

# SECRETS *of the* SAMBAR

*and other Cervidae*



## ZONES OF SILENCE

*Pinpoint them and finding sambar becomes child's play*

## THE 3 YEAR STAG

*It was all in the Planning*

## WHEN ALL THE STARS ALIGN

*Success can be Extraordinary*

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*Much more to the hunt than the kill*



# Vixen®

## 2.5 - 10 X 50 SCOPE REVIEW



**W**hen I was asked to review the Vixen 2.5-10 x50, I was about to fit one to the Sako 85 Deluxe that I have reviewed in this edition. This added an extra element to my testing.

Will these two items do justice to one another? Does each have accuracy that is good enough to fully complement one another? All are good questions. The short answer is yes they do. If you have read my review of the Sako 85 you will have noted that the accuracy obtained with this combination was extreme, and that 0.5 inch group shot was simply the best "I" could shoot a 30/06 over a bench in those conditions. I believe this scope/rifle combination would shoot a one-hole group, if the "shooter" was good enough.

The truth is many scopes on the market are not capable of this level of accuracy for many reasons, including design, lens quality and engineering. All these factors affect a scope's accuracy, not to mention how well it survives recoil, thumps and bumps, or being dropped or fallen on. "You don't do that you say", then I guess you don't hunt sambar.

Vixen have been building high quality optical equipment for over 60 years in Japan, and their products are undeniably very good. Vixen equipment is not cheap but if you compare apples with apples its value for money becomes apparent. Many scopes seem OK in good light but as light fades so does their clarity, whilst the very best scopes enable you to see detail well after you can't see it with your naked eye.

A scope's ability in poor light is extremely important as many game animals - particularly sambar - are shot at first and last light. This is especially true for the older and wiser trophy sambar stags.

For this review a colleague and I compared the Vixen 2.5-10 x 50 with seven other high quality scopes for optical clarity and definition from good light through until dark. Some of the scopes we compared cost two to three times as much as the Vixen.



by Graeme Jemmeson

At the end of this exercise we had 3 winners as we couldn't pick a difference between them. The Vixen was one of the 3.

OK - as you may have already guessed from having read the first couple of paragraphs, I am already converted. The Vixen range of optical equipment has won me over with its excellent quality and design at a bargain price. Let's have a look at the design and features that I believe make this scope so good.

### Scope Tube

The Vixen's one piece 30mm tube is made from specially engineered alloy. The wall is relatively thick and anodised matt black. This tube provides a strong and rigid chassis in which to mount the delicate optical parts and keep them safe and secure. The ocular housing is similarly constructed. Forward of this is the power adjustment ring and on top is the battery compartment and 'on - off' switch for the illuminated reticle. It also incorporates the brightness adjustment.

Overall, the scope body is very robust and it's interesting to note that it's identical in length and weight to another excellent scope - the Zeiss Victory 2.5-10 x 50.

### Optical Quality

Vixen riflescopes have lenses of the highest quality and this is obvious the moment you look through one. The sharp, crisp image is just what you need for exacting accuracy and the excellent resolution is just what you need to define the exact spot on a big stag partially hidden behind numerous intersecting branches and leaves. As already mentioned, the 2.5-10 x 50 Vixen is a bright scope which transmits a high level of light.

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This is necessary if you are to positively identify and shoot that once in a lifetime stag sneaking into his wallow in the pre-dark gloom.

### Adjustment Rings, Turrets & Dials

Whilst this scope has about as many rings, turrets and dials as can be fitted, they all play an important role and all function perfectly. The diopter adjustment ring on the eyepiece enables the focus to be adjusted instantly to bring the image and reticle in sharp focus together to suit each person's vision.

The top of the battery compartment for the illuminated reticle screws off to fit or change batteries and is positively marked for polarity. Below it is the 'on' 'off' and brightness adjustment dial marked from 1 to 11. There is in this range a suitable brightness from total dark to full sun, as I will discuss later.

Next is the power adjustment ring – it is marked from 2.5-10 and like all dials and knobs on this scope, it has finely cut grooves for good grip. There is also a raised section that coincides with 2.5 power. This makes adjustment simple. The windage and elevation adjustment turrets are a little larger than on some scopes as they cover 'dial up adjustments'. No coin is needed - just the thumb and forefinger – so they are very easy to adjust.

These dials are like a cap that's numbered 0-11; each number division is broken up into four. These equal  $\frac{1}{4}$  of one inch at 100 yards or approx. 7mm at 100 metres. Each division corresponds to a definite click as you make adjustments. Having adjusted your scope you simply lift this cap and turn it around to place the zero back on the line on the turret base.

You now have a whole new world of possibilities at hand if you choose to use them. This base line setting - say for your most commonly used load - can now be adjusted for different loads while never losing your original setting.



