

FINGER ON THE

PULSAR!

The editor gets the first test of Daystate's enigmatic new supergun

I've been testing rifles for Airgun World for well over 25 years, and the very first review I did was a Daystate. It was their FTR model, way back at the end of the '80s, and it was the first solid proof that Daystate, the pioneers of the modern pre-charged pneumatic, intended to change with the times. Back then, Daystate didn't change much, really, but the state of near-agricultural bomb-proofery that sustained the Staffordshire company and its customers for a couple of decades, seems a whole world away now.

These days, Daystate are innovators, groundbreakers and envelope-pushers, and one glance at this month's exclusive test subject shows that the company

has no fear of taking risks, either. You're looking at the Pulsar, an electronic, fully-ambidextrous bullpup built around a brand-new platform designed to replace the world beating Mk4 system. The laminate stock Pulsar on test is one of a three-line whip, which includes a walnut version and a fully synthetic model, with the first 200 of these designated as 'special edition' with a £2000 price tag as standard.

SPECIALS

These specials have been dubbed the ORO (means 'gold', apparently) series and the test rifle is a fully

operational, prototype of one of them. The production rifles will be presented in high-grade walnut or laminate, fitted with a rangefinding laser, a match-type trigger, plus some engraving picked out in gold, all presented in a posh box with an equally posh certificate of authentication. Spookily, despite the £2000 tag, the orders are already arriving at a rate that even Daystate find pleasantly surprising.

Once the first 200 are delivered, the special edition run will make way for the production version, and the asking price will drop to a measly £1795, with a pick 'n' mix options upgrade list, if you want to buy the extras that come as standard with the special edition run. I hope you understand all that

because I'm moving swiftly on.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We need to establish a pivotal fact of Pulsar life, right here and now. The camera doesn't love it. No matter how many times we posed and reposed it in the Airgun World studio, the result didn't do it justice. No photo ever published, anywhere, fairly represents this rifle in any way. In short, the Pulsar is way better looking when you see it 'live'. I heard this from shooters time after time, at the recent SHOT Show in Vegas, and at the British Shooting Show in the far more glamorous Stoneleigh, and you'll say the same when you get to see one.

Actually shouldering the Pulsar



It's way prettier than this, I assure you. I still think it's a stunner, though.

done that are anything to go by, you'll see it in a totally different light.

uncomfortable.

Get it in your shoulder and see for yourself just how stable this bullpup is when it's in the right position to do its job.

For the record, I think the Pulsar looks stunning, but then I've seen it, shouldered it, and now I've shot the hell out of it, so let's get into the performance stuff without any more delay.

HOW DOES IT HANDLE?

I usually prefer to describe the features of a test rifle before its function, but this time I'll combine the two, because so many readers want to know what it can do. Well, in short, this fully-electronic,

10-shot, side lever, can do anything that any Daystate has ever done, but it does it in the way

that only bullpups can do it.

The Pulsar is just 30 inches (780mm) long, and although it weighs a perfect 8lbs (3.8kilos) without a scope, its compact design concentrates that weight, which is a good thing when it's in the shoulder, but a distortion anywhere else. As stated, reserve every ounce of your judgement of this rifle's looks, balance and potential until you get it pointing at a target. If 99% of those who have

HOW DOES IT SHOOT?

Flicking that sidelever by reaching back to your ear feels odd at first, indeed you'll probably find your fingers closing on air as you go for a lever that isn't where they normally are, but a couple of magazines into it, you'll become bullpupped and you won't look back.

The trigger, which isn't the 'post and shoe' design destined for the production specials, is electronic, so there are no mechanical challenges to overcome, or any long linkages to bridge the gap between the trigger blade and its mechanism at the rear of the action. Electricity doesn't mind running along a wiggly wire concealed within woodwork, so total sensitivity is never more than a micro-pulse of power away.

Each pellet left the 17-inch (430mm) Lothar Walther barrel with the soft 'bip!' sound electronic Daystates tend to produce, accompanied by a tiny wisp of



'Get it in your shoulder and see for yourself just how stable this bullpup is when it's in the right position to do its job'

So stable on aim - and that's the bullpup magic.



Such a better screen, and it even called me 'M8' when it told me to change the batteries.



Six AAs will see the Pulsar through 14000 shots.



Never, ever assess the weight and balance of this, or any, rifle like this. Try it on-aim, where it's designed to impress.

'Shot after shot smacked into targets set out to 55 yards'

PCP 'smoke', as the warmer breath from the Pulsar's muzzle met the cold air of my test range. Shot after shot smacked into targets set out to 55 yards, and

while I'd have preferred a bit more magnification for extreme accuracy testing, the MTC Connect 3-12 fitted to the little bullpup by Daystate was born to match that rifle. I have a ton of shooting to do with this rifle and believe me I'll be doing it, but within the very first session I knew I was going to perform well with the Pulsar, and I did. I really did. More of that later,

but now let me finish the description of this remarkable airgun.

