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WEEK OF OCTOBER 13

Patrick Sweeney and James Tarr review the Nighthawk Heinie Signature 1911. AR manufacturer Stag Arms is highlighted, with a good look at the features that make their models so popular. We tour Blackhawk's new manufacturing facility in Montana where they build holsters from scratch on state-of-the-art equipment. Kyle Lamb gives Craig Boddington some pointers on the best pistol grip and stance. And Kay Clark Miculek gives you some tips on getting started in 3-Gun competition.

WEEK OF OCTOBER 20

We check out Armscor's 1911-style pistol chambered in .22 TCM, which is unlike any cartridge you've ever seen. We give the Walther PPQ M2 9mm pistol a workout on the range along with the Ruger SR22 .22 LR pistol. Craig Boddington and Kyle Lamb take a look at optic options. And in "Shooting Better With The Best," we tell you how competition teaches you good shooting techniques and habits.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 10

This week we take an exclusive look at Magnum Research's BFR .30-30 revolver. See how this stainless-steel single-action revolver chambered for the classic lever-action cartridge is a real handful! Also, we check out SIG's brand-new M400 Predator 5.56mm varmint rifle and the 100-year-old Lorenz rifle. In addition, Craig Boddington and Kyle Lamb examine the critical subject of speed reloading.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17

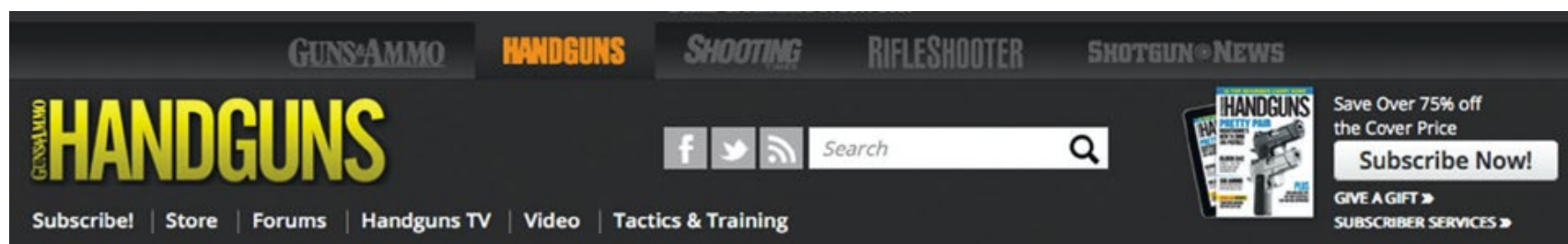
LaserLyte's new laser system is put to the test in "nonstandard" shooting positions. The classic Spencer carbine is reviewed, with a look at how it impacted the Civil War. Craig Boddington and Kyle Lamb engage multiple targets in their "Tactical Hunter" segment. And Jerry Miculek and Patrick Sweeney talk about their trigger fingers and managing recoil. Keep in mind their trigger/index fingers combined have pulled the trigger more than a million times.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 24

Patrick Sweeney and James Tarr review the Nighthawk Heinie Signature 1911. AR manufacturer Stag Arms is highlighted, with a good look at the features that make some of their models so popular. We tour Blackhawk's new manufacturing facility in Montana where they build holsters from scratch on state-of-the-art equipment. Kyle Lamb gives Craig Boddington some pointers on the best pistol grip and stance. And Kay Clark Miculek gives you some tips on getting started in 3-Gun competition.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 1

We check out Armscor's 1911-style pistol chambered in .22 TCM, which is unlike any cartridge you've ever seen. We give the Walther PPQ M2 9mm pistol a workout on the range along with the Ruger SR22 .22 LR pistol. Craig Boddington and Kyle Lamb take a look at optic options. And in "Shooting Better With The Best," we tell you how competition teaches you good shooting techniques and habits.



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Bad Advice & Semantics

Handguns is outstanding and I am a highly satisfied subscriber, but in the December 2014/January 2015 issue there were several errors. First, an advertisement for a pistol instructs the reader “Put it in your nightstand and sleep well.” This is atrociously bad advice. Why? Because most burglaries are not at night with the occupants home, but in daylight, with the occupants away at work or elsewhere. And where does the burglar immediately go? To the bedroom and the nightstand, looking for guns.

In “Deep Impact” Dave Spaulding writes about bullets expertly designed so their “jacket designs... allow for consistent collapse of the side walls.” Bullets are designed to expand, mushroom, curl or fragment, but I doubt that the designer wants them to “collapse.”

DON HARMON
WILLIAMSBURG, VA

Webster defines “collapse” as “to give way,” which I believe is an accurate representation of what occurs when an expanding bullet impacts human tissue, especially a bullet designed to expand by impact versus hydraulics.—Dave Spaulding

Mooning Over Clips

While I am sure my chops are not as impressive as Bob Shell’s, he is wrong when he states that the half-moon clips intended for use in the Model 1917 revolvers made by Colt and Smith & Wesson for use dur-

ing World War I were designed to retain the cartridges close enough to the firing pin to shoot. In a Model 1917 by either maker, the cartridge headspaces on the reduced diameter portion of the cylinder when the cartridge lip rests against this smaller diameter portion of the cylinder. The half-moon clips were intended solely to permit the empties to be ejected together via the ejector rod. Indeed, .45 ACP ammo may be fired in these revolvers without the clips, but the empties have to be removed individually.

JACK COLLINS
ROCKY MOUNT, VA

The Best Policy

I would like to thank Mr. Tarr for an excellent and honest review of the Sig P320 (December 2014/January 2015). I, too, was anxiously waiting for a striker-fired SIG and was extremely disappointed to see just a striker-fired version of the P250. I never really got the concept of the P250 and don’t think a striker-fired version will sell any better than the hammer-fired DAO version. Too bad. But it was so refreshing to read an honest review.

MIKE HALL
KINGSTON, NH

War By Any Other Name

Rick Hacker’s article “Up In Smoke” in your June/July 2014 issue was great. Not only did it give a good overview of blackpowder shooting, but Rick called the war

that took place in North America from 1861 until 1865 by a name that made sense. The war had many names. Unfortunately, the one most often used today is the least accurate of the bunch. It was not a civil war, which is one wherein two factions fight one another for the control of their country. If you take the accurate Northern view, it was the “Great Rebellion.” If you take the accurate Southern view, it was the “War of Northern Aggression.”

WILLIAM MITCHELL
MEMPHIS, TN

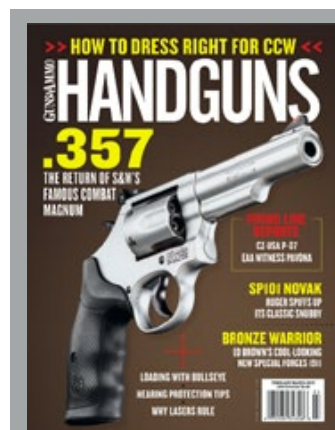
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Not long before this issue went to press, I received a couple of letters and emails from readers who had received subscription notices from outside firms—including at least one that “offered” a *Handguns* subscription at a price well above what we normally charge. These scammers go by different names, but the bottom line is they are scams, so protect yourself: If a subscription offer or renewal doesn’t come directly from *Handguns*, call our reader service department to be sure the offer you’ve received is from an authorized subscription agent. Otherwise you might lose your money because we accept subscriptions only from authorized agents. Our contact information is found below.

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DOUBLE COVERED

Depending on whether you bought this issue on the newsstand or received it as a subscriber, you’re treated to one of two covers. The Smith & Wesson Combat Magnum graces the newsstand edition, and the Ed Brown Special Forces Bronze is on the subscriber covers.





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Uncage the Soul

SLIPPING INTO DARKNESS

THE AUTHOR SEES THE LIGHT ON PISTOL LASERS.

By J. Scott Rupp

LAST YEAR I GAVE TOP-FLIGHT COMPETITIVE shooter Dianna Liedorff an assignment to cover the Crimson Trace Midnight 3 Gun Invitational. I wanted her insights on operating in dim-light environments, especially because she's not just a competition shooter but also a police officer. This year I attended the same shoot, albeit an abbreviated version held for media.

Why cover it again? Because I'm what they call in the golf world a "duffer." I'd never competed in 3 Gun, and my experience in operating in low-light situations has been limited to investigating a few bumps in the night and a couple of shoot-

house scenarios. In short, a total rookie.

What did I learn? First and foremost, you're crazy if you don't have a laser on your defensive pistol (and, yes, of course that is Crimson Trace's aim in hosting this event in the first place).

For years I've had Crimson Trace Lasergrips on my bedside gun: a CZ-75. But as much as I've fired that gun since I installed the grips, I haven't shot it much with the laser except for a few trips to the local indoor range for familiarization and to confirm that the laser was zeroed. The rest of the time was spent on the outdoor range, in broad daylight,

where the red dot of the laser is pretty much a non-factor.

And while they were educational experiences, the shoot-house scenarios I participated in were extensively controlled, with a safety officer in my hip pocket and talking to me the whole time about what I should be looking for—with broad hints about where my next target was going to be.

The nighttime 3 Gun shoot was a whole different animal. While we did get to walk through each stage to get a look at the targets, once the timer buzzer went off, we were on our own to either execute a plan or fail to do the same (with a range

officer watching over our shoulders, of course). Veteran 3 Gunners get their plans dialed in during these walk-throughs and can follow them once the action starts, but for me it was “react and engage”—what one would face in a defense situation.

The darkness also added a whole new dimension to routine tasks, such as loading, reloading and unloading. Even the simple act of presenting the pistol was different. As I punched the gun toward the target, I found it difficult to resolve the three-dot sights and the dimly lit targets—especially the farther ones—despite the fact that the sights had tritium lamps.

In the end, I found it much easier to simply look for the beam on the Rail Master Pro that was supplied for the event. Once that became second nature, my pistol shooting on the stages improved.

Aside from the ability to get quick hits with the laser, I found two other areas where it was an advantage. One, while shooting and moving, I discovered that not having to focus on the front sight when engaging targets really improved my peripheral vision. That allowed me to think ahead more easily and make a better, faster plan for which target to shoot next.

It also helped a lot in navigation—how to get from point A to point B, as well as spotting any obstacles that might trip me up.

The second advantage? The ability to shoot better around obstacles, particularly one-handed. On one stage I had to shoot left-handed (I’m a rightie) around a “wall”—just a frame with mesh on it to simulate a wall—to hit a close target. Simple as pie. I just hooked my arm around the “wall” and fired when the laser was on the cardboard target, double-tapping it (they double-tap everything in 3 Gun).

Sure, you say, but it’s cheating because I could see the target through the mesh, unlike with a real wall. That is true, but when I got home I unloaded my CZ and dry-fired around entryways in my house with the laser, both left-handed and right-handed. I found that lasers make it much easier to shoot around a hard corner without exposing a whole lot of your body.

In fact, that was one of the great benefits I got out of the experience: I realized how much work I had to do. When I did my laser dry-fire drills with the CZ at home, it occurred to me how many possible defensive scenarios my own house presented.

I’d considered the basic “intruder through front door” situation and a few others, but for the rest I always figured I’d “just know” how to go about it. (If he’s reading this, Dave Spaulding is probably banging his head on a table right now.) It turned out that, based on rehearsals, this wasn’t the case at all, but now I’ve worked on it enough to feel more comfortable.

And 3 Gun in general taught me a lot about how well repetitive training works. I found the event to be stressful. It was unfamiliar territory, I wanted to do well (okay, just not finish last) and, most importantly, complete the stages safely. In a lot of instances what got me through was my own, admittedly somewhat meager, training.

I regularly work on my drawing, reloading and other skills through dry-fire, and I try to remember to count my rounds when I’m able to make it to the range for live-fire.

At the match, on one stage we had to do a pistol reload in the midst of a run past a slew of targets, and I knew from the walk-through approximately where I was going to do a speed reload. When my turn

Laser Options


GRIP Replacement grips with integral laser. Advantage: instinctive activation with proper firing grip; doesn’t interfere with holster fit. Disadvantages: finger indexing along frame can block beam; model or type specific. Maker: Crimson Trace

GUARD Attaches to trigger guard. Advantages: some versions offer instant activation; can be available as OEM equipment. Disadvantages: some require button operation; can interfere with holster fit. Makers: Crimson Trace, LaserLyte, Viridian

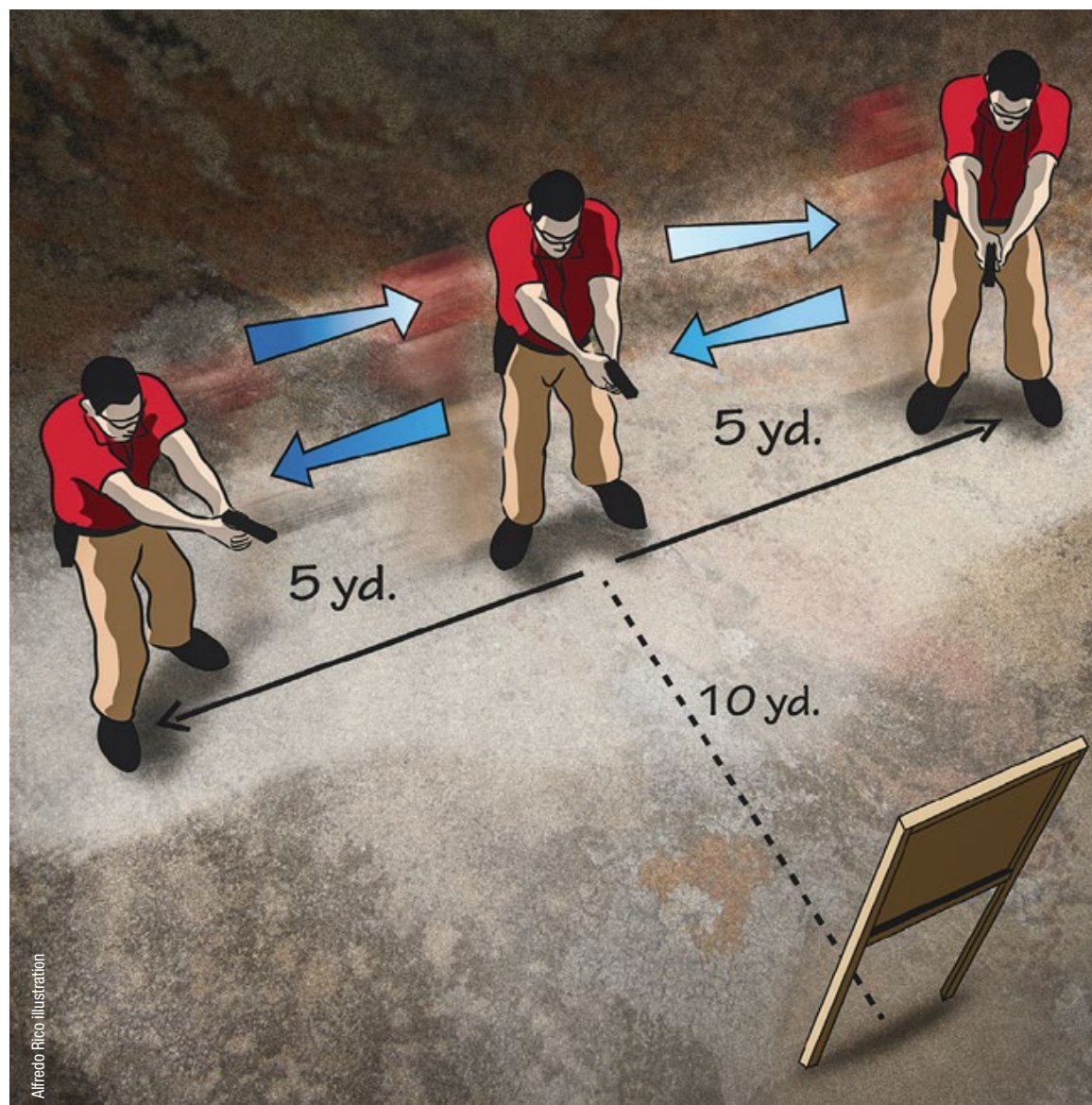
RAIL Mounts on frame accessory rail. Advantages: universal fit on railed guns; can incorporate white light as well; wide selection. Disadvantages: requires dedicated holster; activation via button manipulations and/or button programming. Makers: Crimson Trace, Insight, LaserLyte, LaserMax, Viridian, Steiner eOptics, Streamlight, SureFire

GUIDE ROD Unit replaces internal guide rod. Advantages: doesn’t change pistol externally or interfere with holster fit. Disadvantages: model or type specific; requires manual activation. Maker: LaserMax

came, I counted correctly and was able to reload before slide lock, and I didn’t fumble the reload itself—despite the darkness and the elevated stress—because I’d rehearsed the action tons of times.