Another scenario is dial up range adjustment in conjunction with a range finder and ballistics charts, or your own notes on projectile trajectories for your favourite hand loads. Even if you never choose to do any of this, being able to adjust your scope so easily is a bonus anyway. Of course all this presupposes that all adjustments are completely accurate every time but believe me when I say that this is a huge supposition as many scopes are simply not capable of this. At best this can make them difficult to sight in but once this is done they usually hold zero well enough. But if you try to move them off zero and back again, you cannot rely on this happening.

Some scopes will even change point of impact (POI) as you wind them through different magnifications. Although the POI change may not be much, it can and does cause misses at greater ranges.

Having fitted the Vixen to the Sako with Sako Optilock rings and bases, ensuring it was square and true to the rifle, I set it up in the vice with my collimator securely fitted in the barrel. A scope collimator is an optical instrument that enables you to align the scope's reticle accurately with the bore of the rifle. This is not exactly where it will shoot but it usually gets you on the target. This device enables you to see exactly how and where the scope's reticle moves as you make elevation and windage adjustments. Mine has a fine numbered grid so you can repeat adjustments exactly.

The elevation and windage adjustments on the Vixen 2.5-10 x 50 I tested were absolutely precise and exact at all times with every adjustment. I made all my initial settings on 6x, then wound the magnification up to 10x and down to 2.5x multiple times. The reticle stayed exactly on the same grid at all times.



After that I tried moving the reticle around the grid in a pattern back to zero, i.e. 18 clicks right, 18 clicks down, 18 clicks left and 18 clicks up. And yes, it came back exactly to the same grid intersection every time. You can't get elevation and windage adjustments that are more accurate than that.

Last, but far from least on the opposite side to the windage turret is a parallax adjustment dial. This removes parallax error at any given range. Simply set the dial for the range you are shooting at and no more error.

What is parallax error you ask? Well it is optical error created when your eye is not in exactly the same position in relation to the scope every time. Most modern scopes are adjusted to be parallax free at 100 yards or metres, this means at other ranges parallax error can and does come into play.

An interesting exercise you can do is set your rifle/scope up solidly so you can align the crosshairs on a small object at various distances then without moving the rifle move your eye around in small circles while looking through the scope. How much does your reticle appear to move over your chosen target? Shocked? – Many people will be. When shooting at ranges up to 300m using a high quality scope this will not be an issue. But for precise shooting at ranges past 300m it is an important consideration.

## Reticle

The reticle in this scope is interesting. At first glance it appears to be a standard German No. 4 although on closer inspection the top vertical wire appears to be very slightly thicker than the others. Vixen advise this is due to the LED current being run down through the top hair to power the illuminated red dot. Vixen also advise that the reticle is not constructed of wire, but is glass etched. The cross hairs look a little thicker than some, but still only seem to

cover approx. 0.5 MOA according to my eye when on 10 power and approx. 2 MOA on 2.5. This is obviously fine enough for any "game hunting" at normal ranges and high precision shooting generally, and being in the second focal plane actually covers more area at lower magnification, less at high power for precision shooting, as it should be. Here is the interesting bit though, the centre of the cross has an illuminated red dot that covers no more area than the cross itself – approx. 0.5 MOA.

Now I simply don't like illuminated reticles, mainly because many are so bright they diminish your low light vision. But the red dot on the Vixen is so fine and precise that I found it to be an aid to fine accuracy in full sunlight, but also a great aid to shooting quickly and accurately in dull light or at moving targets close in. I found that with the scope set at 2.5 power it's just like having a red dot sight. You can't lose it in thick brush and twigs either, so personally I am a fan of this feature and would be more than happy to have it on all my scopes as it really is excellent.

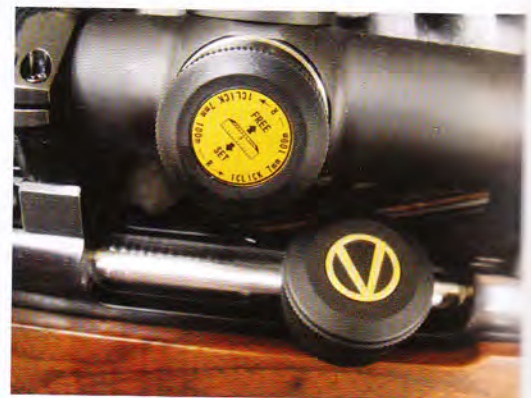
## Overview

I believe the Vixen LVF 2.5-10 x 50 has absolutely everything you could need. From its long 102mm eye relief for use on the heaviest recoiling rifles, its optical and engineering quality and construction, its precision components and designing, the parallax adjustment and red dot. Even the range of magnification covers 90% or more of hunting situations on most rifles for all but specialist applications.

I really have trouble finding anything negative to say about this scope. It is not the most compact or lightest scope available, but you must have some weight to have sufficient strength and all those extra features do result in some bulk. So there you have it. If you need a new scope take a close look - you'll be impressed I'm sure.



Vixen Parallax Adjustment Knob



Vixen Elevation & Windage Adjustment



Vixen Dial Up Knob



Vixen Scope Eyepiece