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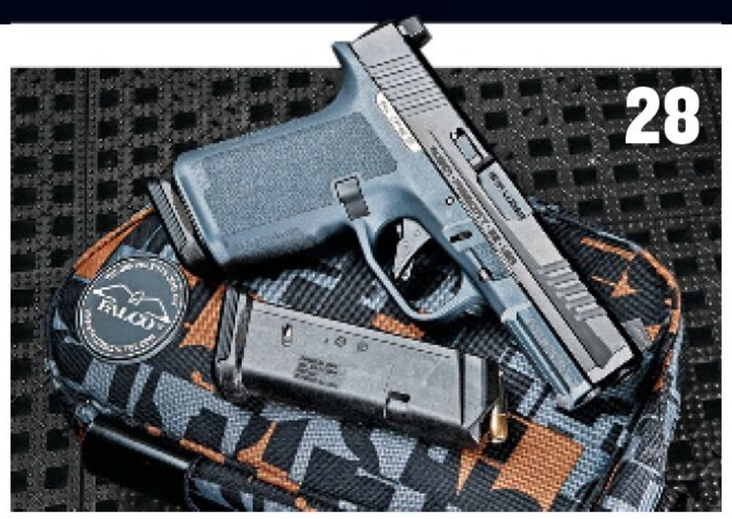
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NSSF's Project ChildSafe Celebrates a Big Milestone

Shame on us for missing it last year, but the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Project ChildSafe marked its 25th anniversary in 2024. The program began in just five cities and has now expanded to all 50 states and five U.S. territories.

Project ChildSafe distributes safety kits—41 million and counting—that include cable locks and educational brochures, all at no cost to gun owners. The program's partners include more than 15,000 local law enforcement agencies and 13,000 organizations.

"For 25 years, Project ChildSafe has operated on both the national and local levels to provide genuine firearm safety solutions to communities that need them most," said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president and CEO. "Since its launch, fatal firearm accidents have dropped to historic lows. The program also aims to prevent firearm thefts and suicide."

"Prevention can be challenging to measure, but over the years we've heard stories firsthand of how our safety kits have saved lives by preventing accidents and suicides," said Bill Brassard, NSSF's senior communications director.

NSSF has set a new goal for Project ChildSafe in the coming year: raise $250,000 in funding. The money will support the development and availability of new education resources, gun locks and city-level gun safety coalitions in communities with particularly high rates of firearm-related accidents and suicides. In fact, just before this issue went to press NSSF announced Project ChildSafe–Louisville in collaboration with Kentucky's attorney general, the city's mayor, and state and local law enforcement.

Whether you're an individual gun owner or part of an organization, you can make a tax-deductible contribution to help this effort. Go to ProjectChildSafe.org/donate/25th-anniversary.



'Handguns' TV Now Airing On Outdoor Channel

The popular "Handguns" television show, now in its 11th season, will be broadcast on Outdoor Channel in addition to Sportsman Channel beginning this year. The show will air every Wednesday at 9:30 p.m. Eastern, with additional airings throughout the week. Consult your local listings.

Remember, you can also catch past seasons of "Handguns"—as well as a ton of other shooting, hunting and fishing shows—via the My Outdoor TV app. Visit MyOutdoorTV.com to start your free trial.

Streamlight recently donated $20,000 to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, the monies coming from the proceeds of sales of specially marked pink lights, an effort that dates back to 2008. The products include the pink Nano keychain light, Pink Siege lantern and pink Strion tactical light. For each of the lights, Streamlight donates $1, $2 and $5, respectively.



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STRETCHING IT OUT

A UNIQUE MATCH IN OHIO TESTS HANDGUNNERS' LONG-RANGE SKILLS.

By Dan Henk

SINCE 2002, AN EAGER ASSEMBLY OF 40 handgunners has gathered each year in late July in rural southeastern Ohio to stretch their long-range handgun skills. The event is the challenging but intensely fun two-day Adam Bender Memorial Shoot organized by Michigan stock maker Jim Rockwell, Sr. It is held on the 200-acre grounds of the Thunder Valley Precision shooting complex in Coshocton County, just north of the town of Cambridge.

The shoot has a hunting theme. Distinct categories include centerfire hunter handguns, rimfire handguns, revolvers and benchrest pistols lobbing rounds out to 1,000 yards.

The first day of the event is devoted to the hunter centerfire handgun, rimfire and revolver competitions. The second day focuses on benchrest events, and at the end of the regular program some benchresters will fire their benchrest handguns out to a full mile—a final informal challenge for the true long-range handgun afficionados.

The hunter-class competitions—centerfire, rimfire and revolver—offer an interesting challenge. To score well, shooters must acquire, engage and consistently hit small stationary targets at various ranges, shooting off inherently challenging surfaces.

Competitors are organized by squads, and the squads progress through five shooting stations that offer novel props for resting the handgun while shooting. Props might include a deer stand, log pile, fence post, hay bale, the back of an ATV, a rusty tractor engine cover and similar challenges.

Each station requires shooters to undergo some kind of physical contortions to get into shooting position. Once settled in position at a shooting station, shooters have a set time to fire at steel plates set out at various known ranges from about 40 yards to about 700 yards. Ranges are shorter for rimfire and revolver.

Targets are similar in shape to silhouette and IPSC targets. The targets increase in size from smaller to larger as the range increases. And believe me, they all look small from the firing line.

Shooting against the clock puts a bit of pressure on the competitor, but this competition does not feature the frantic pace of some of the tactical games.

The benchrest events on the second day are organized differently. In these events, competitors shoot as individuals from concrete benches in a format that would be conceptually familiar to anyone who shoots benchrest rifle matches.

Shooters place their equipment on sturdy, fixed concrete benches and typically use front and rear rests. Although it's permitted, there's no extra credit for shooters who want to use just a bag or bipod.

There are two categories for the benchrest event: light and heavy. This allows competitors to shoot a total of four separate matches during the day if they choose: light gun at 600 yards and 1,000 yards; and heavy gun at 600 and 1,000.

Each match consists of 10 shots for record in a limited time. Scores are based on group size. If the round hits paper, it counts.



Distances can stretch to 700 yards, and except for the benchrest classes the shooting is from field-type rests.

Guns and Gear

The centerfire hunter-style handguns are the most common pieces at the match. These are typically single-shot, bolt-action pistols similar to the old Remington XP-100.

These are not your daddy's XPs, though. Custom actions, barrels and stocks are common. Chamberings range widely, but the 6mm BR is a popular choice. The weight limit is 10 pounds with all attachments and a barrel length limit of 16.25 inches—not including muzzle brake, if any.

Shooting in this class requires single-loading for safety reasons. Bipods or small, portable shooting bags are permitted.

Rimfire handguns are restricted to .22 Long Rifle. Guns are limited to a weight of eight pounds and a barrel length of 16.25 inches. Magazine feeding is allowed.

One popular .22 choice is the bolt-action Anschutz Exemplar. Several competitors use Ruger Mk IV semiautos, and others have used various revolvers.

In the revolver class, competitors shoot only five shots at each of the five stations, and the farthest targets are not much beyond 200 yards. Cartridges are restricted to bore diameters between .32 and .45. Revolver weight cannot exceed eight pounds, and barrel length is limited to 11 inches.

Freedom Arms revolvers are popular, but competitors have done well with Smith & Wesson and Ruger guns. More exotic handguns also have appeared, including Magnum Research BFRs and even a Webley.

The light benchrest class has a weight limit of eight pounds and a barrel length limit of 16.25 inches—not including brake, if any. The heavy class has a weight limit of 20 pounds and a barrel length limit of 18 inches, not including brake.

The benchrest handguns are mainly bolt-action custom jobs, typically chambered to 6mm BR, 6mm BRA, 6mm Dasher and so forth. Others have pursued long-range performance with heavier 7mm and .30 caliber cartridges.

There are no restriction on optics in any of the classes.

The initial intention behind Adam Bender was to offer long-range handgunners east of the Mississippi the kind of competition currently happening out West. Median age of participants tends toward the middle years or older. Female competitors have shot well. The competition also accommodates—and welcomes—shooters with disabilities.

Adam Bender is marked by camaraderie. It has not existed long enough to sink into a slough of obsessive bureaucracy, pettifogging rulemaking and irate competitors. The match is friendly, and competitors are willing to share ideas. Folks are serious about their shooting but not obsessive about winning.

There are no significant restrictions to shooting in this competition—as long as you're legally allowed to have a handgun and are a safe shooter. However, due to range limitations the number of participants is capped at 40, so early registration is highly recommended. More info is available on Facebook at the Adam Bender Memorial Shoot page.

GUNS & GEAR | BY J. SCOTT RUPP



< SAVAGE STANCE XR

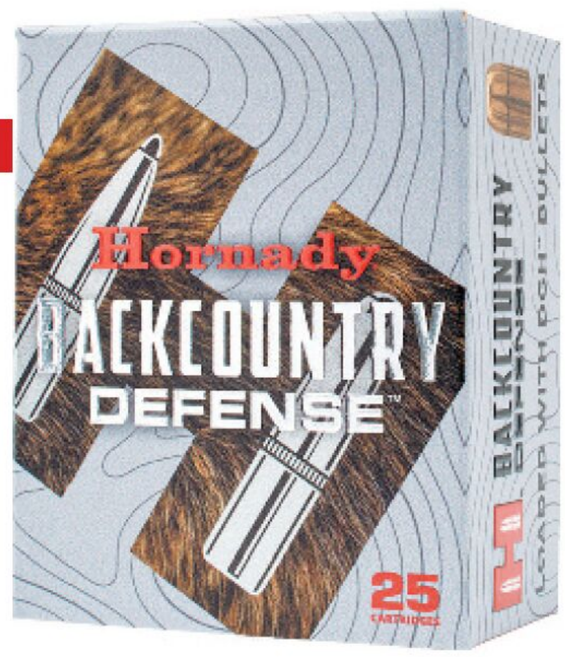
The XR is the replacement for the original, now-discontinued Stance. A 13-round 9mm semiauto with a 3.2-inch barrel, it features a quick-release optics plate and comes with two interchangeable backstraps. The grip frame houses a removable chassis, and the grip is stippled around its circumference. Controls include an ambidextrous slide-lock lever and magazine release. Available in flat dark earth, gray and black.

