

Here comes another new detector model to the market ... ?????

I am going to be posting this evaluation in 2 parts. This is Part 1, and it will be posted in two places: At Findmall.com under the Nokta/Makro Forum, and at AHRPS.org under the General Metal Detecting Forum. Part 2 will be posted when weather arrives that will free my favorite ghost towns and other old-use sites of snow and ice so I have access and comfortable weather to hunt them.

All too often I've seen a new detector hit the market, but after pouring over the product information they don't leave me with very much interest. If it is a new offering that might appeal to a beginner or newcomer I'll check to see how it compares with the vast array of offerings we have now.

If it appears to have a price point and/or features to compare with a mid-level detector, then I am even more drawn to check it out. That would be a price range where a serious 'Hobbyist' or even a more 'Avid Detectorist' might be shopping ... **and that includes me.**

Often the higher-dollar detectors, those with a single search coil and in 'basic' standard form that are priced well over \$1000 in USA terms, usually are less appealing to me because, quite often, they get too gadgety, have too many adjustment options that can bewilder even a more savvy detector user, and frequently are more for 'flash' and lack much improvement in serious all-purpose performance.

Then suddenly, along comes a detector that appears to be a nice 'fit' in a shopping budget for the serious or avid detector user, and also shows itself with what appears to be quality in workmanship, fit-and-finish, and ample adjustments for versatile performance ... but *without* a lot of flash and fancy. That's the type of detector I like to look for, and that's exactly what I saw in the Nokta FORS CoRe.

I enjoy versatility, and due to the challenges I face at most of my preferred sites, I also tend to favor smaller-than-stock search coils. What I saw in the FORS CoRe 'Pro Package' interested me, and that is exactly what I received and have been evaluating.

Ready for some surprises?

The Nokta FORS CoRe (which stands for Coin & Relic) is going to surprise anyone who sees the unit, then makes their first grab and start to work it because it balances so wonderfully! Balance is surprisingly good, and the weight is also much lighter than the outward appearance suggests.

The FORS CoRe comes with a standard 7X11.2 Double-D search coil, and operates at 15 kHz. It has four (4) search modes, and it powered by four (2) AA alkaline batteries.

With a Suggested Retail of \$999 in the USA, this detector competes very well with other detectors in the upper-end of the mid-priced category. Actually, in doing some in-the-field work with friends using some higher-dollar detectors, the **Coin & Relic** competes very favorably with detectors boasting a much higher MSRP!

In addition to the 'standard' Nokta FORS CoRe , the 'Pro Package' includes the following items.:

Two extra search coils. A smaller-size 4.7X5.2 Double-D in a solid-body housing, and a larger-size 13.3X15.5 DD. Like the stock coil, the larger coil is in an open-frame design.

Also, all three search coils come with a nice coil cover installed. Personally, I am not a big fan of coil covers and never really use them as there is no need, but these are great because they are thin, therefore they don't add much extra weight, and they fit snugly.

These extra search coils, impressive mounting hardware, a finds pouch, rechargeable batteries with charger, and set of headphones come in an excellent quality bag with the rods, control housing, and armcup.

The multi-pocket bag has a comfortable handle on the side to carry the entire outfit when broken down, and has two wide, firm and cushioned straps should you want to back-pack everything. This bag, alone, is a better design and quality built product than I have seen from any other detector manufacturer.

Zippering everything open and inspecting each part reflect the same appearance and feel of the whole product as being durable, well thought

out, and 'functional.' It was only a welcome hint of what to expect once the detector was assembled and put into action.

Assembling my Nokta FORS CoRe was mostly straight forward and simple with the exception of the armcup and control housing. Nothing about the CoRe is cheap or of sloppy, ill-fitting design. Instead, everything fits together quite snugly.

The armcup is metal, not plastic, and is attached to the upper rod with two bolts and nuts. Even the choice of these simple parts is impressive as they have excellent size/shape bolt and nut 'handles' to grip and tighten. Where the challenge came, with my unit, was attaching the control housing to the armcup.

