

KAHR FIREARMS
GROUP GRACES
US WITH ANOTHER
"FIFTY."

BY FRANK MELLONI
PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR

TA050





The straight bolt handle makes the TAO50 more user friendly.



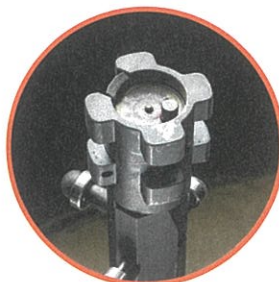
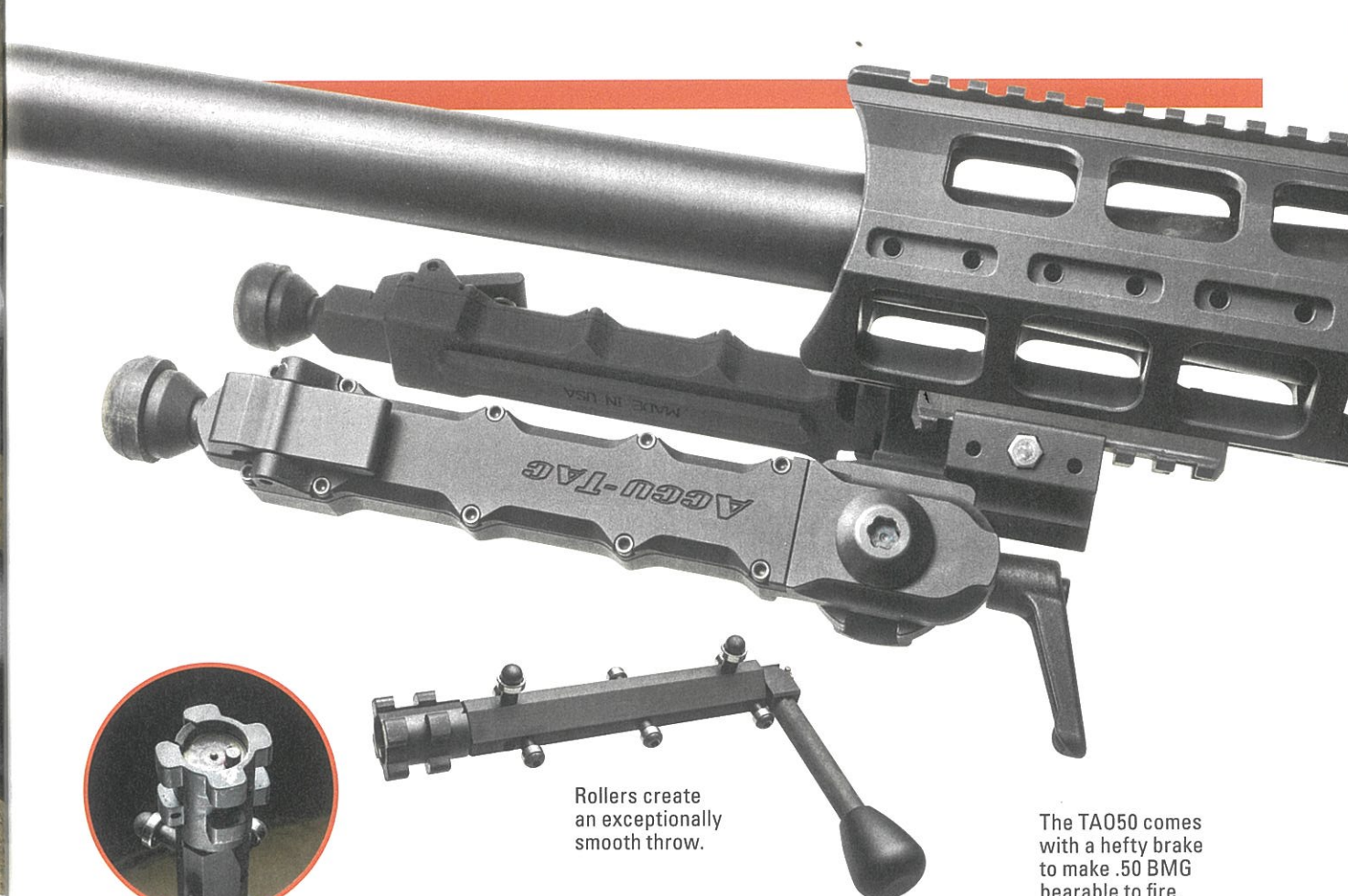
Most people can pick the iconic Desert Eagle Mark XIX pistol out of a lineup without much trouble, as few handguns own .50-caliber status. This firearm is so prolific that its maker, Magnum Research, is affectionately known as “the Desert Eagle company.” Fast forward a few years, and Magnum Research would be purchased by Saeilo Manufacturing Industries, eventually joining brands like Kahr, Thompson, and Auto-Ordnance. The famous .50 became the unofficial emblem for the conglomerate, eventually provoking the question: “When will they make a .50-caliber rifle?” Inundated by defensive firearm purchases for the last few years, I am proud to announce that the Kahr Firearms Group is back to business as usual, and they are showing this with the innovative TAO50. Chambered in .50 BMG, this brainchild of

