History Lesson: 6.5 Creedmoor Cartridge Origin

By **LORI CURRY** | Updated On December 8, 2018
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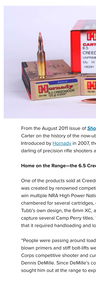


From the August 2011 issue of *Shooting Sports USA*, an article by Aaron Carter on the history of the now-ubiquitous 6.5 Creedmoor rifle cartridge. Introduced by Hornady in 2007, the 6.5 Creedmoor quickly became the darling of precision rifle shooters around the globe.

Home on the Range—the 6.5 Creedmoor

One of the products sold at Creedmoor Sports is the Tubb 2000 (T2K) rifle. It was created by renowned precision rifle shooter David Tubb who used it to win multiple NRA High Power National Championships. Although it was chambered for several cartridges, one that sparked much interest was Tubb's own design—the 6mm XC, a cartridge he used to win numerous titles to capture several Camp Perry titles. The only problem with the cartridge was that it required handloading and load data was scarce.

"Shooters were having a tough time finding the right load for much of mush … and things like blown primers and stiff bolt-lifts were common," explained former Marine Corps competitive shooter and current Creedmoor Sports general manager Dennis DeMille. Since DeMille's company sold the rifles, customers actively sought out the 6mm but the range to explain the problems they encountered.

Approached by DeMille, David Emery, chief ballistician for Hornady Mfg. Co. and close friend to DeMille, had a simple solution to the 6mm XC dilemma: Hornady would manufacture the load—or a similar one. But first, Emery wanted to get it right the first time, so he suggested that DeMille make a wish list for the perfect cartridge. DeMille's list included: magazine length and low recoil (for rapid fire); bullets with high ballistic coefficients; nothing proprietary; flat-shooting and inherently accurate; not a barrel burner; recipe book data (no room for handloaders); two bullet weights for both across-the-course and long ranger; comparable in price to the .308 Win. and readily available components—in short, the idea was to produce one cartridge for anything out to 1000 yards," DeMille stated.

The 6.5 Creedmoor was largely born of a concentration of the .264" bullet diameter (Courtesy Hornady)

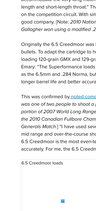
The 6.5 Creedmoor is the performance center of the .264 Bore.

The .30 TC served as the parent case, and the shoulder angle was limited to 30 degrees to ease manufacture. Besides, little could be gained from a steeper shoulder angle.

But isn't this ballistically similar to the .260 Rem.? "Why reinvent the wheel," I asked Emary.

"As we saw it, the .260 Remington had too much case capacity to be efficient for the application we had in mind," he explained. "To get acceptable performance with the .260 Rem., the propellant charge weights got pretty high, and we also had a real major dislike of that—we did not accommodate the very long match bullets because of the cartridge's case length and short-throated throat." That said, the .260 Rem. is well-respected on the competition circuit. With similar performance, the 6.5 Creedmoor is in good company. (*Note: 2010 National High Power Champion Sherri Gallagher won using a modified .260 Rem. cartridge.*)

Originally the 6.5 Creedmoor was loaded only with Hornady's A-Max target bullets. To expand the cartridge to hunting, the company recently began loading 120-grain GMX and 129-grain Super Shock Tip (SST) bullets. Said Emary: "The Superformance loads provide virtually the same performance as the 6.5mm and .264 Norma, but does not have the high pressure, nor excessive, longer barrel life and barrel accuracy."



The 6.5 Creedmoor offers performance similar to the .260 Rem.

This was confirmed by noted competitive shooter Kent Reeves. (*Note: Reeves was one of two people to shoot a perfect score during the 700-meter portion of 2007 World Long Range Championships. More recently, he won the 2010 Canadian Fullbore Championships as well as the Governor General's Match.*) "I have used seven different 6mm cartridges in long range, and the 6.5 Creedmoor is the most accurate," said Reeves. "Of all of them, the 6.5 Creedmoor is the most environmentally friendly. It is very easy to shoot consistently for me, the 6.5 Creedmoor has been the real deal 'easy button.'"

Side-by-side: 120-grain 6.5 mm MK and 6.5 Creedmoor load.

6.5 Creedmoor loads

Although the 6.5 Creedmoor leads the pack of 6.5-mm cartridges, how does it stack up to say, the .270 Winchester? After all, the .270 Win. is field-proven, but it's not perfect. In his book *Handbook for Shooters and Reloaders: Volume One*, noted wildcatter P.O. Ackley reported, "Actually, the standard .270 Win. is probably slightly over bore capacity for best efficiency since smaller charges of powder will produce

velocity with less powder." That is the 6.5 Creedmoor's chief design target: to shine. Nominal factory muzzle velocity for a Hornady Custom .270 Win. load with a 130-grain InterLock SP is 3060 fps, and the Superformance 130-grain GMX reaches 3150 fps. With a 200-yard zero shot at 400 yards, the bullet drops 19.30 and 16.80 inches, respectively; the remaining velocities are 2188 fps and 2385 fps. In comparison, factory ammo shows the Hornady Superformance 6.5 Creedmoor 120-grain GMX and 129-grain SST loads have muzzle velocities of 3010 fps and 2950 fps, and 400-yard drops of 18.90 and 19.60 inches. But those are not the ballistic particulars, the 6.5mm bullets are still traveling at 2249 lbs and 2202 lbs, respectively. With regard to external ballistics, and especially when compared to conventional loads, the 6.5 Creedmoor gets better as range increases.

Add to this a lighter, short-actioned rifle, versus heavier long-action models required by the .270 Win., and less recoil the product of less propellant and lighter bullets) and there's a good case to be made for the 6.5 Creedmoor.

Another Gun for the Rack?

During a week of hunting, the Creedmoor performed consistently. If there was any question as to the appropriateness of the cartridge on African plains game, arguably some of the toughest species on Earth, it proved itself time and again. There were the impala at 401 yards; the SCI No. 18 steenbok at 80 yards; the black wildebeest at 200 yards; two fallow bucks at less than 100 yards; a vlak reebok at approximately 280 yards; a springbuck at 225, and a trio of warthogs and non-trophy species out to 525 meters. With the exception of the vlak reebok, when a second shot was taken but unnecessary, each animal was DRT with a single shot. The rifle was accurate, and when the bullet was properly placed, the cartridge performed beyond expectations.

There's something to be said about a cartridge without excessive recoil that offers the qualities and capabilities of the 6.5 Creedmoor. It has certainly impressed me.

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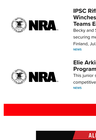

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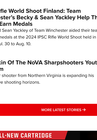

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