The housing has a top-mounted metal bracket with 'rails' that very snugly fit into the bottom brackets on the armcups, and either one rail was fractionally a little oversize, or one armcup grooved receiver was fractionally smaller. By 'fractionally' I mean my control housing does not slide fore-and-aft in the armcup's groove.

Instead, I had to firmly press it into one armcup groove then mate the other armcup so I could get the joined parts aligned with the holes of the armcups and upper rod, insert the bolts and tighten the nuts. Once completed, I was very satisfied with the very solid, wobble-free design, and also glad I had it all together and wouldn't have to do it again very soon. 😊

Once assembled I did quite a bit of in-house testing to get comfortable with the FORS CoRe adjustments and physical design, making sure I had the rods adjusted for a proper and comfortable length so the search coil was being worked about 12" to 18" in front of my feet.

It took me a couple of days to do some bench-testing against a number of detectors I own or borrowed.

Then, the '*Oh Shucks!*' moment arrived. It's early-to-mid January, cold, and we have been hampered by freezing fog, freezing rain, and just sporadic drizzle for a few weeks. More wet weather than normal for this generally drier region.

There I was, ready to head out to start some field work and deal with the

elements and figured I better put on the environmental gear. Do you know what that means?

I had to remove the bolts & nuts and each armcup and the control housing to fit the environmental cover over the housing then re-attach all the parts ... again. 😊 It was easier the second time, but still The EC for the handgrip is very simple to install. Fit it down over the top and close the zipper!

The manual states the battery life with 4-Alkaine AA batteries is approximately 20-25 hours. On my first set of batteries, using only the speaker for indoor testing and so friends could hear what I was hearing for about half the run-time, and either my Pro Star or Killer B 'Wasp' headphones for the second portion of time, I didn't clock it closely, but I know I exceeded 25 hours.

The Nokta FORS CoRe has one feature that I will definitely be using once hot summer weather arrives because I rest up in the shade in the heat of the day and do most of my detecting very early, very late, or after dark when it is comfortable. I may not use it continuously, but I'll have to put in more dark o'clock hunting to find out, but that is a built-in LED flashlight. Located in the handgrip in front of the display, it is activated by a small rocker switch above the Pinpoint trigger. It shines the light just about on the search coil area.

This detector also has a 'vibrate' feature so a detectorist can feel a vibrated response should they be hearing impaired. My hearing isn't totally gone, but it sure isn't like it once was and I lost most hearing in my ruptured right ear in an on-the-job accident in 2010. I have toyed with the Vibrate function a little just for fun and to experience the five different levels of adjustment. It's definitely a functional feature.

Add batteries ... Press a few switches and touchpads ... Hang on for a ride!!!

Installing the 4 batteries is simple and you only have to make sure the polarity is correct.

My FORS CoRe came with the red membrane adjustment touchpads, but to be honest, I don't see where the former rocker switch design wasn't just fine. A friend of mine said he might even prefer the rocker switches, and I kind of think they could be operated a little easier with the EC in place. Maybe.

At the rear of the housing is a 1/4" headphone jack with a stout rubber plug, and an On/Off rocker switch.

On the front of the housing the two cable connectors secure the search coil and the handgrip-mounted switches, display and flashlight. I have not seen any sturdier and tighter-fitting cable connectors in use since maybe the old military-grade connectors used on some of the BFO's back in the '60s. The cables used are also thick and quality feeling, and of proper length so you don't have a lot of excess cable to deal with.

Also on the front of the control housing is a rocker switch for the Ground Balance option. You can turn 'On' an Auto-Tracking GB function, or to turn it 'Off' which will allow the operator to use the automated GB (often referred to as Ground Grab or Fast Grab on other brands), or to manually GB the FORS CoRe. Three GB options to satisfy any detector user.

Four common search modes, but some adjustment functions have different names.

