

Pipsqueaking

[.22lr AR15s]

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Kits are junk.

They are dangerous. Do not use them. Even if nothing blows up, the best won't group smaller than minute of Hillary's ego.

If you want a good .22 lr that's an AR15 in platform, call Derrick Martin at Accuracy Speaks. That's about that. Of course, there's more to read but I know some of you are impatient.



ORIGIN: This is a jist of an article I did for another magazine on .22 long rifle AR15s. I added a few things that I don't send to magazines due to space concerns.

The AR15 has been made into a lot of things, so why not a .22 rimfire? Why not. The idea is to increase the potential on-trigger, on-target time an AR15 owner

spends with his rifle. That's an easy one: .22s can be fired relatively inexpensively and with virtually zero range room, and, if a proper environment is maintained, even indoors. We all know the virtues of a rimfire.

Various .22 Long Rifle (lr) conversion kits have been around a good long while. Like many other products that barely work at all, they're still here. Shy wide. These are fraught with problems, and inaccuracy heads the list. When inaccuracy heads any list, then the mission has ended for me.



The original kit format, while some differed in details that their makers, and sellers, still argue mightily for and against, was pretty much a bolt carrier replacement that (self) contained a firing mechanism. Operation bypasses the gas system, and function, as expected, relied on straight blow-back operation; the operating spring is contained in the assembly, and the bolt, also contained in the assembly, usually rides on guide rods inside the housing that replaces the bolt carrier. Aside from the trigger, magazine release, and sometimes the charging handle, the kits rely on nothing operational in the platform they inhabit. Magazines took and take different forms but did and do exhibit ticklish functional reliability.

These kits have a chamber plug, of sorts,

shaped like a .223 Remington cartridge. That piece is necessary because these kits use the existing barrel to propel the little lead bullets. Little lead bullets, existing barrel. Not a good mix. Firing a .22 lr through a .224 caliber centerfire barrel causes a variety of problems, and these problems are guaranteed.

One is that the bore is too big for the bullet. Most .22 lr bullets are, vicinity, .223 diameter, some range a little larger or smaller, but all the purpose-built rimfire barrels I've encountered are at the least finished with bores smaller than .224, and most are 0.221. The grooves in a centerfire barrel are usually deeper, meaning the lands (rifling) stand up higher off the bore surface. Another is the rifling rate of twist, and that's usually too fast. The common and recommended centerfire twist rates nowadays are either 1-8 or 1-7. The majority

This one shown is a great combo-gun. It's an NRA Service Rifle, but with an adjustable buttplate and a flattop upper. Great training

DPMS did its own version of the drop-on upper, and the one I have works well. It has a good quality 1-16 twist chromemoly barrel, one-inch parallel diameter, 16-inch length. As it sits, weight is 5 pounds, 5.5 ounces. Only trick is that it's been discontinued indefinitely. Bushmaster now has one similar built on a carry-handle upper assembly. These uppers tend to come and go from major makers, so make sure you're stocked on magazines. I took the DPMS upper and fixed on it. Before it was only an offhand or bench-rested rifle, after it could be used to supplement position training indoors. I started my son on this before he goes to an across-the-course gun next year. Standard furniture fits, and I used an

of .22 Ir barrels are 1-16. The kit format also precludes any chance of decent bullet alignment with the bore.

These dimensional and technical factors conspire to derail accuracy from a drop-in kit, for one, and, for the rest, result in a dangerously fouled rifle. The combination of a large bore, deep grooves, fast twist, and oversized leade mean that heinous deposits of lead, priming compound, and propellant residue will be left in the bore after a box of shells goes through. If a .223 Remington centerfire round is fired through that barrel just like that, then, just like that, there's a potential for a catastrophic failure. That means it can blow up. No kidding. It's happened. The residue left behind can sufficiently constrict the bore to replicate the same effect as water or other debris. Of special concern is the chamber throat area.

The idea to use a .22 drop-in kit to expedite close-range training, maybe in full-auto mode, is the only viable reason to consider a kit. Just thoroughly clean the daggone rifle after using it. Use a product that removes lead. Use it well. Not all centerfire cleaners are good at that job.

I'm not sure who originated the far better idea of generating a purpose-built .22 Ir upper assembly, but I know that Derrick Martin did it over ten years ago. This idea works, and can work really well.

The first one I saw from him was essentially a .22 kit (the "GI" version) that had been mated to a rimfire barrel. The chamber plug got gone and machine work and threading mated the remainder of the kit to a new barrel. The whole works is assembled onto an upper receiver like it should be, including being cut with a match-semi-auto reamer (a "Bentz") and headspaced in accordance with proven precision-engineered specifications. The result is then a very accurate .22 rifle.