Thompson and Auto-Ordnance claims to be the softest-kicking .50 in its class, despite only weighing 25.5 pounds.

Like many rifles, it pulls design influence from the AR family — as evident the moment you crack open the hard case it ships in. The receiver is split into two halves that are held together by pins, making transport and storage easier. A 29-inch heavy barrel is mounted to the upper, which also includes the action and buttstock trunnion. This must be removed to put it back into the case, but the necessary tools are included.

A bolt-action configuration, it's one of the more intricate designs out there. To help it glide, a series of rollers are attached to the body, aiding in the long bolt travel. The bolt handle is long and straight and works on a shortened throw of about 60 degrees, protecting your knuckles from the scope turrets

when cycling. Thompson built the action to be left-handed, which allows the support hand to run the bolt, leaving the trigger hand firmly planted for follow-up shots. Since this hand is never supporting the rifle (an Accu-Tac bipod is included), this makes a lot of sense, and being a lefty, I can attest to how well this idea works from my experience shooting right-handed rifles.



Rollers create an exceptionally smooth throw.

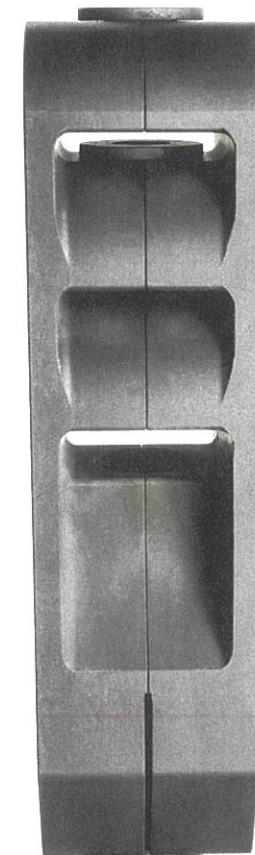
The TAO50 comes with a hefty brake to make .50 BMG bearable to fire.

