

# CARBON FIBER HOWA

Does Your 6.5mm  
Needmoor? Consider  
a 6.5mm PRC!!

By David M. Fortier Cover and lead photo by Mike Anschuetz



Introduced in 2008 by Hornady, the 6.5mm Creedmoor cartridge went on to win both the hearts and respect of American riflemen. A very well-balanced cartridge, the 6.5mm Creedmoor drives efficient 0.264-inch projectiles at respectable velocity giving it a flat trajectory and good down-range performance. It's accurate, has mild recoil, does well in the wind and over the years has really put the knuckles to the .308 Winchester. As good as the 6.5mm Creedmoor is though, there are always those who wish for "a bit more." For certain scenarios and hunting situations it would be nice to have a bit more velocity and a bit more terminal performance down-range on target. Hornady responded to this in 2018 with the introduction of their 6.5mm PRC, or Precision Rifle Cartridge.

The 6.5mm PRC bumps the performance level up a useful amount over the 6.5mm Creedmoor. Better still, it does this while still fitting in a short-action.

[Cont. to page 12]

**New from Legacy Sports is the Howa HS Carbon Fiber in the flat-shooting 6.5mm PRC!**





The HS Carbon Fiber is well-suited for Western hunting where the ranges can get long.

The Howa action is dropped into a HS Precision stock with a full length aluminum bedding block.

[Cont. from page 8]

The result is a flat-shooting cartridge capable of driving long 147-grain projectiles at 2,950 fps. This makes it ideal for the Western part of the country where the shots can be long, and in the wind. One of the many manufacturers to take note of Hornady's 6.5mm PRC cartridge is Legacy Sports International, Inc. Their latest offering is their new HS Carbon Fiber which is well-suited for the Western hunter or rifleman looking to go long.

I have to admit as a child of New England that hunting out West is very different than back East. In Maine you typically zeroed your rifle an inch high at 100 yards, and likely hunted in thick woods where your shots would be close and fast. Short quick-handling "brush guns" ruled the day here. Otherwise, you sat on a chopping or powerline where you might be

able to see 200 or perhaps 300 yards. I grew up hunting this way, and still love it.

The Mid-West and West though are a bit...different. The terrain here in Kansas is very dissimilar to where I grew up in Maine. In contrast to the dense unending forest of Maine, on a clear day in Western Kansas you can see the back of your head. The shots here can be long and the Kansas wind is something which needs to be experienced. Due to this Western hunters tend to gravitate towards flat-shooting cartridges pushing efficient low drag projectiles which hit hard at distance. The 6.5mm PRC was tailor made for these conditions.

So, what's the deal on Hornady's short and fat 6.5mm? For all intents and purpose the 6.5mm PRC is a short magnum which provides 250 fps or so of velocity over the 6.5mm Creedmoor. Due to this the

exterior ballistics are further improved. More importantly, the increase in velocity improves terminal performance making the PRC a better hunting cartridge both at distance and on larger game than the Creedmoor. The Creedmoor is a good, but not great hunting cartridge. The PRC ups the ante without a large increase in recoil or completely axing barrel life. Plus, it better handles heavier bullets, such as those in the 147-grain range, than the Creedmoor. Recoil of the 6.5mm PRC with 147-grain loads is more comfortable than say the classic .300 Winchester Magnum 190-grain load.

Now, keep in mind, what the 6.5mm PRC accomplishes is hardly new. There are a host of 6.5mm cartridges out there, some of which easily outperform the 6.5mm PRC. Cartridges like the 6.5-284 Norma,

6.5-'06, 6.5mm Remington Magnum, .264 Winchester Magnum, 26 Nosler and 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum have been killing animals for years. Plus, while suddenly popular with American sportsmen, the 6.5mm bore-size is hardly new. It has been putting men in the ground and animals in the dirt since 1891. The 6.5x54mm Mannlicher-Schonauer is legendary for its feats on African dangerous game and the 6.5x55mm



The HS Carbon Fiber makes a fine companion when you have to hike over hill and dale and then possibly reach long.