What do I want you to take from all this? One, consider a laser for your defense handgun. Two, practice operating the laser through dry-fire and live-fire in low light if you can. Three, give some thought to taking up one of the handgun action shooting disciplines. They’ll enhance your gun handling—and your ability to handle stress, think and shoot at the same time. 

MAD HALF MINUTE



THE MAD HALF MINUTE IS THE CREATION of Special Forces veteran Mike Pannone (CTT Solutions) and is designed to test a shooter's ability to move, take an accurate shot and then move quickly again.

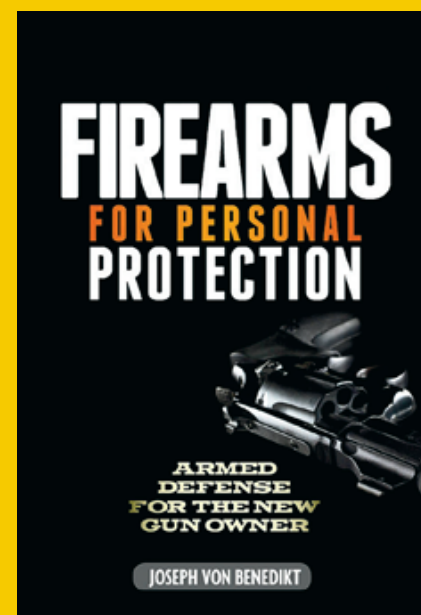
GEAR In addition to the usual, one spare magazine and a good pair of shoes with support. NRA bullseye target.

DRILL There are three firing points with the two outer positions being five yards from the center; target is 10 yards from the center position. On a start signal, the shooter has 30 seconds to fire the first round from the holster, move to one of the outer positions, plant and fire one round. Keeping the gun

pointed downrange, the shooter then moves back to the center position, plants and fires one round before moving on to the other outer position. All that before time runs out.

SCORING A clean run is all 11 rounds in the black. A nine-ring hit is minus one point, and eight ring minus two and so on.

GOAL As Pannone says, you can't fling rounds in order to get an accurate hit. You have to plant, assume a proper body position, align the sights and control the trigger. Hitting a black bullseye at 10 yards is a challenge just standing still, moving rapidly makes it much more difficult.



Firearms For Personal Protection

By Joseph von Benedikt
softcover, \$23
GUNDIGESTSTORE.COM

Seems like only yesterday that founding *Handguns* editor Jerry Lee and I hired a young man from the wilds of Utah to work on this and a couple other Intermedia Outdoors magazines. Joseph von Benedikt proved to be a capable writer and editor and in time ascended to the editor's position at sister publication *Shooting Times*. Now he's moved into the world of freelance writing and can count among his accomplishments his first book.

In its 222 pages, complete with black-and-white photography, von Benedikt tackles the big subject of defensive arms: handguns, rifles and shotguns. He also brings a little different take to the topic due to his rural roots. He doesn't make the assumption that some books do in assuming that personal defense applies only to those living in cities and towns.

The book covers all the topics you expect: gun selection, caliber choices, shooting basics, maintenance. Von Benedikt also chose to devote specific chapters to concealed carry versus nightstand handguns, lights and lasers, gun customization—plus the tricky subjects of how to avoid conflict and what to do if you aren't able to avoid conflict and wind up shooting an attacker.

This is a beginner's book. Experienced shooters aren't going to find a whole lot they haven't already read or learned. But as a primer for new folks, it delivers the goods.—JSR

I CARRY.

I work hard, I train hard.
I've won more than 40 major
championships. And was
named the first female
grand master in my sport.

But there's more to my life
than the range. And more
to defend than my title.



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OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB SHELL

JAPAN'S NAMBU

THE JAPANESE MILITARY MOVED INTO

the 20th century in 1904 by introducing an 8mm Nambu semiauto pistol called the 04 that replaced the 9mm Type 26 double-action revolver, which was a low-powered, rimmed 9mm.

There were a total of four types of Nambu pistols: A; B, which was the 7mm Baby Nambu; the Type 14 and the 94. The Type 14 made its debut in 1925. Designed by Gen. Kijiro Nambu, the designation of this 8mm Nambu comes from the fact that it was introduced in the 14th year of the Taisho Emperor.

The Type 14 is a recoil-operated, locked-breech pistol. The Type 14's shape was partly inspired by the Luger, and the action was partially derived from the Broomhandle, but it had features that allowed the Japanese to cut production costs.

The Type 14 was an improvement over the 04, although it was still complicated and somewhat unreliable—especially during bad weather. The magazine holds eight rounds and is hard to remove, and the safety requires two hands to operate—both bad features in a

combat handgun.

During the campaign in China and other cold places, they found out that the trigger guard was too small for use with gloves, so an oversize model was introduced to remedy that situation.

The Nambu cartridge itself is a bottleneck 8x22 round, is underpowered and wasn't highly regarded by many in the Japanese military. But, like some other military powers, the Japanese considered the handgun

as a badge as opposed to a serious combat weapon. It fired a full-metal-jacket roundnose, and due to its small size and FMJ construction, it was not much of a stopper. The 102-grain military bullet was launched at 960 fps, generating 200 ft.-lbs. of energy—slightly more powerful than the .32 Auto.

The 8mm Nambu round was in service for more than 40 years from the Sino-Japanese war through World War II.

▲ The Type 14 Nambu pistol was developed in 1925 and chambered the 8mm Nambu round, which was slightly more powerful than the .32 Auto. The pistol itself was complicated and somewhat unreliable.



PLUG CAPTURE TOOL



Like a lot of you, I own more than one 1911. Of these, only one has a full-length guide rod, and for that reason I've never liked the pistol very much because it's kind of a pain to disassemble. More than once I've had to break out a flashlight and hunt for the plug after it flew across the room. A while back, though, the folks at Present Arms (PRESENTARMSINC.COM) sent me their Plug Capture Tool, and I'd forgotten about it until a recent gun-cleaning binge. Faced with the full-length guide rod gun, I dug out the tool and discovered once again how simple the best ideas often are. The PCT has the bushing cutout oriented in such a way that when you rotate the bushing, the plug and spring are held in place—allowing you to ease them out. Super easy. The tool has finger grooves for ergonomics, and there are two cutouts to accommodate different bushing designs. And it's polymer, so it won't mar metal finishes. The PCT is only \$10, shipping included.—JSR

Industry Intel Report

NSSF'S Rimfire Challenge drew 170 competitors to its world championship in Fort Smith, Arkansas, last fall. The match surpassed the previous year's attendance by nearly 60 percent—evidence that this action-oriented .22 match is gaining traction. "Entire families traveled from all across the country to be here," said NSSF's Zach Snow. "It's exactly this kind of supportive and family-friendly atmosphere that makes the Rimfire Challenge what it is: fun for everyone."

The National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers handed out its Manufacturer of the Year awards last October. Companies are judged by wholesalers on four criteria: distribution policy; marketing, sales and promotion; logistics and operations; and NASGW and industry support. The envelope please....

Firearms: **RUGER**

Ammunition: **HORNADY**

Optics: **LEUPOLD**

Accessories: **BIRCHWOOD CASEY**

The organization also recognized companies with its Excellence in Manufacturing awards: **BURRIS** (optics), **CRIMSON TRACE** (accessory), **WINCHESTER** (ammo) and **GLOCK** (firearms).

Last July the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals held that doctors do not have a right to ask patients whether they keep guns at home. The ruling came in a lawsuit brought by the American Academy of Pediatrics and American College of Physicians—among others—challenging an **NRA**-backed Florida law that blocked doctors from asking such questions. And in a recent survey commissioned by **NSSF**, more than 80 percent of those polled said the federal Centers for Disease Control should not spend money studying gun violence but should instead concentrate on viruses and disease. Seventy-one percent said gun violence shouldn't be considered a public health issue in the manner of viruses and diseases.

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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2015 HANDGUNS 13

BULLSEYE MAGIC

AN ALL-AROUND, ALL-TIME GREAT POWDER FOR HANDLOADERS.

LOADING UP YOUR CARRY GUN WITH high-tech defensive ammo that costs nearly a dollar a shot is painful. But at least your \$50 investment lasts you a year, until the rounds get too shopworn to be reassuring and you restock. But practicing with it? That is a wallet-melting exercise, which explains why a lot of shooters take up reloading.

But for those who are just getting started, there are a lot of decisions to make. At last count, there was something like 200 powders to choose from. Having the “best” powder for each caliber you load can lead to a storage cabinet full of various powder containers—and frustration when your particular powder happens to be out of stock.

We all know there is one ring to rule them all, but is there one powder to load them all? Yes—if you are looking for efficiency and not max performance.

Bullseye was first produced by Laflin & Rand in 1898 and has been in continuous production ever since. It is not the fastest-burning powder—a dozen powders have passed it—but the differences are not great. It has a reputation as a powder that burns a bit dirty, but I’ve chalked that up to its use as an efficient powder mostly teamed with lead bullets for target shooting. Use a pinch of anything under a lead bullet and you’ll get smoke and powder residue, regardless of the powder you select.

I have to admit I didn’t use it much when I first took up reloading. Once I began loading in volume, I was loading for IPSC and bowling pins, and my go-to powders were WW-231 and AA 452. Only when I began loading 9mm for the second time did I try Bullseye on the recommendation

SELECTED BULLSEYE LOADS			
Bullet	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Charge Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)
9MM			
Lead roundnose	125	4.2	1,085
Berry’s plated	124	4.2	1,036
Rainier plated	147	3.2	847
Durocast	150	3.2	886
.38 SUPER			
Lead roundnose	125	4.2	1,031
Berry’s plated RN	124	4.2	1,019
Rainier plated RN	147	3.4	839
.38 SPECIAL			
West Coast plated RN	125	4.4	920
Berry plated FP	125	4.5	979
Rainier plated	147	4.2	851
Oregon Trails LRN	158	3.0	747
.357 MAGNUM			
Oregon Trails LRN	158	4.6	919
Rainier Plated RN	158	4.6	898
.40 S&W			
Oregon Trail LSWC*	170	5.1	943
10MM			
Berry’s plated FP	155	5.0	921
Hornady XTP	200	5.0	939
.41 MAGNUM			
Oregon Trails LSWC	210	5.4	809
.44 MAGNUM			
Oregon Trails LTC	180	6.7	970
.45 ACP			
Oregon Trails LSWC	185	5.6	893
Lead roundnose	230	4.2	719
.45 COLT			
Oregon Trails LRN	230	5.4	727

Notes: (*Do not use in Glock.) Velocities are averages of 10 rounds recorded on a PACT Mk IV chronograph 15 feet from the muzzle. Average of ten rounds. Where the powder charge is not the all-purpose 4.2 grains, it was adjusted for a particular firearm, to improve accuracy, make power factor or increase efficiency for cleaner results. LRN, lead roundnose; LSWC, lead semi-wadcutter; LTWC, lead truncated cone; RN, roundnose

of our gun club vice president. What I found in short order was that 4.2 grains of Bullseye under a 125-grain lead roundnose made Minor for USPSA competition. And out of any reasonably accurate pistol, it stayed in the A zone of a USPSA target out to 50 yards. As a bonus, I also discovered that 4.2 grains of Bullseye under any 115- to 125-grain 9mm

WARNING: The loads shown here are safe only in the guns for which they were developed. Neither the author nor Intermedia Outdoors assumes any liability for accidents or injury resulting from the use or misuse of these data. Shooting reloads may void any warranty on your firearm.

bullet worked in all my 9mm and .38 Super handguns. None failed to cycle, and none were over-pressure. So I could practice with buckets of 125-grain lead roundnoses or



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HANDGUNS | AMMO SHELF

← 150-grain lead flatpoints in 9mm and .38 Super and then for competition swap them for 115-grain jacketed roundnoses or plated bullets and be all set. And the same load under a

124-grain jacketed hollowpoint even worked in the nine-pin event for local bowling pin shooting.

Since I had just scored 50,000 hard-cast 150-grain flatpoint bullets from Durocast and produced a five-gallon bucket of my own hard-cast 125-grain lead roundnose bullets, I was ready to practice.

Economical? At 4.2 grains per shot, I could get more than 1,600 loaded rounds out of a pound of powder. Back then, powder was \$10 a pound when it was expensive, so each shot was costing me half a penny in powder. Half a penny in powder, a couple of cents for the primer, a couple of

cents for the lead, and free brass; in 1992 I calculated that I was shooting 9mm/.38 Super reloads in practice for about \$50 per 1,000 rounds. Looking at current ammo prices, I practically weep.

That calculation led me to investigate Bullseye for other cartridges, and doggone if 4.2 didn't work for a whole lot more of them.

The .38 Special, using a 125-grain bullet, lead or jacketed, just stays in its moderate pressure zone with 4.2 grains of Bullseye. If you up the bullet weight to the normal 158 grains, you edge into +P territory. That's fine if you want to duplicate defensive loads, but for practice a lead 125-grain bullet and 4.2 grains of Bullseye will serve you well. It probably won't make Minor for IDPA, but in ICORE matches no one will care about that.



◀ Bullseye has been around for a long time, as evidenced by this old-style, eight-pound keg, which was good for more than 13,000 rounds of 9mm practice ammo. It works great for the 9mm and many other calibers.



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For the .357 Magnum, you can simply jump to the cartridge-standard 158-grain lead bullet, stuff it in the case over 4.2 grains of Bullseye, and be done. It won't give you full-house magnum velocities, but it will be faster than the .38 Special and will be an accurate load.

What about 10mm or 40 S&W? You bet. With a 180-grain lead bullet, 4.2 grains of Bullseye cycled all of my metric-caliber pistols except for Glocks. The .40 load had a bit more speed, simply due to the smaller combustion chamber of the shorter case. If I wanted really soft practice ammo in the .40, then I'd load Bullseye over 155-grain bullets and be shooting really soft loads—although they're not suitable for Glocks.

And the .45 ACP? I'm glad you asked. Choose a 185- or 200-grain lead semi-wadcutter and put it over

4.2 grains of Bullseye for a soft-shooting combo. Replace either of them with a lead 230-grain round-nose and you have a load that comes usefully close to factory hardball in recoil.

