



PHOTO CREDIT: WESS R. BROWN

I Want “Moor”

“...I AM NAE LIKE ANY OTHER MAN. I AM A HIGHLANDER.” – VICTORIA ROBERTS

Have you ever made a list of “must-have” requirements in something? Whether its traits you want in a prospective husband/wife, evaluating a real estate purchase or looking for that “perfect” pair of boots, we’ve all made our wish list of things upon which we weren’t willing to compromise.

I do it with firearms. I look at what I want it to do, to accomplish, where I’ll be taking it and how much I’ll be shooting it. This leads to evaluation on caliber, weight, optics, recoil, energy delivery and ammunition accessibility/availability.

I needed a new rifle. So, to the drawing board I went. I wanted a rifle that would do most everything, quite simply. I wanted something I could take whitetail hunting in the Midwest, chase elk in the mountains or hunt predators across the country. I wanted a package I could trek comfortably with for miles and brace over a backpack to take a sheep at 300 yards or more. I also wanted something I could successfully punch paper and ring steel with at 1,000 yards or more on the range.

I wanted something I could shoot a lot. The only way to improve performance is to increase precision through productive practice. Quantity is part of that. Therefore, it not only has to be comfortable to shoot, but also have a readily available source of ammunition.

Energy delivery is critical for swift, ethical and accurate harvests. It had to have all of the above but be able to deliver effective one shot kills on animals from 130 to 700 pounds at distances of 50 to 750 yards. I had a 7mm Rem Mag that could accomplish a lot of those things, but there were some glaring deficiencies when stacked up against my list. I wanted “moor.”

The 6.5 Creedmoor was developed in 2007 to accomplish just that. It was a purpose-built

round designed to be effective on a wide variety of targets and species out to 1,000 yards. It had low recoil, was not a barrel burner, could effectively utilize high ballistic coefficient bullets, and ammunition could be readily obtained off the shelf. It was not a “handloader”-only cartridge. Ahhhh.... I think we have a winner! Now, to find the rifle itself.

A rifle is like the ballistic version of your favorite pair of jeans. They just flat fit and feel right. In the shotgun world, there is considerable emphasis placed on fit, measurements, eye alignment and proportions. In rifles, this is not a huge topic of discussion, but is no less important. Things like length of pull and eye relief (when dealing with optics) can make or break form in rifle fit.

With this concept in mind, I sat down with Griffin & Howe to create my “just right” fit. I knew I wanted a 6.5 Creedmoor but needed to nail down the actual rifle platform details.

Based on what I wanted to do with it, the Highlander was the best option. It was a

“mountain” gun in design, with shoot ability and accuracy just as important as portability. Here’s where the fit concept comes into play.

I’m five feet tall with a short length of pull and high cheekbones. This means I typically prefer shorter barrel lengths, more compact stock dimensions and higher combs. I have never picked up a rifle and had the eye relief be right without some wiggling, adjusting and frustration. This is highly problematic in a hunting situation where immediate acquisition through the scope can be the difference between a shot opportunity or not.

We have now arrived at the Griffin & Howe Highlander in 6.5 Creedmoor. What does that actually break down to? Let’s walk through the components:

PROOF RESEARCH BARREL

I’m not a big fan of cleaning guns. With all my other rifles, it has been a constant cycle of



PHOTO CREDIT: WIL HAUSER



The face you make when you ring steel at 3/4 of a mile!

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THE CONTROLS

The Highlander is built on a Defiance Machine Rebel Action with a control-round feed. The three-position safety gives me peace of mind that the bolt won't snag and open unexpectedly while stalking, climbing or moving. Additionally, I can open and fully function the open bolt with the safety on, a big plus of the three-position system.

The Griffin & Howe Highlander is currently chambered in .22-250 Rem, .243 Win, 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC, .270 Win, 30-06, 7mm Rem Mag, 308 Win, .300 Win Mag and .300 PRC. It can be created in other calibers upon request. I have had the opportunity to shoot the Highlander in 6.5 Creedmoor, 7mm Rem Mag and .300 Win Mag. All are extremely comfortable to shoot, highly accurate and purpose driven.

The Trigger Tech trigger is adjustable from 1.5 to 4 pounds. It arrives set at 2.5 pounds but can be ordered within the above adjustment range. It has a true zero-creep break and is clean, crisp and consistent. It is surrounded by an aluminum floorplate and trigger guard.

In true Griffin & Howe style, everything is finished with elegance. The integral scope rings and bases are constructed from titanium and boast the iconic full-curl ram stamp. They hold a Swarovski 3.5-18x50 X5I. This scope has the capability to take this rifle out to a mile with the turn of a dial.

cleaning, fouling shots, shooting well, group dispersion and back to cleaning. Not with this barrel. Once the barrel has been broken in, it just shoots and shoots and shoots and shoots. The only time it doesn't? Operator error.

This particular model has a carbon-wrapped, stainless steel 20-inch barrel. At the end is a two inch long proprietary muzzle break that disperses gasses at 45 degrees to the shooter, significantly reducing felt recoil and muzzle flip.

The Proof Research barrel is set in a classic, proprietary Griffin & Howe Monte Carlo shaped carbon fiber and fiberglass resin stock. It's lightweight, amazingly balanced and ergonomically constructed. The stock finish material is smooth, quiet, grippy where needed and absolutely weather resistant.

The eye relief/eye alignment is amazing. The Monte Carlo comb brings the eye up and the shape creates a beautifully consistent cheek weld. No more oblong shadows in the scope for this girl.

While we're on the stock, let's talk length. Griffin & Howe is one of the most comprehensive custom gunsmithing shops in the country. They matched my Highlander rifle build to my shotgun length of pull dimension. Now, whether shooting prone, offhand or any other position, my gun mount and cheek weld are solid, natural, comfortable and consistent.

There are a few other items in the stock of the Griffin & Howe Highlander that make it the ultimate shooting machine. A bipod can be

imperative to a successful shot, depending on the presentation. Sometimes it can just be in the way, however. With the Highlander, you get the best of both worlds!

There is a recessed metal port in the fore-end (forward of the sling stud). The corresponding magnetic-headed carbon fiber bipod slides easily into a pocket or pack for quick access. It can be attached, adjusted and removed with one hand.



The carbon fiber bipod



It's like Christmas morning!

The day you open that custom case with the Griffin & Howe logo inlaid inside, you realize you are about to embark on an incredible series of adventures. Those adventures begin when you take that rifle out, slide the bolt home and literally hold the promise of future memories in your hands.

At this point, I have had the opportunity to harvest a deer with the Highlander in addition to many, many hours spent on the range. I have taken the Griffin & Howe Highlander from under 100 yards to three-quarters of a mile. I have

carried this rifle for hours in hand and on sling through fields, woods and hills. The bottom line is this:

The Griffin & Howe Highlander in 6.5 Creedmoor is MY ultimate, all-around rifle. Targets to 1,000+ yards and game out to whatever is deemed situationally ethical, the rifle is beyond impressive, accurate and solid.

I wanted more out of a rifle. I ended up with "moor," and then some. Check out the Griffin & Howe Highlander for your next adventure! ■

