

Mark Camoccio gets all tearful over his long lost Daystate FTR but finds that things have got a whole lot better from this popular British manufacturer



Progress Report

What a long way we have come, the Daystate Mk 4 is without doubt the cutting edge of PCP technology



It's a Daystate Jim but not as we know it now, my old FTR, which in its day was quite some rifle



Electro/mechanical systems is what these new guns are about, with precise metering of air pressure and an electronic trigger



The display relays information such as residual pressure, shot count, shots per charge etc, clever but how many of us will take full advantage of it?



Note the tight squeeze. That mag still sits very proud of the action



One of my all time favourite airguns has to be the Daystate Huntsman FTR from around 1988. The action was the classic agricultural design of old – a steel cylinder, knurled bolt handle, fairly crudely scalloped breech housing, and simple knock open valve set-up. But it shot superbly and proved a super accurate Field Target or hunting rifle in its day. A tight BSA .174" calibre barrel complimented the consistent power plant beautifully, along with that cleverly designed stock, which incidentally still stands as one of the best 'custom' handles that I have encountered to this day.

The deep box forend and drop down pistol grip, coupled with a pronounced cheek piece and adjustable butt pad, were a credit to Custom Stock who produced it. The pleasant semi-match trigger part designed by the legendary Barry McCraw, made the FTR a winner.

Everything just came together and with ultra tight groups out to the full FT distances and my confidence brimming, that rifle helped me plunder plenty of silverware, including the coveted CLA Rosebowl at the 1988 Kelso Game Fair in 1988 in Scotland. Yes that Daystate Huntsman FTR was a real classic and only a fool would have sold it, doh!

PROGRESS?

So if that gun shot so well, it begs the question, just what does the modern Daystate do better? Firstly, consider the latest line up of models. The company shrugged off that agricultural tag once they took the airgun scene by storm with their cutting edge electronic actions. Not for everyone of course, and for the traditionalists among us, mechanical designs are still available.

However, I'm focusing on the latest MK4iS Sports model, which utilizes just about everything that Daystate have learnt in the last few decades. Take a close look at that glorious Gary Cane designed walnut woodwork and the stark similarities between this MK4 and my old FTR, become obvious.

MAPPED COMPENSATED TECHNOLOGY

Shot count is an area where modern PCPs really outscore those early guns. Consider that my FTR could barely muster 45 usable shots in the smaller calibre and the MK4 can knock out 160-170 from a single 230bar charge, you may begin to appreciate just how far we've come.

The MK4 sports MCT (Mapped Compensated Technology), which uses a digital microprocessor to control a solenoid-powered air valve. The ingenious design sees the rifle's on-board computer and pressure sensors monitor every microsecond of the firing cycle. Calculating the precise amount of

time that the valve needs to open, to overcome the pressure inside. Effectively computer controlled, the system continually regulates the power output, which largely addresses the problem of a conventional PCP and the inevitable, associated power curve.

The clever stuff doesn't stop there. A small information screen denoted by 'IS' in the nomenclature is mounted on the action. This allows you to keep tabs on the complex technological marvels within; relaying such information as residual cylinder pressure and overall shot count. The MK4 is programmable and by using its electronic trigger as a switch (once the action has been checked and cleared as safe of course!) programs can be cycled through in turn, and activated as required.

Settable commands as pre-set on this MK4 Is Sports model, are as follows: (signified by the relevant number of beeps)

Stage 1 Reset Magazine

Resets the magazine shot counter

Stage 2 Reset Shot Count.

Resets the overall 'shots taken' counter

Stage 3 Display Pressure

The current on-board air pressure is shown

Stage 4 Set Power

The trigger can then be used to toggle between the two power modes- Hi pwr (100%) and Pwr2 (70%)

Stage 5 Lighting Options

The LED display can be set to light up for 10 seconds, or continuously

Stage 6 Mag Count ON/OFF

Stage 7 Single Shot ON/OFF

When set to ON the safety catch needs to be reapplied after each shot, and the rifle bleeps as a reminder

Stage 8 Pressure Warning

The rifle can be set to give a warning when the residual pressure drops below a pre-set figure - adjustable in 50bar increments

Stage 9 Reset Defaults

The trigger is electronic in operation, offering pleasantly light and crisp settings to suit the majority, whilst adjustment is mechanical via Allen keys.