Bigger Charges

You can, if you wish, increase your powder charge in the bigger cartridges to gain more speed. If you want soft practice ammo, Bullseye lets you do both.

The .41 Magnum works reasonably well with Bullseye, but it will be dirty. This round will benefit from a bump up in powder charge; I boost the charge to more than five grains of Bullseye (see accompanying chart). And the .44 Special benefits from a jump as well. The Alliant guide lists loads for the Special ranging from 5.2 to 5.9 grains

of Bullseye. But that isn't going to break the bank. Even at six grains per shot, you get more than 1,100 loaded rounds per pound of powder.

No, I'm not saying Bullseye is the perfect powder or that the 4.2 grains is the only, or the best, charge weight. I've used less of it, throttling back to 3.8 and even 3.7 grains in 9mm to make for really soft-shooting ammo, and I've upped it in .45 Colt to get a cleaner-burning load.

There are powders that let you get more velocity in any given cartridge/bullet weight combo. There are powders that burn cleaner. However, there's a reason Bullseye has been in continuous production for close to a century and a quarter. If it didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent it. So if you don't have a can of Bullseye on hand, just in case, why not?

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MUG SHOTS

HERE'S HOW TO AVOID BECOMING AN EASY TARGET.

AN UNFORTUNATE FACT OF LIFE THESE

days is that there are plenty of people whose primary intent is to get some or all of your money. Many of them will use force, intimidation or deception to do so. All work to get close to you.

Here's one example. A mugger appears as a panhandler and asks for a nominal amount of money ranging from 25 cents to a dollar. As you comply, the mugger ups the request to "Gimme it all." A variation of this is making the initial request for money very loudly and in a menacing manner. If you comply by offering a small sum, he will then ask for all of it.

Deceptions are used to distract you so the mugger can move in close, where he'll then use some form of force. You might be asked for some sort of information, such as the time or directions, and as you answer, you are sucker punched and he takes what he can find in your pockets. These scenarios have some things in common: The person wants to get close, he wants to see if you are fearful, and there is little or no time for you to make a defensive response.

I've experienced all of these scenarios—most recently the loud, threatening approach. At about 11 a.m. on a Saturday, I had stopped at my neighborhood gas station/mini-mart to fill up. All the gas pump islands were vacant. I had finished, put the gas cap back on, and as I was starting around the back of my vehicle heading to the driver's door, I noticed a man who looked to be in his mid-30s coming from the general direction of the empty office parking lot next to the gas station.

He was large, stockily built, di-



▲ Muggers may use any number of ploys to get you to drop your guard. Their number one goal is to get you close enough to launch an attack. Don't fall for it.

sheveled and wearing a ratty, filthy old GI field jacket. At the time, I thought he was going to the mini-mart, but he came right up to me and began mumbling and waving his arms

The only word I understood was "money." At this point, he had gotten almost to within arm's length of me. I loudly yelled, "Get back!" But he did not stop.

I yelled it again as I raised my hand, palm out, in a "stop" motion. Now he stopped and stared at me for a second or two; then he went back the way he had come. I watched him until he was out of my sight. I was armed and had put my hand on the S&W M42 J-frame revolver in my pocket when he first approached me, but I didn't see the need to go any further. The encounter was uneventful.

An unanswered question: Was he just a nut case or was he sizing

me up to see if there was any fear or apprehension on my part due to his mumbling and arm waving? It's something you have to let play out, but you need to be ready to react more strongly—just in case.

A possible distraction-mugging attempt happened to me about seven years ago. My wife and I went to a late dinner at an upscale center city restaurant with an old friend and his wife. We hadn't seen each other in years, so we lingered over dinner and didn't leave the restaurant until well after 10 p.m.

We were parked a few blocks away and were walking back to our vehicles. Given the hour and the somewhat-deserted streets, it was not really a good time to walk in a large city. But the weather was nice, so our wives wanted to walk.

We moved two by two, with the ladies in the rear. As we walked along, a casually dressed young man

in his 20s with shoulder-length hair and slender build was coming at us from the opposite direction. As he neared us, he started to pass us on the building side of the sidewalk but abruptly stopped short, almost parallel to my friend and me, and asked, “Do you have the time?”

My friend reflexively started to look at his wristwatch, and I just as reflexively told the man to “move on.” He stared at us for a moment and then walked on by.

At this point, my friend laughed and said he had been living in “Mayberry” too long. A streetwise city boy, he was long retired and living in a small, upper Midwestern community where everybody knows everybody and most all greet each other pleasantly. We both watched as the man rounded the next corner. In the area we were in, strangers don’t stop other strangers late at night unless they have a real emergency.

My take on this was the man saw two “mature,” well-dressed couples in an area of affluent restaurants walking on a deserted street. His first move was sizing us up by asking his question to gauge our responses to being stopped. Also, with him positioned to get past my friend and me, he had a clear path to our wives and their handbags. He was set up to snatch a purse or two and get away successfully.

The street was clear, and while I won’t speak for my friend, the would-be purse snatcher didn’t have to worry about me catching him. I left hard running behind a few birthdays ago. For that matter, empty-hand fighting is not on my to-do list, either. But once again, I had my hand on the J frame in my pocket—just in case!

The best defense is not engaging in any way whatsoever. Ignore him. Pick up your pace and never respond to him in any manner.

Don’t even make eye contact. This can be difficult, of course, because it can be seen as rude if not downright offensive.

If you have reacted by telling him to back off or go away, the mugger then may play on your values. He may come back at you by attempting to shake your hand, while saying, “No offense meant,” “Take it easy” or “No hard feelings.” Perhaps even accompanied by a nice big smile. If you ignore this, you might get “What’s the matter? You too good to talk to someone like me?” If the person is a different race than you, he might play the race card.

Believe me, these ploys do work. But it’s better to be seen as a socially inept boor—albeit a socially inept boor who still has his wallet.

Discretion Is Best

To me, none of these examples justifies displaying a defensive handgun. No threats were made, nor was there any physical contact, but my having a handgun quickly accessible greatly contributed to my demeanor and how I reacted.

Also, we’re looking at these examples in hindsight. They could have easily gone the other way; such encounters are as varied as the individuals involved in them. We cannot know intent until it is demonstrated.

Probably the most well-known practitioner of successful deception was Theodore “Ted” Bundy, an attractive young man and a mass murderer, who assaulted and killed more than 20 young women. In his deception, Bundy faked injury to his arm by wearing a cast or carrying the arm in a sling and asked young women for help putting something in or on the top of his vehicle. He would then take them captive and eventually kill them.

You know, your mother wasn’t wrong when she told you not to talk to strangers.





< RUGER LCR 9MM

The Ruger LCR is now available in 9mm Luger, its cylinder machined to accept moon clips (three ship with the gun). Barrel length is under two inches, and the LCR's double-action-only trigger operates via a unique cam system that makes the pull seem lighter than it actually is. Gun weight is a mere 17.2 ounces, courtesy of the polymer fire-control housing and also a fluted stainless steel cylinder.

{ \$599, RUGER.COM }

> BLACKHAWKS FOR XD-S

The popular Springfield 3.3-inch XD-S pistol now has not one but two new holster options from Blackhawk: CQC Serpa and standard. The Serpa is a retention design in which the trigger finger depresses a latch on the draw, releasing the pistol. The standard version has a passive retention screw, and both models have a speed-cut design for easy clearing. Each comes with both belt loop and paddle attachments. Rightie and leftie versions available in both styles.

{ \$50, CQC Serpa; \$22, standard; BLACKHAWK.COM }



> WILSON COMBAT ELITE TACTICAL

Wilson Combat's new 1911 Elite Tactical magazine is an eight-rounder that features an aircraft-grade ETM stainless tube and MAX flatwire spring for ease of loading and maximum life. The MAX spring is designed to be corrosion-resistant for reduced spring fatigue and extremely reliable feeding and operation. The magazine features a removable base pad for ease of maintenance and is backed by Wilson's no-risk service policy.

{ \$46, WILSONCOMBAT.COM }



> LASERLYTE TGL KIT FOR DIAMONDBACK

The TGL is a modular system that allows you to fit one laser to two different pistols—in this case either the Diamondback DB380 or the DB9. The module fits seamlessly onto the pistol's dust cover and trigger guard, and because the kit comes with two of these modules, you can swap lasers simply by turning out a single screw. And you don't have to remove the laser to replace the 392 batteries. Features constant on and pulse modes, and it automatically shuts off in six minutes.

{ \$105, LASERLYTE.COM }

V WARHORSE LEATHER CLEANER

An all-natural glycerin-based soap and cleaner, Warhorse is designed not only to clean leather holsters and belts but also to rehab them and restore flexibility. I used it on an old U.S. Army flap holster and found it to work well, but note that it may darken the leather.

{ \$12 (12 oz.), WARHORSE SOLUTIONS.COM }



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[For every action there is
an equal and opposite reaction.]



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LISTEN UP!

HEARING PROTECTION ISN'T OPTIONAL. HERE'S A LOOK AT YOUR CHOICES.

HEARING PROTECTION—OR THE LACK

thereof—is what some people like to call a self-correcting problem. Forget to put it on when you go to the range and you'll quickly realize your mistake—and irreparably damage your hearing just as quickly.

Hearing protection can be divided into two basic categories: plugs and muffs. Earmuffs just by their nature do a better job of blocking sound because they completely enclose the ear. Plain muffs are a great choice when shooting inside, or outdoors when the weather is cool or cold, and I wore this style for a couple of decades. They worked just fine.

However, when I got heavily into competition shooting, most of which happens during the summer months, I found that having plastic-coated foam pads around my ears while shooting in 90-degree heat sucks. The sweat would drip from my head. In addition, muffs are bulkier than plugs and became just one more piece of gear to try to fit in my range bag.

Getting a good fit around your ears with muffs while wearing a baseball cap is no big deal, but if you want to wear any other kind of hat under your muffs, it is probably going to get folded up in some way.

And then there is the issue of sympathetic fit with your eye protection. The temples of your protective eyeglasses go over your ears, right where muffs press tight against your head. If the temples are flat, you won't have a problem, but if they come into your head at an angle or have even a minor S curve, you may find they are very uncomfortable to wear with muffs.

Years ago I had a pair of shooting glasses I really liked, but after



▲ Today's shooters have great hearing protection options: standard and electronic muffs, roll-up foam plugs and high-tech earplugs. All do a decent job, and the choice boils down to personal preference and shooting activity.

just an hour or two of wearing them under my muffs, it felt like someone had been digging their thumbnails into my skull behind my ears. If you have a set of glasses or muffs you really like and are looking for a new pair of the other, try them on together at the store to make sure the combo won't cause you pain.

Even with all these complaints about muffs—and I admit they are rather minor complaints—they have seen a resurgence in popularity in the last decade or so because of technology. Electronic hearing protectors are common now, and just about everyone I see at matches these days using muffs is wearing them.

Electronic muffs have microphones that pick up and, in most cases, amplify the sound around you. You can converse with people in a normal conversational tone, and yet the sound cuts off when loud

noises like gunshots erupt.

Electronic muffs have been on the market long enough now that there is a wide selection of brands and models. The most common brand I see at matches is Impact Sport from Howard Leight, probably because they are very low profile, sticking out from the wearer's ears barely more than an inch. They also conveniently fold up into a ball for transport and storage and are available online for under \$50.

While writing this article, I attended the Crimson Trace Midnight 3 Gun Invitational, and during the media-only part of the week, I found myself standing in a shooting bay filled with gun writers and manufacturers' reps. Weather was about 60 degrees; not hot, but not cold. I did a count, and of the 24 people there, 14 were using earplugs and 10 were wearing muffs. Of the muffs, nine of the 10 were electronic, and

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← six of those were Howard Leight Impact Sport models.

For actual comfort and noise reduction, foam earplugs are my favorite. I can wear them all day and not be bothered by the way they feel in my ears, and they reduce decibels nearly as much as muffs. But foam plugs are not perfect. They can be frustrating to get into your ears; you have to roll them up between your fingertips and then stuff them into your ear canal before they expand. If you're shooting with your kids, you usually can't get foam plugs small enough to fit into their ears.

And foam plugs have a limited life span. The foam can be squeezed only so many times before losing consistency and you have to throw them away. At least they're inexpensive. I keep a Ziploc bag filled with different sets of earplugs in my range bag.

Rubber earplugs have been around for decades, and they reduce sound nearly as well as foam plugs. They're also easier to insert and have a much greater life span. For the last few years I have been using SureFire Sonic Defenders, which are best described as product-improved rubber earplugs—although

their construction is medical-grade polymer and not rubber.

SureFire offers several different models of Sonic Defenders and sells them in several different sizes because not everyone has the same size ear canals. Also, they have an exterior framework designed to help

With filter caps closed over the valves, Surefire Sonic Defenders offer 24dB noise reduction.

them stay in your ear. With filter caps closed over the valves, they offer 24dB noise reduction. In short, they allow you to hear normal conversation but protect your hearing from the sound of gunshots. I prefer them to plain military-type rubber earplugs just because of their looks, and they're what I wear 95 percent of the time. Most versions sell for under \$15.

When it comes to noise reduction, rubber earplugs (plain or fancy like the SureFires) don't provide as much protection as muffs or foam plugs. They are more than enough when shooting outside, but I have found that indoors, shooting anything loud-

er than a handgun, rubber plugs aren't quiet enough for comfort.

In fact, I know many people who double up and wear both plugs and muffs when shooting rifles or very loud compensated pistols indoors.

I've come to the realization that how well you take care of your

hearing has a lot to do with how you were introduced to shooting—and when. My former father-in-law was a doctor in the Air Force in Korea just after hostilities ended there, and when he practiced with his 1911, his "earplugs" were .45 ACP rounds stuck into his ears. He's now in his 80s and has been suffering with hearing loss for quite some time.

How much of it is due to his lack of proper hearing protection we'll never know, but loaded cartridges have never done a good job as earplugs. He's never smoked, but a lot of the smokers of his era stuffed cigarette butts in their ears for improvised protection. I suppose that works better than nothing, but whatever protection they provide would be minimal.

Guys also tend to be stupid, egotistical and prideful. I've gotten looks from people in hunting camp when I've put in earplugs prior to heading out hog hunting, but I didn't care. Heck, when I was 27 I wore earplugs to a Ted Nugent concert that turned out to be the loudest concert in Michigan history, resulting in a new noise ordinance being enacted. And even though they were protected, my ears still rang for three days afterward. But after 19 gunfire-filled years, I still have nearly perfect hearing, and I plan to keep it that way. You should, too. 🔴



🔴 Electronic muffs, such as Howard Leight's Impact Sport models, allow you to hear normal conversation with ease but automatically reduce harmful noises such as gunshots to safe levels.

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TRAINING OR TRENDY?

WHY NOT EVERYTHING YOU SEE OR READ IS WORTH LISTENING TO.

I OFTEN SCRATCH MY HEAD AT THE

current state of combative firearms training in the United States. In times past, fixed-location schools and traveling instructors were former military or law enforcement professionals or successful competitive shooters who wanted to share hard-earned experience to help good guys and gals prevail in armed conflict. Sure, they wanted to make some money doing it, but for most it was love of the craft that drove them.

