by Scott Mayer

FIERCE CARBON EDGE

Fierce offers a custom-type rifle made using proven manufacturing techniques and an accuracy guarantee at an affordable price relative to the competition.



Each Fierce rifle comes with a ½ MOA accuracy guarantee.

I stumbled onto Fierce Firearms by accident at the 2016 SHOT Show. I was on the lower level looking for some other booth when I neared the end of an aisle and cut through their booth to shave a few steps off of my walk. Then a rifle on display caught my eye. It kind of looked like a Sako, but not quite because it had a carbon stock and fat carbon fiber barrel. Indeed, it wasn't a Sako, but a Fierce Carbon Edge. Though it has many of the desirable features of the Sako, is a unique new action being made by Fierce.

"The Edge is a new breed of high-end performance rifles at an affordable price," says Fierce CEO, John Mogle. How affordable? Consider the Fierce Carbon Edge has a MSRP of $3,195, while a similar Proof Research Summit is listed for $5,840. Both have carbon fiber barrels and ½ MOA guarantees.

I asked Mogle how he can make these guns and sell them for that price and he explained, "I had a gentleman [Hugues Vaillancourt] approach me at my first SHOT Show I attended who said he could build the best gun in the world for the best price and I was like, 'Yeah, whatever.' A couple of weeks later, he flew me up to his factory [Nutech Industries] in Quebec … and when I went into his machine shop, I quickly realized that was probably one of the best machine shops in North America.

"He's one of the largest suppliers to Bombardier, he's built at one time the Winchester Model 70 action, he has built parts for Marlin — I mean several big manufacturers in our industry — and has done so for 25 years. And so when I saw that he was a gun guy already and he's got robots that feed his machines and he's got the highest-end machines in the business, I was like 'OK, if I am going to partner with someone, this is the guy.'"

Mogle has many years of experience building custom rifles and, like many custom riflemakers, started making his guns using available components and assembling them in custom stocks. "In January 2014 we introduced the Fierce Edge. We manufacture the entire rifle. We make the action, we make the carbon fiber stock, we make everything," he says.

Everything is made in Canada except the barrels, which are laid up with carbon fiber in Utah. "The only thing we don't manufacture on the entire rifle are the barrel blanks themselves and we get the barrel blanks from McGowen. They're a well-known barrel manufacturer. They're a match-grade [button-rifled] hand-lapped barrel," says Mogle, who describes Fierce's patent pending C3 carbon fiber process as something between what Christensen Arms and Proof Research do. "We do both the filament winding process and a hand lay-up process and we're using a much higher modulus carbon fiber material."

With a carbon-wrapped barrel, the manufacturer turns down the barrel blank to a much thinner diameter and different profile and then uses their carbon fiber process around the blank. It's basically a steel liner in a carbon fiber case. The result is a barrel that is much lighter than the same diameter steel barrel. Plua, the carbon adds stiffness that increases the accuracy and, if done properly, also acts as a heat dissipater to help keep the barrel cool during long shooting sessions.

There are many other key features of the Carbon Edge, but the main ones include a 70-degree bolt lift, controlled-round feed, three-position safety, detachable magazine, a trigger that's user-adjustable from a 2- to 4-pound pull and a custom carbon fiber stock.



Fierce manufactures its own triggers for the Edge that are user adjustable from 2 to 4 pounds.

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The author lines up for a shot with the Fierce, which guarantees three-shot ½-inch groups.

That it looks like a Sako is no accident as Mogle didn't want to make essentially another Remington 700 clone and saw an advantage to the three-lug, or "triad" bolt as he calls it. "In today's world with the bigger scopes, I feel that a short-bolt throw action gives you a great advantage," explains Mogle. "A Sako is a broached, high-production action; ours is all wire EDM … [and] the top doesn't have Sako's dovetail," he says when describing some of the differences between the two.

It's a flat-bottom receiver and instead of having a traditional recoil lug, Fierce beds the lug into the stock. "Some people think a gun like that can't be accurate but it can because the action is square. It's not going to twist on you like a rounded action," says Mogle.

With the EDM process, metal is removed at the molecular level resulting in very precise tolerances. Another thing Fierce does to ensure such tolerances is to do as much machining in one step as possible, and final machining after heat treating because something as seemingly benign as heat treatment can cause dimensional changes.

The sample Carbon Edge came already fitted with a Swarovski 3.5-18x44mm Z5 scope in Talley rings on Remington bases. Federal provided several types of .308 Win. ammunition for accuracy and function testing.