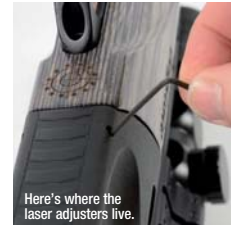
THE POWER WITHIN

The Pulsar's action is powered by six, standard AA batteries housed within the stock, rather than the 'plug-in rechargeable' Daystate usually runs on its electronic rifles. Each six-pack is good for over 14,000 shots, and the Pulsar

warns its user that a battery change is required, when it gets within 1000 shots of running out of juice. The rifle will also run on a Lithium PP3 battery, which provides around 7,500 shots' worth of motivation. You'll need to drop the stock to change batteries, but that's a one bolt job and I managed it in four minutes first time out. Not a problem.

The whole rifle is a progression, in terms of the way it works and how it's made, but the most immediately noticeable improvement has to be the recessed information screen. Now housed in a neat hidey-hole on the left-hand cheek piece, the screen has no carbuncle qualities at all, while remaining as informative as ever. Great move, Daystate designers.

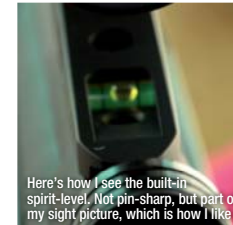
In place of the nine levels of programming proffered by previous models, the Pulsar has just three. By opening the side lever and holding back the trigger, you can toggle between 'Magazine On/Off' – which stops the rifle firing once you've fired the final shot from the magazine – 'Laser On/Off' – which is self-explanatory, and 'Power Level', which gives the option of shooting at either 9



Here's where the laser adjusters live.



Swapping the side lever to southpaw preference takes five minutes.



Here's how I see the built-in spirit-level. Not pin-sharp, but part of my sight picture, which is how I like it.

or 11-plus ft.lbs. in the non-FAC version and between 26, 35 and 40 ft.lbs in the Section 1 UK, or export model. Once the rifle is programmed to suit your requirement, the screen shows a constant reservoir pressure readout, plus the power mode chosen, and, hand on heart, I can't say I missed the option to have the safety catch light on or off, or any of the set and forget programme modes electronic Daystate customers have enjoyed for years.

CONSISTENCY AND ACCURACY

Each 200 bar charge of the Pulsar's 300cc reservoir produces 220 shots in .177 and .250 in .22, at the 11.3 ft.lbs. clocked by the test rifle. I tested the first 50 of these shots from the .177 I've been using, and, using Air Arms Diabolo Field straight from the tin, the overall variation was just 10 f.p.s. I revisited the charge at 100, 150, and 200 shots, and each

10-shot string maintained that consistency. At shot 222, the power dropped right off, and the pellet impact point went with it. Impressive stuff, although I can never see any normal human chugging on through a couple of hundred shots without stopping for a major rest, and a recharge. At 45 yards, I managed three groups on 16mm diameter, and almost repeated that feat at 50 yards, but for a couple of fliers caused by having the trigger set far too lightly. I was seriously annoyed about it, and it helped spark the article on page 52 of this very issue. Anyway, I adjusted the trigger to a non-stupid pull-weight, and carried on impressing myself and those around me, by shooting some truly frame-worthy groups. I'll brag unashamedly next month, but let me close this first test with a word about the bullpup format itself, and the Pulsar in particular.

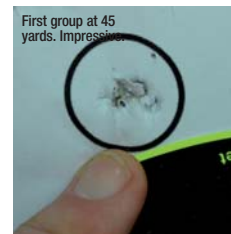
BULLPUPS IN PARTICULAR
Shooting a bullpup is different in so many ways, not least in terms of pellet trajectory, due to the raised sightline. It took me just one, two-hour, session to match the ranges I needed with the aimpoints required, and even less time to become used to doing that on autopilot. I'll explore this feature, and so many others, in next month's follow-up test, but it's already obvious that Daystate has produced a groundbreaking sporter, here. I need to take it into the hunting field and get some rain and cold into it, but the signs are just about as exciting as they could possibly be. The photos may never do the Pulsar justice, but I promise you I will. Stand by for a noteworthy follow-up test. This special edition Pulsar is special in so many ways. ■



The all-accommodating butt pad - at last!



Remove the butt to swap out the batteries. No problem.



First group at 45 yards. Impressive.



Here's what happens when the air supply falls below its working pressure. Instant drop-off.



TECH SPEC

Model: Pulsar
Manufacturer: Daystate
Country of origin: UK/Ireland
Price: £2000.
Type: Limited edition, pre-charged, multi-shot bullpup
Calibre: .177, .22
Cocking: Side lever
Loading: Via removable rotary, 10-shot magazine, or single-shot adaptor
Trigger: 2-stage, adjustable unit
Stock type: Laminated, ambidextrous sporter
Weight: 3.8 kg (8.1lbs) unscoped
Length: 780mm (30ins)
Barrel: 430mm (17 ins)
Fill pressure: Varies. 200-bar for test rifle
Shots per charge: 250 in .22, 220 in .177
Average energy: 11.3 ft.lbs.
Best group at 45 yards: 16 mm diameter
Favoured pellet of test rifle: Air Arms Diabolo Field
Options: FAC-rated actions, various upgrades. Call for details
Contact: Daystate 01785 859122

RRP £2000

Below: Cycling the side lever becomes second-nature in no time.