There were instructors who focused on competition and stated that up front, which was much appreciated because you knew there was nothing in the lesson plan about fighting. You were expected to adapt what was taught, and we have known since the days of the Spartans that it is the combatant who adapts the quickest to a rapidly evolving situation who will win the fight. After all, a fight (regardless of whether it is fist, knife or gun) is a series of rapid decisions based on what an opponent does.

Today, training seems to come from the Internet more than any place else. And while I would like to say this phenomenon does not affect the law enforcement community, my experience says otherwise. I am continually grilled by young law enforcement officers who tell me what I am teaching does not jibe with what they see on the Internet: “You teach ‘old school.’ I was watching a video on YouTube, and XXX says you should do this.”

When I check out the source of this new information, I am met with an individual covered with tattoos (nothing wrong with tattoos, folks,



▲ Beware of buzzwords and complicated technique. Simple techniques, explained simply, are what will carry the day in a defensive encounter.

just reporting what I see), wearing a beard and wraparound sunglasses, dressed in what I would call “contractor casual” clothing, spouting some diatribe that is based on nothing.

Sex Sells

Sometimes it’s a young woman in tight short-shorts and a low-cut top or a bikini shooting a gun while the camera pans up and down her body. Hey, I like girls as much as the next guy, but if this is where you are getting your personal security information, you are being shortchanged.

It seems the firearms training industry is driven more by celebrity than it is by substance. “Old school” you say? How about referring to them as techniques that have been proven in conflict over many years,

things that are known to work. They just may not look flashy.

I am not alone in this observation. Recently, I was on the Modern Service Weapon website, a site I feel offers substantive information about combative firearms, and read an article by Hilton Yam, a current federal agent with substantial real-world experience. He was reviewing a training course he had recently attended, one taught by a well-known instructor with a special operations background.

Hilton wrote, “Mike is a consummate professional, and you will not be shown flashy YouTube ninja techniques in any of his classes, nor will you be bombarded with catchy buzz phrases or nonsensical jargon just so you feel like you’re doing something.”

Bingo! He captured exactly what I think is much of what's wrong with today's training. I am a believer in being verbally and visually descriptive in my classes, to explain things in such a way so the students can get a picture in their heads of what is required. I then demonstrate all of my techniques so the students will gain confidence that they, too, can do it.

Humans learn a new skill best if it is explained to them, demonstrated and then practiced under the watchful eye of a skilled instructor. The more confusing the skill is, the harder it is to learn, master and anchor in one's skills set, and while fancy jargon might sound cool, it makes the task of skill building all the more difficult.

For a number of years, I have used the phrase "physiological efficiency" when I talk about performing physical skills, but the phrase is not mine. I took it from a well-known track and field coach. I went to college on a track scholarship as a long jumper, and while attending a symposium on motivation taught by this coach, I asked him about one of his long jumpers, who had had success using an in-flight technique that was different from what others used.

Quickly, without trying to bore you, most jumpers at that time "ran" in the air, what is called a "hitch kick" technique. His jumper used a "hang," where he arched his back and waited until right before he landed to jack-knife his legs forward, gaining as much distance as possible.

When I asked the coach about it, he said: "Well, young man, it's about physiological efficiency. Which technique do you think requires the most practice?" I said the hitch kick. He agreed and went on to say that while both techniques work, his jumper could spend less time working on leg extension and focus

on other, more complicated, aspects of the jump. "By being simple, it is easier to learn, master and anchor into one's skills, thus it is more physiologically efficient," he said.

I realized early that physiological efficiency would also work when trying to teach someone how to shoot. By making the skills simple, they would be easier to learn, master and anchor so they could be called upon and used without conscious thought.

I have continued to use the term physiological efficiency, but I have seen others start to use terms such as "kinesiology smoothness," "biomechanical efficiency," "motion efficiency" and similar terms—and by their terminology and their explanations, they actually complicate the theory rather than simplify it. Making things simple and easy to do is not "dumbing down" training; it's making it easier to do when crisis, pandemonium and fear of injury or death will rob you of skill.

Ten-Dollar Words

But cool-sounding jargon and flashy technique are what sells these days—even though both make the process of preparing to fight more difficult.

One phrase I heard an instructor on YouTube use was "non-diagnostic linear stoppage manipulation." What was he talking about? The simple "tap-rack" technique of clearing a malfunction, the action to undertake anytime the pistol fails to fire. "Tap-rack" is verbally and visually descriptive of what is required, and nothing is served by making it more confusing.

Today's new shooters have the right to obtain their information any way they choose, and if cool sounding/looking stuff is their choice, then so be it. I just hate to see a subject such as one's personal security become more of a fashion trend than the serious topic it should be.

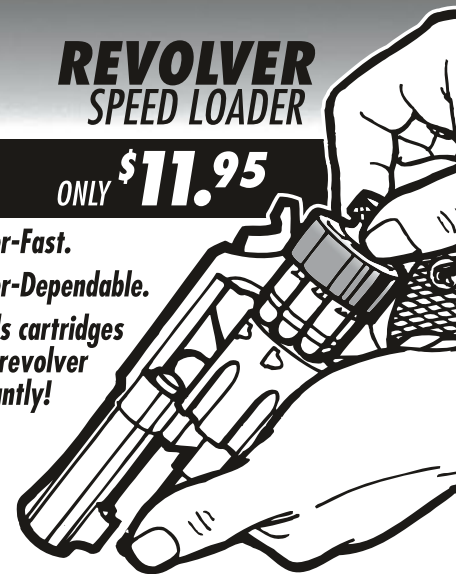
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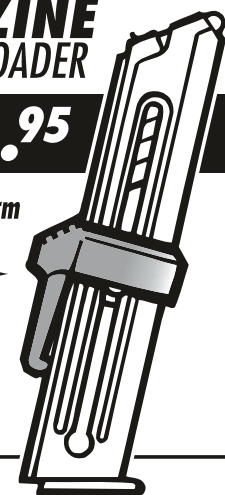
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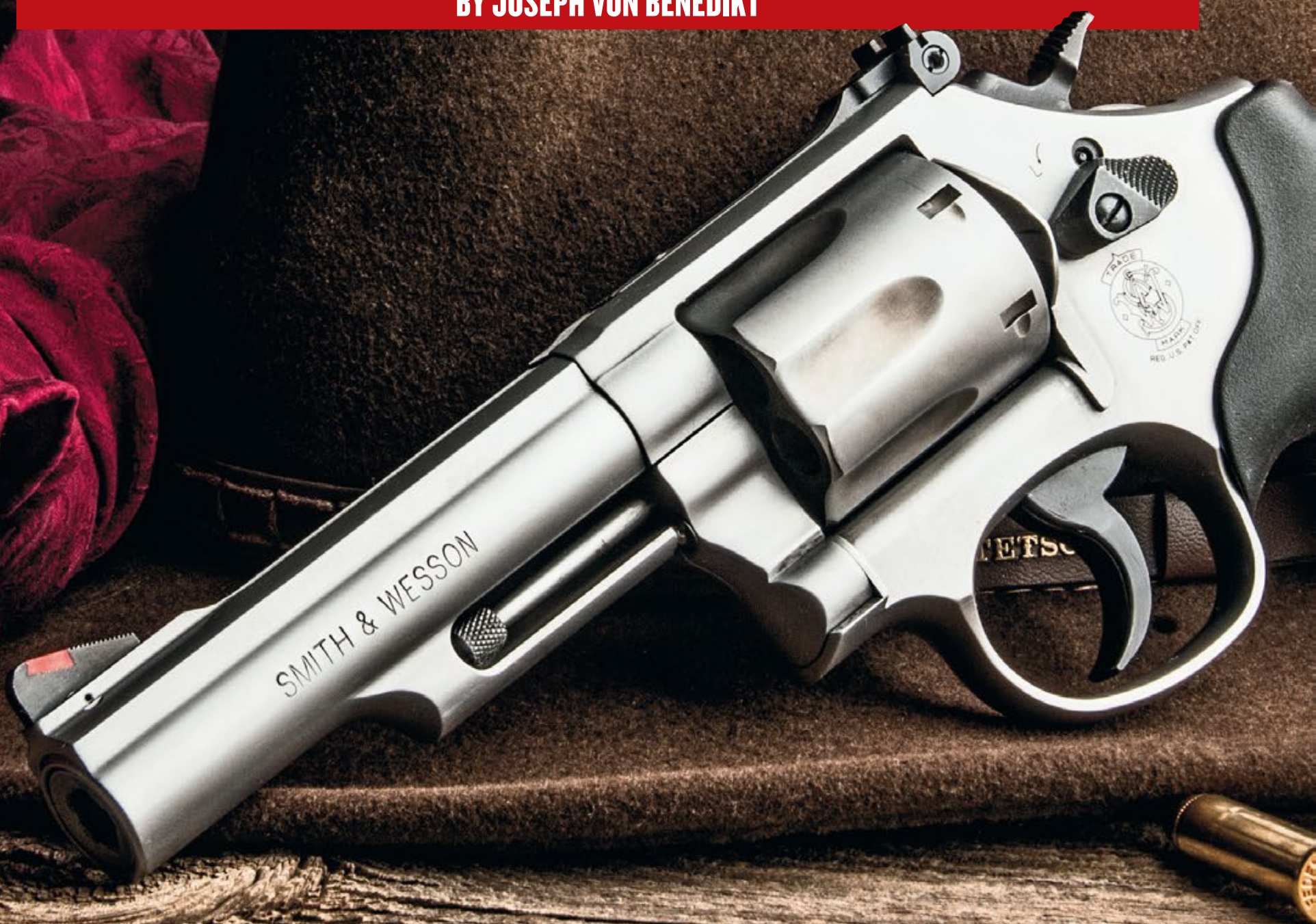


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RETURN OF THE KING

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT





SMITH & WESSON BRINGS BACK ITS MOST FAMOUS .357: THE COM- BAT MAGNUM.

In his 1977 book *History of Smith & Wesson*—considered by many to be the definitive work on the company—Roy Jinks wrote that without doubt the K-frame line of revolvers is the company's most important development for two reasons: Some of S&W's most famous handguns are within the K-frame line and—a fact I was unacquainted with—"...its production exceeds the combined quantities of all the other handguns produced by Smith & Wesson."

My revised copy of Jinks's book was printed in 1996, and at that time both statements were probably still true—and perhaps they are yet. The introduction of the company's semiauto M&P line and the popularity of semiautos in general has made serious inroads on revolver production numbers, but that doesn't change the fact that, in the world of legendary revolvers, those built on the K frame rank high.

Originally designed in 1899 for the .38 Special, the K frame was drafted into magnum duty by post-World War II Smith & Wesson President Carl Hellstrom after a lengthy conversation with sixgun artist and lawman Bill Jordan at the National Matches at Camp Perry. The topic was designing the ultimate law enforcement sidearm, and the result was the Combat Magnum. Chambered for the newish .357 Magnum cartridge, it sported a shrouded barrel and adjustable sights. The first serial-numbered gun was presented to Jordan in 1955.

However, time would prove that the K-frame Combat Magnum had an Achilles' heel. Over a period of time, sustained shooting of heavy magnum loads could fatigue the frame of the revolver just below the rear of the barrel, where machining for the ejector rod weakened the portion of the frame enclosing the threaded barrel. Frames would occasionally crack, so shooters learned to control the diet of their beloved revolver, feeding it mostly .38 Specials when practicing and reserving the heavy .357 Magnum loads for duty carry or personal protection use.

Amid anguished cries from revolver lovers, Smith & Wesson discontinued building the svelte K-frame .357 Magnums in 2005. Two models had existed: the blued or nickel-plated carbon-steel Combat Magnum (to which the designation "Model 19" was added in 1957) and the stainless steel Model 66. Built with barrels varying from 2.5 to six inches in length, the former was in production from 1955 until 1999, the latter from 1971 to 2005.

This brings us to the recent introduction of a new Model 66 Combat Magnum. Like previous Model 66 Combat Magnums in configuration, the new revolvers have one key difference. As Smith & Wesson's Paul Pluff pointed out when he first showed me the new revolver, the machining around the barrel is slightly different, leaving the frame more robust in critical high-stress areas, eliminating the potential for cracked frames.

The new Model 66 has a 4.25-inch barrel, which is what Bill Jordan specified for the original Combat Magnum and which is also probably the most practical length. The bore is five-groove rifled with a 1:18.75 right-hand twist. It has a classic ramped front sight with an orange insert for increased visibility pinned atop the shrouded barrel. Both the top of the barrel and the rear sight base are serrated to reduce glare. The rear sight is fit beautifully tight, without any discernible play. →

RETURN OF THE KING

← Finished in a nice non-glare satin, “Smith & Wesson” runs down the left side of the barrel, “-357 Magnum-” over “COMBAT MAGNUM” down the right. The classic S&W trademark logo is engraved just below the cylinder latch, and the model designation “66-8” is rollmarked on the frame inside the crane, along with the serial number.

Minimal cylinder play exists when the revolver is at full cock, indicating a nicely machined cylinder stop and well-tuned action. The

cylinder gap between the rear of the barrel and the face of the cylinder is nice and tight, too. Fluted for appearance and to reduce weight, the cylinder shows minimal marking from the cylinder stop, further indicating clean action timing.

Like the previous generation of Model 66s, the new revolver has a smooth trigger face (Model 19 triggers were for the most part serrated). While not of precision-tuned custom quality, the double-action pull rolls over cleanly and smoothly, stacking ever so slightly just before the hammer falls.

My Lyman Digital Trigger gauge maxes out at 12 pounds, and the double-action pull is more than that. However, I did get good measurements on the single-action pull, which is characteristically clean and crisp, breaking at four pounds, 11 ounces with about five ounces of variation over a series of five pulls.

Heavily knurled, the hammer is a semi-combat type—fairly low profile to minimize snagging but substantial enough to enable a shooter to flick it back easily should the precision of the single-action

function be desired. Like the sights, trigger and cylinder latch, it is finished in a matte black that contrasts nicely with the glass-bead satin of the stainless frame and barrel.

A locking mechanism is accessible via a tiny keyhole just above the cylinder latch, enabling the owner to render the handgun inoperable if desired. It’s the one element I don’t like about the new Model 66 Combat Magnum. Sporty-looking synthetic grips feel even better than they look. Slightly tacky and offering just a bit of texture, they are emblazoned with Smith & Wesson’s intertwined S&W logo.

Like every Model 19 and 66 that rolled off the production line, the new Model 66 feels great in the hand, balances superbly and points like an extension of your body. At 36.6 ounces it’s light enough to carry comfortably day after day in a duty-type holster yet heavy enough to dampen the recoil of full-bore .357 Magnum loads into something approaching civilized.

The original K-frame revolvers were often shockingly accurate. To determine whether this new CNC- and EDM-produced version upheld the family reputation, I filled my range bag with various fodder from Remington, Winchester, Hornady, Federal, Fusion, Estate and Black Hills until it threatened to burst and headed to the Utah foothills for some accuracy and function testing.

During the course of accuracy testing and chronographing, I burned through about 220 rounds and managed to shoot some surprisingly good groups—including the single best 25-yard, five-shot group I’ve ever fired from an iron-sighted revolver. Shot with Hornady’s 125-grain FTX Critical Defense ammunition, it measured a scant 0.253 inch center to center.

I sure couldn’t do it every time—and, frankly, I’m not sure that the revolver could either, superbly accurate though it is—but I shot at least one very small group with



▲ Glare-reducing serrations run the full length of the top rib and sight tang. The red-ramp front sight is pinned; the rear sight is adjustable.

