

Turbo Competition Detector

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I received my new Tek Turbo (from Tek Unlimited) the day before I left for the Treasure Week Hunt extravaganza in Indiana. With a week of hunt events upcoming, I was anxious to try the first machine de-signed for competition hunting.

The Turbo came packed in a sturdy cardboard box equipped with plenty of protective wrapping. The hardest part of assembling the Turbo was removing the protecting wrapping from the coil and stem! Within a couple of minutes, I had the machine assembled and ready to try.

Before jumping out the door, I took a few minutes to look the machine over. The sleek design of the Turbo strongly resembles Tek Limiteds SIT water machine, how-ever the Turbo has distinctly differ-ent controls and is considerably lighter.

The unique housing that serves as the armrest and battery compartment also houses the electronics, six con-trols and a headset jack. (There is no speaker on the Turbo.) This design eliminates the need for any body-mounting arrangements without adding weight. In addition, the dis-tinctive housing arrangement counter-balances the weight of the coil, making the coil appear lighter.

Initial observation of the various controls may seem intimidating at first, but to give the machine maxi-mum versatility, all controls were carefully selected. Before covering any actual op-erations, a brief explanation of the controls is in order.

1. The power switch is a three-position switch that allows the operator to select between a primary battery supply and a back-up battery pack. The unit comes equipped with two packs capable of holding six, 1 1/2 volt, AA batteries each (primary batteries) and velcro mounting arrangement for standard nine-volt batteries as the backup supply.

2. The stability control does basically the same as sensitivity control.

As the control is turned clockwise, the stability is decreased and the sensitivity is increased.

3. The disc/notch switch allows the operator to select between a normal discrimination mode and a discrimination with variable notching. While in the notch mode, the Turbo has two-tone audio LD. Any targets above the notch setting are a high tone and below the notch are a low tone.

4. The disc/notch control is used in conjunction with feature #3, above. When in the discrimination mode, the control determines the level of discrimination.

However, when notch is selected, this control determines the targets to be notched out. -

5. The slow/fast selector actually changes the filter characteristics of the machine. The fast mode, normally used in hunts, allows the operator to sweep as fast as he wants without the fear of missing targets while the slow mode is used for more casual hunting.

6. The frequency selector is a six-position switch capable of selecting different frequencies to minimize interference from nearby machines during hunts.

7. Finally, the last control located on the stem is the familiar mode switch. This switch allows the operator to switch between discrimination and all-metal mode and to retune the instrument.

Anxiously, I took the Turbo outside to give it a try. The most obvious thing I noticed about the machine was the light weight and the balance. The machine seemed to float in my hand. In all honesty, this machine seemed to be the most comfortable machine I had ever had in my hands.

The first actual test was over my known buried test targets. In the discrimination mode, the Turbo responded positively and distinctly (because of the full audio alert) to all targets I have buried. (Since the discrimination mode is the normal mode I hunt in, any references in this article will be to this mode unless otherwise specified.)

The deepest target, a dime I have buried at 6 inches, was detected with ease. Considering that the soil conditions around my home is some of the most mineralized in Colorado, I was surprised at the sensitivity of the machine. I have had some top-line machines fail to find the same target.

Because of time constraints, spent only a minimum of time was spent familiarizing myself. I figured the weeks worth of hunts waiting in Indiana would give me plenty of time to become familiar with the unit.

My next hands-on experience with the Turbo was in the first hunt of the day in Indiana. Selecting the first position of the frequency shifter, I was amazed that I encountered no interference. In fact, throughout the entire week there were only two mirror occasions where the machine displayed any actual false signals due to nearby machines.

Because the area contained very little trash, I set the controls as follows: stability at minimum (same as maximum sensitivity), discrimination/notch switch on discrimination, discrimination level set at 4 (to accept nickels), and the slow/fast switch on fast. Except for a few minor experiments, the controls remained the same throughout the week.

I elected to use all nine-volt batteries instead of penlight cells to reduce the overall weight. The result was almost a half-pound in weight savings. I hunted throughout the week on the some two primary nine-volt batteries and continued to use them for a few days when I got home.