"Swedish" Mauser is respected by competitive shooters and hunters alike.

What is relatively new is the interest by American sportsmen in this bore-size. This is primarily due to the success of two cartridges, the previously mentioned 6.5mm Creedmoor and the 6.5mm Grendel. Neither were an instant success, but both eventually found their footing and then took off. The success of these two cartridges has led many hunters to take a closer look at other 6.5mm cartridges. While there are a host of 6.5mm cartridges, none besides the Creedmoor and Grendel have really achieved real success with American hunters. Hornady hopes to change that with the 6.5mm PRC.

Typically the difference between a hugely successful cartridge and one that is soon confined to the dustbin of history is nothing more than timing. Cartridges that are too far ahead or behind the curve typically do not fare well. To be blunt, the bones of 6.5mm cartridges which failed to achieve mainstream success in the US litter the ground. So, the 6.5mm PRC is a bit of a gamble for Hornady. Mainstream success has nothing to do with performance or factory support. American sportsmen are a fickle bunch, and commercial success depends upon their whims. That said the 6.5mm PRC has the performance and characteristics to be a commercial success.

Enough about the cartridge though, let's turn our attention to the eye-catching rifle sprawled across our cover and these pages. Legacy Sports Howa HS Carbon Fiber is a good looking rifle with both traditional and non-traditional features. The first thing which catches your eye on this new model is obviously the carbon wrapped barrel. This gives it a distinctive

look. A stainless steel thread protector is a nice touch, indicating you can easily mount a muzzlebrake or sound suppressor, depending upon your needs. The barreled action sits in a HS Precision stock, so it has classic lines while being very practical. The stock features a web textured camouflage finish, adding to its distinctive look.

[Cont. to page 16]



The knurled muzzle nut comes standard.



Removing the muzzle nut reveals 5/8x24 threads allowing easy attachment of muzzle devices or a sound suppressor.



The 6.5mm PRC offers a nice step up in performance over popular 6.5mm Creedmoor.



The heart of the rifle is Howa's well-proven Model 1500 action.





The Carbon Fiber wrapped barrel is distinctive looking and adds to the appeal of the rifle.



Barrel twist is 1 turn in 8 inches.



An extra sling stud is fitted to allow easy mounting of a bipod.

[Cont. from page 13]

The foundation for this rifle is the Howa Model 1500 standard-length receiver. This is machined from forged steel. The Model 1500 is readily available in three popular action lengths, standard, short and miniature. The standard-length Howa features a bolt length of 7.4 inches, the short-action has a 6.9-inch bolt while the miniature-action bolt comes in at just 6 inches. Offering their action in three lengths allows them to chamber a wide-range of cartridges in an appropriate size action. So, Legacy Sports can tailor different models to fit specific niches.

Examining it you'll note the Howa 1500 design features a rotating bolt with dual front locking lugs. The bolt face sports a plunger type ejector, claw ex-



The bolt handle is long enough to provide plenty of leverage and a 3-position safety is standard.



The Howa Model 1500 action proved smooth and fed reliably with zero issues.

tractor and the design cocks on opening. The forged steel receiver features a large integral recoil lug. Plus, the action is designed with three gas ports for pressure relief in case of a catastrophic failure. These will vent gases away from the shooter. The bolt features a single-piece steel bolt handle and the entire bolt can be easily stripped without tools. A two-stage Match trigger is standard with an advertised pull weight of between 2.5 and 3.8 pounds. One feature I like is the

inclusion of a 3-position safety. This locks the bolt closed, or allows the rifle to be unloaded and cleared with the safety on. It is a practical feature, especially at the end of a hunt.

Screwed into the front of the Howa 1500 action is a 24-inch long carbon wrapped barrel with a #2 contour. The muzzle features 5/8-24 threads covered by a knurled protector. This thread pattern allows a wide variety of muzzle devices to be easily mounted.



This model features a traditional internal box magazine with a drop-floorplate.