{$469, SavageArms.com}

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This new load is specially designed for defense against four-legged threats. Backcountry Defense features a heavy-for-caliber Dangerous Game Handgun bullet that has a protected point for maximum straight-line penetration. Calibers include 9mm +P (138 grains, 1,150 fps, 405 ft.-lbs.), .357 Magnum (165, TBA), 10mm (200, 1,160, 598), .44 Magnum (240, 1,620, 1,398), .454 Casull (300, 1,820, 2,206), .460 S&W (300, TBA), .500 S&W (500, TBA).

{HORNADY.COM}







< SAFARILAND INCOG X LEFT-HAND

Safariland's Incog X inside-the-waistband holster is now available in left-hand fits for the Glock 17 and 19. All the lefty versions will accommodate guns with and without lights. The Incog X has a Boltaron body wrapped in microfiber suede for comfort. It comes with three sizes of clip strut shims to fine-tune the fit, and the optional magazine caddy has tension adjustment.
{$93–$123, SAFARILAND.COM}



< XS SIGHTS PRE-DRILLED FRONTS FOR RUGER, S&W

These new front sights provide a quick and easy DIY replacement for Smith & Wesson J, K and L frames plus the Ruger SP101. They feature a dual self-illuminating system, pairing a tritium vial with XS's proprietary Glow Dot that absorbs ambient light to glow in low light. Dots for the K- and L-frame guns are available in green or orange; it's green only for the J frame and Ruger.
{$65–$110, XSSIGHTS.COM}

> FEDERAL CHAMPION BULK PACKS

If you're shooting rimfire, you're usually shooting a lot at one time, and two new bulk packs from Federal are super convenient—and economical. It's a 36-grain lead hollowpoint at 1,260 fps, and the bullets are loaded in Federal brass. Price is about nine cents per round, which is hard to beat.
{$30 (325 count), $47 (525 count); FEDERALPREMIUM.COM}





QUICK SHOT | BY J. SCOTT RUPP

SPRINGFIELD 1911 GARRISON 4.25

IT'S FUNNY HOW SOME PEOPLE REACT TO shooting a particular handgun for the first time. We were filming "Handguns" TV last spring, and gear editor Brad Fitzpatrick was assigned to review the new Springfield 1911 Garrison 4.25 in 9mm, which I'd brought to the shoot. He was so impressed that after filming was done for the day he immediately ordered one.

There's a lot to like about an all-steel, Commander-size 1911—especially one in 9mm Luger—and Springfield got this one right. Chambering aside, it's as traditional as traditional can be, which was the company's goal for the Garrison line.

No bull barrel, no full-length guide rod, no G10 grips, no accessory rail, just a rock-solid example of the type. Springfield Armory likes to play up its use of forged steel components, and with good reason: Forging creates truly strong parts that can withstand thousands of rounds and a lifetime of dependable service. The frame and slide on the Garrison 4.25 are blued carbon steel while the fully ramped barrel is stainless steel.

Slide serrations are on the rear only and consist of the traditional narrow-style cuts. Sights are low-profile combat three-dot, with both the front and rear set in dovetails. The rear is drift-adjustable for windage.

Grips are a dark Thinline wood and are checkered in the traditional double-diamond pattern. Springfield's cross-cannon logo is engraved in the center of both panels, and the panels are secured to the frame via Torx screws.

The flat mainspring housing is checkered at 20 lines per inch; the frontstrap is smooth.

The single-side thumb safety is extended, and the grip safety has a memory bump. The three-hole trigger is left in the white, and it and the barrel bushing provide a nice contrast to the all-blue slide and frame.

This is a shooter for sure. Accuracy was great from the bench, but the real joy comes in defensive-style shooting thanks to the weight provided by the all-steel construction paired with the 9mm cartridge.

If you've been thinking about a Commander-length 9mm, be like Brad. This one's a keeper.



Springfield's Garrison 4.25 is an all-steel pistol, available in 9mm and .45, that stays true to 1911 tradition.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY 1911 GARRISON 4.25

TYPE: 1911
CALIBER: 9mm Luger (tested), .45 ACP
CAPACITY: 9-round mag; one provided
BARREL: 4.25 in. forged stainless steel
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.9/5.5/1.2 in.
WEIGHT: 34 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: blued forged carbon steel slide and frame
GRIPS: Thinline double-diamond wood
TRIGGER: 3-hole; 3 lb., 7 oz. pull (measured)
SIGHTS: low-profile combat 3-dot
SAFETIES: single-side extended thumb, memory bump grip
PRICE: $868
MANUFACTURER: Springfield Armory, SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

ACCURACY RESULTS | SPRINGFIELD ARMORY GARRISON 4.25

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Magtech FMJ	115	1,186	18	2.3
Fiocchi FMJ	115	1,113	28	2.5
Federal HST	124	1,132	9	1.8
Hornady Subsonic	147	964	17	2.1

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest with iron sights. Velocities are averages of 15 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket

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STREAMLIGHT TLR-1 HL-X USB

STREAMLIGHT'S NEWEST GUN LIGHT, THE TLR-1 HL-X USB ($395), is a USB-C rechargeable light that gives serious power to the defensive handgunner. With the supplied SL-B9 batteries, you're getting 1,500 lumens, 20,000 candela and a beam distance of 283 meters—with a run time of one hour. It's a dual-fuel light, and if you opt for readily available CR123A lithiums, which are not included, the output drops to 1,000, 15,000 and 245 meters respectively, but runtime bumps up to 1.5 hours.



The Streamlight TLR-1 HL-X USB is a dual-fuel light that provides a ton of lumens and candela and is useful in a wide variety of defensive situations.

The body and face cap are made of 6000-series machined aircraft aluminum with a black anodized finish. It's IPX-7 rated—waterproof to one meter for 30 minutes. The lens is made of impact-resistant Borofloat glass, and the white LED light source is impervious to shock and has a 50,000-hour lifespan.

The light will fit a wide variety of pistols via interchangeable rail keys: two Picatinny, one Glock and one for the Beretta 92. Changing rail keys (one of the Picatinnies comes installed) requires a bit of care. Screw in the rail's clamp tension bolt using the provided multitool or a coin. You'll see an e-clip on the opposite side. Position the clip so the open end faces the rear of the light. Take the multitool and push on the open end of the e-clip until it dislodges.

And here's where the care comes in. The clip is tiny and under some tension, so watch that you don't lose it. Reverse the process to reinstall a different rail.

The supplied SL-B9 batteries need to be charged before you can use the light. Streamlight thoughtfully provides a two-headed USB-C cable for juicing up both batteries simultaneously. From dead to fully charged takes about 2.5 hours. Note the battery insertion diagrams on the sides of the light, as both have to be positioned differently.

The light ships with high and extended-high tail switches. Because they can be installed and removed independent of one another, you can mix and match.

For example, I installed the light on a Springfield Echelon 4.5F, and I found what worked best for me was the high switch on the right/trigger-finger side and the extended high on the left for my support-hand thumb.

Press and hold either switch for momentary on; tap either one for constant on. The TLR-1 HL-X has a strobe mode, which is disabled as it comes from the factory. To enable, from the off position press either switch 10 times quickly, holding down on the 10th press. To activate the strobe, press/release/press either switch within a quarter-second.

Streamlight says the light will fit full-size and compact guns and work with standard light-bearing holsters. I'd caution, though, that because the light will likely extend beyond the muzzle you should check the fit before buying a holster.

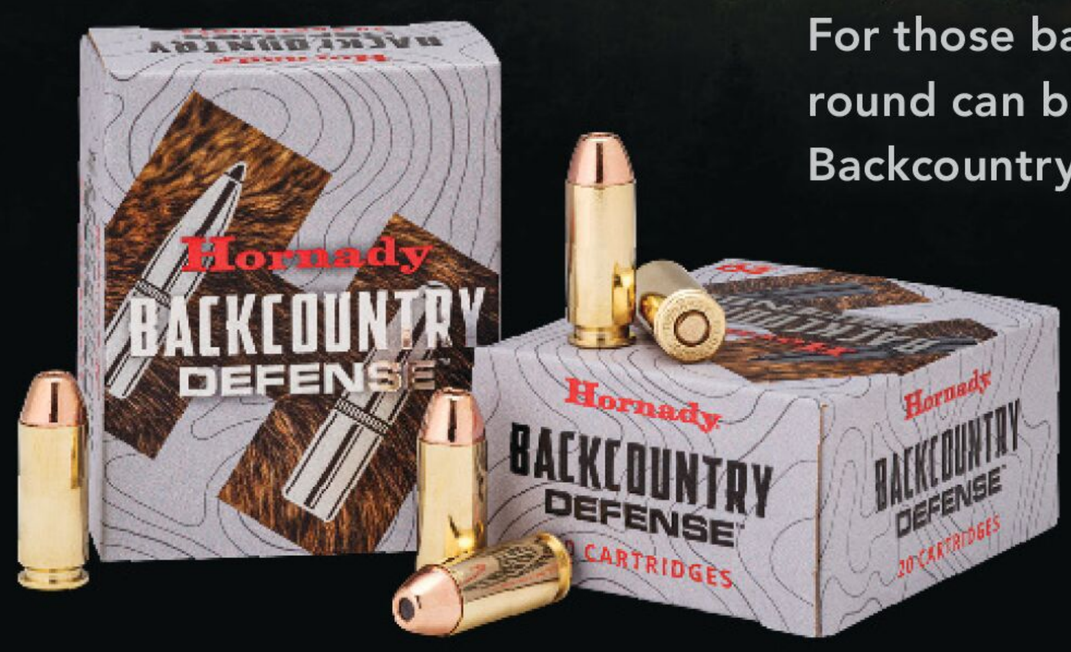
The TLR-1 HL-X USB's beam has a strong center and an extremely large peripheral portion. In my garage and basement, the peripheral was enough to light up entire walls, and even in small bedrooms there was little area you couldn't illuminate with short movements of the light. And that powerful center will help you identify threats—whether in the home, in larger commercial buildings or outdoors.

