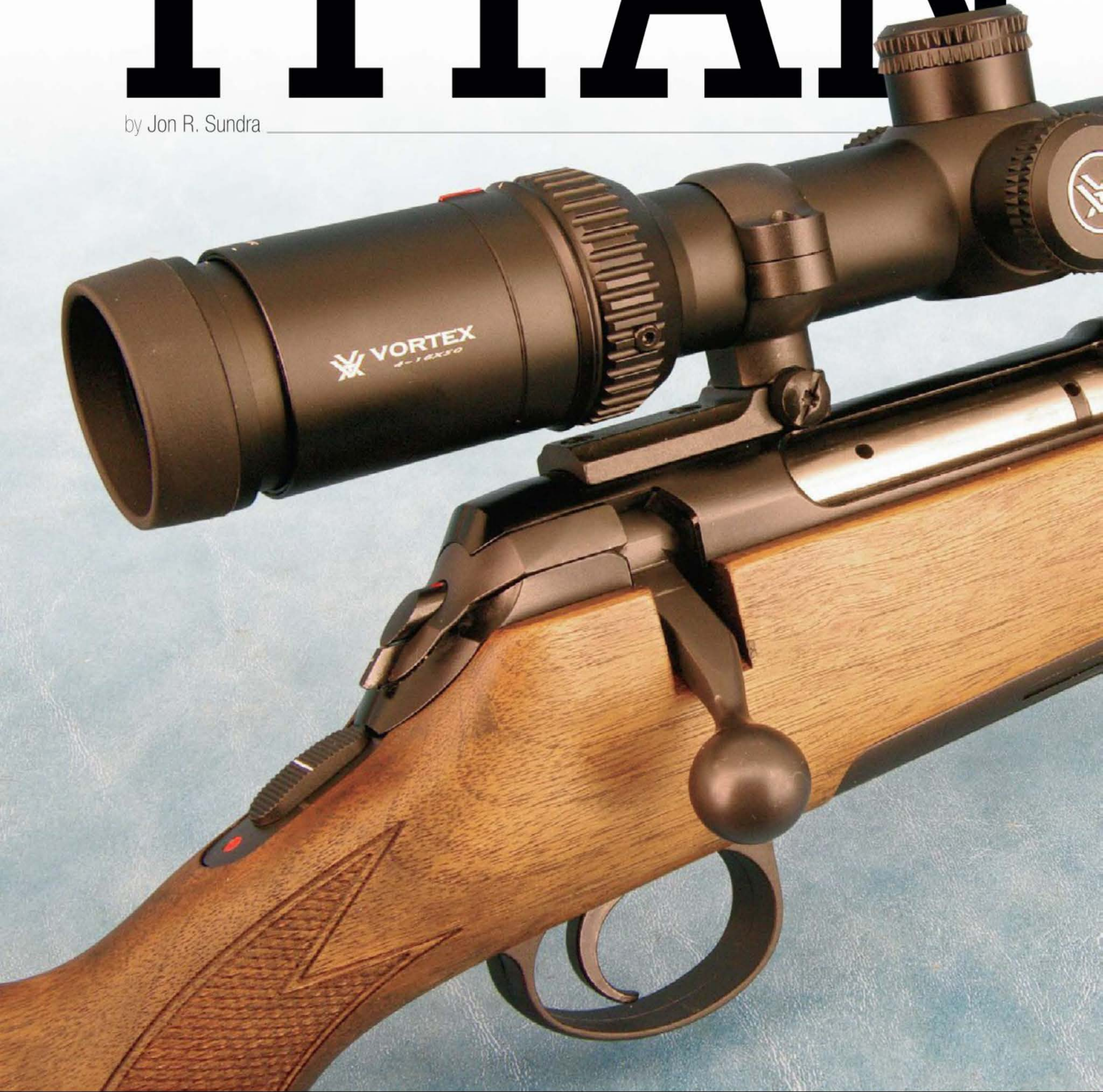


# CLASH OF THE TITAN

by Jon R. Sundra





ROESSLER'S TITAN 3/6 OFFERS  
SWITCH-BARREL CAPACITY AT A  
FRACTION OF THE PRICE OF ITS  
EUROPEAN COMPETITORS.



**W**hen it comes to rifles, I'm conflicted. I grew up in the era when the Savage 110 and

Weatherby Mark V were still fairly new to the market, and the Model 700 wasn't yet a glint in Remington's eyes. To me the only rifle I'd consider back then was a Mauser-type with twin opposed locking lugs up front and a fixed magazine with a hinged floorplate. It could be push feed or controlled feed, as long as it had the aforementioned features. But then again, I can't recall there being anything but such rifles available back in the late 1950s and early '60s.

Times have changed, and in many ways so have I. I still have a strong sentimental attachment to traditional rifles like the Remington 700, Ruger Hawkeye, Winchester Model 70, et al, but if truth be told, these guns are behind the times. For hunting I still prefer the manually operated bolt action, but it has evolved somewhat since the '98 Mauser—not here in America, but in Europe, Germany and Austria to be specific.