The floorplate opens easily to allow quick unloading.



The butt features a soft rubber pad that helps mellow out the recoil.

It also makes it very easy to add your favorite sound suppressor onto. Or, you can simply leave the thread protector in place. This model is also offered in .308 Win and 6.5mm Creedmoor. The 6.5mm PRC model features a one turn in eight inches rifling twist for optimum performance with a wide range of bullet lengths/weights. This twist allows use of very long 147-grain Match bullets to much shorter and more economical 100-grain pills for dusting coyotes and the like. The muzzle sports a recessed target crown cut at 45 degrees to protect the all-important lands and grooves at the muzzle. It should be also noted that the bolt face is true and square to the chamber.

The barreled action is installed into a rugged HS Precision stock, so it has classic lines while being very practical. The stock features the full 7075 aluminum bedding block HS Precision is known for. The stock is hand laminated from a mix of Kevlar, fiberglass and carbon fiber and then injected with a proprietary blend of dense polyurethane foam material. This keeps the stock light but strong. The design also incorporates a barrel center screw. Sling studs are fitted and an additional stud is mounted in the fore-end for a bipod. The stock features a web textured camouflage finish, adding to its distinctive look. Available finishes are HS Precision Gray, ODG, Kuiu Vias 2.0 and Kuiu Verde 2.0.

The design feeds from a conventional internal box magazine, and it has a hinged drop floor-plate. Overall length of the rifle is 43 inches and it weighs in at 7.8 pounds. MSRP of this rifle in camo is \$1489. Leg-



The Howa is an able hunting companion which will do the deed if you can make the shot.

acy Sports offers both individual Howa rifles as well as rifle packages. I requested one of their packages which included a set of 30mm rings and a NikkoStirling Diamond FFP 6-25x50mm scope. I was a bit surprised to note this scope features a Front Focal Plane reticle, which has exploded in popularity in the last 15 years. The Skeleton HMD reticle is glass etched and illuminated.

Adjustments are .1 Mil per click, but no way to track full turret rotations, and the mechanism block features a side parallax turret onto which the reticle intensity rheostat is fitted. The design is waterproof, shockproof and Nitrogen filled. Lenses are fully multi-coated. This scope features a lifetime warranty and has an MSRP of \$367. The NikkoStirling features a well-designed and useful reticle which can be used for elevation and windage/lead holds. Optical performance is good, especially for the money. This is

actually a pretty nice package for the sportsman looking for one stop shopping. You can buy a Howa package, zero and hit the woods with it. Just add a bipod, sling and swivels and you're ready for the field.

I was very interested to see how the big 6.5mm Howa would perform, so off to the range I went. Test ammunition consisted of two Hornady factory loads, their 143-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter and their 147-grain ELD Match. Both of these bullets have an excellent reputation. They both possess very high Ballistic Coefficients (BC), are known to be very accurate and the ELD-X performs very well on game. The 143-grain ELD-X has a .625 G1 BC while the 147-grain ELD Match has a whopping .697 G1 BC. The 147-grain ELD Match bullet makes more sense in the 6.5mm PRC than the Creedmoor.

Conditions during testing were very hot and humid. I unpacked my gear on my 100 yard range and





While not ultralight, the Howa still carries easily and slung well.

settled in for some fun. The scope zeroed easily in a matter of a few shots and I quickly got to work. Initial testing consisted of firing four 5-shot groups with each load from a rest while recording velocities using a LabRadar Doppler Chronograph. Here the Howa proved both stable and comfortable. Rounds load easily into the magazine and the bolt proved smooth with cartridges feeding easily from the box magazine. The three-position safety is easy to manipulate and the trigger is good out of the box. Recoil is not bad but a step up from the Creedmoor.

