TIME TRIALS

The reason these products exist at all is their purported ability to help the field shooter place his shots more accurately. We wanted to see how much they improved a shooter's performance—if any at all. We found that, overall, these rifle supports did help most shooters make more accurate shots, but they also cost the hunter time. Since each product is generally suited to a specific application, we ran accuracy tests with a shooter firing a gun with only a sling and shooting position for support. The shooter had to place one round inside a 9-inch circle at 100 yards—roughly the kill zone of a whitetail deer. We timed how long it took the shooter to get the first round in the pie-plate-sized target. We ran our tests with the devices in the most compact carry position—that is, they had to be set up and adjusted (if necessary) to fit the shooter.

What we found: Nearly any bipod helps your absolute accuracy, but it's tougher to measure how many shots they may cost you. In most cases, it took longer to set up a good first shot with a bipod than it did from a position. Unquestionably, this will mean missed (not taken) shots at game animals.

The Harris BRM unit, for instance, was too short for our tester to get a comfortable shooting position unless he adjusted the legs. This obviously slowed him down, as the table below shows.

However, the leg lengths on the Harris S-L and Versa-Pod Model 2 were the right height for our shooter, and didn't require adjustment. Thus, their set-up times were nearly as fast as a good position shot.

Testing the longer units, we chose to shoot kneeling without the bipod, since it was a faster, higher, more stable position for our shooter. The longer attached bipods, however, couldn't be used in the kneeling position, so we shot them while sitting. Likewise, the Telescoping Bipod required the kneeling shooter to make more adjustments to the legs than when a sitting shooter used the device, so we reported the shorter time below.

The Stoney Point Steady Stix set up fast in the prone position because the unit could be preset for the right height and simply spread to accommodate the rifle. In the sitting position, however, the shooter had to spend a great deal of time assembling the unit's legs before he could shoot. That lead to some of slowest set-up times we recorded.

The Steady Arm product, which uses an aluminum pole to bear the rifle weight in front of the hunter, helped most shooters get on and stay on target, as the data below show. It lead to generally better standing shooting, though some taller shooters often had trouble getting the gun support base to stay put when they were shooting.

HARRIS BIPOD MODEL BRM

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Prone)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Prone)
15 seconds	35 seconds

HARRIS BIPOD MODEL S-L

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Prone)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Prone)
15 seconds	24 seconds

HARRIS BIPOD MODEL S-25

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Kneeling)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Sitting)
17 seconds	24 seconds

VERSA-POD MODEL 2

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Prone)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Prone)
16 seconds	13 seconds

VERSA-POD MODEL 3

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Kneeling)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Sitting)
16 seconds	19 seconds

STONEY POINT TELESCOPING BIPOD

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Kneeling)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Sitting)
16 seconds	31 seconds

STONEY POINT STEADY STIX

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Prone)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Prone)
16 seconds	17 seconds

STONEY POINT STEADY STIX

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Kneeling)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Sitting)
17 seconds	40 seconds

JLB INNOVATIONS STEADY ARM

Time To First Good Shot Without Device (Standing)	Time To First Good Shot With Device (Standing)
13 seconds	12 seconds