TRIGGER	2.5-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Two position
MSRP	\$565



The Bergara BMR is a mini-action rimfire bolt gun with a free-floated, 18-inch threaded barrel and a rigid, ergonomic composite stock.



Each BMR comes with a five-round magazine and a 10-round mag that are optimized for the specific chambering (.22 LR, .22 WMR, or .17 HMR). Note the easy-to-access paddle-style magazine release in front of the trigger guard.

Forward of the trigger guard, a wide, paddle-type magazine release enables the shooter to swiftly and easily drop the magazine. Why is this important? For hunters, it really isn't. However, the BMR is configured for .22 NRL and PRS-type competitive shooting, and being able to quickly swap an empty mag for a loaded one can mean the difference between winning and losing.

On that note, each BMR—in every caliber—comes with two magazines. One is a five-rounder that fits nearly flush and is ideal for hunting. The other is a 10-round version suitable for competitive shooting or high-volume plinking and hunting. Both slide into the beveled magazine well with ease and seat home with a satisfying click. The outside dimension of the magazines is nice and compact, yet large enough to house .17 HMR and .22 WMR cartridges. As you can see in the accompanying photograph, mags are adapted to appropriately contain each cartridge.

Every BMR also comes with a special rail-type scope base factory mounted to the receiver. Why is it special? It incorporates 30 MOA of cant, making it so shooters with precision-capable scopes can dial up for long shots. In PRS and NRL competitions, the good old .22 LR is not considered "just" a 100-yard cartridge. The BMR is considered capable of shooting to 200 and even 300 yards, and Bergara clearly intends to support shooters making the most of their rifles.

### Making Its Mark

So what is this whiz-bang little bolt-action rimfire actually capable of? My introduction to it came at a media event in Great Falls, Montana. I watched another writer shoot an impressive sub-MOA cloverleaf group at 100 yards, and when he was done, I settled in behind the rifle to see if I could equal it. My first two shots were about 0.75 inch apart, and the third landed exactly between them.

I was impressed. In addition to the accuracy, the ergonomics were outstanding. Like most acutely addicted gun guys, I immediately figured I had to have one.

Bergara was kind enough to send me one on loan for review. I made certain they'd be willing to accept a check rather than the rifle when I was done with my report, and then I went to work.

Eager to wring it out, I mounted a Crimson Trace 3-12X 42mm Brushline Pro scope in Leupold QRW rings. The optic offers enough magnification for long-range rimfire shooting and has adjustable parallax, which is critical to precision. Plus, it has a BDC holdover reticle and an elevation turret with 25 MOA of adjustment per rotation.

With a Harris bipod attached to the front sling-swivel stud, I rounded up several .22 LR loads and headed to the 25-yard range. As I settled in, I encountered an adverse factor that I should have considered but didn't. The Crimson Trace scope, being designed

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## A CUT ABOVE

for long-range precision shooting, did not have enough close-range parallax adjustment to eliminate apparent reticle movement at 25 yards.

It didn't bother me much, since I intended to work the rifle out much farther once clinical testing was accomplished. To help me achieve maximum consistency, I employed an old trick and stretched a piece of electrical tape across the ocular housing, then poked a small hole in it with a needle. Sighting through the little hole was challenging, but it helped me keep my eye centered behind the reticle, thereby eliminating parallax-related issues.

From the start, the BMR shot beautifully. Five-shot groups often resulted in one ragged hole, particularly with match-grade ammo by SK and Eley. All seven ammo types tested averaged groups of less than 0.75 inch at 25 yards, and all but two averaged less than 0.5 inch. SK Long Range Match and Eley Subsonic Hollow tied for smallest average, at 0.38 inch.

I only experienced one hiccup with reliability. Once, an empty case hung up in the chamber, and I had to use a cleaning rod to pop it out.

With formal 25-yard testing accomplished, I transitioned to a 100-yard target to refine my zero with SK's Long Range Match ammo before attempting 200 yards. After a couple of sighters, I fired a five-shot group using SK Long Range Match ammo. To my amazement, four of the five bullets clustered into a tiny 0.44-inch group. One flier—which I cheerfully attribute to human error—opened the group to 1.53 inches.

Time to stretch the Bergara BMR out. I moved to the 200-yard range, where a round gong awaited. It's just eight inches in diameter, but after one sighter, I not only averaged 100-percent impacts, but I put 10 shots into a group not much bigger than the little SK Long Range Match ammo box. (See the accompanying photo.)



The .22 rimfire BMR's accuracy at 100 yards and 200 yards was equally impressive, as this 10-shot group fired on a steel gong at 200 yards demonstrates.

Before concluding my testing, I wanted to put the svelte little BMR to more practical work. The buttstock is too long for Henry, so I put it in the hands of my youngest daughter Sophia, age nine, and we set out to stalk several steel animal targets I'd placed in strategic positions around our farm.

Sophia isn't quite the shooting fan that my boys are, but she still enjoys being out and squeezing triggers. Resting over three-legged standing sticks, she pinwheeled a Legion Targets rocking wild boar, made a self-healing prairie dog target dance, and astutely dinged a round steel target representing a charging Cape buffalo.

Because she doesn't function firearms with quite the confidence that my boys do, it was a perfect test of the BMR's user-friendliness. No matter whether she worked the bolt like she was trying to break it—per my instructions—or tentatively tugged at it, the rifle functioned perfectly.

Pricewise, the Bergara BMR is in the same realm as Tikka's T1x and has the advantage of coming with multiple magazines and the 30-MOA optic rail. It's less expensive and just as capable in NRL and PRS competitions as other more costly brands. And although it won't shoot like a \$3,000 Voodoo Gun Works rifle or an Anschutz, it is close enough that 99 out of 100 shooters won't know the difference.

Modern times and the PRS movement have blessed us shooters with the most adaptable precision rifles in history. I have no doubt the excellent Bergara BMR bolt-action rimfire will make its mark.

### BERGARA BMR ACCURACY & VELOCITY

AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	25-YD. ACC. (IN.)
<b>.22 LR, 18-in. Barrel</b>				
Browning Fragmenting 37-gr. HP	1447	38	12	0.41
American Eagle 38-gr. HP	1245	36	12	0.46
Eley Subsonic Hollow 40-gr.	1063	25	8	0.38
Remington Thunderbolt 40-gr. RN	1281	56	17	0.75
SK Long Range Match 40-gr.	1105	26	8	0.38
SK Magazine 40-gr. RN	1006	75	22	0.59
Winchester Super-X 40-gr. RN	1221	51	14	0.47

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of 15 rounds measured adjacent to the muzzle.