I'm totally sold on rechargeable lights. It's so handy to bring a light to full power simply by plugging it in instead of guessing how run down a battery might be. At a 500-cycle life span, you could charge the SL-B9 batteries once a week for almost 10 years before you'd have to look at replacing them.—*J. Scott Rupp*

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COVER QUESTIONS

HOW TO MAKE BEST USE OF OBJECTS THAT WILL STOP A BULLET.

WHEN FACING AN ARMED ASSAILANT, getting behind cover is a high priority. While it's true that cover is a relative term, anything you put between you and the bad guy is better than nothing. But before you can use cover, you need to recognize it. Once you're behind cover, there are a few techniques that will help maximize the protection it provides.

Since we don't tend to think clearly under duress, identifying, moving to and using cover probably won't just come to you when a deadly threat suddenly emerges. That's why it's important to understand what constitutes cover and how to maximize its benefits before your life depends on it.



It's important to know what is and isn't cover and, once identified, decide the best way to make use of it.

First, let's define what cover is. Cover is any object capable of stopping a bullet. Of course, an object that would stop a bullet from a .22 rimfire might not stop a .223 centerfire bullet, what would stop a .223 bullet might not stop a .308 bullet, and so on. Still, dense objects like concrete walls or pillars, a vehicle's engine block or tires, or even a large tree trunk will likely protect you from incoming rounds. Interior walls, car doors, and the like may not.

As you work through your day, start being aware of objects in the vicinity that could be used as cover. Consider not only whether an object would contain a bullet but also how you may have to position yourself behind the object for maximum protection.

Understand that how you use cover can change depending on the angle from which you are attacked. For instance, if an assailant is in an elevated position, being as close to cover as possible will better protect you than being several feet behind it. The same goes for an assailant attempting to flank you.

But hugging cover isn't always the answer. When you're too close to cover, your field of view is limited. Being too close to cover also makes you more susceptible to being struck by rounds that skip off the object you are behind, since they will tend to travel relatively parallel to the object.

If you're a few feet back from cover, skipped rounds are more likely to glide harmlessly past. This holds true whether you're working around cover, as in the case of the corner of a building, or over cover, like the hood of a vehicle. Being back from cover also gives you more room to maneuver, which is particularly beneficial if you're sharing that cover with others, who may also be trying to shoot the bad guy.

When you're armed, you'll want to keep as much of your body behind cover as possible to return fire. This requires you to be proficient in firing from a variety of shooting positions such as squatting, kneeling and lying down. Each position has its pros and cons.

Squatting enables you to keep more of your body behind a horizontally oriented object like the hood of a car. Here you need to remember that being behind the engine block is cover; if you're not behind the engine block, you may not be protected.

When possible, shooting around cover is better than shooting over it. Popping up above cover is more predictable, and since the distance between your eyes and the top of your head is greater than the distance from one eye to the side of →

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← your head, you are less exposed shooting around cover than over it.

Of the various shooting positions, squatting is the most like standing upright, so it doesn't require much modification. Just widen your stance and bend your knees to get your head behind cover. If squatting is enough to protect yourself from incoming fire, don't get any lower; to do so would needlessly compromise your mobility.

To get lower, there are several shooting positions where one or both knees are in contact with the ground. There's high kneeling, double high kneeling, low kneeling and double low kneeling.

High kneeling means one or both knees are on the ground, with your leg—or legs if both knees are on the ground—forming an approximate right angle. The ball of your foot (or feet) are in contact with the ground, which allows you to propel yourself up quickly.

With double high kneeling, it's a little slower to get up because you'll first have to transition to one knee. Your upper body positioning is no different than standing upright or squatting.

With low kneeling, your butt rests on one or both heels. This enables you to get even lower. When kneeling on your gun-side knee, this position allows you to brace your non-shooting arm on the corresponding raised knee.

This helps stabilize your gun for increased accuracy, but you should avoid resting the point of your elbow on the point of your knee. Instead, rest the outer portion of your elbow against the inner portion of your knee.

With the low kneeling position, you could place the tops of your feet on the ground rather than the balls of your feet. While doing so would enable you to get even lower, it would of course also take longer to stand up.



The rollover prone position can help you maximize the protection a vehicle tire provides.

Finally, we have various lying positions, which include prone, rollover prone and supine. These can enable you to use a very short object like a fire hydrant or even a high curb as cover. They also allow you to stabilize your gun for better accuracy.

Prone requires you to lie on your stomach, facing the threat, while propped up on your elbows. Rollover prone involves facing the threat while rolled onto either shoulder. You might find it more comfortable to bend your leg opposite the side you rolled to. If you roll to your left shoulder, your right knee bends, and vice-versa.

Supine may be used if you find yourself on your back, behind the tire of a car or in a similar predicament. Keeping your feet on the ground ensures your lower body is out of the line of fire. It also enables you to move left or right to stay oriented to the threat. You can brace your arms against the inside of your legs for stability.

Recognizing and maximizing available cover is one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself against someone shooting at you. If you're unarmed, it buys you time. If you're armed, it provides a degree of protection from which you can return fire to stop the threat.

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BACK TO THE WALL

TIGHT ON SPACE? SECUREWALL PANELS HAVE YOU COVERED.

MY WIFE AND I HAD A HOUSE BUILT A few years ago, and our contractor suggested we add extra space to the garage and outbuilding. He said it's easy to run out of space, but since I was frightfully close to running out of money I chose not to take his advice. Of course, he was right, and I've run out of space, especially in my gun room.

Lockdown's SecureWalls have helped cope with that. The panels themselves are the heart of the system. They come in two varieties—standard and heavy duty—and multiple sizes.

Standard panels are made from 16-gauge steel and will support up to 100 pounds each while the 14-gauge heavy-duty panels can hold up to 200 pounds each. Standard panels are available in 32x24-, 16x24- and 4x24-inch sizes while the heavy-duty panels are available in 32x24- and 16x24-inch sizes. This allows you to mix and match panel sizes based on available space. Every SecureWall panel comes with a silver powder-coated exterior finish for added durability.

With multiple openings for installing screws, the SecureWall panels make it simple to attach the panel to your wall. There's no track system needed, and because there are multiple points at which you can insert the screws you can install these panels almost anywhere you'd like.

The bottom of each panel comes with a "tang" that overlaps with the panel below. In that way, each screw anchors both the top and bottom panels, offering a relatively seamless junction. Installation is simple and straightforward and doesn't take a great deal of time or specialized tools. A level, drill and screws are the primary tools required.



SecureWalls panels have so many anchor points it's possible to store lots of handguns on a single panel. Having the ability to rearrange the panels as space demands change is also a major benefit.

Attachment points extend all the way to the edge of each panel, and this allows for more efficient use of space. The cutouts in each panel accept not only Lockdown accessories but also any standard pegboard accessory, and that adds a great deal of versatility.

Lockdown offers both straight and angled barrel pegs, which are powder and vinyl coated to reduce the risk of damage to the interior of the bore. The angled pegs do a better job displaying your handguns, but I find the straight pegs make it simpler to remove and replace pistols.

Pegs are four inches in length so most compact and subcompact guns fit securely. With five-inch guns and longer, you may want to switch to Lockdown's new pistol hanger bracket. It comes with two side by side V-shape hangers. For really large handguns you can use either a handgun hanger or two of Lockdown's long gun hangers positioned close together.

The website indicates the barrel pegs will accommodate barrels from .38 to .50, and I had no issues installing 9mms. Your .22s will not fit, though, and will require handgun hangers.

One of the newest accessories from Lockdown is the Pistol Mag Rack, which is a beneficial addition. I don't know how many pistol magazines I have tucked away in drawers and range bags, but the Pistol Mag Rack makes it simple to store these items where they can easily be located and accessed.

These racks snap into position on the SecureWall panels and hold up to five single-stack magazines, but there are metal dividers that can →

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New is the Lockdown Gun Lock (l.) that locks your handgun to the wall panel. A cable lock is provided. The new Pistol Mag Rack (r.) holds up to five single-stack magazines or three double-stack mags.

← be arranged to accommodate wider mags. By spacing the dividers, the rack holds three double-stack magazines.

The first criticism levied against wall panels is that they don't offer security unless installed in a secure room. Lockdown recently added an optional accessory to address this: the Gun Lock.

Gun Locks include a peg that secures in place on the wall panel. Channels drilled through the peg allow owners to thread a cable gun lock through the peg and the open action of their firearm. Lockdown provides a keyed gun lock with each peg, but you can certainly use the gun lock that is provided with new firearms.

The gun cannot be removed without the key, and since the cable prevents the action from operating when the lock is properly positioned the firearm cannot be fired until the lock is removed.

Lockdown offers a variety of storage accessories, too—most recently adding plastic bins with label brackets. These bins are handy for storing interchangeable backstraps, cover plates, wrenches and other small parts that are easy to lose, as well as spare optics batteries.

Lockdown SecureWalls also accept standard pegboard pegs. This means there are hundreds of accessories available at most hardware →



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← stores that will work with your SecurePanels.

Generally speaking, it's easy to swap accessories in or out of your panels as needed, but sometimes accessories do not fit perfectly. During testing, a few items installed on the panels were so firmly locked in place they were difficult to remove. My advice is not to exert excessive force with sticky accessories.

Put another way, getting angry because an accessory doesn't fit correctly or won't pull free and wrenching the piece in or out of place only damages either the panel or the accessory you're adding or removing.

