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ON THE COVER

BREWING STORM

DSI'S VARIANT 1 5.56 RIFLE GETS PUT THROUGH
THE RIGORS OF 3-GUN COMPETITION By Kenzie Fitzpatrick





Dark Storm was born out of frustration by two people—Ed Newman and Peter Morrisey—who struggled to find local dealers that stocked AR parts and were annoyed with clunky websites selling parts with an unknown inventory. Hello, backorder. In 2012,

they collaborated to open a business catering specifically to the AR platform modern sporting rifle enthusiasts. They offer a full range of rifles in various calibers and AR-style pistols while also selling DSI parts and accessories. Essentially, it's a one-stop shop if you're interested

in a quality-built rifle or want to complete your own build.

RIFLE SPECIFICS

It is my opinion (and many others) that guns should come outfitted with ambidextrous controls. This isn't just to appease left-handed shooters but to truly be pre-

pared for any scenario you may find yourself in, even as a right-handed shooter. Some matches require me to shoot weak hand or weak shoulder or have stages that have forced me to shoot this way to impact a target. When time is everything in shooting sports and in defensive

situations as well, the ambidextrous safety has allowed me to manipulate the safety with my left-hand thumb, saving me time from having to switch hands or shift my grip to toggle it on safe or fire.

The ambidextrous charging handle by DSI is what I would consider oversized, and in cold conditions where you lose dexterity in your fingers or if you're wearing gloves to shoot, the size really helps you get a purchase on the handle to pull it back. Finally, the takedown pins are extended and oversized, which makes field stripping the gun a breeze.

The DSI Variant 1 rifle has a 12-inch handguard with M-Lok rails, two QD mounts on both sides and a Picatinny rail on top. The Hogue stock is also outfitted with three QD mount points on both sides and adjusts for length of pull. There is one final QD attachment point on the end plate. In 3-Gun, using a rifle sling can be required in some stages. It is helpful to have so many options to choose from to set this rifle and sling up for you. In the Open division, the Picatinny rail is a necessity to mount a



RUGGED SUPPRESSORS ALASKAN360

→ The Alaskan360 suppressor is one of Rugged's latest and greatest suppressors. The big selling point behind the design is that it is full-auto-rated for pistol and subgun calibers up to 9mm and rifle calibers up to .338 Lapua. The tube and baffles are made with 17-4 stainless steel with a titanium front cap and a U.S. Grade 5 titanium mount. The total length of the Alaskan360 is 6.6 inches and measures 7.5 inches with Rugged's Universal Mount (R.U.M.). This can weighs in at just 9.4 ounces without the RUM and 11.8 ounces with the mount. The sound level of the Alaskan360 on the Variant 1 rifle is about 130.4 decibels.

You can't beat the universal use for this suppressor, and Rugged Suppressors stands behind their products with an unconditional lifetime warranty. For more information, visit ruggedsuppressors.com.
—Kenzie Fitzpatrick



← From stem to stern, the Variant 1 from DSI is a purpose-built rifle that should appeal to many competing in 3-Gun matches.

“IF WE CAN'T TRUST OUR GUNS TO PERFORM OR OUR GEAR TO WORK, IT'S HARD TO FOCUS ON THE MATCH AHEAD.”

SPEC BOX

DSI VARIANT 1 RIFLE

CALIBER:	5.56
BARREL:	16 inches
OA LENGTH:	33 to 36.5 inches
WEIGHT:	7 pounds (empty)
STOCK:	Hogue adjustable
SIGHTS:	None
ACTION:	Semi-auto
FINISH:	Tungsten Cerakote
CAPACITY:	30+1
MSRP:	\$1,795



← In accuracy testing, the author found the DSI rifle to be quite accurate, shooting sub-1/2-inch groups with all ammunition tested.



scope and an offset red dot or offset iron sights for other divisions. Plus, you can attach rail panels, lights, lasers and other accessories to the gun using the M-Lok positions or Picatinny rail.

GOT GAS?