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 66 COMBAT MAGNUM

TYPE: double-action revolver

CALIBER: .357 Magnum

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 4.25 in., 5 grooves, 1:18.75 RH twist

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 9.68/5.58/1.45 in.

WEIGHT: 36.6 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: machined steel

FINISH: satin non-glare

GRIPS: synthetic

SIGHTS: adjustable rear, ramp front

TRIGGER: single action, 4 lb., 11 oz. (measured); double action N/A

SAFETY: internal lock

PRICE: \$849

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson,

SMITH-WESSON.COM



▲ The new K-frame magnums are more robust in critical areas, which prevents the distress cracking seen in older K frames that had been fed a lot of magnum ammo—as the author did during his test, with no problems.

each ammunition type I tested. This in spite of winds gusting to 20 mph that buffeted me and the fact that my eyes just don't resolve iron sights like they did 20 years ago. Several of the groups were small enough to make me wish I had a Ransom Rest to accuracy-test the revolver or had at least put a handgun scope on it. I'd cheerfully wager that it would average sub-inch 25-yard groups with ammo it likes.

In order to avoid fouling buildup in the forward portion of the chambers, I completed testing the .357 Magnum loads I had on hand before switching to .38 Special. Although the Model 66 was peppy with the hottest magnum loads, it was comfortable to shoot with most of them and downright kitten-like with .38s.

As you can see in the accompanying chart, not one load averaged over 3.0 inches at 25 yards, and two—both of them .357 Magnums—averaged under 1.5 inches. Hornady's 125-grain FTX Critical Defense won the honors of best average, but its average was skewed a bit by that spectacular 0.253-inch group. In reality, the American Eagle 158-grain jacketed softpoint load consistently produced the best groups. Got to love it when a handgun shoots wonderfully with inexpensive ammo.

With accuracy testing complete, I did some casual drills and plinked with the Model 66 for a while, shooting rapid-fire two-handed, slow-fire in the old classic one-handed bullseye stance, and finally, in honor of Bill Jordan, from the hip. Nope, I couldn't even hit dirt clods consistently from the hip—let alone aspirin tossed in the air like Jordan did back in the day—but the handgun did point noticeably well, and it behaved politely through recoil thanks to the excellent synthetic grips.

By the time I was out of ammo, the lovely satin finish on the Model 66 Combat Magnum was plenty dirty and honorably coated with gunpowder residue. Precision machine that it is, it never even threatened to

hiccup—but that was to be expected because, after all, it's a revolver.

I left the gunpowder residue on for photography—not because I was lazy (which I am) but because while examining it post-testing it just looked right that way. The new Model 66 is an extremely robust version of the legendary K-frame .357 Magnum that will digest the heaviest magnum cartridges you can find without pause or potential for distressing the frame.

I've shot sleek Dan Wesson .357 Magnum revolvers, Colt Pythons and little J-frame .357 Magnum hand cannons. I'm particularly partial to Smith & Wesson's seven-shot .357 Magnum 686 Plus, and I consider the eight-shot N-frame Model 327 TRR8 to be the best all-out combat revolver available anywhere. But the new Model 66 Combat Magnum is arguably the most streamlined,

balanced .357-Magnum size revolver being currently built.

Were I an officer who preferred to carry a revolver for duty, I'd likely opt for the new Combat Magnum. As Bill Jordan once said about the blued twin of the Model 66, it's "the answer to a policeman's prayer." However, few officers are actually likely to carry a revolver these days. But as a trail gun or for working outdoorsmen in harsh, dusty environments, it's a superb choice.

The new Combat Magnum is versatile enough to defend hearth and home, to fill the stewpot, to perforate cans at the local gravel pit or to teach somebody the finer points of revolver shooting. It's a well-mannered, authoritative aristocrat of the wheelgun world.



A The 4.25-inch barrel sports an underlug for about three-quarters of its length, and simple, tasteful rollmarks denote caliber and model.



A The new Model 66 Combat Magnum demonstrated excellent accuracy, as evidenced by this 25-yard group with 158-grain American Eagle. And it's not even the smallest group von Benedikt shot.

ACCURACY RESULTS MODEL 66 COMBAT MAGNUM				
Cartridge	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
.38 SPECIAL				
Black Hills HBWC	148	682	16	1.71
Estate FMJ	130	783	17	2.43
Remington HTP	110	902	42	2.58
Winchester T&D Defend	130	863	13	1.61
Winchester T&D Train	130	811	22	3.00
.357 MAGNUM				
American Eagle JSP	158	1,192	26	1.41
Federal Premium CastCore	180	1,123	28	1.76
Federal Premium Hydra-Shok	158	1,166	17	2.40
Fusion JHP	158	1,202	17	2.63
Hornady FTX	125	1,364	53	1.30
Remington JSP	125	1,428	20	2.29

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of three five-shot groups fired from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. Velocity figures are the averages of five rounds measured with a Shooting Chrony chronograph 10 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: HBWC, hollow base wadcutter; FMJ, full metal jacket; HTP: high terminal performance; T&D, Train & Defend; JSP, jacketed softpoint

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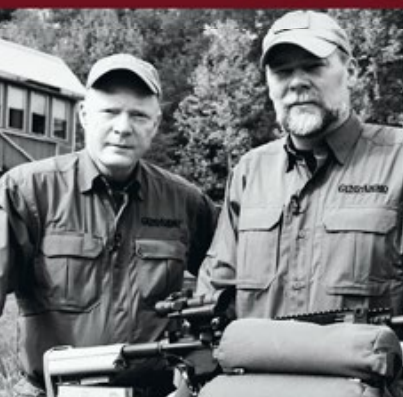
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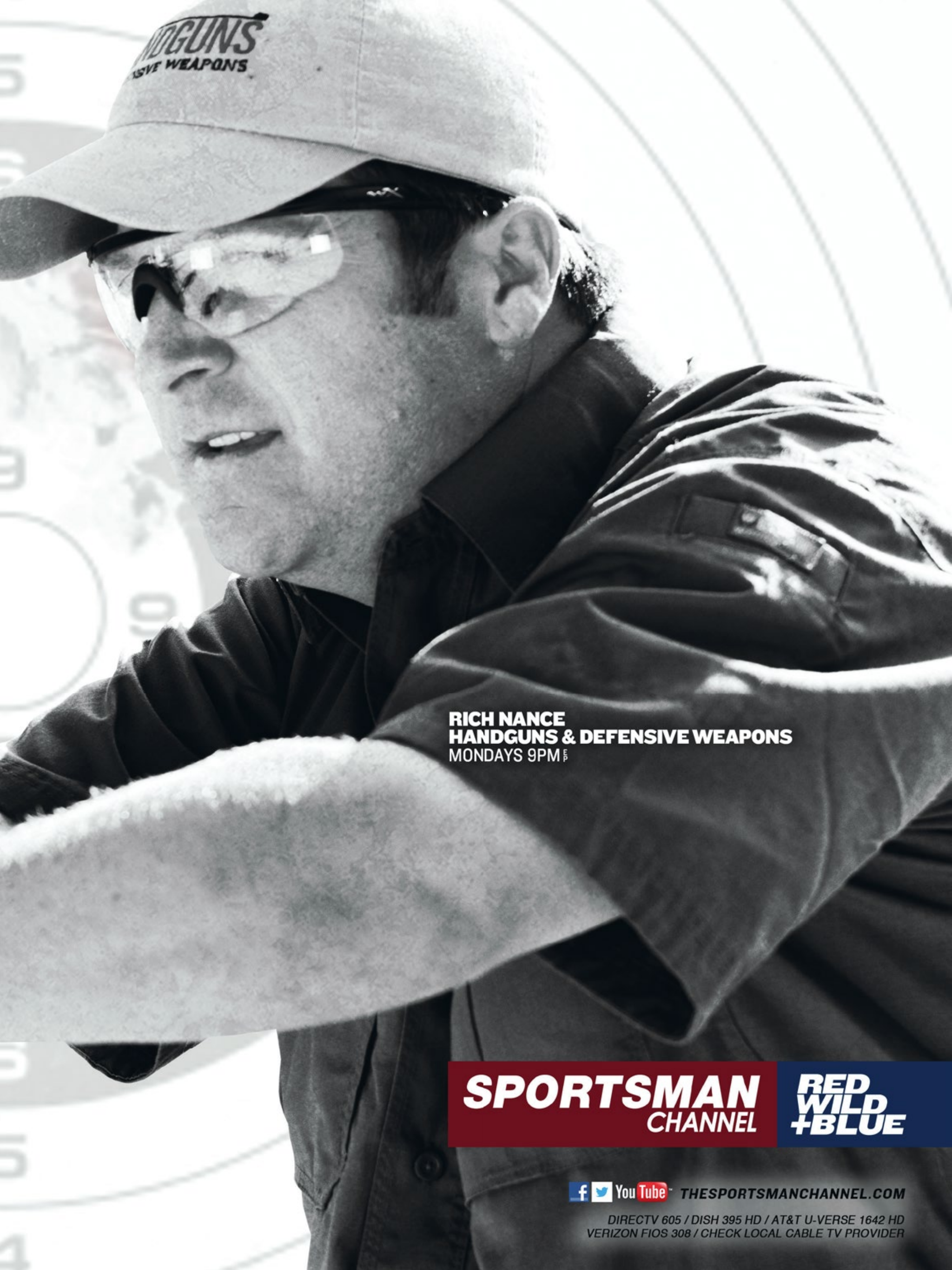
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A NEW FINISH FOR ED BROWN'S SPECIAL FORCES CREATES A CUSTOM-CLASS WORKING GUN WITH A BIT OF PIZZAZZ.



Photo by Michael Anschuetz

Never have we had such an embarrassment of riches as today. Even the average custom gunsmith or 1911 builder of today produces a product superior to the master craftsmen of the early days of IPSC, and the best today produce perfect samples of the 1911. Ed Brown Products is one of the, if not *the*, best when it comes to making classic 1911s.

You will not see the usual post-“Miami Vice” extras that the blinged 1911 is prone to—my personal irritant being the full-length guide rod. What you get is a 1911 built as a London Best shotgun maker would make were he making 1911s. Travis Brown, son of the founder, and the man who runs the day-to-day operations, corrected me on that one, with a smile in his voice. “Patrick, if someone wants a full-length guide rod, we’ll install it. We’re still a custom shop, after all.”

The pistol sent for my testing (and covetous lust) is the Special Forces Bronze, a Government-size, all-steel 1911 in .45 ACP. The Special Forces model is one of the company’s most popular guns.

The Special Forces is meant as a hard-use working gun. As a result, it has a set of Novak sights on top of the slide, fixed night sights in dovetails. As fixed sights, they are almost indestructible, unlike even the most rugged adjustable sights. The Special Forces also has a smooth, round-topped slide; it lacks the sight grooves found on the firm’s Classic and Executive models. Yes, grooves look good, and they can, in some instances, cut the glare on a competition range, but they don’t do much on a working gun. So Ed Brown’s crew dispenses with them.

The Special Forces model uses only Ed Brown parts, as do all Ed Brown 1911s: slide, frame, barrel, slide

stop, bushing, fire control parts and both the thumb and grip safety. I’ll ask you to look

for a moment at the two safeties. The

thumb safety and grip safety look so

normal, so customary, that it may be

hard to realize what a revelation

they were when they first appeared

on IPSC ranges in 1989. No grip

safety in existence allows your hand

a higher hold on a 1911 frame than the

Ed Brown Memory Groove does, and few

thumb safeties are as ergonomically fitted

to the shooter’s hand. I was building 1911s

back then, and after the first time I shot an Ed

Brown grip safety-equipped 1911, I installed no other on my pistols. Ditto the thumb safety.

Since Ed Brown machinists make the slide, frames, barrels and so on, there is no question about proper fit when it comes time to assemble a pistol. If by some →

BRONZE BEAUTY

← bizarre happenstance a slide doesn't properly fit onto a frame, the brass doesn't have to email or call a supplier and ask what the deal is.

"We're in a 20,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility," Travis said. "We're eyeball to eyeball every day."

The slide-to-frame and the barrel-to-both fits are about as close to perfect as the human hand can make them. And when it comes to those slide and frames, they are CNC machined from forgings. There are no cast parts, no MIM parts, no shortcuts and nothing that isn't exactly to spec.

But we don't shoot pistols for the perfect fit of metal. We shoot them to build skills and strike targets. And

so what matters here are fit to the hand, trigger press and a non-slip grip. The frontstrap of the Special Forces Bronze has an undercut at the top, below the trigger guard, and that—combined with the grip safety—gets your hand as high as humanly possible on the frame.

The good thing is that it helps control recoil and muzzle rise. The bad thing is that it lifts your hand away from the grip safety. No problem. When Ed Brown designed his Memory Groove grip safety way back when, he added a block of steel to the grip safety to fill the gap. You thought that the block was always there, always a part of the 1911? No, it wasn't, but it is now.

On the frontstrap and the flat mainspring housing, the Special Forces Bronze has the Ed Brown Chainlink III treatment. Typically, the classic form of non-slip frontstrap treatment offers you two choices: non-slip and hand-grinding or hand-safe and not so non-slip. Sharp, 20 or 25 lpi checkering will keep the pistol from slipping in your hand, but the price is steep and

❑ **The Special Forces features all Ed Brown parts, as you would expect, but not everyone knows how groundbreaking some of his designs were. The thumb safety is perfectly shaped to complement the high grip permitted by the grip safety, the latter including extra metal so there are no issues hitting it.**

sometimes painful for those who have desk jobs. Chainlink III is both less aggressive and more non-slip than the previous iteration, Chainlink II. Even when I was shooting the hot defensive loads out of the Special Forces Bronze, the frame was not slipping in my hands.

Travis confirmed my thought on that. "Some thought Chainlink II was too aggressive," he said. "Chainlink III is less aggressive, but attractive and functional. We still offer both."

When talk turns to custom 1911s, the baseline assumption of many is that the trigger must be tuned to baby's-breath lightness. Nothing heavier than that will do, and nothing heavier will allow the user to shoot to the capability of the pistol. Here's a shocking fact for you. There are maybe a dozen shooters in the country who can shoot up to the accuracy potential of any 1911—let alone one as well-built as the Special Forces.

As long as a trigger is clean and crisp, you are going to do as well with it as you are going to do. So after dry-firing the Special Forces Bronze and remarking to myself on how nice a trigger it was, I did my range work. I shot over the chrono, I shot for groups, and then I sat down with the measuring tools to see what the trigger pull was. I always →



ED BROWN PRODUCTS SPECIAL FORCES BRONZE

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: .45 ACP

CAPACITY: 8+1

BARREL: 5 in.

OAL/WIDTH/HEIGHT (IN.): 8.5/1.2/5.6

WEIGHT: 40 oz.

FINISH: black Gen4 slide; Battle Bronze Gen4 frame

GRIPS: black G10

SIGHTS: Novak 3-dot night sights

TRIGGER: single action; 4.5 lb. pull (measured)

PRICE: \$2,445

MANUFACTURER: Ed Brown Products, EdBrown.com

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BRONZE BEAUTY

← wait to do that until after I've shot a handgun for at least one range session because a brand-new trigger pull can show some variance until it wears in and the parts have a chance to burnish themselves against each other.

Imagine my surprise when I weighed the trigger and found it to be an absolutely consistent four pounds, eight ounces. "That can't be," I said to myself. I held it up to dry-fire and again thought it had to much lighter than that-3.5 pounds, I was sure.