Each Edge rifle comes with a ½ MOA accuracy guarantee and Mogle says that, "people need to realize with Fierce, especially if they go into dealers, all of our Edge models have a certified target in the box and most of the time it is with factory ammo." If for some reason factory ammo doesn't achieve that accuracy guarantee, Fierce develops a specific handload that it shares with the customer. "We give the custom recipe to the customer, and if you had to do that out of house it's going to cost you $400 to $500 to do so," he explains.

When using Federal's Vital-Shok ammunition loaded with Sierra 165-grain GameKing bullets, I averaged 0.62-inch three-shot groups at 100 yards. That's just a tad bigger than Fierce's ½ MOA guarantee, but I'm going to give it to them because I had to contend with heavy mirage and gusty winds.

The trigger is a crisp and snappy 2.6 pounds that breaks like a shard of glass. "We build our own triggers that are very similar to their [Sako] triggers, but it is adjustable from 2 to 4 pounds," says Mogle. There's a fixed ejector in the bottom of the action, so cases really fly when you yank the bolt back with authority, or simply pop out when you pull the bolt gently back.

While the magazine is similar to a Sako magazine, Mogle says there's a "slight difference" so additional magazines must be Fierce-specific. They lock in solidly and fit flush with the bottom of the stock. You can top load them while they're seated in the magazine and you can even single load without having to push the cartridge down into the magazine because the extractor will snap over the rim, but when doing that I sometimes had cartridges nosedive into the back of the barrel instead of the chamber.

At about 6 pounds, the Edge is feathery, but when cinched into a

SPECS

Manufacturer: Fierce Firearms
Model: Carbon Edge
Calibers: .22-250 Rem., .243 Win., 6.5x47 Lapua, 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5x284 Norma, .270 Win., .270 WSM., 7mm-08 Rem., 280 Ackley, 7mm WSM, 7mm Rem. Mag., 7 mm STW, 7mm RUM, .308 Win., .30-'06 Sprg., .300 WSM, .300 Win. Mag., .300 RUM, .30-378 WBY, .308 Norma Mag., .338 Win. Mag., .338 RUM, .338 Lapua Mag., .375 H&H
Action: Three-lug bolt-action
Magazine capacity: Detachable box, 5+1
Barrel: 24-inch carbon fiber
Trigger: Adjustable 2- to 4-pound pull (2.6 pounds as tested)
Sights: None. Drilled and tapped Remington scope bases.
Stock: Carbon fiber
Overall length: 45½ inches
Weight: 6.4 pounds
MSRP: $3,195
Other: Guaranteed three-shot ½-inch groups at 100 yards with appropriate ammunition
More Information: ***www.fiercearms.com***

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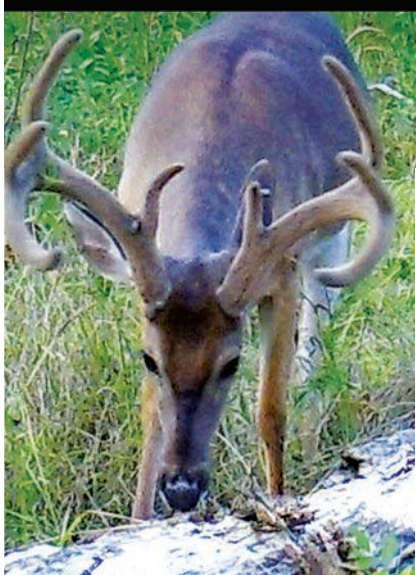


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Peabody sling it's solid and steady from various shooting positions. Despite the light weight, recoil is entirely manageable thanks to the very effective muzzle brake. Like any brake, it's loud, but the 15-degree forward angle to the holes makes the brake mildly quieter than conventional muzzle brakes. Shooting without the brake moved point of impact about 2 inches left, so be sure and do your final sight in with or without the brake, depending on how you intend to use the gun when afield.

A little bit of internet searching revealed that there were delivery problems early on with Fierce, but Mogle says those issues are resolved. "The carbon fiber's become really popular, so our lead time on carbon fiber guns is probably 6 to 8 months while our steel barrel, if a guy was to call in a custom order, it's 3 to 4 months," he adds. "And we're adding more and more dealers and that's helping to fill the pipe so customers can now start to find them on the shelf.

"Anyone who wants a precision lightweight rifle that shoots under ½ inch is our customer," says Mogle. Fierce fills a niche for a custom-type rifle at an affordable price relative to similar rifles.



Fierce fills a niche for a lightweight custom-type rifle at an affordable price relative to similar rifles.



Left: Capacity of the flush-mounting magazine on the sample was five .308 Win. catridges. Right: Controlled round feed ensures the cartridge is never loose in the action.