Minimizing the felt recoil of a rifle can give you a competitive edge in 3-Gun. Many stock guns come over gassed, so they're guaranteed to run with low-velocity ammunition. But when you shoot common velocity ammo, this can really increase the felt recoil. The compensator, gas length system, gas block and buffer system combine to manage felt recoil. While the DSI doesn't have an adjustable gas block, it features a 3-ounce carbine buffer, carbine-length gas system, micro gas block and competition compensator. The reduced felt recoil is greatly improved due to the compensator that directs gas through two angled top ports in the expansion chamber, two vertical top ports in the baffles and the two side baffles.

The Variant 1 is lightweight and built from aerospace aluminum billet 7075-T6. The lower and upper receivers are machined with an intricate design that also cuts weight. The lower is fashioned with a flared mag well and an integrated and enlarged triggerguard. With the

PERFORMANCE

DSI VARIANT 1 RIFLE

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Dot 55 FMJ	3,001	0.40
Super Vel 55 FMJ	2,682	0.25
Winchester 55 FMJ	3,028	0.45

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.

shorter length handguard, the total weight of the gun is less than 7 pounds, and with the scope mount and Trijicon 1-8 Credo scope, my gun sits at about 9 pounds.

The barrel on the Variant 1 has 1/2x28 right-hand threads, making it a great suppressor host. I mounted the Rugged Alaskan360 suppressor to the rifle using Rugged's R3 Flash Mitigation System threaded onto the barrel. The rifle ran flawlessly with regular ammunition and subsonic ammo. The felt recoil was decreased even more, and it was a blast to shoot.

TESTED TOUGH

I was able to vigorously test out the Dark Storm Industries Variant 1 5.56 rifle to see if it could pass all the qualifications that we 3-Gunners look for in a rifle. I'm happy to report that it not only passed but also exceeded my expectations, as well as a few buddies who also enjoy shooting multi-gun matches. In the 3-Gun world, if a gun, piece of gear or specific ammunition—you name it—doesn't hold up during a match, it's not made of good enough quality. Competing in 3-Gun matches puts firearms through the paces with shooters throwing guns into dump barrels, shooting in muddy or rainy conditions, relying on our rifles to shoot out to 500-plus yards, slinging our rifles across our backs, and hoping our inertia-driven shotguns will feed no matter the odd positions we get put in. Oh, and through all this, we are praying our optic mounts stay torqued down and that our optics hold zero.

Before ever shooting a major multi-gun competition, we test our guns, gear, ammo and optics to look for signs of wear or potential flaws. If we can't trust our

**“THIS BUILD’S
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TRIJICON CREDO 1-8x28 SCOPE



→ From their red-dots to their scopes, I'm a big fan of Trijicon optics. As a competitive shooter who plays in 3-Gun, PRS and NRL22, a scope with a MIL reticle made sense for me to use across all sports. The glass is clear, the reticle is easy to hold for wind and elevation, and the scope is extremely durable. The Credo 1-8 is a first-focal-plane scope and features a 34mm tube and a dual red/green illuminated MRAD segmented circle reticle. For more information, visit trijicon.com. —Kenzie Fitzpatrick

guns to perform or our gear to work, it's hard to focus on the match ahead. Without a major match to shoot the Variant 1 rifle in, I replicated the conditions and used the exact scope mount and scope used in competition. I spent two months taking this rifle to the range to shoot in cold and warm weather, chronographing different ammunition, shooting groups at 100 yards, ringing steel at 300 yards (the longest distance I have access to), shooting it off a barricade and throwing it in a dump barrel. The gun didn't have any pins or screws come loose, never

lost zero, shot accurately at distance and fed all the ammunition reliably.

GAME CHANGER

Dark Storm Industries paid attention to detail, ergonomics and performance with the Variant 1 rifle. This build's intentionality makes it a purposefully driven rifle perfect for serious competitors. I'm looking forward to shooting this gun in a major match this year and am very appreciative to DSI for the thought that went into this rifle. For more information, visit dark-storm.com. 🎯