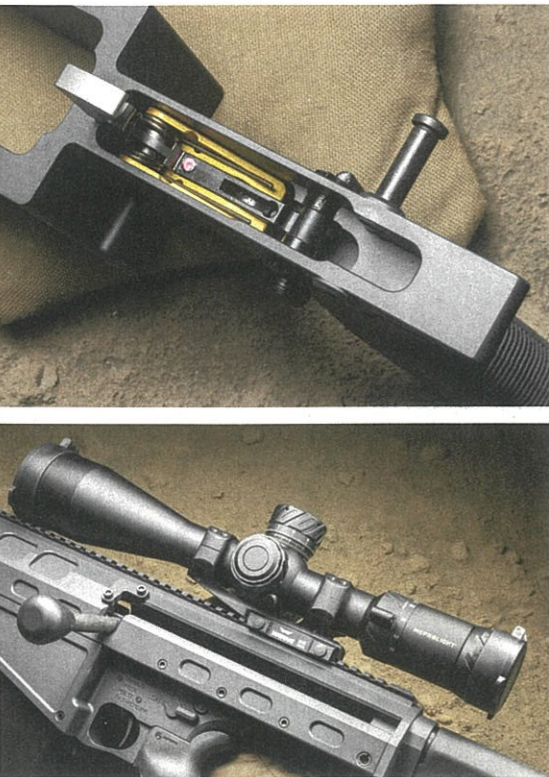
TAO50

Type	Bolt-action repeater
Cartridge	.50 BMG
Capacity	10 rds.
Barrel	29 in.
Overall Length	61 in.
Height	7.75 in.
Width	2.5 in.
Weight	25.5 lbs.
Finish	Anodized
Stock	Magpul PRS GEN3
Trigger	Single-stage, 7 lbs., 8 oz.
Sights	None, integral rail
MSRP	\$8,699
Manufacturer	Kahr Firearms Group auto-ordnance.com

Most of the weight is in its barrel. At 29 inches in length, it's about as common as it comes for a .50 BMG. It's cut with a 1:15-inch twist, making it up to the task of stabilizing longer, heavier, match-grade projectiles. Threaded onto the end is a massive tank brake that is responsible for most of the recoil mitigation. This can be replaced with a suppressor from a host of aftermarket companies, but if you ask me, that sort of takes away from the overall experience.

Once had a dentist tell me, “You don't cut bait if you aren't going fishing,” right before giving me a root canal. To that end, it would be foolish to build a gun in the image of the AR-15 without going all the way. Therefore, the TAO50 comes equipped with a Timney AR-style trigger set to 7.5 pounds. This is a touch heavy, but on a gun of this weight, it's easy to break without disturbing the

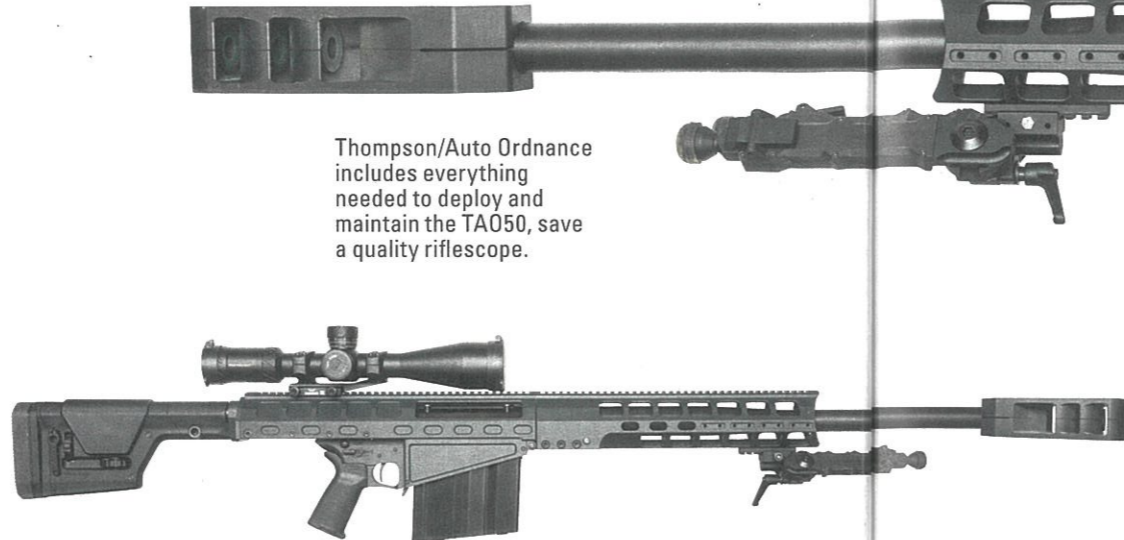




High-magnification optics are a must with a .50. The author used Meprolight's new 6-36X MVO for this test.