Accuracy at 100 yards proved quite acceptable for a production rifle. The rifle has an accuracy guarantee of being able to put 3 rounds into less than an MOA at 100 yards. This particular example would do much better than that with multiple 3-shot groups coming in at .5 inch and under. Hornady's 143-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter averaged .75 inch at 2,948 fps for four 5-shot groups. You'll note the velocity is fairly impressive and I nice step up from the 6.5mm Creed-



The NikkoStirling Diamond FFP 6-25x50mm scope performed well, especially considering its economical price.



Magnification ranges from 6x to 24x and it features a Front Focal Plane reticle.



Adjustments are in .1 Mil clicks with 6 Mils per full turret revolution.



Turret clicks are fairly crisp and the scope tracked without issue.

moor. Switching to Hornady's 147-grain ELD Match bullet with the chronograph data for this load showed the average velocity to be 2,888 fps with a high of 2,904 fps.

The rifle sits well on bags and performed well. Heat didn't seem to affect accuracy. The Howa action isn't the fastest on the market, but it worked just fine. The NikkoStirling Diamond FFP 6-25x50mm scope performed

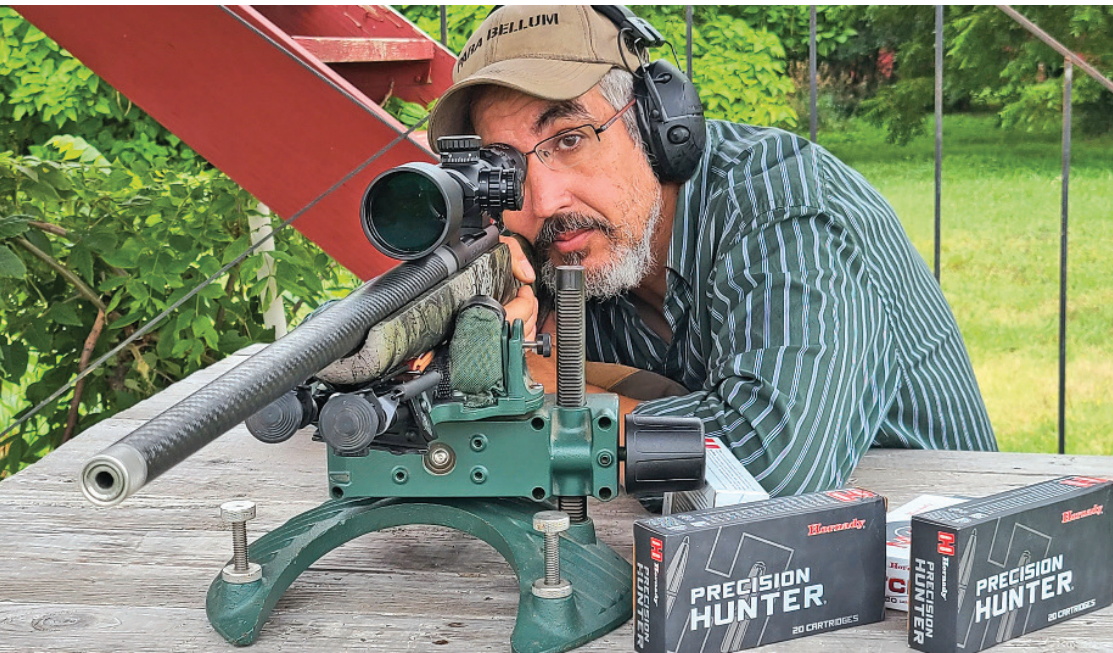
[Cont. to page 20]



Optical performance is solid and this scope has a lot of features for the money.



Hornady's 147-grain ELD Match load combines their respected 147-grain ELD Match bullet with the 6.5mm PRC. Results are impressive.



The Howa proved both accurate and fun at the range with a smooth bolt and fairly mild recoil.



A hunting and match load from Hornady were used during testing with very good results.