The Nokta FORS CoRe has four search modes. One is a Threshold-based All Metal mode, and the other three are all motion-based Discriminate modes. The modes and their function are labeled as follows.:

GEN ... This is your General or All Metal search mode.

DI2 ... Which looks like D12 but it is really Di2, describing a Discrimination/2 Tone Audio response. In this mode, if all or some iron targets are accepted, they will generally produce a Low (bass-like) Tone. Non-ferrous and more conductive targets will produce a High-Tone audio, and this response also incorporates a VCO (Voltage Controlled Oscillator) circuit that will increase the pitch along with the loudness as the target is closer to the search coil.

DI3 ... Or Di3, is a Discrimination/3-Tone Audio response, assigning the Low Tone for most Iron/Ferrous-based targets. A Mid-Tone for low-to-medium conductivity targets such as foil, US nickels, pull tabs, most gold jewelry and targets that fall in that conductivity range. And a High-Tone audio for the higher-conductive targets, such as most US clad and silver coins. US pennies, depending upon their date and alloy make-up, will fall in either the Mid-Tone or High-Tone range. This mode does not incorporate a VCO audio response.

COG ... Means Conductive Ground and is designed for places like salt water beaches and lakes, and alkali sites when they are also damp or wet. This mode is also referred to as the Beach Mode due to the GB range and offsets to handle the low-conductive wetted salt effect. It uses the same 2-Tone w/VCO Audio like the Di2 mode.

To start hunting is simple, just select the search mode you want to use, make the adjustments you feel comfortable with, select Auto-Tracking or Automated/Manual Ground Balance, then GB the CoRe and start searching.

The menu is easy to follow and adjust, and the Owner's Manual is very well written so even a novice should be able to learn and understand this detector in a very short period of time.

The Nokta FORS CoRe is designed and shipped with factory default settings in each search mode that are designed to help deal with some of the more common challenges we might encounter, and in my opinion is really set-up for a more experienced detectorist and not a new-to-the-sport beginner.

I say this because the two main-use search modes are likely to be DI2 and DI3, both of which have a factory default Discrimination level of '10.' On the Nokta FORS CoRe, they use the term ID Masking for what we generally call Discrimination. On the coming-soon Makro Racer, they changed the term to ID Filter.

I don't know what the factory default setting is on the Racer, but the ID Masking of '10' is to help Discriminate rocks and *some* iron. Therefore most

iron targets, to include nails, are going to produce a response. The ID Masking adjustment range goes from '0' to '99' so the operator has more than enough adjustment range to find an ID Mask setting to Discriminate the primary bothersome targets.

Most iron will be rejected in the '0' to '39' range so an ID Mask setting of '40' should reject most ferrous junk unless it is in a man-made shape that enhances its conductivity. Those types of targets, such as the annoying crimp-on/pry-off bottle caps, can be dealt with using skilled sweep techniques in most cases.

Other adjustment functions have more common names, such as Sensitivity, Threshold, Frequency, Tone, Volume, Vibration, Brightness, etc. Just learn the Mode names and understand that ID Masking is Discrimination and the setting adjustments come easily.

The full-information display is located on the left side of the control housing with the adjustment switches below it. As I stated, there are ample adjustment features that are best described as 'functional,' and this detector provides impressive and versatile performance without a lot of excess features that can easily confuse a person or result in really messed-up performance.

If the unit is too noisy and chattery, you logically reduce the Sensitivity until it is stable. If you are hunting very close to metal structures or in a very densely littered area, just reduce the Sensitivity. On the other hand, if it is smooth running and you would like to try to get a little more depth, just increase the Sensitivity level.

Warning: The default Sensitivity level is '50' on an adjustment range from '1' to '99' and you might think the default setting is way too low. Depending upon the search coil you have mounted and the ground and target environment at the site you're going to hunt, you might be surprised how well the CoRe can perform at that default Sensitivity level. Yes, all of my saved mode settings have it higher, but not maxed out. Find the setting that will be most comfortable for you 'on average' and then tweak it up or down a little, if you feel the urge.