The included Magpul stock is adjustable to fit a multitude of users.



Thompson/Auto Ordnance includes everything needed to deploy and maintain the TAO50, save a quality riflescope.

sight picture. The best part about AR-15 component compatibility is that you can swap it with whatever you want to suit your tastes. This includes the Magpul stock and grip, but if you ask me, Thompson got it right with their selections, so all that was left was to get it ready for the range.

Cartridges like the .50 BMG were made for distance, so use a scope that is capable. I used this opportunity to test Meprolight's new MVO 6-36X. Built with Schott glass, it remains clear under adverse conditions or when cranked to the top of its magnification range. Although it lists a rating of up to .338 Lapua, the soft-recoiling nature of the TAO50 allows us to get away with slapping it on a .50. Since the rail is continuous, I used a Warne one-piece X-Skell mount to clear the objective lens yet still position the scope low enough that I wouldn't have

to crane my neck to peer through it. For ammunition, I chose PMC Bronze and Freedom Munitions as they offer a low-cost means of "plinking" and paired them with DoubleTap's 750-grain match solid to get a better idea of the gun's top performance.

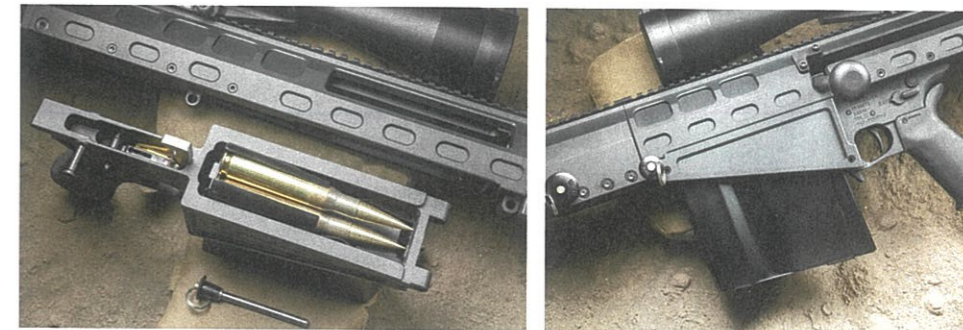
Rainy weather forced me to shoot from a covered pavilion, but instead of typical 100-yard testing, I opted for 300 yards for a more realistic distance. Touching off that first round, I felt every inch of my sinuses as the concussion resonated through my head and body. This is the effect of a brake doing its work, which was also evident by the lack of kick. As promised, it was indeed soft to shoot, and moreover, I was impressed with its ease of cycling. Feeding was spot on, which also wasn't a surprise. Instead of reinventing the wheel, Thompson built the TAO50 to accept Barrett M107A1 magazines,



The TAO50 uses Barrett-pattern magazines, making it easier to source spares.

which securely rock into place and are relatively available. Accuracy was acceptable, considering I grabbed the first three loads available, with the DoubleTap hovering around 1 MOA at distance. I'm sure a handloader can tune this to achieve sub-MOA groups.

Firing Thompson's .50 BMG was an experience that was akin to shooting my first Desert Eagle. Like its big-bore brother, the novelty of each step of the process is enough to keep anyone's interest. In short, it's easy to look past the practicality of ownership as it's eclipsed by the "cool factor." Ripping off 100 rounds of .50 BMG has never been more comfortable, and although lengthy, it wasn't the most cumbersome rifle I've ever humped to the firing line. Thompson did a great job with this one, and I can't think of a better companion to its hard-charging handguns that sit under the same roof. **PRS**



PERFORMANCE

LOAD	Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Extreme Spread	Avg. Group (in.)	Best Group (in.)
DoubleTap DT Long Range 750 gr.	2,793	26	59	4.8	4.1
PMC Bronze 660 gr.	2,751	29	80	6.7	6.1
Freedom Munitions FMJ 647 gr.	2,632	12	35	8.9	8.4

Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups at 300 yards from a Caldwell Rock BR rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph set 10 inches from the muzzle.