I learned the hard way that it's better to determine what is binding and preventing installation or removal and addressing the issue. The panels are sturdy—especially the 14-gauge heavy-duty panel—and will generally survive rough handling. Jamming an accessory into position, however, could break it.

Overall, though, these panels are a well thought-out and worthwhile addition to any gun room. They're also relatively affordable. Standard SecureWall Panels range from $25 to $56 depending upon size, and heavy-duty panels cost from $50 to $70.

You can install four heavy-duty SecureWall panels covering 24 square feet of wall space for under $300. Covering the same space with standard panels costs less than $225.

Barrel pegs, either angled or straight style, and handgun hangers cost $6, and the new magazine rack is $13. Both the Gun Lock and Bin Hangers two-packs cost $15. So for less than $400 you can install multiple panels and add all the accessories you need to secure dozens of handguns as well as storage space for belts, holsters, weapon lights, manuals and more.

SecureWall panels are easy to install, and I like that. Just be sure to take the time to make certain that you level them so they fit properly. Installation took me less than an hour, and I'm certainly not a carpenter.

If space is limited and you're looking for a new way to store your handguns the Lockdown SecureWall panel system is a sound and reasonably small investment. It's given me more space for guns and gear, which means I have good reason to do some shopping at the local gun store.



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IF YOU SIMPLY CAN'T GET ENOUGH GUNS and shooting, the My Outdoor TV (MOTV) app is a resource like no other, a curated treasure trove of firearms- and outdoor-oriented television shows and videos.

For example, MOTV offers nine seasons—102 episodes—of "Handguns" (formerly "Handguns & Defensive Weapons") alone. The show focuses primarily on personal protection and includes plenty of recreational shooting activities such as plinking and action-shooting competitions.

It features reviews of the latest firearms, ammunition and shooting accessories, as well as advice on marksmanship, gun handling, self-defense techniques and a host of other handgun-related topics.

But wait, there's more! There are 10-plus seasons of the popular "Guns & Ammo" television shows, encompassing more than 200 episodes available on the app. You can also check out past episodes of shows like "Gun Stories," "The Gunfather," "Hollywood Weapons" and "Shootout Lane."

In addition to the HD episodes, there are short-form videos encompassing how-to instructional and gun history topics you can watch anytime, anywhere.

I think *Handguns* readers will really appreciate MOTV's short-form HD videos covering a wide variety of self-defense topics. These videos are perfect for sharing with family members to reinforce the finer points of keeping yourself safe. Like the show episodes, the videos are true HD quality for the ultimate viewing experience.

And if your tastes run to the wider outdoor world—including hunting and fishing—there are a ton of shows and additional content covering these.

In addition to streaming video, you can take this content with you, downloading content for later viewing when you're without internet access.

MOTV is available on the Web, as well as Apple and Android platforms. Interested? Simply go to MyOutdoorTV.com and subscribe today. Monthly subscriptions are $10, and you can get a year for $99.

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RUGER PLANTS A FLAG

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



Michael Anschuetz photo

WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GLOCK-COMPATIBLE RXM, RUGER AND MAGPUL TEAM UP ON A GUN THEY HOPE WILL BE A MARKET LEADER.

Ruger celebrated 75 years of firearms manufacturing last year, and the company has achieved many milestones in the past three-quarters of a century. Its 10/22 .22 semiauto rifle and Mark-series rimfire pistols set the standards in their respective categories, and the company claims a substantial share of the single- and double-action revolver market. The American rifle is the best-selling bolt gun in the country, and new additions to the Ruger family, including the PC and LC carbines, have been instant best-sellers.

One area where Ruger seems to have struggled a bit, though, is the compact and full-size polymer-frame, striker-fired pistol market. I wrote about the SR9—Ruger's first striker-fired gun—when it arrived on the scene more than a decade ago, and that was followed up by the American pistol. Both were fine guns, but neither threatened to become the best-selling striker-fired pistol. Ruger doesn't seem to like the runner-up status, and as such it is revamping its semiauto pistol line with the new RXM.

The RXM and the American are brand mates, but aside from the fact that they're both striker-fired, polymer-frame semiautos, the two share little in the way of design architecture. The RXM looks very Glock G19-ish, and in fact it is Glock G19 Gen 3-compatible. There's no doubt that the shooting public likes the G19 pistol, and Ruger loyalists will love to see that they can have a Glock G19 Gen 3-compatible pistol that's built in Prescott, Arizona.

The RXM is sized similarly to other double-stack compact guns with four-inch barrels. It measures 7.2 inches long and 5.3 inches tall. The slide itself is an inch wide, and the overall width of the gun is just around 1.1 inches.

That makes the RXM slightly shorter overall than the 7.4-inch Glock G19 and about .015 inch narrower. At 23.2 ounces unloaded, →

RUGER PLANTS A FLAG

← the Ruger is about a half-ounce lighter than the Glock.

The new RXM isn't just a Ruger project, though. It's a collaboration between Ruger and Magpul (hence the name: R for Ruger, M for Magpul). Ruger offered up the machined metal parts. Magpul provided the gray grip frame it refers to as its Enhanced Handgun Grip, or EHG for short. It does not incorporate interchangeable backstraps.

Inside the grip frame you'll find a serialized stainless steel Fire Control Insert (FCI). Since the FCI is serialized, it can be removed and reinserted into a different grip assembly, and that means down the line you can mix and match slides and grips as they become available, without having to buy a completely new firearm.

The current grip frame holds 15-round magazines; 10-round versions are available in capacity-restricted jurisdictions. A full-size gun—and corresponding full-size frame—is almost certain to follow, as are color options besides gray. We may see an even more compact version of the frame for better concealment. Point is, you have the ability to configure this gun as you'd like when new components come to market.



The RXM features a Magpul grip frame that houses the serialized fire-control unit. The American-made gun is compatible with Glock 19 Gen 3 parts, sights and holsters.



The RXM's machined slide offers mounting options for several popular optic footprints via a system of removable dowel pins—resulting in a direct mount that gets an optic lower on the gun.

RXM pistols feature through-hardened alloy steel slides that are precision machined and treated with ferritic nitrocarburizing (FNC) for durability and corrosion resistance. The four-inch, 1:10 twist alloy steel barrel is also FNC treated.

Other finishes such as Cerakote may follow, but I think FNC is a good place to start. The process rearranges the molecules on the surface of the metal, improving lubricity and protecting against wear.

I've really tried to wear down the surface finish on the FNC-finished pistol I've carried every day for the last several years, and it just doesn't happen. Sure, you can damage the metal, but the finish won't flake like some ceramic finishes, and it's considerably tougher than standard bluing. Even the abuse of daily carry won't mar the RXM.

This pistol has angular slide serrations at the front and rear of the slide. They're not radical, and there are no crisscrossed diamond-shaped patterns that wrap around to the top of the slide, but they're functional for press checks.

All RXM slides are cut to accept optics, and, hallelujah, Ruger has decided to make optics mounting and swapping simple. The slide is cut and drilled to accept a range of red-dot sights. To accommodate differing sight designs, Ruger supplies four round metal inserts— →

ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER RXM

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,152	8	1.9
Hornady American Gunner JHP	115	1,136	14	2.2
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,146	9	2.3
Speer Gold Dot JHP	124	1,100	10	2.4
Fiocchi FMJ	147	942	13	2.8

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest with a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro red dot. Velocity figures are 10-shot averages recorded on a LabRadar at the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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← called dowel pins in the manual—that fit in pre-drilled holes on the optics cut. The setup is similar in concept to Springfield's Variable Interface System in that you don't have to match plates to specific optics, and the optic sits lower on the gun.

Attaching a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro like the one I used, or an optic on the Shield RMSc footprint, requires all four dowel pins, whereas attaching a Trijicon RMR-footprint optic requires only two pins. The pins are bagged separately, and they are tiny and easy to lose, so pay close attention when opening the bag.



The forward part of the grip frame features an indexing point and a Glock-dimensioned accessory rail. The steel front sight is on the Glock pattern and incorporates a tritium vial.

Ruger also did a good job selecting iron sights for the RXM. The all-black metal rear sight fits in a dovetail and has both glare-preventing serrations on the rear and a flat face with ample purchase for one-handed cycling. The front sight is also metal, and it's pinned to the slide. It's a tritium sight that provides around-the-clock visibility.

The sights are suppressor height and will co-witness with most optics. They didn't with the Leupold DeltaPoint Pro, but this sight has a very high deck height, so that's not unusual. The sights are Glock compatible, but the Ruger's factory sights are superior to Glock's G19 factory sights, which aren't as sturdy or as easy to see as those on the RXM.

Magpul put serious thought into the grip frame design and has →



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The EHG grip frame on the RXM features texturing on the backstrap, sides and frontstrap of the grip to offer better purchase on the gun. The grip frame does not offer interchangeable backstraps.

← added some features I wish were found on other guns. Chief among these is a molded low-profile magazine well that's just the right size. The mag well makes it easier to reload quickly—especially with your hand resting on the mag well itself, offering an instant reference point—but it doesn't print under clothing or jab into your body.

There's also a magazine release "scallop" for improved access to the release. Magpul's proprietary texturing is called Trapezoidal Surface Projections (TSP), and the Enhanced Handgun Grip on the RXM features three-quarter-scale TSP texturing. This offers a secure hold on the gun without biting.

In keeping with the times, Magpul has also built an indexing point into the forward portion of the frame. It offers a reliable, repeatable landing spot for the forward thumb and a bit of control over muzzle rise.

Speaking of control, the grip frame features a high trigger undercut and a beavertail that pushes the hand up closer to the plane of the bore, which helps reduce recoil fatigue and muzzle rise. The frame also incorporates a Glock "universal" rail on the dust cover and an oversize trigger guard with plenty of room for gloved fingers.

The RXM has a flat-face trigger with integral safety; models with a manual safety aren't currently available. There's also a striker-block safety, as well as a small cutout machined into the chamber that allows for a visual inspection. The beefy extractor is externally mounted, and the barrel's feed ramp is smooth.