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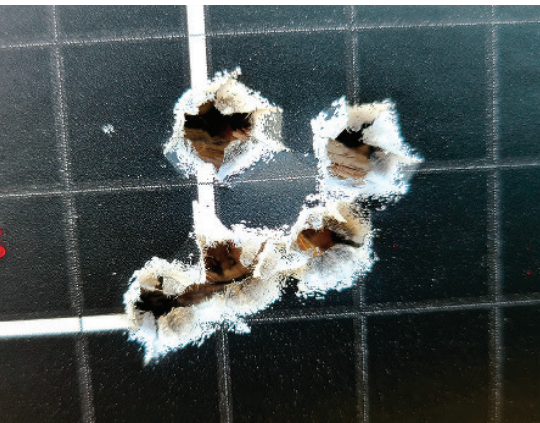
well. I was actually impressed by this optic, especially considering the economical price. It has a lot of features, and a modern FFP reticle. Image quality is good the magnification ring zoomed smoothly.

From the bench I moved to firing prone off a Harris bipod with a rear bag. I did this informally for a little fun. The 6.5mm PRC cartridge is indeed flat shoot-

ing which takes some of the error out if your range estimation is a bit off. It also has less wind deflection than lesser cartridges. However, even with the big PRC you still need to be able to read wind if you are taking a shot at a game animal. The efficient bullets and velocity certainly help, but you still need to know what you are doing to make hits at distance in a difficult wind. If you can estimate range and read wind though, this thing is a monster inside 1,000 yards. It definitely kicks sand in the face of lesser cartridges. I really like how little elevation it takes to reach out and touch something.

My thoughts? I like Legacy Sports Howa HS Carbon Fiber in 6.5mm PRC quite a bit. I like the flavor

[Cont. to page 22]



A 5-shot group fired at 100 yards shows the Howa's potential.





Firing prone off the bipod at steel targets proved a lot of fun and proved the Howa's abilities.



Feeding and ejection were positive with zero issues encountered.

ACCURACY CHART LEGACY SPORTS HOWA HS CARBON FIBER 6.5MM PRC				
Load	Bullet Weight (gr)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Average Group (in.)
Hornady Precision Hunter ELD-X	143	2948	20	.75
Hornady ELD Match	147	2888	35	.68
Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired from a rest at 100 yards. Velocity figures are 10-shot averages recorded with a LabRadar Doppler chronograph at the muzzle at an ambient temperature of 35 degrees F at 1,030 feet above Sea Level.				



Three shots fired prone off the bipod show this rifle easily meets Howa's accuracy guarantee.

[Cont. from page 20]

of it, the way it looks and feels. I also like the way it shoots. It's a comfortable rifle, the trigger is very good and the recoil isn't off-putting. It's comfortable from common field positions and handles and carries well. It slings nicely and is a nice balance between weight and performance. While it's no ultralight sheep rifle, you can carry it over hill and dale without issue. It is steady off hand, and the bolt is smooth and fairly quick. With a bit more ammunition and time behind it I think I could do some excellent shooting at the limit of my range, 800 yards. If I was going to offer up any complaint I'd say the sling studs were not fully tightened. But that's my only gripe.

It's obvious the 6.5mm PRC has a number of fine qualities, the exterior ballistics are quite good and it offers a bit more performance over the Creedmoor for hunters. If you want a definite step up in performance over the 6.5mm Creedmoor, but do not want to go to a .30 caliber, like the .300 Win Mag, this is a viable option. Short magnum type cartridges are often here today and gone tomorrow. Will the 6.5mm PRC catch on like the Creedmoor and Grendel? That I cannot say, but it certainly has the performance and industry backing to be a success. **FN**

SPECIFICATIONS	
LEGACY SPORTS HOWA HS CARBON FIBER	
Action Type:	Manual rotating bolt with controlled round feed
Caliber:	6.5mm PRC
Capacity:	3+1 internal box magazine
Barrel:	24 inches carbon fiber wrapped, 1-8 inch RH twist
Overall Length:	43 inches
Weight:	7.8 pounds
Stock:	HS Precision
Finish:	Blued action
Trigger:	Two-stage
Sights:	None
Safety:	Three-position wing type
Price:	\$1,279 MSRP
Importer:	Legacy Sports, www.HowaUSA.com