The main limitation on accuracy from such a semi-auto .22 is ammunition. Ammunition choice, unfortu-



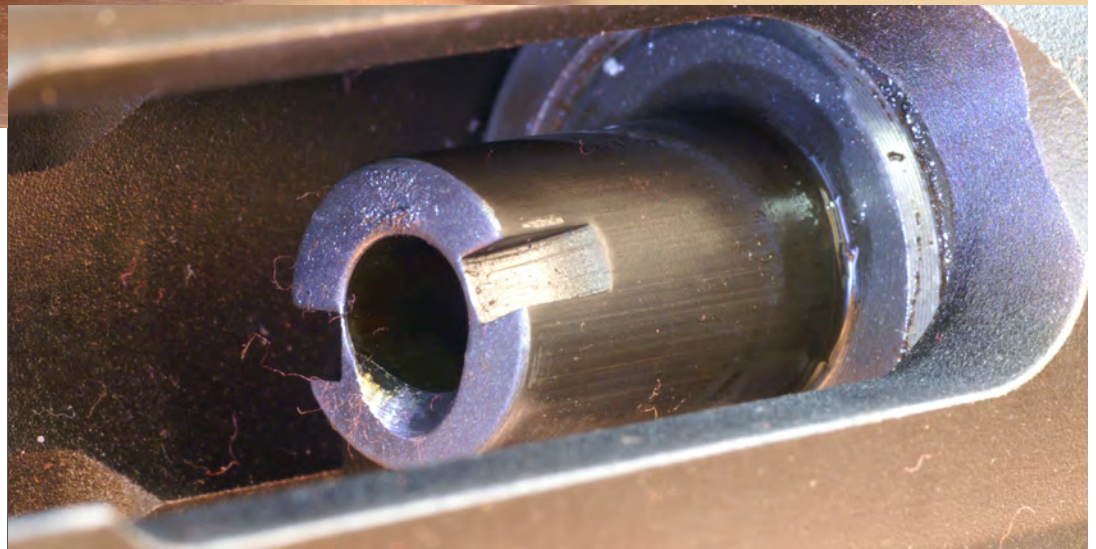
Accuracy Speaks Match Rifle float tube and Medesha Firearms extension tube front sight assembly to get it working for position shooting.

nately, has the most to do with functional capacity, not on-target performance. It's a semi-auto, after all. The really good stuff won't work through anyone's upper unit I've tried, but that doesn't mean what will won't perforate to suit. It's no gold-digger, though. It's also not even going to win a local indoor match. It will, however,



Here's the trick, and it's essentially the same as Derrick Martin does on his conversions. Instead of the round having to try to find a center, they gave it one. The barrel and chamber are uni-fit just like a centerfire, or a good .22, and that makes all the difference. The upper becomes a dedicated assembly, but that's what a dedicated shooter needs.

So what do I think about training with a .22? All training, especially when it's going to transfer to the main event, is a good thing. However! I never looked at .22 shooting as training for High Power, no more than I looked at High Power as training for ISSF smallbore competition. It's always been an entity for me. It's not now, so I'm learning, and what I have learned is to shoot the best ammo you can to a target that's realistically sized. Then it's a terrific trick, and tip.



clean an NRA-spec 50-yard smallbore target. It shoots half-inch groups at that distance. I've yet to get a clean ISSF 50-meter target, but that's a different level of competition, in all respects. That takes about quarter-minute accuracy, and that's a turn-bolt single-shot, an expensive one with an incomprehensible owners manual, like an Anschutz.

I've had good luck running mine with Eley "Semi-Auto" for a premium-grade ammunition and, believe it or not, Winchester Wildcat hammers for about a buck a box. I know you're only supposed to run "match" ammunition through a rifle with a "match" chamber, but the reasons for that can't be universally applied to every maker's offering in "standard" ammo. No high-velocity, though. As with any rimfire ammunition we're trying to get smallest groups from, buy only one box to try and then stock up when you find one that's doing the best all around.

I renewed my interest in rimfires after working with this subject in-depth over the past year. My publishing company just released a new book on the topic of rimfire ammunition. We are having a blast with ours. There's little more fun with a gun than when it's a .22. [Click HERE](#) to check it out.



It's not the magazines. It's the ammo. All the semi-auto .22s I've used, and that goes double for tricked-out 10/22s, are really sensitive about wanting to eat what they are fed. It will not, by my experience, be possible to use the "good stuff" but there's a lot available that will produce sub-half-inch 50 yard groups. Click [HERE](#) to learn about which will.

SOURCES

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