Controls include a compact slide stop and rectangular magazine release. Both of these are on the left side only and are not reversible. The takedown pin is a transverse style.

The test RXM's trigger broke at 5.25 pounds average after 10 pulls on a Wheeler gauge, and I like the flat front design. There's plenty of take-up but a defined wall, and the break is relatively clean. Trigger reset is on par with other striker-fired polymer pistols but noticeably longer than the reset of, say, the Walther PDP.

Accuracy was very impressive. At 25 yards the Ruger managed to shoot several five-shot groups under two inches, and the best group measured 1.6 inches center to center.

Reliability was excellent throughout testing, although the slide failed to lock back twice while I was shooting from a supported position on the bench. However, I never encountered this issue when shooting drills.

I fired 10-shot slow-fire drills, and perhaps the most telling was a seven-yard hostage drill. All my shots struck the bad guy and did not nick the hostage. Margin of error is less than 2.5 inches for that drill, and it was no problem to shoot accurately.

Ruger got a lot right with the RXM. First, as mentioned, I like the design of the magazine well. It's just large enough to accommodate those fast reloads and to provide a tactile reference point when reloading. The molded index point is a nice touch, offering enough purchase to control the pistol and to encourage consistent hand position.

I'm not crazy about the TSP grip texturing and prefer what Walther and Springfield do with their guns, but the TSP is secure and functional.

Where Ruger really hit the mark was with the sight setup. If you have a red-dot sight on the Trijicon RMR, Leupold DeltaPoint Pro or Shield RMSc footprint, everything you need to mount your optic is included with the gun. The metal sights are also very good, and that bold green tritium front dot promotes front-sight focus. Because the RXM uses Glock-pattern sights, there are lots of aftermarket options, too.

The Magpul GL9 magazines that ship with the RXM work in both the Glock G19 and the Ruger. →

RUGER
RXM

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto centerfire
CALIBER: 9mm Luger
CAPACITY: 15; 2 Magpul PMags supplied
BARREL: 4 in. FNC-finished alloy steel
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.2/5.3/1.1 in.
WEIGHT: 23.2 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: FNC-finished steel slide, gray Magpul EHG frame
TRIGGER: 5.25 lb. pull (measured)
SIGHTS: notch rear, green tritium front; slide cut for optics, direct-mount
SAFETIES: trigger, striker block
PRICE: $499
MANUFACTURER: Ruger, RUGER.COM

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Accuracy from the RXM 9mm semiauto with a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro red dot proved excellent. At seven yards it was easy to make accurate shots on hostage targets.

← I also used factory Glock G19 magazines in the RXM without any issues.

The RXM is also compatible with G19 holsters, and because that fitment is so popular you have lots of options. I tested Bianchi, Safariland and Blackhawk holsters designed for the G19, and all fit the RXM.

The RXM deserves consideration as a carry pistol. No, it's not as trim as the company's Max-9 or other subcompacts, but this gun's narrow design, superb accuracy and manageable weight make it a good option—especially since it will hold 15 rounds.

The RXM feels like a full-size gun and shoots that way. It would make a great choice for an all-around pistol for home defense, concealed carry and target shooting for the buyer who wants a single gun.

The RXM comes with a plastic case with locking tabs and two Magpul GL9 15-round PMags. At a suggested retail price of $499 it's a great value. Ruger told me they've seen street prices as low as $399, with an average around $450. Compare that to the cost of the Glock G19 Gen 3, which has a typical street price of $499.

Is the RXM going to make Ruger the leader in the compact 9mm market? Time will tell, but its collaboration with trusted brand Magpul is a great start. The RXM is certainly a well-designed pistol, and it's the type of high-quality American-made firearm that is the bedrock of the Ruger brand.



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BY KEITH WOOD



COLT REINTRODUCES A .44 MAGNUM NOT SEEN IN MORE THAN 30 YEARS, WITH SOME CHANGES THAT MAKE IT A BETTER GUN.

No doubt influenced at a young age by publications such as this one, I have always loved big-bore revolvers. Single actions, double actions, Rugers, Colts, Smith & Wessons or custom jobs, I love most of them. It's no secret that revolvers have made a big comeback, and Colt has reintroduced some classic sixguns, including the Python, Anaconda and King Cobra. This year, the company has taken things a step further with the release of the non-snake-themed Kodiak chambered in .44 Remington Magnum.

Many people will not recall the original Kodiak, which was a limited-production revolver made in 1993. Around 2,000 were reportedly made, so they were fairly rare.

The 1993 Kodiaks were actually Anacondas with unfluted cylinders, Pachmayr grips and Mag-na-ported vent-rib barrels. Most examples I've ever seen for sale had six-inch barrels, although four-inch guns do exist. These guns were made at the tail end of the revolver's century-and-a-half period of dominance, and they never seemed to gain the collector cachet of the snake guns. Still, they command high prices due to their low production numbers.

Colt's classic Anaconda and Python revolvers were well-made and beautiful, with triggers that were the envy of all. They had their flaws, though. The guns weren't as tough as their competitors' offerings and weren't ideal for high-volume shooting with full-power ammunition. Also, their intricate actions were extremely complicated and difficult to repair or tune. During a recent conversation, renowned pistolsmith Hamilton Bowen told me he knows of only one really good double-action Colt smith who is still alive.

When Colt set out to reintroduce its revolver lineup a few years ago, the company addressed those shortcomings. The new double-action revolvers, to include the Kodiak, are built with beefed-up frames to withstand the punishment of a →

A NEW KIND OF KODIAK

← lifetime of shooting. The internals are also simplified, making these revolvers easier to make and also to repair.

So no, these are not faithful reproductions of the old guns. And yes, Colt uses modern manufacturing methods including metal-injection-molded (MIM) parts. While some purists may disapprove, the practicality of business dictates otherwise. If you're looking for a hand-built revolver using all parts machined from bar stock, order a Korth from Nighthawk Custom at three to six times the price of a new Colt.

Although it is not a clone, the new Kodiak is certainly inspired by the original and fills the same practical niche. As its name suggests, the Kodiak is a stainless steel revolver built for life in bear country. Compact enough to carry on a daily basis but powerful enough to use on a big bear in a pinch, the Kodiak is an outdoorsman's sidearm.

At its core, the Kodiak is an Anaconda with a 4.25-inch barrel and several tweaks that make it functionally and aesthetically pleasing. The beefy Anaconda-size frame is large enough to accommodate the .44 Remington Magnum—or the .45 Colt if the company opts to add that chambering. The added steel is mostly in the topstrap area above the cylinder window.



▲ The Kodiak features an unfluted cylinder and full-underlug barrel. The Hogue Monogrip does an admirable job of soaking up recoil.



▲ The Kodiak's 4.25-inch vent-rib barrel is ported with six round holes—three on each side—to cut muzzle rise.

Colt deviated a bit from the classic four-inch barrel, opting for a 4.25-inch length on the Kodiak. The barrel uses the full underlug and vent rib that make a Python or Anaconda recognizable from across the room.

I am such a fan of this barrel style that a couple of years ago I paid a ridiculous amount of money to have an Anaconda barrel fitted to a Ruger Redhawk. The Kodiak's underlug adds a bit of weight up front where it can help tame muzzle rise, and it also protects the ejector rod.

Unlike many of the two- or three-piece composite barrel arrangements that have become popular, the Kodiak's barrel is made from a single forging. A false muzzle on the Kodiak extends slightly past the face of the sight rib and underlug, providing a protective ring around the crown of the bore.

One of the unique elements of the Kodiak is the barrel porting, which is designed to reduce felt recoil and muzzle rise. Original Kodiaks had trapezoidal ports while the current version uses six round holes, three on either side of the rib. →

ACCURACY RESULTS | COLT KODIAK

Cartridge/Load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
.44 MAGNUM				
Hornady LeverEvolution	225	1,399	16	2.5
American Eagle JSP	240	1,291	16	2.3
.44 SPECIAL				
Hornady Critical Defense	165	870	19	2.6
Lost River Ammunition WC*	185	796	8	2.4

Notes: (*.44 Russian.) Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Target Shooting Inc. Model 1500 rest with iron sights. Velocities are averages of 10 shots using a Garmin Xero C1 chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle. Abbreviations: JSP, jacketed softpoint; WC, wadcutter

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A NEW KIND OF KODIAK

In my experience with the Kodiak, the porting was effective for its intended task. While recoil with .44 Magnum loads is never going to be soft, the porting helped the gun recoil straight to the rear, making faster follow-up shots possible.

The porting did increase muzzle blast, but I doubt that I would notice if a bear was trying to put me on the menu. I've been forced to stop a charging dangerous game animal at close range, and I can tell you that noise was the least of my worries. Putting accurate rounds on target was all that mattered.

Unfluted cylinders were not popular on Colts made after the percussion era, which is what makes both the modern Kodiak and its 1993 antecedent special. The absence of flutes does add a bit of recoil-taming mass but, like the barrel lug, mainly looks cool.

Revolvers have a few quirks that can have significant effects on accuracy. One of these is the size of the cylinder throats. Ideally, the throats are a slip fit with bullets—tight enough to maintain minimal resistance to guide the bullet straight into the barrel's forcing cone but loose enough not to raise pressures or constrict bullet diameter.

Remember that we still want the bullet to be sized correctly to fit the bore after it passes through the cylinder throat. Using pin gauges, I determined that all six throats on my Kodiak sample's cylinder measured .432 inch. While this might be slightly on the generous side, it is far better than the alternative.

The Kodiak's cylinder locks up at the rear and is released by pulling back on the cylinder latch. There was some slight horizontal play between the cylinder and the bore, which isn't always a bad thing.

In cases where the chamber throat and forcing cone are not perfectly aligned, that play can allow the bullet sufficient room to find its way into the bore. If there is no play, perfect alignment is necessary for good accuracy. My sample had a barrel-to-cylinder gap of .008 inch, which is the maximum allowable spec according to Kuhnhausen's shop manual for Colt double actions.