The gun I'm reviewing here, the Austrian-built Roessler Titan 3/6, is not a radical design like the Blaser R8, Merkel Rx Helix or Heym SR-30—all of which are straight-pull actions, yet each employs its own unique locking system. No sir, the Titan is basically similar to the "value-priced" rifles we've seen debut here recently. I'm talking guns like the Browning X-Bolt, Thompson/Center Venture, the Ruger American and the Winchester XPR, all of which belong to the "fat bolt" school of bolt-action design.

What to my mind makes the Titan 3 and 6 noteworthy is that, unlike the aforementioned American guns, they offer caliber-switching capability. And just as importantly, the cost of admission is less than half that of the European rifles I mentioned.

By now most readers know what a fat or "full diameter" bolt is, so we'll not go into any great detail here. Suffice to say the bolt body is the same diameter as the bolt head where the locking lugs are located. Because the locking lugs do not



protrude out from the bolt body like on a Mauser-type action, only a round hole is necessary for the bolt raceway. The first rifle to employ this type action was the Weatherby Mark V Magnum, which debuted in 1957.

One of the defining characteristics of this type action is that all of them have their locking lugs on 120-degree centers, which I define as a tri-lug sys-



When barreled in .223-size calibers, the bolt is a three-lug affair. In standard and belted magnum calibers there are six locking lugs.

tem. It can be one row of three lugs, two rows of six, or three rows of nine like the Weatherby, but in all cases a tri-lug action requires only a 60-degree rather than a 90-degree bolt rotation, which of course means a 60-degree rather than a 90-degree handle lift.

The advantages are that the action can be cycled faster, and there's more clearance between the bolt handle and the scope's eyepiece. Also, the clearance between the bolt and its raceway can be held to tighter tolerance, which can make for an exceptionally smoother bolt glide and virtually no lateral play in the bolt. That, in turn, minimizes the chance of the bolt binding when trying to cycle the action from the shoulder.

The Titan I received for evaluation was the Standard model and came set up in .223 Rem., with an accessory barrel, bolt and magazine to convert to .308 Win. The rifle is considered a Titan 3 when configured for the .223 or any of the other six small-head cartridges

for which accessory barrels are available. But when you switch to the .30-06 or belted magnum case families (25 calibers are offered ranging from the .243 Win. To .338 Win. Mag.), the gun becomes a Titan 6. That's because the Titan 3 bolt has one row of three locking lugs, and the Titan 6 has two rows of three lugs. (Interestingly enough, Roessler also makes a straight-pull rifle called the Titan 16, which, you guessed it, has 16 locking lugs. But that's another story.)

Like all similar rifles, the bolt glide on the test gun was smooth as glass, and that was with the bolt being bone dry. With a little Break Free applied, it moved as if on ball bearings. That's just one of the things I love about German and Austrian rifles: No matter what type of action they employ, they are so much smoother than ours.

Up front the bolt head looks like every other tri-lug action in that the face is recessed and houses a plunger-type ejector button and an extractor housed in the face of the lower right locking lug that slides radially within a T-slot. At the rear the bolt shroud and receiver are



Smooth barrel shanks with index notches allow easy and secure caliber switches. Unlike other swappable designs, the scope mounts to the Titan's receiver instead of the barrel.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### ROESSLER TITAN 3/6

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| TYPE           | 3-lug manual turnbolt, 60-degree bolt rotation.                           |
| CALIBER        | .223 Rem./ .308 Win. (two of 32 calibers offered)                         |
| CAPACITY       | 3+1 (as tested); single-stack detachable box                              |
| BARREL         | 22 in. (as tested)  |
| OVERALL LENGTH | 42.75 in.   |
| WEIGHT         | 6.5 lb.   |
| FINISH         | semigloss blue  |
| TRIGGER        | 40 oz. (measured); factory spec is 2.2–2.4 lb.                            |
| SAFETY         | two-position tang   |
| SIGHTS         | none; receiver drilled and tapped for 6-48 screws                         |
| PRICE          | \$1,357 (as tested); \$825 for second caliber (barrel, bolt and magazine) |
| MANUFACTURER   | Roessler  |
| IMPORTER       | TR Imports, TRIMPORTS.COM   |





No Bavarian or other European influences here. The stock has straight-up American styling. The Standard model is stocked in Grade A walnut.



All calibers are based on one receiver length, so standard-length mags are baffled to accommodate shorter cartridges like the .223 and .308 families. They're not the easiest to load.

