



MEC STEPS BEYOND
THE LOADING BENCH
AND ONTO THE RANGE
IN A BIG WAY, SAYS
DAVE HOLMES

THE APEX OF MODERN FABRICATION



For most all shooters, MEC has long been known for their shot shell reloaders. But in the corporate scheme of things, reloaders aren't even the tip of the company iceberg. With sixteen plants and over 2,000 employees, the company does metal fabrication – from start to finish – for agriculture, construction, commercial vehicles, power sports and recreational vehicles, the military and now produces traps. They can cut it, fold it, bend it, weld it, finish it and machine it – you-name-it and they can do it. They were named the number one fabricator by The Fabricator Magazine three years running.

From humble roots – the company was founded in 1945 by two cousins – MEC has

expanded through shrewd business acumen to become an industrial powerhouse.

In 1985 they became a 100% employee owned business. Everybody who parks in the lot in the morning has a vested interest in how things are run – and it shows.

MEC had decided they wanted to expand in the shooting sports market and their manufacturing capability made traps a logical step. The company had explored several options, but none had come to fruition due to one reason or another. Then...

Apex Traps was the 'baby' of Simon Hurley and Andy Perkins, both of whom have been involved in the trap business for many years. They partnered up and did what they both do

best – designing and building traps and then sold them under the Apex name. Combining their experience and contacts would seem to make the business a cinch to succeed, but anyone involved with business start-ups is well aware that finances are always a hassle. Parts manufacturing was done in several local shops, with parts collected and assembled at Apex. While not perhaps the perfect business model, it was a necessary one as setting up to do all the fabrication in-house far exceeded their initial available budget.

When MEC and Apex started 'dating', a 'marriage' seemed the natural outcome. MEC wanted to expand in the shooting sports and Apex had the product and expertise to

push MEC squarely into the market place. Six months on and it's safe to say that the potential of the union is being tapped in a very positive way.

Apex traps were initially designed using an all aluminum and stainless steel construction to avoid any issues with rust. The initial MEC production, carried out in the Apex facility, saw a change in labels and little else to distinguish the transition. However, when the operation moved to Mayville a few months after the acquisition, the wheels started turning.

Apex traps had a natural metal finish. The MEC thought process was to brand their traps with their reloaders. In short time, the current red/dark gray format was introduced. Parts that weren't going to corrode any way were electro coated (e coat) and powder coated. The result is an all weather surface, provided that the surface isn't broken. The traps utilitarian 'Air Stream' aluminum look was replaced with a two-toned paint job – scratch the finish and the exposed metal won't rust, either.

Other manufacturing efficiencies have also been implemented and will continue to be implemented as MEC pushes for the best performance they can get. Since the fall, Hurley has designed a new arm to improve trap performance. Due to in-house parts production, it was being installed on new traps in just a few weeks after its design.

Trap prices are always a consideration. That got Hurley thinking – and the 'E' Series traps were introduced at the SHOT Show. This series has the same stainless throwing plate and drop plate as the aluminum model, now deemed the XP, but has a steel base instead of the aluminum 'box base' found on the XP. The savings



MEC TRAP ASSEMBLY. NO ROBOTS, JUST SKILLED HANDS AND TIME.



BELOW: SIMON HURLEY AT THE RECENT NSCA NATIONALS.



HURLEY HAS DESIGNED A NEW ARM TO IMPROVE TRAP PERFORMANCE.

in material and labor costs have produced a series of traps that are economically priced. The 200 is \$1495, the 300 is \$1995 and the 400 is \$2495. The steel bases do add weight to the traps, as much as 40 pounds, but for those who don't find the added weight an issue, the value is quite a drawing card. There is a difference in the warranty terms, but not in the components used. The additional warranty is value added to the XP line.

The XP line, about \$500 more than the E series, offers left and right hand models at the same price. Mini turrets can be had on either version for the base price. A battue trap is included in the XP line-up. Chandelle traps are available in either line. Skeet sets, ATA and wobble traps are available if one is so inclined. There are 19 models in the line currently and they aren't done yet. That doesn't mean I have any secrets to keep – just that I've gotten a feel for how these guys think.

I've had a 200 since last summer. It's a slick operating little machine (70lbs) quite capable of throwing most club targets, which makes it a great practice machine for the individual, or a trap that will work for smaller clubs. I mounted it on an ITB-M Solo Shooter base from Renair Shotgun Sports. That combo gave me a setup that could throw any presentation that could be thrown using a standard target. The only limitation is it can't do a really big chandelle or teal.

I've just taken delivery of a 300 XP to throw the really big stuff. I started ticking off the changes that I could see from the Apex line. The throwing arm has been redesigned, counter balanced and lightened. It uses a different spring. A target counter has been installed. That makes it quite simple for a range operator to

SoftTouch™
Recoil Reduction Systems

800.323.7940 • www.SoftTouchStocks.com

Shamrock Leathers... ...Always a Winner!

THE HIGHEST QUALITY LEATHERS • THE FINEST CRAFTSMANSHIP
UNMATCHED AFFORDABILITY • MANY WAYS TO CUSTOMIZE, PERSONALIZATION INCLUDED
OVER 40 YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE IN THE SHOOTING SPORTS INDUSTRY.

PRODUCTS: SHELL BAGS, SHELL POUCHES, METAL SHELL BOX CLIPS, MAGNETIC BARREL RESTS, BUCKLES, CARD CASES AND MUCH MORE... ALL PRODUCTS WE OFFER ARE ALSO AVAILABLE FOR TROPHY USE.

8 Box Bag, Regular Pocket, Antique. #R110

8 Box Bag, Large Pocket, Embossed Pine Cone. #R1210

8 Box Bag, Large Pocket, Tooled Floral B.

MIA DELEGATE
PSSA
1992-2007

MADE IN USA

www.shamrockleathers.com

9722 320th St., St. Joseph MN 56374 tel: 1.800.728.5184 info@shamrockleathers.com

COMPANYPROFILE



LEFT: THE MEC BASE ALLOWS UP TO 40 DEGREES ROLL AND 60 DEGREES ELEVATION.

BELOW: TEAL ANYONE?

BOTTOM: MEC 400 XP.



check the targets thrown by the traps against the targets paid for – not every range can afford a counter system. Instead of a fuse, a circuit breaker is employed with the reset button on the back panel of the wiring box. Throwing distances are always difficult to judge accurately and fairly. Wind, temperature and ground slope can all skew the results a bit – but I can assure you that the 300 will hold its own against the competition. As regards the circuit box, Hurley opted for an aluminum box built into the back of the trap. Instead of a sealed box, he opted for a built in box sheltered under the body of the trap to prevent direct exposure to the elements, with a drain hole so whatever can get in can get out. In his view, it's the best solution.

MEC's carts also deserve mention. They're heavy duty to say the least. They utilize their metal-forming capabilities to roll the

frames from quarter-inch plate. They're heavier than other carts on the market and the tires are large diameter and solid – so the carts will still be rolling years from now.

Perkins spends most of his time on the road spreading the MEC news around the sporting countryside, promoting the fact that MEC is looking to expand on the products in their shooting sports line. Combine the experience of Perkins and Hurley and MEC's commitment to shooting sports and it's almost impossible to imagine them not being successful.

(www.mecshootingports.com) ■