

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Phill Price asks, just what does a beginner need?

I'm often asked about the ideal rifle for somebody who is new to the sport. My answer comes from a friend who owns a gun shop and he always recommends a good quality, break-barrel springer package at around £200. In it, you get the rifle, with its scope and mounts, so you only need a gun bag and some pellets and you're ready to go. Many manufacturers want a bigger piece of this market, so they're all trying to impress us with their latest and greatest offering.

SMK is a name well known to many readers and they're the UK distributor for the Remington range of rifles, some of which I've tested before. I've liked and enjoyed each model I've tried, so was happy to receive the Express XP Tactical that you see in the



This high-quality pellet must have the longest name you've ever seen.

photos. It's a conventional, spring-piston design, which I believe is still very hard to beat for this role. The build is all-metal and quite simple, so there's little to go wrong. Further, all the parts

can be substantially built, so there are no flimsy parts to wear out or fail. The break-barrel springer has been the mainstay of airgunning from its birth to this day, and we all owned them and

took pleasure from their tough reliability.

GOOD SUPPORT

At first glance you can immediately see the American styling in its stock and configuration. The butt section is very straight, with minimal drop to heel. Rifles used to shoot running game often adopt this style, which is perhaps why the Americans like it. For us, it means a nice high comb (cheek piece) that gives good support to the face for scope use. This tactical version uses a grey synthetic stock for strength and weather resistance.

This is important for this rifle because no open sights can be fitted. At the muzzle you find the silencer, which is permanently moulded to the barrel. Where the



The slim stock and forward balance made for a lively rifle.





I liked the neat plugs to cover the unused screw holes.



A silencer is included and takes some of the credit for such a quiet rifle



With the lever back the safety is locked on.



The breech slopes, so be sure to seat your pellet fully to prevent skirt damage.

rear sight would fit on the breech block, each of the screw holes has a nice rubber plug fitted, which finishes off the rifle well and prevents water accumulating inside and causing rust.

The pull length, the distance from the trigger blade and the butt pad's face, feels long in the shoulder, but the tape measure tells me that its only 14¾". This is just ¼" longer than standard, so I tried to understand what I was feeling. I finally concluded that the scope has quite short eye relief and once moved back in the mounts, felt fine. Eye relief is the distance from the rear lens of the scope to your eyeball. There must be clearance so that the rifle doesn't hit you as it recoils and this distance varies from scope to scope.

IT'S CALLED WHAT?

SMK included a tin of the Remington Thunder Field Target Trophy Power which must win the award for the longest name of a

pellet, ever. It's not hard to see who Remington buys this pellet from because they are makers of very high-quality products, which has to be a good thing. They're a classic roundhead, weighing 14.3 grains in .22 and the Express launched them at an average of 543 fps, for a muzzle energy of 9.3 ft.lbs. This is plenty of power for plinking, and even some close-range ratting or feral pigeon clearance around buildings.

Cocking the rifle was light and smooth, making it ideal for long plinking sessions. This is one rifle that won't wear you out. I was also very impressed with the firing cycle, which was smooth and quiet with no noticeable vibration from the main spring. This suggests that Remington has fitted proper spring guides and they're doing their job well.

A SAFER SAFETY

The safety is automatic, popping out on the left side of the action at the rear, where it's ideally placed

to be disengaged with the right-handed shooter's thumb. What's novel about the safety is that it has a safety. Yes, you did read that right. When you cock the rifle, the safety button protrudes from the action and from there you can rotate a lever clockwise that locks the safety on. No matter what you do now, the rifle won't fire until you rotate the lever forward and disengage the safety. I was pleased to find that the rifle can be decocked with the correct technique because no anti-bear trap was fitted.

Shooting from a supported position, I was able to get consistent 1½" groups at 25 yards and was very impressed with just how smooth and quiet the rifle was. As is expected from a rifle in this class, the trigger was heavy, but clean and consistent – which means a great deal to me.

Going back to my opening question about what to buy, I think this rifle ticks all the boxes for anybody new to our sport. It's

well made, comes with everything you need, plus has a quiet and refined firing cycle, worthy of guns costing much more. If you have £200 burning a hole in your pocket and want to get into the wonderful world of airguns, this rifle is well worth a look. ■

TECH SPEC

- Manufacturer:** Remington
- Importer:** SMK
- Web:** www.sportsmk.co.uk
- Tel:** 01603 795333
- Model:** Express XP Tactical
- Type:** Spring-piston
- Action:** Break-barrel
- Length:** 45.6" (116cm)
- Weight:** 8.5lbs (3.85kg)
- Trigger:** Two-stage adjustable
- Calibres:** .177 and .22

RRP £199.95

The Remington Express Tactical. It looks the part and it's a proper practical plinker.