Back into the vise, The Lyman Digital trigger gauge read four pounds, eight ounces. Again.

Travis told me they're able to get a trigger to feel like that thanks to years of experience, but he did note that the allowed weight variance in the Special Forces spec sheet is 3.5 to 4.5 pounds. Me, I'd be happy with this one: a 4.5-pound trigger that feels a pound lighter.

When the subject of custom 1911s comes up, there are two expectations besides an impressive cost: accuracy and reliability. Let's get the reliability question out of the way first. I have never seen an unreliable Ed Brown 1911. Back when single-stack 1911s were still ruling the roost in IPSC, and for a decade after that on bowling pin ranges, I never heard of a single Ed Brown where the owner complained about its function. I've never had one I was testing or using

ever give me the slightest problem. I'll admit that I haven't shot a statistically relevant sample of them, but if someone paid a lot of money for a custom gun and it wasn't reliable, they'd say something. This one was no exception: 100 percent reliable.

As for accuracy, a full-size 1911 is about the easiest big-bore handgun to shoot well. And at the same time, it's one that will show you your faults. When you've got four shots touching at 25 yards, the smallest oversight in technique will blow the group. You can get sloppy with a less accurate pistol and who would know? That trigger-nudge that just "opened" your 3.5-inch group by another quarter-inch? So what? →



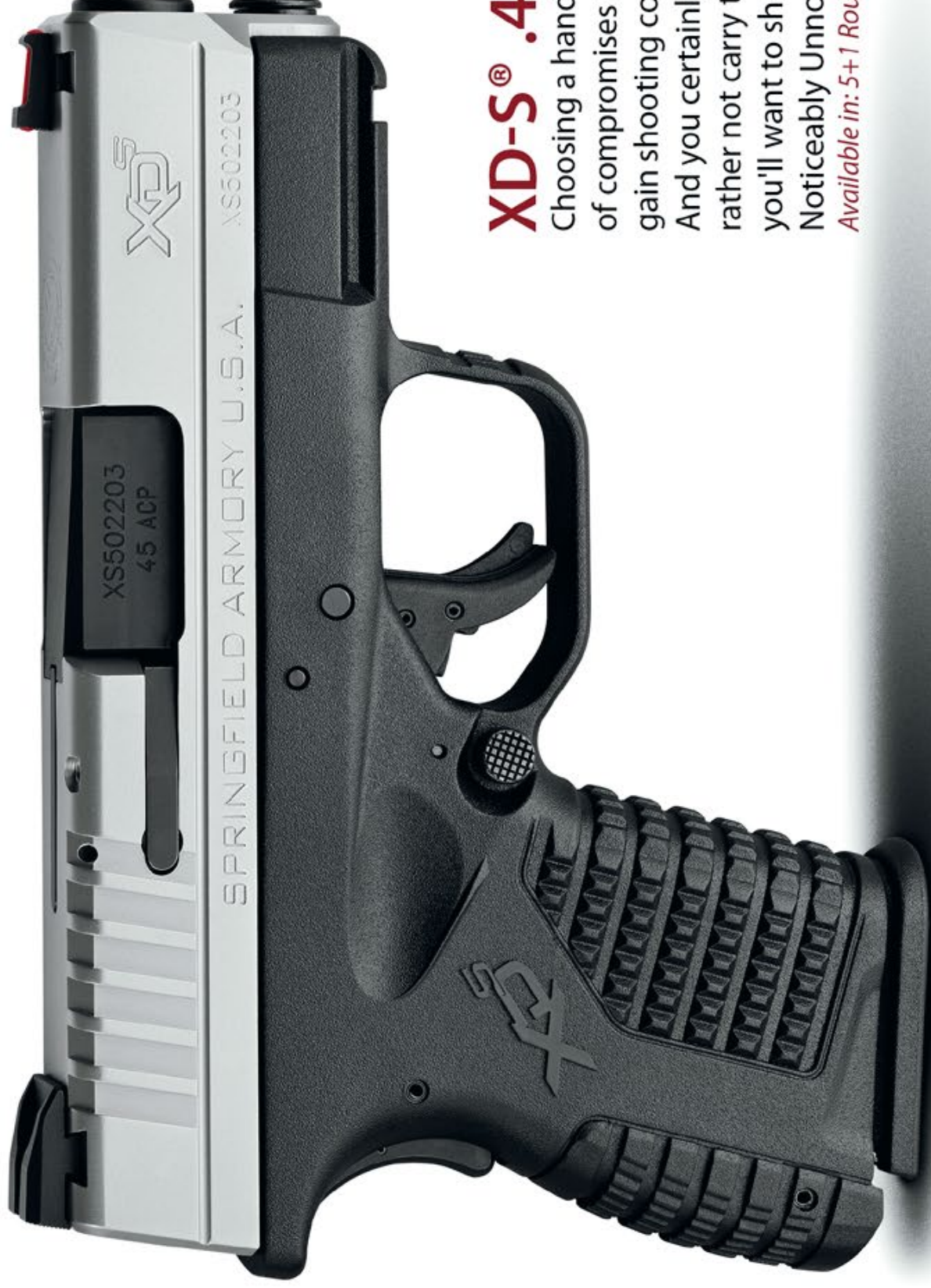
▲ This is the latest iteration of Ed Brown's Chainlink pattern, Chainlink III. Based on customer feedback, it's not as aggressive as II but still provides excellent control.



▲ The Special Forces is designed the way a 1911 should be, in the author's view. And that means no full-length guide rod.



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BRONZE BEAUTY

← An accurate 1911 lulls you into a sense of “I’ve got this.” And then you admire your group before you’re done, and your one-inch group is now two inches. Poor baby. This Special Forces, like all Ed Brown pistols, is brilliantly accurate. But you have to do your part. And if you get tired, it will mock your efforts.

I asked Travis about the company’s testing. He was understandably reserved. “It depends on the ammunition and shooter,” he said. “With

the right ammo out of a rest we can regularly get one-hole groups.” Translation: If your Ed Brown doesn’t shoot as well as you think it should, perhaps the answer comes from Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar”: “The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars....” The fault lies not in your pistol but in your ammo. Or your technique.

So I laid off the coffee, at least as much as I could and still function, and did my best to shoot one-hole

groups. Mostly I failed, if you can describe a continual series of groups smaller than two inches a failure. The one exception was Liberty Ammo’s Civil Defense, which shot larger—but still gratifyingly small—groups. And can you really complain about a two-inch average group size?

So why Bronze? Travis told me they had a lot of customer feedback on that. Customers liked it, the crew at Ed Brown liked it, so the company offered it beginning in May of last year. And it has sold very well. It’s not difficult to see why.

And to make the situation even better, there’s the price. I know custom gunsmiths who have years-long waiting lists. The average monthly mortgage payment in America today is \$865, and I know gunsmiths who routinely charge four mortgage payments worth of cash to overhaul your 1911. You can have a brand-new, no extras needed, Ed Brown Special Forces Bronze for \$2,495.

ACCURACY RESULTS ED BROWN SPECIAL FORCES BRONZE				
.45 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Asym TAC-XP + P	185	974	20	1.10
American Eagle JRN	230	816	8	1.55
HPR JHP	185	951	30	1.05
Black Hills JHP	185	940	12	1.25
Hornady Steel Match HAP	230	777	12	1.00
Speer Gold Dot HP	230	849	10	1.45
Barnes TAC-XPD +P	185	928	10	1.15
Liberty Civil Defense JHP +P	78	1,944	19	2.00

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five, five-shot groups at 25 yards off a Sinclair front shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a PACT MKIV chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: HP, hollowpoint; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; JRN, jacketed roundnose



Thanks to premium parts, state-of-the-art machining and expert hand fitting, the Ed Brown proved an exceptionally accurate 1911. The author bets it will shoot better than you do.

Since Ed Brown is still a custom shop, what if you have an Ed Brown and you want it to be bronzed? No problem. Ed Brown Products would be happy to recoat your existing Ed Brown 1911 in Battle Bronze. Okay, you say, but how long will that take? "We have a week or two turnaround on that," Travis said. For a moment I thought I had misheard. How long? "A week or two."

There has been a trend in the last few years of trainers and competition shooters getting or building 9mm versions of their .45 1911s. Back when ammunition was reasonably priced, a 9mm practice gun saved money, and price notwithstanding, a 9mm saves wear and tear on wrists and elbows. So any chance of a Special Forces Bronze in 9mm?

Travis was just encouraging enough to make me mull my options. "If someone has a 9mm Ed Brown, we can refinish it for them." You see, Travis and the crew do a small run each year of 9mm pistols, for insistent shooters like me, and the 9mm Ed Brown 1911 does exist. "There are some for sale out there right now through our dealer network."

So until I can track down a 9mm Ed Brown and send it in to be rebuilt as a Special Forces Bronze, I'll just have to content myself with using this .45 ACP one. I think I can stand up to the strain.



▲ The pistol sports a subdued magazine well funnel that makes reloading easier without adding bulk and weight.



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FASHION SENSE

By Richard Nance | Photos by Alfredo Rico

TIPS ON HOW TO DRESS AROUND YOUR CONCEALED CARRY HANDGUN.

It's amazing to me how poorly many of my fellow police officers conceal their off-duty gun. It's as though they are content with any garment as long as it drapes over the gun to some degree. Perhaps this cavalier attitude stems from the idea that anything is less conspicuous than carrying their full-size duty pistols while on the job. What many fail to realize is that there's a big difference between their gun being covered and being concealed.

Successful concealed carry requires more than mere fabric covering your handgun. The better you hide the fact that you're packing, the more likely you are to maintain the element of surprise, which plays a huge role in most armed confrontations. Concealed carry is about finding the perfect balance of concealment and accessibility. Too far in either direction could be detrimental to your health.

I've carried a concealed handgun for more than 17 years and still experiment with different combinations of gun, holster and cover garments in attempt to find a better way to conceal a particular gun while at the same time ensuring I can access it in a hurry.

The maxim "dress around the gun" is well-known in concealed carry circles. The idea being that with substantial enough attire one can adequately conceal any type of handgun. The problem here lies in that your mode of dress must be congruent with what others are wearing to avoid drawing undue attention.

I have to admit that as a rookie

police officer I didn't give much thought to concealed carry clothing, and in the beginning I toted a full-size Glock in a fanny pack. I'm pretty sure fanny packs fell out of fashion about the same time as acid-washed jeans and aviator sunglasses, but, nevertheless, my fanny pack enabled me to conceal my gun plus a couple spare magazines and still be able to draw either relatively quickly. Of course, that I wore that pack at all was cause for suspicion—of my fashion sense, if nothing else.

Consider this timelier example of a concealed carry fashion dilemma.

In North Dakota in February, a heavy jacket might enable you to easily conceal a full-size pistol worn comfortably in an outside-the-waistband holster. The jacket wouldn't garner any extra attention because everyone else would be dressed similarly. But that same jacket would be an epic concealed carry failure if you wore it in California on a warm summer day. Sure, your gun would be hidden, but you'd likely be miserable, and the mere fact that you were wearing such inappropriate attire for the environment you were in would surely bring unwanted stares. →



▲ Even something as simple as a T-shirt can be used to conceal a gun the size of this Springfield EMP. Remember that all of it has to work together: covering garment, gun size, carry location and holster type.

FASHION SENSE

← It's important to choose the right clothing. Again, what you wear will be predicated on your gun and holster and where it's worn. While there are numerous locations on

the body to carry a handgun, this article will focus on waistline carry, which is by far the most popular and, in my opinion, the most practical mode of carry.

Once you've selected your concealed carry handgun, you need to consider where along your belt to carry it and whether you'll be using an inside-the-waistband or outside-the-waistband holster.

Speaking of belts, be sure to strap one on that's wide enough to keep your holster from sliding around and sturdy enough to withstand the rigors of daily carry. A flimsy belt will not hold the weight of your gun and may sag, which could tip off a miscreant that you're packing.

Your decision to wear an open cover garment, such as an unbuttoned shirt or unzipped jacket, or a closed cover garment, like a T-shirt or pullover sweatshirt, is largely a matter of personal preference. However, with an open garment, something as seemingly innocuous as a gust of wind could lead to a major wardrobe malfunction that exposes your gun to the world. Why then is open-garment carry so popular? Because it tends to facilitate an easier and therefore faster draw.

If you opt for an open cover garment, make sure the fabric isn't so thin that the slightest breeze sends it flapping behind you like a superhero's cape mid-flight.

Another potential hang-up with an open cover garment that's too thin is that when you hook the shirt with your hand to uncover your gun, the fabric could actually wrap around your hand creating a potential nightmare scenario. Imagine desperately sweeping away your cover garment to get to your gun only to have the thin fabric entangle your hand. By the time you unraveled your hand from the garment, you could be dangerously far behind the eight ball.

Closed cover garments are less prone to exposing your gun by way of a wind gust, but they are also typically more cumbersome to draw from. Of course, with practice drawing from a closed cover garment can be surprisingly fast.

"Tuckable" holsters are →



▲ A closed cover garment conceals the gun very well but can be slower to employ. Appendix carry works well here, but with training you can make other locations practical options as well.



▲ An open cover garment is a great option. Just remember that a gust of wind can reveal your handgun. Busy patterns, such as Hawaiian shirts, are especially good because the pattern helps disguise any printing.

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FASHION SENSE

← becoming increasingly popular thanks to the deep concealment they provide. With a slightly oversize shirt made of relatively thick fabric (like a typical dress shirt), the only indication of a holster is a low-key, black metal clip. When coupled with a black belt, it's unlikely to draw much attention. Initially, drawing from a tuckable holster can be a bit of a challenge, but I've found that with practice it's really not that bad.

Another consideration regarding closed cover garment selection requires some inspection. Inside some shirts, near the bottom of the button line, the fabric is not sewn completely together. When you don't get your closed garment out of the way quickly enough, the resultant gap inside the shirt will tend to capture the muzzle as you attempt to drive your gun toward the target.

Could you shoot through the fabric of your shirt? Absolutely. But having your gun snag on your garment will

impede your draw and could lead to you dropping your gun. Do yourself a favor and ensure there is no such gap in a shirt you intend to use as a closed cover garment.

A cover garment's pattern, or

A slightly oversize shirt mitigates the gun printing through the fabric. It also makes drawing the gun easier.

lack thereof, is another important consideration. In the same way a horizontally striped shirt can make you look wider, a plain or predictably patterned shirt can accentuate your gun. That's because even the slightest wrinkle or bulge in the fabric sticks out like a sore thumb and can draw a person's eyes to the gun.

Multicolored, random-pattern shirts, particularly those of the Hawaiian variety, make great concealing garments because they help

mask minor changes to the naturally draping of the shirt created by the gun. Such shirts can produce a sort of sensory overload to the human eye and make it much more difficult to detect that the wearer is armed.

Be prepared to swallow your pride when you're shopping for concealed carry clothing. If you're like me, you'll want to order a size bigger shirt than you'd normally wear. A slightly oversize shirt mitigates the gun printing through the fabric. It also makes drawing the gun easier because there's more garment to grab hold of.

The real ego crusher comes when shopping for pants. If you're planning to carry IWB, expect to pur-

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chase pants that are about two inches bigger in the waist. This will allow for the extra girth created by the gun and holster. Trust me on this. It's not worth it to try to squeeze everything into pants that are too small for concealed carry just to be able to say that you wear a particular size.