If we can assume that the Kodiak's primary role would be defense against four-legged creatures, a good double-action trigger pull would be important. My test gun had a very smooth double-action trigger pull, with a weight of 10.3 pounds. The single-action pull was also very clean, breaking at 5.5 pounds.

The trigger itself has three deep grooves cut into the face, which could be useful with cold or gloved hands. The hammer spur is serrated horizontally.

For the Kodiak's grip, Colt chose the excellent Hogue Monogrip. I've been using these soft rubber grips on revolvers for three decades. They hold up well to real-world abuse, and they really seem to soak up felt recoil. Their textured sides stay grippy even when wet, which would be particularly useful for backcountry situations.

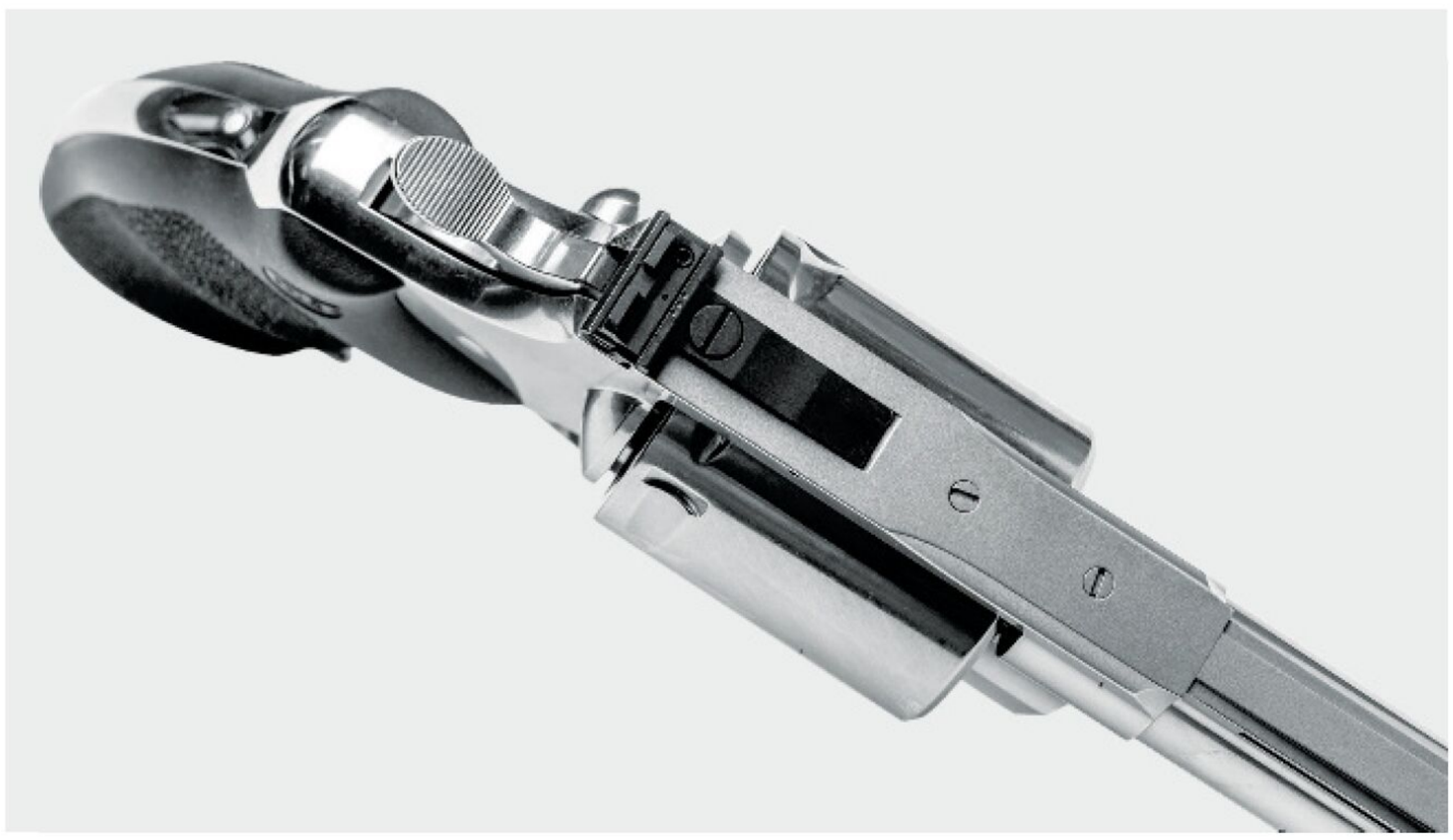
The Kodiak ships with a red →



The barrel is a one-piece forging, and a false muzzle extends slightly past the face to protect the barrel's crown.

COLT
KODIAK

TYPE: double-action/single-action revolver
CALIBER: .44 Rem. Mag.
CAPACITY: 6
BARREL: 4.25 in., one-piece stainless steel
OAL/HEIGHT: 9.9/6.1 in.
WEIGHT: 49 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: 410-series stainless steel frame
GRIPS: Hogue Monogrip
SIGHTS: red ramp front, adjustable rear
TRIGGER: DA pull: 10 lb., 5 oz.; SA pull: 5 lb., 8 oz. (measured
PRICE: $1,599
MANUFACTURER: Colt's Manufacturing Company, COLT.COM



A small set screw on the rear sight prevents the blade from wobbling in its slot. The gun is also drilled and tapped for an optic mount.

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← ramp front sight that is secured to the rib using a hex screw above the muzzle. The plain black rear sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation.

When the new Pythons and Anacondas were released, some shooters complained about the wiggle of the rear sight blade. Colt has responded by adding a vertical hex set screw that can be used to lock the blade in place once any necessary adjustments are made. This works well.

If you have a desire to change out the sights, upgraded replacement sights are available from a few firms, including Wilson Combat and Harrison Design. The top of the frame is also drilled and tapped to allow for the mounting of an optic. I checked online and found that Kodiak red-dot mounts are already available.

One of my favorite things about revolvers is their ammo versatility. Unlike semiautos, revolvers are incredibly forgiving. Since the .44 Magnum headspaces on the rim, it will not only swallow loads ranging from shotshells to heavy magnums, but it can also fire less-powerful cartridges.

In addition to two full-power .44 Magnum loads, I also tested .44 Special and even .44 Russian ammunition. With Lost River Ammunition's 185-grain .44 Russian wadcutter load, recoil was almost nonexistent. This made the Kodiak incredibly fun to shoot, and the combination would be ideal for practice or taking small game.

Accuracy was about average with the four loads I tested. If I'm going to be honest with myself, my ability to get a crisp sight picture with my middle-aged eyes was likely a factor. If I'd had more time with the Kodiak, I would have loved to mount an optic in order to get the greatest possible accuracy out of it.

The powerful all-weather Kodiak would be a great choice for a sidearm in bear country. With the heaviest .44 Magnum loads it would be capable of stopping a hostile animal, but it is light and compact enough to wear all day. The stainless steel construction and rubber grip make it resistant to the elements, while the porting helps keep the muzzle on target when needed. For Colt fans, the new Kodiak is a second chance to own a purpose-built workhorse.



The Kodiak will shoot a variety of loads including (l.-r.) the .44 Russian, .44 Special and .44 Remington Magnum.

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TURNING PRO

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



WALTHER'S PDP PRO-E GUNS ARE A STEP UP FROM THE STANDARD PDP, THANKS TO A BETTER TRIGGER AND A REMOVABLE MAGAZINE WELL.

Walther introduced its Performance Duty Pistol (PDP) 9mm semiauto handguns in 2021, and three years later the company launched the upgraded Pro Series SD PDP. Recently it has introduced yet another new member of the PDP family, the Pro-E. Available in four-inch compact and 4.5-inch full-size versions, these German-made striker-fired 9mms effectively split the difference in terms of features and prices between the standard PDP and the top-of-the-line Pro Series SD models.

The Pro-E pistols have a flat-face polymer trigger with integral blade, just like the Pro Series SD guns (more on this in a bit), and they also feature an aluminum mag well that makes it easier to reload in a hurry. The Pro-E full-size pistol gets a bump in magazine capacity—20 rounds compared to 18 for the Pro-E Compact—and the three included magazines feature magazine extensions.

The primary feature missing on the Pro-E pistols compared to the Pro Series SD is a threaded barrel. With their upgraded features, the PDP Pro-E guns have a price of $779, falling between the standard PDP ($649) and the line-topping Pro Series SD ($899). If you can live without a threaded muzzle, you'll save more than $100 with the Pro-E model. And with the mag well, upgraded trigger and extra magazine, the Pro-E might offer the most bang for your buck of any Walther pistol.

I toured Walther's factory in Ulm, Germany about a decade ago, and the facility is among the finest I've seen anywhere in the world. At the time, Walther's flagship was the PPQ, a gun that set the standard for build quality and ergonomics in the striker-fired market. I was a bit heartbroken, then, when the PDP supplanted the PPQ.

But it didn't take me or anyone else long to warm up to the PDP. It is, painful as it is for me to admit, a more modern pistol than the →

← PPQ. For starters, the slides on PDP pistols—including the Pro-E—are cut for optics. The cover plate is beefy, and lugs that correspond to cutouts the slide provide added traction.

Although no plates are included, you can obtain plates from Walther to fit a variety of red dots. With each new gun you get a certificate for a free plate; additional plates cost $40.

If you choose not to run a red dot, the Walther features adjustable polymer sights. The rear notch sight features two white dots and can be adjusted for windage and elevation via the screws on the right side of the sight. The rear screw adjusts elevation while the front adjusts windage, and Walther even includes a tool to make these adjustments. The front sight is polymer with a white dot.

The PDPs feature Walther's Super-Terrain slide serrations. The portion of the slide that contains the front and rear serrations is machined wider than other parts of the slide, and deep serrations are machined into this widened section.