From the first hunt on, I found the Turbo very quick and responsive. Considering that I was still unfamiliar with all the locations of the controls, the only problem I encountered at first was becoming accustomed to the location of the pinpoint (mode) switch.

Used to having the mode switch thumb-actuated, I initially found the under-the-shaft location awkward.

By the middle of the week, however, changing modes with my forefinger became more comfortable.

When the slow/fast switch was selected fast, the Turbo gave a good indication on a target no matter how fast the unit was swept. Even the deeper targets (some found between three and five inches) would give a quick but distinct positive indication.

One problem I encountered was the slow/fast switch got bumped from fast to slow position and I found myself missing several targets. It is possible to swing the machine so fast that the slow mode will fail to respond, especially to deeper coins.

As the week progressed, I became more familiar with the controls and became comfortable with the locations of the mode switch.

My problem of finding targets wasn't with the machine but rather with myself.

I would detect a target but just couldn't seem to find it in the dry dirt. At times, I felt more like a kid playing in a sandbox than a treasure hunter.

During the week, I tried both the eight-inch coil and the 10-inch coil. The machine responded reliably, however, the eight-inch coil I had felt very heavy, and took away the comfortable feel of the machine.

I felt that the total number of found targets using the 10-inch coil was better than I could have done with the standard coil, however, the added weight of the larger coil made swinging the machine more difficult. I realized that I was just plain spoiled by the feather-light, standard 7 1/4-inch coil and returned to it. (I would like to see Tek Limited develop anew, ultra-light weight coil in the eight- and nine-inch range).

By the end of the week, I had tallied almost \$35 face value in silver, as well as several prizes. I am sure this is more than I would have gotten with my standard machine and I definitely didn't get as tired. Using the Turbo was actually a fun experience.

Although I wanted to give the Turbo a test under normal coin-hunting conditions in Indiana, the weather didn't cooperate. Therefore, I waited until I was back in Colorado.

While in Indiana, I did test the actual depth capabilities of the machine on several occasions (usually at the request of other treasure hunters who were curious about the Turbo's capabilities). On one coin, buried in a tent where several brands of machines were displayed, the Turbo was one of the few machines that reliably found the coin.

Even though the Turbo was not specifically designed with depth in mind, this machine seemed to match the best of them on actual buried target tests.

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Once I got back to Colorado, I took the Turbo out to see if it would work as an everyday, coin-hunting instrument. Because of the extreme heat, the outings were limited to a couple of hours in the mornings. The first place I took the machine was to an area where WW II army barracks once stood. (this area has been hunted several times by myself and other treasure hunters with little success.)

All that is left at this area is a lot of trash, a ton of nails and other items that may have been dropped. I wanted to see how the machine would respond under adverse conditions.

At this location, the trash re-sponses were easily distinguishable from the solid sound of good targets. The net result was eight wheat back pennies found at depths ranging between two and four inches. My hunting partner managed to only find one wheat hack during the same period of time.

The second area tried was an older section of a nearby city. There, I hunted only three yards and the parking area in front of two others.

The final result from this area was a total of 31 wheatbacks (from depths of two to five inches), five memorial pennies, one new dime and one new quarter, one 1919 Mercury dime found at a depth of about 4 to 12 inches and a 1903 nickel retrieved from a depth of approximately six inches.

Running at minimum stability (maximum sensitivity), the machine was very stable. It gave periodic short but unrepeatable signals to trash such as tin foil (I have yet to find a machine that doesn't). The coins, however, all gave good, strong, repeatable responses.

Even though the tests were brief, I was impressed with the capabilities of this machine for everyday treasure hunting. The Turbo seems to really excel in heavily mineralized soil conditions such as those found here in Colorado.

Although designed as a competition unit, this machine will hold its own with the best of them in both depth and consistency while coin hunting for any reason.

The only fault I found was in hearing the very deep coins in the all-metal mode.

I would not hesitate to recommend this machine to anybody who wants an extremely fast and comfortable competition machine as well as a versatile unit capable of tackling almost any aspect of treasure hunting.