In most cases, when you carry a concealed handgun along your waist, especially IWB, an undershirt will make you much more comfortable. An undershirt provides a barrier to prevent your gun or holster from rubbing against your bare skin.

It also helps protect your gun from sweat, which can lead to corrosion. There are holsters that are specifically designed to keep the gun from contacting your skin, but even with such a holster, you can't go wrong with an undershirt.

Another potential concealed carry pitfall is dressing like a gunfighter. If you're wearing a "contractor" shirt, freshly creased tactical pants, a pair

of \$300 desert tan boots and a belt designed for rappelling, people may speculate that you're armed even if your gun is not visible.

Add to the mix any firearm-themed logo apparel and you might as well be openly carrying your firearm. (For similar reasons, I'm not a fan of affixing firearms-related stickers to my vehicle.) I would rather a potential foe have no idea that I'm armed. It's all about having an ace up your sleeve and using the element of surprise.


I'm often asked how I carry concealed. I have to admit that since I'm often "testing and evaluating" a new gun or holster for an article, there's not as much consistency to my daily carry as I would like.

My preferred carry style is appendix with only a T-shirt as a cover garment. I can easily conceal my Glock 19 in this manner and bring it into play very quickly. The main gripe with appendix carry is that it

can be uncomfortable when you're seated. Like most other carry methods, it's about finding a holster that feels comfortable and experimenting with it to find the sweet spot.

Concealed carry is a very individualized endeavor. Two people given the same gun and holster combo might prefer entirely different carry methods and cover garments. What works well for me may be the most uncomfortable or impractical thing imaginable to you and vice-versa.

Just remember there's more to concealed carry than a strapping a gun to your hip. You need to consider how you will comfortably and efficiently conceal your gun while going about your daily activities.

But concealment is only half the battle. You must also be able to deploy your gun instantaneously in response to a potential deadly threat. Don't underestimate the importance of choosing proper clothing to maintain the element of surprise. 



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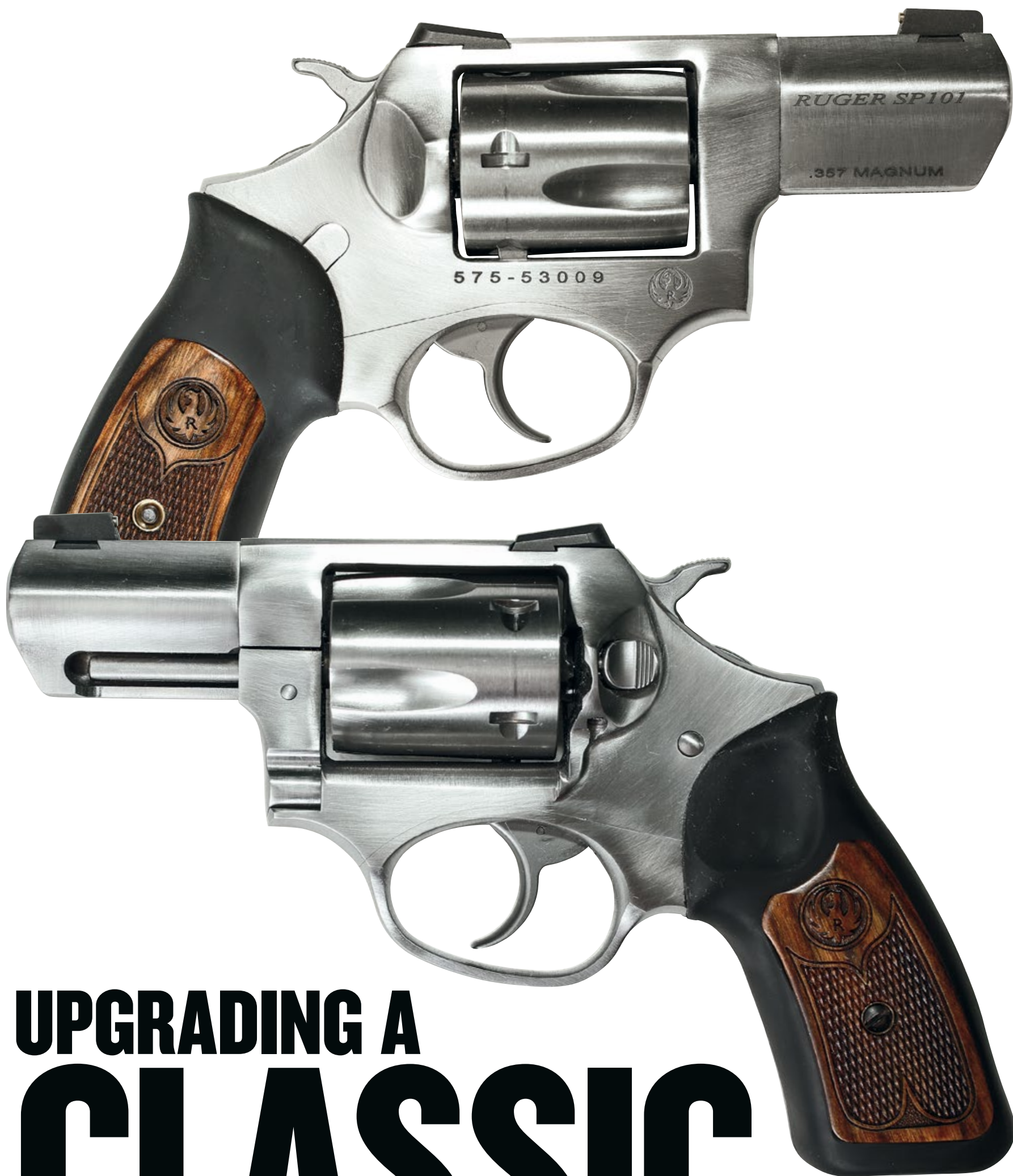
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UPGRADING A CLASSIC

BY PATRICK SWEENEY

**STEEL-FRAME SNUBBIES STILL HAVE A PLACE, AND
RUGER'S NEW SP101 NOVAK IS A KEEPER.**

This is the 21st century—the age of polymer pistols and digital apps, of cars with more computing power than NASA had available to it when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Such modern things were not available to me back when I fairly clanked stepping out of the gun shop doors each evening. We had some airweight snubbies available then, but mostly we had steel. And steel revolvers with short barrels are compact but a tad hefty.

So in this modern era—when everything is lighter, plastic, digital and impervious to rust—is there still a place for the all-steel snub-nose revolver? To test that, I borrowed the newest SP101 from Ruger.

A gun that first saw the light of day in 1989, the SP101 has been available in expected and unexpected calibers. The former group consists of the .38 Special and .357 Magnum; the latter, .32 H&R Magnum and .327 Federal Magnum. The model I got in for testing is a distributor special, available from TALO (TALOINC.COM), called the SP101 Novak. It is a five-shot, stainless, double-action .357 Magnum revolver, with, you guessed it, Novak sights—with a rear sight that's scaled-down proportionally to fit the SP101 frame.

Now, snubbies and I go back a long way, and one of their endearing aspects is that they are compact. That also poses a problem for me. I can't palm a basketball, but I have big hands with slender fingers. (Yes, Mom wanted me to be a surgeon. Sorry, Mom.) And small grips make a handgun tough and sometimes painful to shoot.

So a compact gun with bigger-than-compact grips was my usual approach, even if it made for a package a bit more difficult to carry concealed. In the case of the SP101 I had back then—and still have today—it's the best of both worlds. The grips are large enough for me to get a good hold for a firing grip

and yet still compact enough that I don't risk being that "lumpy" concealed carry dude. Also, it's comfortable, but we'll get into that in due time.

At 25.5 ounces the Novak SP101 is going to sag your pocket, but if you are carrying properly, there is no such thing as "pocket" carry. You need a proper pocket holster, belt holster (and proper belt) or shoulder rig of some kind.

With a proper holster, the weight is not a big deal. Yes, it is more than a compact revolver half that weight would be, but I've fired revolvers that weigh half what this one does and they were no fun at all—no fun even before .357 Magnum enters

the picture. And that's why, even with its successful polymer-framed LCR in the line, Ruger continues to pay attention to its steel guns.

"The SP101 fills a different segment than a gun like the LCR," said Ruger Product Manager Kurt Hindle. "The SP101, being heavier, is more of a home defense gun, and because of that weight, it's also good for those who are sensitive to recoil."

The genesis of this new SP101 comes from a special Wiley Clapp edition of the steel-framed GP100. "The idea was to take some of what we learned on that project and roll it into the SP101, creating sort of a higher-end SP," Hindle said.

The sights were developed →



▲ The rear sight is a real rear sight—in this case a scaled-down Novak that won't snag on the draw. It works like a champ.



▲ The front is also a Novak and is also fit into a dovetail. It features a brass bead for good visibility even in low light.

UPGRADING A CLASSIC

← by Wayne Novak and Charley Pulit at Novak’s shop in West Virginia. The rear, as I mentioned, is a scaled-down Novak sight designed specifically for the SP101.

“We have a good rapport with Wayne and his folks,” Hindle said, noting that Novak worked with Ruger on the sights that went on the SR1911. “As far as a rear sight goes, I don’t think there’s a better design.”

The rear is dovetailed into the top-strap of the SP101, and Hindle noted that cutting the topstrap had no effect on the strength of the frame.

There’s so much there that the sight dovetail makes no difference. Ruger is proud of how tough its handguns are, and the last thing its designers would do is jeopardize that reputation. So don’t worry, be happy.

The front sight is also dovetailed into the barrel. It features a brass bead insert, and for those of us who don’t feel the need for tritium sights or the desire for a fiber-optic sight, the brass bead works very well indeed.

The designers also worked on the shape of the crown, adopting a

geometry similar to that found on the new GP100 Match Champion. The crown is very important for accuracy, and according to Hindle, Novak’s 11-degree crown improves the SP101’s accuracy because it squares the shoulder where the rifling meets the crown. At least for the time being, this crown geometry is found only on the Novak version and not on the rest of the SP101 line.

The SP101 grips are an interesting part of the design, one the new model does not change from the original. For eons, standard grips on revolvers have been planks of wood, clamped to the frame by a single screw and held in place with a fixing pin. They can work loose, they can warp and create gaps, and because they are wood, they offer no real reduction of recoil.

SP101 grips are different. First, the grip is actually a single hunk of molded rubber that slides up over the grip post of the frame. It can’t wiggle loose because it is not only a tight fit, but also secured with an aluminum cross post. SP101 grips feature panels that fit into the molded rubber grip, and on the Novak model, they’re stained wood—the same style found on the standard-production, adjustable-sight SP101 versions.

(A note here if you’ve never disassembled a Ruger double-action revolver grip. After removing the screws that hold the panels in place, under one of those panels you’ll find a slot that holds a copper pin. This is the disassembly pin that captures the mainspring; if you happen to lose it, a correctly sized nail will do the trick as well.)

Speaking of the mainspring, it is a coil spring on the SP101. You could dry-fire the SP101 until your trigger finger bulked up to the size of a banana and you would not weaken the spring.

The design and composition of the grip act to dampen felt recoil. Since you’re holding a rubber-wrapped post, the frame can recoil



▣ The SP101’s hardwood panels are set into a rubber mono-grip that fits over the frame and is secured by a cross pin. The copper pin is for capturing the mainspring spring during disassembly.

ACCURACY RESULTS RUGER SP101 NOVAK				
Cartridge	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
.38 SPECIAL				
Hornady FTX	90	972	13	2.00
Magtech HP +P	95	992	26	2.50
Hornady FTX	110	924	10	5.50
Black Hills JHP	125	824	6	2.25
Magtech JHP +P	125	839	14	2.50
Winchester Defend JHP	130	802	22	2.00
Winchester Train FMJ	130	797	8	1.75
Cor-Bon FMJ	147	769	18	1.75
Black Hills LWC	148	599	7	1.75
Black Hills LSWC	158	681	30	2.75
.357 MAGNUM				
Black Hills JHP	125	1,150	40	2.75
Hornady LeverEvolution	140	1,228	21	2.75

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of five, five-shot groups at 15 yards off a Sinclair shooting rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a PACT MKIV chronograph 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; HP, hollowpoint; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; LSWC, lead semi-wadcutter; LWC, lead wadcutter

inside the rubber, and so the recoil energy is therefore inefficiently transmitted to your hand. In other words, the rubber soaks up a lot of the energy.

I found the Novak SP101 to be quite comfortable shooting .38 Specials, even those of the +P variety. A 25-ounce revolver fed .38 Specials is not going to kick very hard, no matter how small it is. The +P loads were noticeably sharper, but still no big deal if you're accustomed to recoil. If you were introducing a new shooter to the SP101 Novak, I'd start them out with target wadcutters.

My practice runs with .357 Magnum ammunition were interesting. Thanks to the grip, I experienced a lot less recoil than I was prepared for. Don't get me wrong; it wasn't a picnic. If I really felt the need to be using full-house .357 Magnum ammunition in a carry gun, I'd resign myself to packing a bigger revolver.

At the same time, I found it very



▲ The revolver exhibited good accuracy and thanks to its grip design proved soft-shooting—even with .357 loads.

interesting just how much performance the 2.25-inch barrel delivered. I was expecting nearby shrubbery to be scorched, dry grass set aflame and eye-searing balls of flame every time I touched off a magnum.

Ammunition makers have learned a lot over the years, and these days you get magnum performance with much less drama—although Sir Isaac can't be fooled, and you still pay the recoil price. →

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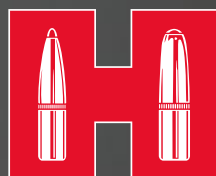
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UPGRADING A CLASSIC

← The thought with snub-nosed revolvers is that they are not accurate, but I've always found Ruger's wheelguns to shoot well. And so it was with the Novak SP101, with one very odd exception. Our testing protocols at *Handguns* call for testing barrels this short at 15 yards instead of the customary 25. So you can understand my alarm when the "group" with one particular load started lapping over onto other aiming pasters.

I have experienced this only rarely in the past, but it is something I have seen: a particular handgun really not liking a particular load. In this instance, the particular Novak SP101 I was testing didn't like the Hornady 100-grain FTX load. No, amend that: it loathed the Hornady 100-grain FTX load. Where other loads were punching two-inch groups, this was scattering shots over five and six inches.

I tried the Hornady FTX load in another revolver, and that one (also a snubbie) punched them into a tight



▲ One of the advancements on the SP101 Novak is a newly designed 11-degree crown for enhanced accuracy.



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cluster. So always test your ammo in your handgun, because this one in 10,000 combo might strike—with any gun and any ammo. On the other end of the spectrum, please note how much the Novak SP101 loved the Hornady 90-grain FTX load.

The accuracy (the one load aside) of the Novak SP101 is quite remarkable. This is due in part to the new crown geometry. So if it makes a noticeable difference, why hasn't Ruger put it on all its revolvers? I asked Kurt, and he was quite clear. Because it's new, it has to be tested. Ruger is nothing if not prudent about changes. Ruger plans to test the new crown geometry on all of its revolvers, and where it improves accuracy, Ruger will incorporate it.

Back to our initial discussion of whether there's still a place for an all-steel snubnose revolver. The plain fact is they are heavier than an airweight revolver, and they do not hold as much ammo as an equally compact 9mm pistol. Me, I don't see much of a problem in either case. The extra weight is easy to pack, given a good holster. And the extra weight helps to dampen the vigor of +P .38s or .357 Magnum ammo for guns so chambered.