This gives the PDP Pro-E and its kin the most aggressive—and useful—slide serrations on the market. They're far more functional than the me-too shallow cutouts you'll find on other pistols in this class. You want a positive grip when you're racking the slide or performing press checks, and the PDP pistols offer just that.

One feature I particularly like about the PDP pistols, and the PPQs before them, is the ambidextrous slide-lock lever. Unlike the miniaturized levers on some pistols, this one is actually functional. In fact, it's over an inch long, and it offers plenty of purchase when you slam a magazine home and want to chamber a round as fast as possible using the lever as a slide release.

Many gun instructors preach the overhand pull/release method for chambering a cartridge, and while it's positive, it is slower than hitting a well-positioned slide release. However, some guns have such perfunctory slide releases it's impossible to use them consistently to drop the slide on a freshly loaded magazine. That's not the case with the Walther.

Gone are the days of the cool European paddle-style magazine releases found on older PPQ pistols. PDP-series guns, including the Pro-E, feature a large, round, checkered mag release button. It's reversible, and it's larger than competing mag release buttons. It sits in a molded shelf on the frame to prevent accidentally dropping the magazine.

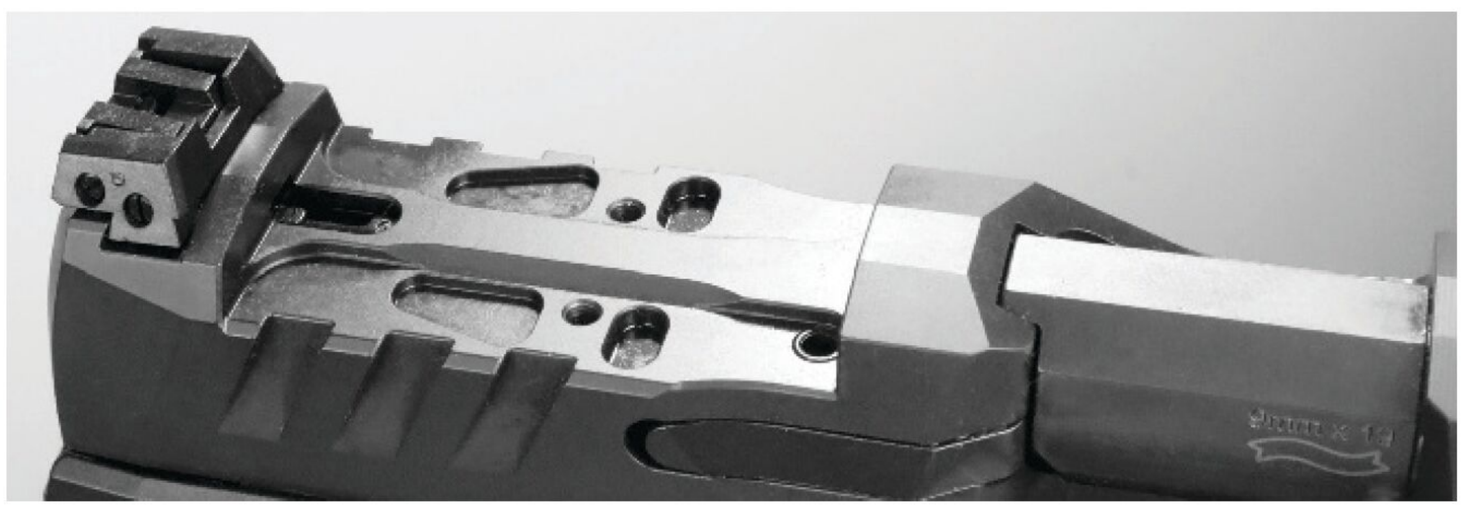
The slide is made from precision machined steel and is finished with Tenifer, a ferritic nitrocarburizing (FNC) process. The FNC finish is extremely durable and holds up well to rigorous use.

The barrels also receive the Tenifer treatment and feature a 1:9.8 twist. Why such an odd twist rate? Because Germany uses the metric system, and the 1:250mm twist rate—which translates to 1:9.8 inches—is the 9mm standard.

Like other PDP pistols, the Pro-E guns feature polygonal rifling, which is believed to create a better gas seal, ease cleaning and improve accuracy. Feed ramps are polished and machined to the proper angle to ensure reliable operation. →



Walther did an excellent job with the Pro-E's control layout, including a generous ambidextrous slide release, reversible mag release and easy-to-operate transverse takedown bar.



The slide is cut for optics. Walther doesn't provide adapter plates with the gun, but a free one is easily ordered from the company.

ACCURACY RESULTS | WALTHER PDP PRO-E FULL SIZE

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,197	10	1.6
Hornady American Gunner JHP	115	1,155	13	2.4
Speer Gold Dot JHP	124	1,177	12	2.0
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,206	7	2.3
Fiocchi FMJ	147	1,002	13	2.7

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocities are 10-shot averages recorded on a LabRadar at the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



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← Walther handguns have superb ergonomics, and the PDP Pro-E pistols are no exception. The sides of the grips, and the interchangeable backstraps are covered in Walther's Performance Duty Texture. It's a grip texturing that, when viewed under a magnifying glass, appears like hexagonal reptile scales with peaks in the center of each scale.

Most owners won't closely examine the grip texture, but the benefit of the design is immediately apparent when you hold the pistol. The gun is firmly locked in your hand and doesn't shift under recoil at all. Best of all, this anchored grip is achieved without resorting to aggressive texturing that hurts your hand during recoil.

There are no finger grooves on the front of the grip—a departure from the PPQ's design—but finger grooves are molded into the sides of the grip. The grip angle itself is excellent, and the grip has an ample beavertail and trigger undercut to promote a high handhold. Keeping the hand high on the pistol drives recoil forces back through the arm where they are manageable, and this, in turn, allows for faster follow-ups.

Three interchangeable backstraps are included: small, medium and large. Swapping them out is simple. Remove the magazine well by driving out the pin at the base of the grip using a 5/32 punch. The mag well is easy to remove as well if you'd prefer a more concealable profile, and you need to remove the well first in order to change backstraps.

Pro-E pistols incorporate the E-Dynamic Performance Trigger. It's a flat-face design like the Dynamic Performance Trigger found on Pro SD models, but Jens Krogh, Walther's vice president of marketing and product development, told me there are a few minor differences between the two. First, the trigger shoes on the E-Dynamic are made of injection-molded polymer, not aluminum like the Dynamic Performance. Also, the E-Dynamic isn't hand-tuned, which the Dynamic Performance is.

However, unlike the trigger on the standard PDP, the E-Dynamic has a flat face, which many of today's shooters prefer. There's a smooth, light take-up and a well-defined wall, and the break is very crisp—crisper than the standard PDP trigger. Trigger reset is also exceptionally short.

The trigger on the full-size Pro-E broke at an average of five pounds, one ounce. The compact version's trigger broke at four pounds, 14 ounces on average. You'd be hard-pressed to find any factory striker-fired trigger that performs better.

Walther has earned a reputation for superb ergonomics, and the PDP Pro-E is as comfortable and controllable as any striker-fired gun. Both the full-size and compact frames feature a large, square trigger guard with ample room for gloved fingers and three-slot accessory rails on the dust cover. There's a molded "step" in the front of the frame that serves as an indexing point and offers some control of the muzzle.

PDP Pro-E pistols are not currently offered with manual safeties, but there are multiple passive safeties built in. They include the trigger safety, a striker block safety and a disconnect safety.

I'd shot Walther's PDP and Pro-SD as well as the Pro-F (smaller grip circumference) models prior to laying hands on the Pro-E, so I knew what I could expect from the Pro-E. There are no cheap, weak or ill-fitting components on this gun. The external extractor is beefy but precisely →

WALTHER
PDP PRO-E

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto centerfire
CALIBER: 9mm Luger
CAPACITY: 20 (full size), 18 (compact)
BARREL: Tenifer-finished steel; 4.5 in. (full size), 4 in. (compact)
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.0/5.7/1.3 in. (full size), 7.5/5.7/1.3 in. (compact)
WEIGHT: 26.6 oz. (full size), 25.1 oz. (compact)
CONSTRUCTION: Tenifer-finished steel slide, polymer frame w/Performance Duty Texture; 3 interchangeable backstraps
TRIGGER: E-Dynamic Performance; measured pulls: 5 lb. 1 oz. (full size), 4 lb. 14 oz. (compact)
SIGHTS: adjustable two-dot notch rear, white dot post front; slide cut for optics, free plate available from Walther
PRICE: $779
MANUFACTURER: Walther Arms, WaltherArms.com



The E-Dynamic Precision Trigger is a polymer unit with a flat face. It's an upgrade over the trigger on the standard PDP.



Walther's Performance Duty Texturing includes hexagonal "scales" with high points in the center that secure the gun in the hand but are not overly aggressive. The magazine well on the Pro-E is removable.

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machined and fits into the gap in the slide with very little extra space.

The grip inserts fit snugly into the frame without seams, and the pin that holds them in place is neither too loose nor too tight. The spring is relatively heavy, but slide movement is smooth, and slide-to-frame fit is excellent. Feed ramps are polished and smooth, and the internals were free of machine marks.

You might also expect these guns to be accurate, and the PDP Pro-E proved to be one of the most accurate striker-fired guns I've tested. I topped the 4.5-inch PDP Pro-E with a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro and tested it at 25 yards and found that the gun could routinely group under two inches at that distance. The best group went just over 1.5 inches.