When making adjustments for any mode, you need to refer to the display

panel on the left side of the housing where it shows each mode, available functions, and the settings you make. It will also display other information, such as the Ground Phase read-out, Target ID numeric value, Coin Depth, and other points of interest.

The main information most detectorists want to see during a search is the Ground Phase, a Target ID read-out, and Coin Depth. One of the nice designs of the FORS CoRe is the sleek handle with a small display pod. When you Ground Balance, or press-and-release the automated GB button by the handgrip display, it will show the current Ground Phase reading.

When you sweep over a target that has a strong enough signal to process a visual response, you will see a Target ID numeric value based upon conductivity. If you squeeze the Pinpoint trigger, the display will show an approximate Coin Depth. All of the readings are large, bold numbers that are very easy-to-see.

I frequently remind people that there is no such thing as a 'perfect' metal detector, so I always like to remember to point out strengths, but not ignore what I consider to be a weakness. The Nokta design of the FORS CoRe was quite good in providing us a very clear and readable display.

One of the better points to mention is that the handgrip display is easy to view at any time, day or night. That's because when a target is encountered or you activate a Pinpoint switch or GB pushbutton, a display backlight comes on, and the user can adjust the backlight from '0' (no backlight) to '20' for a very intense lighting. My saved settings are '10' which is sufficient for me to clearly see the handgrip display.

One negative, if it really bothers a person, is that in the Pinpoint function the Coin Depth reading is in centimeters, not inches. To me it isn't a really big deal as I very seldom use Coin Depth read-outs as they are most often not quite close to accurate. I do use them to get a general idea of a possible depth 'range' and not expect a specific reading.

In this modern day of Internet access, I am sure most readers have, or will, visit the manufacturer's website where they can view the detector, see the features and read about what it offers, so in many ways, an evaluation and review such as I am doing doesn't really need to focus on all of the detector

package we see.

However, in working on this product review I think it is important for me to point out things that I feel many beginners to more experienced hobbyists might want to be aware of, such as the Coin Depth read-out. There are a few others things that I really like about the FORS CoRe and fell it is important to convey to readers who are interested in what this newer-to-the-market detector could offer them.

Good Points I Really Like.:

- If I want to “start from scratch,” it is easy to restore the factory default settings of all modes.
- Better yet, it is easy to make the adjustments and find settings that you are comfortable with, then easily save them to memory. That sure eliminates a lot of fumbling around with different modes and functions at every start-up. I like detectors with a memory capability.
- It has a very quick automated Ground Balance, as well as the ability to easily tweak it just a little bit manually when I feel the need.
- The rod-locks are good sized and snug up well, there’s no looseness or wobble in the coil or rod system, and the mounting hardware for the search coils and arm cup/control housing are impressive.
- The DI2 search mode with dual-tone and VCO audio is a search function I really enjoy using. I will say that using VCO audio, for many newcomers and especially old timers who haven’t had much experience with it, will probably take a fair amount of field time to get to understand and appreciate. Once learned it can convey a lot of information about a target, and it can help pick good targets out of some trashy sites, primarily when it is iron trash.
- I found the DI3 Discriminate mode to also be pleasant to use. I do NOT like to hear a lot of multi-tones on most detectors with the only exception being my White’s XLT, but is only sees occasional use. All of the 5 tone, 7 tone, 9 tone, it-doesn’t-matter tone offerings kind of annoy me. I like a good

single tone. Prefer a 2-Tone audio that helps separate ferrous from non-ferrous. And I like the 3-Tone concept with the breakdown Nokta used, for ferrous, mid-range and high conductors. Simple, and I like 'simple.'

- With my impaired hearing I also found the 5 different Tone settings helpful as I can match an audio tone I find pleasant and distinctive for the different headphones I use.

- As mentioned, the weight is definitely not an issue, and the balance and feel are more than comfortable, especially since I deal with a really bad back, neck and shoulder. When summer arrives and I hit some places where I have a purposeful use for the larger search coil I will get the opportunity to see how I can endure that set-up, but for all of my typical day-to-day detecting, the FORS CoRe isn't a big burden.