The difference in ammunition capacity between the Novak SP101 and an equally small 9mm semiauto is not all that great. Five for the SP101 and an equal number, maybe an extra shot, from a compact 9mm. Yes, compact 9mms hold more than that—when you make them larger than the SP101, with a longer magazine. You don't get something for nothing.

We also have the superb accuracy the SP101 Novak demonstrated and the simplicity of operation of a double-action revolver. No external safety to mess with, no magazine button to bump. Just line up the sights and stroke through the trigger. And as Kurt said, it makes for an excellent home defense gun as well—due to its accuracy, simplicity and soft-shooting qualities. 



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EAA WITNESS PAVONA

TANFOGLIO PISTOLS ARE IMPORTED INTO the U.S. by European American Armory, which offers a complete line suitable for every handgun use you can think of, including concealed carry. One of its newest concealed-carry models is the EAA Witness Pavona. It was designed with input from EAA's Sharon Lacy and has a number of features intended to appeal to female shooters.

The first of these is that the Pavona buyer has a choice of five different frame colors: black, charcoal, Fandanggo, imperial and sapphire—all featuring a sparkling finish that's the result of silver- and gold-colored metal flakes

added to the polymer mixture. These are set off by a stainless steel slide with either a bright or black finish.

The ergonomics of the grip have been designed with a woman's hand in mind, and the grip offers impressed checkering on the side and front- and back-straps to provide a secure purchase and enhance recoil control. A generously sized grip tang positions the pistol securely in the hand and helps disperse recoil pulse for more comfortable shooting and faster follow-up shots.

The magazine and slide releases are both well positioned, and while I found the thumb safety a bit high for easy

EUROPEAN AMERICAN ARMORY WITNESS PAVONA

TYPE: DA/SA semiauto

CALIBER: .380, 9mm Luger (tested), .40 S&W

CAPACITY: 13+1 (as tested)

BARREL: 3.6 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH (IN.): 7.3/4.5/1.4

WEIGHT: 30.4 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: polymer frame (multiple color options); black or bright stainless steel slide

GRIPS: checkered polymer

SIGHTS: white, 3-dot

TRIGGER: SA, 5.3 lb. pull.; DA, 9 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETY: single-side thumb

PRICE: \$476

IMPORTER: European American Armory, EAAcorp.com



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→ manipulation (more about that later), it was positive in operation.

A unique feature of the manual safety is that when the hammer is cocked with the safety engaged, the hammer spring is depressed—allowing the slide to be retracted with much less effort to chamber a round or removed an unfired round from the chamber. This cannot be done with the hammer in the forward position.

In keeping with its CZ-75 heritage—and unlike most of the double-action/single-action pistols on today’s market—the Pavona can also be carried cocked and locked. The magazine holds 13 rounds of 9mm ammo and has a finger-rest base plate, allowing a full, three-finger grip on the pistol, while the wide-mouth magazine well ensures smooth, snag-free reloads.

The Pavona’s slide runs on rails that are located inside the frame and supported by four steel inserts. The rails run the entire length of the slide, providing full-length support, smoother cycling, tighter tolerances and consistent lockup to enhance accuracy. In addition, this system lets the slide sit deeper in the frame, which lowers the bore axis and reduces muzzle flip.

The stainless steel slide has deep grasping grooves for easy retraction and is fitted with a set of easy-to-see three-dot sights. Windage adjustments can be made by drifting the rear sight in its dovetail.

Because the Witness Pavona was designed with the female shooter in mind, I felt it would only be fitting if my fiancée, Becky, assisted me in running it through its paces. The pistol we received had the Fandango-colored frame, which Becky found quite becoming.

The double-action trigger displayed the usual new-gun stiffness but had a stage-free stroke. The single-action trigger was a bit gritty with a bit of take-up before 5.3 pounds of finger pressure tripped the sear.

My first task was to discover what

type of groups it could shoot. It shot low and right, but the gun produced groups in the 2.5- to 3.5-inch range. The best groups, fired with the Remington Golden Saber and Black Hills jacketed hollowpoint loads, measured a pleasing 2.0 and 2.25 inches respectively.

Next, we set up a Birchwood-Casey Dirty Bird combat target, and Becky saw how the Pavona handled a series of offhand drills from five and 10 yards.

Becky has been shooting for about a year and a half and has used nothing but 1911 pistols, and the Pavona’s DA/SA trigger at first resulted in some fliers. But once she had the hang of it, she was able to chew up the nine and X rings.

She admired the pistol’s ergonomics but said she would prefer plain black rear and fiber-optic front sights rather than the white three-dots. In addition, she’s a leftie and thought ambi thumb safeties would have been a nice touch.

Her only other comment was that it took quite a bit of effort to load the

magazine to capacity, and a magazine loading tool would have been a handy addition to the Pavona’s shipping box.

EAA’s Witness Pavona proved a most shootable pistol with above-average ergonomics. In three shooting sessions we ran in excess of 300 rounds through it without a single hiccup. If you’re a female shooter—or a man who is looking to give a wife, daughter or mother some options for a self-defense pistol—check out the Witness Pavona. It’s practical—and colorful.



The slide has deep grasping grooves for easy manipulation. The pistol comes with three-dot sights, but the author’s tester would’ve preferred fiber optics.



The Pavona’s slide reciprocates on rails inside the frame. That provides full-length support for reliable functioning and also keeps the bore axis low.



The ejection port is lowered and flared for sure ejection, and through 300 rounds—right out of the box—the Pavona functioned flawlessly.

ACCURACY RESULTS EAA WITNESS PAVONA				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
CCI Blazer FMJ	115	1,131	43	3.6
Remington Golden Saber	124	1,017	31	2.9
Hornady Critical Duty	135	957	20	3.4
Black Hills JHP	147	899	27	3.0
Berry’s Plated*	115	1,049	24	3.6

Notes: (*Handload) Accuracy results are the averages of five five-shot groups fired from an MTM K-Zone rest at 25 yards. Velocity results are the averages of 10 rounds measured with a Chrony chronograph 10 feet from muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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CZ-USA P-07

I KNOW A LOT OF SAVVY GUN PEOPLE

who are big fans of CZ pistols, but they focus on the metal-framed CZ-75s for the most part and ignore the polymer-framed P-07. That's a shame, because it's a heck of a pistol for a good price, and it's just recently been updated.

CZ did things a bit backward with the P-07. Normally, a company introduces a full-size gun, then starts cutting it down to offer compact/carry versions. CZ started with the P-07 Duty, which is big enough for a duty gun and yet small enough to conceal. It was several years later when the company offered a "full-size" version of the P-07, the P-09,

with some enhancements and improvements. Well, those design improvements have made their way down to the P-07.

The first thing I noticed is that it is now simply the P-07. CZ dropped the "Duty" from the name, perhaps realizing who the target market really is. There are a heck of a lot more private citizens buying guns in America than cops.

This is a hammer-fired, polymer-frame pistol slightly larger and heavier than a Glock 19. It is offered in 9mm and .40 S&W, and I was shipped a 9mm model for testing. It features a 3.8-inch barrel and weighs just over 27 ounces

CZ-USA P-07

TYPE: double-action/single-action semiauto (convertible to SAO)

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 15+1

BARREL: 3.8 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH (IN.): 7.2/5.3/1.5

WEIGHT: 27.2 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: black polymer frame, nitrated steel slide

SIGHTS: 3-dot photo-luminescent

TRIGGER: DA, 10.5 lb. pull; SA, 4 lb. pull (measured)

PRICE: \$510

MANUFACTURER: CZ-USA, CZ-USA.COM

empty. It's a double-action/single-action gun as it comes from the factory, but in its case you'll find a manual safety that allows you to convert it to single-action-only. The pistol comes standard with photo-luminescent three-dot sights.

As part of the upgrade, the P-07 now comes with interchangeable backstraps—small, medium and large—with slots in the case foam for the ones you're not using. I wish the backstraps had more texturing on them, but that is a minor complaint, and the rest of the frame has decent patterning. The frame above the front of the trigger guard is also textured; this is where the thumb of your support hand will press if you have a proper two-handed grip.

With its iconic humpbacked frame, the CZ-75 has always been known for its ergonomics, and the P-07 shares that. It feels good in the hand. With its very low bore it was very comfortable to shoot, with minimal muzzle rise and felt recoil.

The shape of the trigger has been slightly flattened on the new model, and the hammer has been reshaped to reduce the chance of snagging. Also, the pistol has been given forward cocking serrations. Considering how minimalist the slide profile is on this gun, I'll take any extra gripping area I can get. The slide also has a new nitride finish that is supposed to wear longer and be more corrosion resistant.

The P-07 comes with two magazines, and I discovered they were 15-rounders as opposed to the 16-round mags that came with the original P-07 Duty. Checking with CZ's Zach Hein, I learned that the factory updated the magazine to increase longevity for the .40 version. Between the larger diameter spring and a different base plate retainer, capacity in the 9mm dropped by one. However, that means the new P-07 will be legal for sale in New Jersey and Colorado. Old P-07 Duty magazines will work just fine in the new pistol. →



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← Every P-07 and P-09 pistol I've ever fired has had a great double-action trigger. This pistol? Not so much. It was a bit gritty and at 10.5 pounds noticeably heavier than I was expecting. That said, after take-up the trigger travel in double action with the hammer starting in the decock notch was only .65 inch, which is very short. Because of that short travel I was able to shoot this pistol better than I would have expected. The single-action pull was four pounds even, with a long take-up and an almost imperceptible break.

When I heard that CZ was introducing a "new and improved" version of the P-07 Duty, I hoped the company would change my only complaint on the original: a manual safety that was so flat it was hard to work holding the pistol at any angle and nearly impossible, with a firing grip on the pistol, to get on and off using your thumb. Unfortunately, the updated P-07 retains that same manual safety. Therefore, while I would rather carry a cocked-and-locked single-

action pistol than a DA/SA model, I wouldn't recommend replacing the decocker on the P-07 with the provided manual safety.

My issues with the nearly useless manual safety aside, I really like the P-07. It looks good, feels good in the hand, is reliable and accurate, has a good trigger and holds all sorts of ammo. Best of all, with a suggested retail of only \$510, it is noticeably less expensive than many of its polymer pistol competitors.



▲ The pistol ships with a decocker installed, with the option of changing to a manual safety, which is included in the box. The author dislikes this particular safety and recommends keeping the decocker.



▲ The pistol ships with three interchangeable backstraps, and though the author wishes there was more checkering or stippling on them, the rest of the grip offers sufficient purchase.



▲ The slide is relatively minimalist, so CZ has added front grasping grooves for ease of operation. The bore axis is very low, which results in a controllable gun with little muzzle rise.

ACCURACY RESULTS CZ-USA P-07				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Black Hills FMJ	115	1,132	10	2.8
Winchester FMJ	115	1,154	14	3.0
Nosler JHP	124	1,159	13	2.6
SIG Elite JHP	124	1,122	16	3.1
Speer Gold Dot JHP	124	1,203	12	2.7

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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17) Signed by **Peter J. Watt, Vice President, Consumer Marketing**
Date **10/01/14**

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- Frank has come up with some **impressive FREE bonuses** that are ONLY available to folks who purchase one of his kits on a first-come, first-served basis. For example, my 3-month kit came with 5,400+ heirloom survival seeds, 4 hard copy books, an 11-in-1 survival tool, and some other cool stuff.



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I want to make sure you don't miss out on this because **this is the #1 item to hoard today.**

Here's why... If you don't take action to get your food stockpile right now, you'll be in the same boat as the brainwashed masses who think "everything is fine." And if a crisis hits and your family asks, "What are we going to eat?" your mouth will go dry and you'll feel powerless.

But what if you decide right now to secure your food stockpile instead? Just **imagine how much better you'll feel right away.** And if a crisis hits and your family asks, "What are we going to eat?" you'll calmly reassure them that they're safe and they will have plenty to eat.

Listen, I can't predict the future. I don't know exactly when or how a crisis will hit. But from everything I see, it could be soon and it could be a big one. That's why I really want you to get the same peace of mind that I do.

P.S. Got a call from Frank and you'll never believe who just tried to buy up his entire supply of food! You'll be shocked!

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PLAYING IT COOL

IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR WITS, YOU ALREADY HAVE AN EDGE.

A TELLTALE SIGN THAT A CRIME IS HAPPENING, just happened or is about to happen is a marked change in behavior of a potential suspect when he or she becomes aware of the presence of a police officer. Such was the case several nights ago when I was patrolling an area known for its disproportionately high level of narcotics activity.

As I turned the corner in my marked police vehicle, I keyed on two males, each in his 20s, talking on the sidewalk. One of the men was on foot, and the other was straddling a bicycle. Upon seeing me, their conversation ceased. The pedestrian walked one way, and the bicyclist rode away as fast as his feet could pedal in another direction.

I followed the bicyclist, intending to conduct an investigatory detention, but he had other plans. The man ignored my verbal direction to stop and continued riding along the sidewalk. When he finally slowed to a stop, it was only long enough for him to reach into a pocket and toss something onto the ground. I assumed that “something” was narcotics or related paraphernalia.

I calmly radioed headquarters to let them know what was going on as the man turned 180 degrees and rode quickly away from me. I paralleled him in my patrol car and cringed as he nearly crashed on his bicycle. Then, the inevitable occurred: The suspect took a corner too fast and went down, skidding face first along the asphalt in the middle of what was fortunately an empty intersection.

With the bicyclist suddenly relegated to pedestrian status, I got out of the car. The suspect stood

and ran a few steps, but his newly skinned knee and freshly detached shoe apparently caused him to reconsider.

I took full advantage of the situation by drawing my pistol—because drugs and guns tend to go hand in hand—and in the most intimidating voice I could muster, I ordered the man to get on the ground.

After handcuffing him without incident, I recovered the item he had tossed, a hypodermic needle, which he admitted to having used to inject

But being aware of your surroundings will only take you so far. You must also be prepared.

methamphetamine the day before. He was booked into the county jail for possessing a hypodermic needle, violating his probation and failing to stop as I attempted to pull him over.

The takeaway here (aside from the fact that drugs are bad) is that by keeping my composure, I was able to control the situation. I waited for the suspect to make a mistake. When he did, I capitalized on it.

The importance of being in control of my emotions was instilled during my youth as a faithful devotee of martial arts. Of course, years of police work have reinforced this concept considerably.

In personal defense, emotional control will enable you to see a stressful, rapidly evolving situation for what it is so you can respond appropriately. Hesitate or respond with too little force and you could be injured or worse. Overreact or use too much force and you could wind

up spending an extended stay at the gray bar hotel.

While remaining calm under stress is easier said than done, here are a few points to consider:

The more alert you are to potential threats, the more time you have to either avoid the situation altogether or, if unavoidable, to make a reasonable decision followed by well-executed action. But being aware of your surroundings will only take you so far. You must also be prepared.

When you have a thorough grasp of the laws pertaining to self-defense in your area, you're less likely to freeze up at the critical moment. Instead of wondering whether you would be legally justified in taking a particular action, you can focus on your personal safety.

Another consideration is that, from a shooting standpoint, even seemingly mundane tasks like drawing from concealment can be challenging when your body experiences extreme stress. The realism and frequency of your training sessions can help bridge the gap between training and reality.

By keeping a clear head, you will be able to outthink a panicked or crazed assailant. And the ability to make appropriate decisions quickly while under duress will likely be more of a factor in the outcome of the encounter than physical prowess or shooting ability.



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