MULTI-SHOT?

The MK4, in keeping with all Daystate's models, is a multi-shot design running a 10-round, detachable magazine. It can also be used as a single shot with the mag removed and a single shot tray fitted. To load fill each chamber by rotating the cover, then push the magazine into its slot within the action, and push the bolt forward.

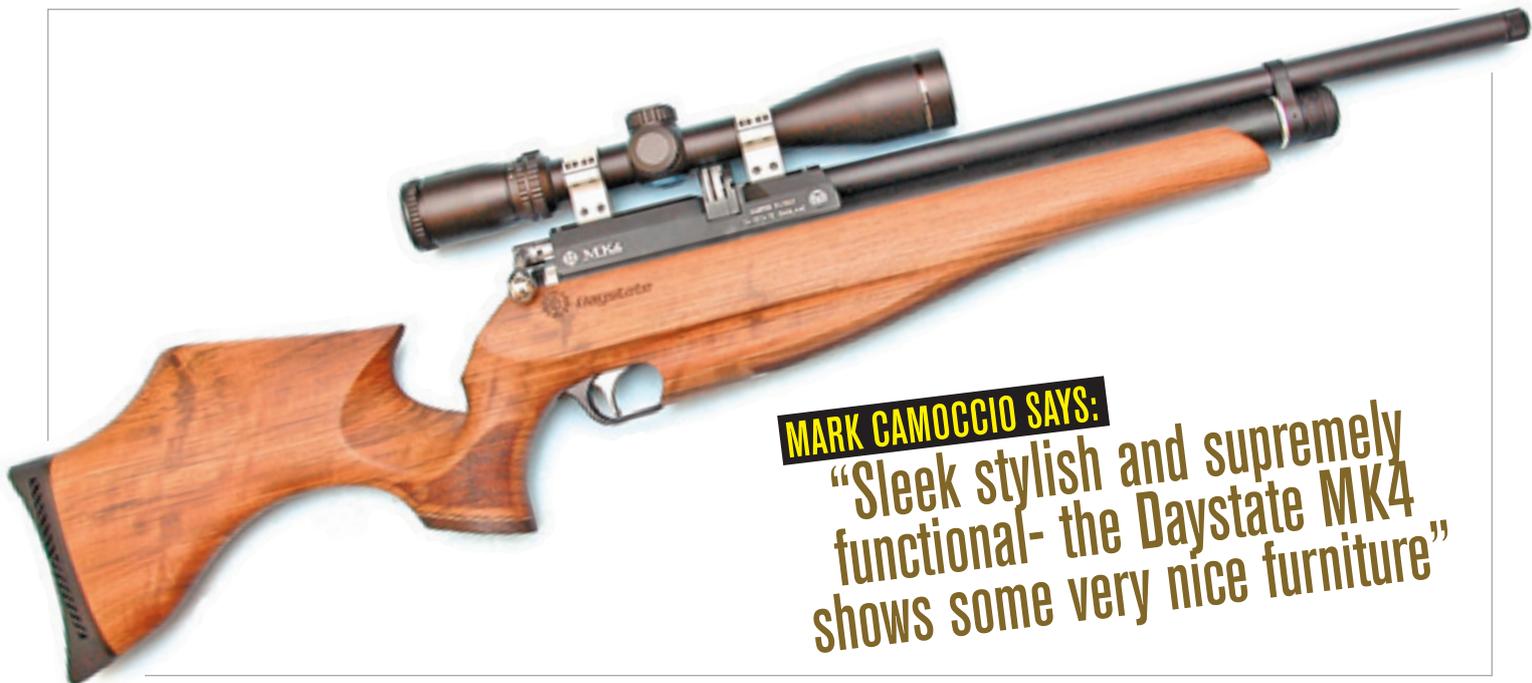
One point to note with these electronic rifles is that the bolt doesn't actually need to be cocked, but merely subtly drawn back- so effort is minimal. With the mag fitted, the motion does index the following shot, so more care and positivity needs to be taken here. With the stainless single



Detailing around the grip area, note the generous shape and thumb-up hold option too



A push-pull fit valve cover keeps things simple, neat and clean



MARK CAMOCCIO SAYS:
 "Sleek stylish and supremely functional- the Daystate MK4 shows some very nice furniture"

▶ shot tray in place, zero effort is expended, whilst each pellet is simply rolled into the loading channel.