- The standard 7X11.2 Double-D search coil is not just a rugged-feeling coil, it balances comfortably and works well. What has surprised me even more is how well the smaller DD coil, the 4.7X5., has been working in the trashier (mostly iron) places I have been able to get to in our wintry weather.

Reader Alert: I'm aware many people who know me personally or have read my posts through the years know that I generally favor a Concentric designed search coil. Well, I do, especially IF it is of a good size, like somewhere between 6" and 7" in diameter, AND IF the detector I am using performs well with a Concentric coil.

Not all detector designs do well with both types of search coils. I do like the 5" DD Excelerator coil for the White's MXT family models, and I wouldn't be without my 5" DD for the Teknetics Omega. My old Compass models have standard DD coils, too, but there are some detectors, or some particular DD coils, that just do not work well or appeal to me.

So, for some, it might come as a shock that I like these DD coils on the FORS CoRe. I do for one very 'simple' reason ... they work, and they work well. 'They' being both the DD coils and the Nokta detector circuitry design.

Just a few reminders about how the FORS CoRe functions.:

The FORS CoRe will turn-on in the DI2 search mode. This is the most powerful or sensitive Discriminate mode.

By design the FORS CoRe is a moderate to fast sweep detector, and it has

a very quick response so make sure you learn the sweep speed limitations for the search mode you use and the site being hunted.

With both an Auto-Tracking or Automated/Manual GB option, choose the method you prefer and be sure you are Ground Balanced at the site before you start searching. GB is an important function to perform to get the best all-around performance from any detector.

If you press the GB pushbutton to bob the search coil to GB, you are shifted from a Discriminate mode into the GEN All Metal mode. You have a few moment pause before it returns to the search mode you were using, or you can just pull-and-release the Pinpoint trigger for a quick return.

Here's a quick review of my saved-to-memory settings (which I can alter and save changes at any time) for the different search modes based upon the mostly urban sites I have been hunting.:

GEN.. Sensitivity-'80' .. Threshold '40' .. Volume '20' .. Tone '3' ..
Brightness '10'

DI2.. Sensitivity '85' .. ID Masking '22' .. Volume '20' .. Tone '4' .. Brightness
'10'

DI3.. Sensitivity '85' .. ID Masking '22' .. Volume '20' .. Tone '4' .. Brightness
'10'

COG.. Sensitivity '85' .. ID Masking '40' .. Volume '20' .. Tone '3' ..
Brightness '10'

Do I suggest you use the same settings? No, of course I don't. This was just to let you know what I happen to prefer, right now, and I might make some changes when weather allows me access to the old sites I prefer to hunt. There are reasons why I use the settings above, just like you'll have your own reasons or preferences.

I know I could go on and make this long Part 1 Evaluation even lengthier, but I think you all have an idea about the Nokta FORS CoRe already. After I've had a few weeks to hunt some of my favorite ghost towns stage stops and other places in Eastern Oregon, Nevada and Utah, I'll make a Part 2

Evaluation post.

It will deal mainly with the specific strengths and weaknesses I might find when searching those very littered locations, and by then (by mid-March I hope) I hope to have a Makro Racer in-hand as well. That will let me give some added information about how both the Nokta FORS CoRe and Makro Racer compare in side-to-side performance.

Closing Comments .. An invite to come see the FORS CoRe .. And my Keeper/Not-so-Exciting decisions.:

Before I got the FORS CoRe in-hand it seemed to have some similarities to the Teknetics line, especially the T2. If you're used to a Fisher F75 or most White's models like the MXT All-Pro, then you're used to the US 5¢ coin reading with a much lower Target ID number, whereas the FORS CoRe has them in the '56' to '58' ID range like the Teknetics Omega, G2 or Fisher Gold Bug Pro and F19, etc. So for some hobbyists who are used to one set of Target ID (VDI) numbers, it will take a little time to adapt to the higher read-outs from the FORS CoRe. Since I used both Teknetics and White's detectors, it came easier.