## ACCURACY RESULTS

### ROESSLER TITAN 3/6

| Cartridge                 | Bullet Weight (gr.) | Muzzle Velocity (fps) | Standard Deviation | Avg. Group (in.) |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>.223 REM.</b>          |                     |                       |                    |                  |
| NORMA FMJ                 | 55                  | 3,140                 | 9                  | 0.95             |
| BLACK HILLS SP            | 55                  | 3,110                 | 16                 | 1.15             |
| FEDERAL FUSION            | 62                  | 2,935                 | 21                 | 1.35             |
| <b>.308 WIN.</b>          |                     |                       |                    |                  |
| BLACK HILLS HORNADY A-MAX | 155                 | 2,710                 | 19                 | 0.90             |
| NORMA SIERRA HPBT         | 168                 | 2,685                 | 13                 | 1.25             |
| HORNADY ELD-X             | 178                 | 2,545                 | 126                | 1.80             |

**NOTES:** Results are averages of five three-shot groups from benchrest at 100 yards. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a CED Millennium chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; HPBT, hollowpoint boattail; SP, softpoint

sloped to match the top line of the grip, which lends a pleasing silhouette. In the cocked mode a rearward extension of the firing pin protrudes 1/8 inch, thus providing both a visual and tactile check of the action's status.

Though the bolts of the Titan 3 are virtually identical to those of our domestic fat bolts, the big difference is that the latter lock up with the receiver a la Mauser fashion, while the Titan locks up with abutments within the barrel itself. That, of course, is what makes barrel switching possible.

Switch barrel guns have never been that popular here, but it's a feature highly prized in Europe because in most countries swapping barrels on the same serial-numbered firearm eliminates the expense and paperwork required when buying a new gun.

The barrel shank is unthreaded and simply slip-fits into the receiver, which is split at the bottom like a C-clamp. Two transverse machine bolts tighten the receiver around the barrel shank. There is an index notch that makes it impossible to install a barrel improperly.

The two-position safety is located in the most ergonomic position possible: atop the tang just behind the bolt shroud. It operates silently and when engaged blocks trigger movement but does not lock the bolt. My test gun had an excellent trigger, breaking crisply at 40 ounces without the slightest discernible creep.

The detachable magazine stores cartridges in a single stack and fits flush with the belly of the stock. Simultaneously pinching the release buttons at either side of the magazine with thumb and forefinger naturally positions the hand to catch the released box.

Like most rifles coming out of central Europe, the Titan is available in a mind-boggling number of options as to stocks, triggers, sights and barrel lengths—plus barrel contour, caliber, metal finish, embellishments and more. As mentioned, my test gun was the Standard, which is the second least expensive in the Titan line at a suggested retail of about \$1,500 at the current exchange rate. The least expensive model is the



All Around, which is stocked in a plain Jane black synthetic stock and goes for around \$1,375.

Both guns share the identical stock style-wise except for the fact that the Standard sports one of Grade A walnut. Either would look right at home on any mainstream American rifle, as there is not the slightest hint of Bavarian styling evident. It is a damn good-looking stock.

At the bottom of the receiver ring is a massive steel block that's part of the C-clamp arrangement that doubles as a recoil lug. As such, it's bedded in epoxy, while at the rear the tang sits on a massive aluminum pillar imbedded in the stock. Both guard screws went from resistance to dead tight in less than a full turn, indicating a receiver that was properly bedded and stress free.

The test gun came with a pre-mounted Vortex Viper 4-16x50 scope with a 30mm tube sitting in a Leupold rotary dovetail mount. I must say it's quite an impressive scope, with extra-low disper-

sion glass, fully multicoated lenses, ArmorTex coating to protect exterior lenses from scratches, and Argon gas-purged with O-ring sealing. Other features are Euro-type quick reticle focus on the ocular bell and a turret-mounted parallax/image focus. This scope comes standard with Vortex's Dead-Hold BDC reticle with windage hash marks.

Both barrels were 22 inches. Set up in the .223 configuration the scoped Titan 3 weighed eight pounds, 14 ounces. It was two ounces less in .308.

Armed with three factory loads in each caliber, I headed for the range. With the initial .223 Titan 3 configuration zeroed in, the level of accuracy with all three loads was more than acceptable.

It was the same when configured in .308. Accuracy was above average for a sporter-weight rifle, particularly with the two match loads. The first shot after switching to .308 impacted roughly six inches from the .223 groups, but then you expect a change in point of impact with a switch-barrel gun that has the

scope mounted on the receiver rather than the barrel itself.

Function-wise everything with the test gun worked with the smoothness and precision we've come to expect from guns coming from this part of the world. Switching barrels, bolt and magazine to make the Titan 3 into a Titan 6 took about six minutes.

Cartridges fed smoothly in both caliber configurations, but charging the magazine was a bit of a pain. That's par for the course, though, with single-stack mags where you have to depress the front end of the top cartridge to slide the next round backwards under the feed lips. It is, however, just a minor irritation. Besides, how often do you find yourself having to quickly recharge a magazine in a hunting situation? Of course, having a charged spare in your pocket dispels that concern.

All in all, this is one quality rifle in every respect and compared to other rifles coming from Germany and Austria, one helluva bargain. ■

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