TOP GUN?

As a point of interest I decided to evaluate this MK4is with regards to handling in the main shooting positions; partly to see how it compared to my old FTR, but also to verify its competition credentials.

Plenty of crossover exists within the various branches of our sport, and whilst one rifle may be deemed suitable for hunting and another for HFT for example, the requirements of each should be and are, largely one and the same. Admittedly budgetary restraints often dictate what a shooter may take hunting, but where top class accuracy is required for HFT or FT, little is left to chance for the top competitors. The MK4 clearly joins the list of top guns and has a string of wins to its name; but why?

Inherent accuracy is a pre-requisite of course and Lothar Walther barrels make that possible. Ultimate control resulting in accurately placed shots, is what it's all about thereafter, and the Sports stock on my test model is the real deal here.

AESTHETICALLY PLEASING

All the features of the FTR are here, yet in a more flowing, aesthetically pleasing format, with the scalloped and beautifully shaped cheek piece being outrageously stylish. The wonderfully concave butt pad really hugs the shoulder, so whichever stance is adopted, confidence is assured.

I began from the rested and supported prone position, shot from a bean bag over 35yds. This instantly reaffirmed what I already knew - these rifles are blisteringly accurate machines, capable of groups of 5

shots forming just one enlarged hole at such a distance. From the kneeling position groups inevitably opened up slightly, yet bear in mind that the test card was prepared using rings just larger than a one penny piece and the results are impressive!

Standing is the most demanding of all and here I found the MK4 a little light at the muzzle for my taste; so a silencer would be screwed into place if this were my rifle. Shot as seen, results were again highly acceptable, with just the odd pellet slipping away as the fragility of my technique was pushed to its limit.

What really makes this rifle for me, is those dual thumb shelves and the subtlety of the design, and the luxurious grip afforded. These excellent features, coupled with the company pedigree, keeps the MK4 around the top of any shortlist.

TECHNOPHOB

If all this technological wizardry leaves you cold, or worse; scares the pants off you, then fear not – as mechanical equivalents are available. The company hasn't lost sight of its roots in this regard. If however cutting edge electronics fires the imagination, then just embrace Daystate's trail-blazing ways.

They boldly claim that the MK4 is the most advanced PCP on the planet and with these rifles generating a lock time (the time between the trigger being pulled and the pellet exiting the barrel) apparently several times faster than a conventional, mechanically-powered PCP they may have a technical point.

BETTER OR DIFFERENT?

However, theory is all well and good. Whilst these electronic Daystate's are undoubtedly brilliant pieces of technology, reality still

sees mechanically driven rifles feature heavily at the highest level of both Hunter Field Target and FT; so the jury's still out as to verifiable advantage.

One things for sure though, what Daystate have achieved is strong brand distinction and originality and with it a fiercely loyal following. With their latest ethos of 'innovate not imitate', its little wonder that the company has carved out a successful niche for themselves; catering for serious enthusiasts and connoisseurs of fine engineering and design, worldwide.

Yes Daystate do things differently, and in the MK4 is, we have a superbly functional sporting airgun with real character that can't fail to put a smile on the face.

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Model	Daystate MK4 is Sports
■ Type	Electronic multi-shot PCP
■ Calibre	.177 on test; .22 available
■ Weight	7.5lbs unscoped
■ Length	36.5"
■ Barrel	17"
■ Stock	Walnut sporter (right hand on test)
■ Trigger	Match grade, electronic
■ Power Source	Divers bottle or dedicated pump
■ Fill Pressure	230 bar
■ Shot Count	Expect around 160-170 shots in .177/ 190 approx in .22
■ Velocity	High 812fps Low 790 Ave 797
■ Spread	22fps over 165shots using Daystate Li pellets
■ Energy	11.2 ft/lbs average on test
■ Price	£1,036 including 10 shot magazine, single shot tray and electronics charger
■ Options	Sports Thumbhole, or Panther version
■ Contact	Daystate, 01782 791755 www.daystate.com