Other than the Coin Depth reading in cm there were only a couple of negatives I had, but I won't discuss them here as it is something I presented to the folks at Nokta to be aware of.

We know that only KellyCo is handling the Nokta Detectors in the USA so you can't go and see them at a local dealer's shop. If you happen to live in the greater Portland Oregon area, I'll share this invitation to attend our Free-to-the-Public metal detecting group meeting on Saturday morning, February 14th. You can find location information for the meeting in the Announcements Forum at the ahrps.org site, or you can shoot me an e-mail to monte@ahrps.org and I'll get back to you.

I know that the 14th is Valentine's Day here in the USA, but this is a morning meeting and presentation, allowing you ample time to take someone out for a special dinner in the evening. Come and see the FORS CoRe, find out what it can do and get to feel the balance and performance.

Only YOU can decide if any detector is a Keeper or Not-so-Exciting. Come check it out and make up your mind. I know I have, and it actually took a bit longer than a detector often takes when I evaluate them. I have a fair number of detectors, some listed below and some not.

I have them to use in seminars to show what we have had and what some good detectors are capable of. I also use them as loaners from time-to-time. And all of them get put through my **Nail Board Performance Test** and a few other challenges as well as used afield.

As a rule I keep my main three or four detectors with me in my vehicle all the time for all my travels and searches at a variety of sites. It has been the White's MXT Pro then All-Pro as the #1 all-purpose detector w/6½" Concentric for trashier sites, and the past year the 9" Concentric spider mounted for more open-area searches. The White's MX5 took the place of the M6 and Teknetics Omega as being the #2 use detector, but often first-grabbed because it is lighter and handier with my bad back. It sported the 6½" Concentric coil mounted full-time. I also have a Tesoro, either the Outlaw or Bandido II µMAX w/6" or 7" Concentric coil, and sometimes the White's XLT for cruising open areas.

The Nokta FORS CoRe is definitely a KEEPER.

It has impressed me so much that I have now positioned it on the back seat as my #1 all-purpose detector. I hope to get a Makro Racer in-hand soon because I anticipate the performance will be very similar to the FORS CoRe.

With the performance I am now enjoying with a little less back fatigue, I plan to keep the smaller coil ready when I get a spare lower rod for it and one for the larger coil. I have no doubt, after what I have enjoyed in performance and with the versatile adjustments these two models offer, that the Makro Racer will occupy the space next to my FORS CoRe on the back seat, and it will have a smaller coil mounted full-time making it the grab-and-go detector I will first grab for most sites I hunt. The Nokta will be set with the standard DD mounted to search the fringe areas of ghost towns or to hunt plowed fields, and other open areas etc.

We each get to make up our own minds and my MXT All-Pro in inside on

my detector rack, and soon the MX5 will join it. The rack is for all the good models that I have for 'back-up,' loaner, or instructional purpose. Getting "back seat billing" is reserved for my Primary-Use Detectors.

That's how impressed I am with my product evaluation of the Nokta FORS CoRe.. Not just that it is a good detector that folks ought to check out, but it is an exceptional detector that moved into the top spot for me.

All I need now is:

- 1.. Warmer and drier weather.
- 2.. A Makro Racer Pro Package.
- 3.. Extra lower rods for both Racer and FORS CoRe extra search coils.

I now have a New #1 All-Purpose detector, and to be quite honest I figured it might not be a bad detector, but I didn't expect it to do so well on my bench test scenarios and continue to out-perform one of the best, most versatile detectors on the market. However, *in most comparisons*, it did.

I guess I really need to add one more item to my list, other than a new Racer Pro Package, and that is a new camera so I can get photos to post. Nokta & Makro. Names we haven't been that familiar with, but I am sure we will see more of in coming months and years. The product quality and performance is right on par with their involvement and attention to the activity on their Findmall Nokta/Makro Forum.

Okay, off for some detecting ...

Monte