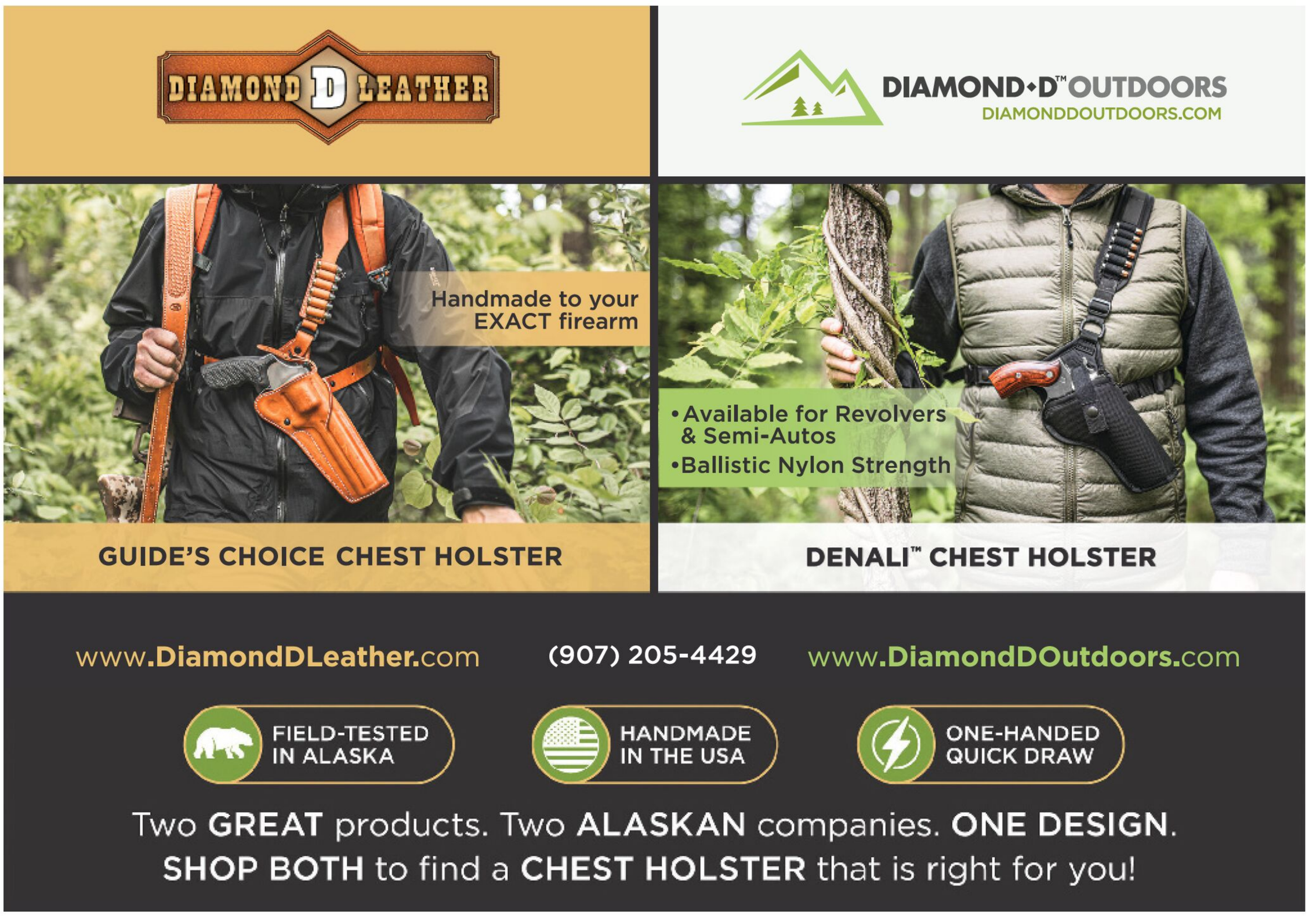
You can credit some of that to the polygonal rifling, but I believe trigger quality plays a major role in the Walther's accuracy. The E-Dynamic Performance Trigger is simply outstanding, certainly among the best of any striker-fired guns out there.



Swapping out the interchangeable backstraps requires driving out a single pin to remove the magazine well with a 5/32 punch and then replacing the backstrap with the size of your choice.

The grip geometry also allows for a firm, steady, comfortable hold on the gun. I tested both the full-size and compact guns offhand and was equally impressed. The Walther's robust design and architecture make it not only accurate but fun to shoot. It's like a sports car, begging you to move faster. You'll hit your speed limit before the Walther does, but a well-trained shooter will appreciate this gun's impressive capabilities.

You'll also appreciate the gun's reliability. Throughout testing





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← neither of the guns failed to chamber, extract or eject a round, and the slide locked open every time the magazine ran empty. Running the quality-control failure reports must be the single most boring job at Walther.

Both the 18-round mags for the compact and 20-round mags for the full size are made of metal and feature base plates that add enough weight to ensure they drop free during reloads. The extension on the 20-rounder also offers better purchase on the mag should you need to strip it by hand. The base plate on the compact pistol is made from polymer, while the plate on the 20-round mag for the full-size pistol is made of aluminum.

Although it's not oversize, the Walther PDP Pro-E is a beefy pistol. Both versions are 5.7 inches tall and 1.3 inches wide, making them a bit more broad-shouldered than many other semiautos. The full-size pistol weighed 26.6 ounces, with the compact coming in at 25.1 ounces. While they are slightly heavier than competitors' guns, the extra couple ounces of mass certainly make them more manageable to shoot.

Novice gun buyers typically want the lightest and cheapest 9mm available, and the Pro-E guns are neither. However, they are great pistols for new shooters because they are so manageable. They're also easy to disassemble thanks to a large transverse takedown bar, which is much simpler to operate than the small blade-style bars on other guns.

With the mag well removed and a standard PDP 15-round magazine (available from Walther) the PDP Pro-E Compact in particular would make a suitable carry pistol, and you wouldn't have to wear a bulky coat to conceal it.

There's a lot to love about this gun, but if I had to identify a weakness it would be the sights. The three small white dots aren't as visible as the sights on competing guns. The adjustable rear sight is a nice touch, and it offers a flat face for one-handed cycling, but the sights are too short to co-witness with an optic. Also, there's no serialized fire-control unit that allows you to swap slides and grip frames as with some other pistols.

Overall, though, this is simply an outstanding pistol. The craftsmanship is best in class, and every component part is high quality. There are a lot of striker-fired 9mms that exist simply to grab a share of the market. Walther designed the PDP to outperform the other guns in this class, and it largely does so.

The new Pro-E offers many features found on the line-topping Pro-SD guns, at an excellent price. The Pro-E is a superb gun and an excellent value, and if you're about to purchase your next striker-fired 9mm, don't pull the trigger until you've had this pistol in your hand.





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AN 'A' FOR AOS

BY KEITH WOOD



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY'S INNOVATIVE AOS SIGHT SYSTEM FOR 1911S TAKES PISTOLS LIKE ITS OPERATOR TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL.

Optic or no optic? These days, that's a legitimate question shooters have to ask themselves. With many handguns, the question is binary. Thanks to Springfield Armory's new Agency Optic System (AOS) models, one need not commit to one or the other. I tested the Springfield Armory 4.25-inch AOS handgun, a compact and capable 1911 with versatile sight options.

The Operator series consists of duty-ready handguns designed for tactical/defensive use. Both full-size Government-length and 4.25-inch Commander-length models are available. My test sample was the latter, chambered in .45 ACP.

The pistol starts with a lightweight forged aluminum frame, with an integral accessory rail machined into the frame's dust cover. The grip has a standard GI-style profile rather than a modern high cut. The frontstrap is smooth, with no checkering or serration.

The grips are G10 panels made by VZ Grips in Tallahassee, Florida. They feature VZ's Alien texture and a smooth thumb notch for accessing the magazine catch. The mainspring housing is checkered with a woven pattern that is reminiscent of what Springfield Armory previously used on the Vickers Tactical Master Class model.

The back of the frame is contoured for a beavertail grip safety. The grip safety has a memory bump to ensure it is easily disengaged when the shooter grips the handgun. There is also an ambidextrous thumb safety with extended levers. The magazine catch is the standard serrated button, and the slide stop is standard size as well.

The Operator is fitted with an aluminum three-hole trigger with a serrated face and an overtravel adjustment. The trigger on my sample broke at just under five pounds, with almost no detectible creep. The hammer is a Delta-style.

The slide is made from a carbon steel forging and, like the →

AN 'A' FOR AOS

← frame, is finished in black Cerakote. Angled cocking serrations are milled into both the front and rear of the slide, and the slide's saddle cuts are made with a ball end mill. The radius made by the end mill cuts aligns with the taper of the frame. The ejection port is generously cut and is both lowered and flared back.

The match-grade barrel is forged from stainless steel. The barrel uses an integral ramp, which is somewhat unusual for a .45 ACP-chambered 1911 but provides more strength and durability considering that this handgun uses an aluminum frame. The barrel employs a standard bushing that does not require a wrench to remove.

The Operator 4.25 AOS features a standard internal extractor and a frame-mounted ejector. The recoil system is a Commander-length rather than a full-stroke and uses the typical GI guide, plug and coil spring. There are no fancy dual springs or other modern spins, just a long-proven system.

The star of the show on the Operator 4.25 AOS is, naturally, the AOS sight setup. This system was developed in collaboration with Idaho-based Agency Arms, a custom shop specializing in upgrades for handguns and shotguns. The beauty of this system is that the iron sights can be used when desired and, if needed, an optic can be mounted in about a minute.

Why? Well, let's say that you're like me and are more comfortable using iron sights but recognize that red dots bring a great deal to the table. Or, also like me, you've reached middle age and your eyesight is getting worse by the day. The ability to add an optic without investing in a new handgun or sending the slide off to be altered is an asset.

Let's start with the iron sight setup. The front sight is a tritium dot on a blade dovetailed into the slide. The rear sight has a white dot below the notch and has a ledge so it can be used to rack the slide one-handed. The section of the slide that rear sight is milled into is secured with two T10 Torx screws and can be removed to access the optic mounting platform.

Once this is removed, a machined steel mounting plate for the ap-



The gun has a forged steel slide atop a forged aluminum frame, and the frame sports an accessory rail. VZ G10 grips provide great control.



The rear sight (l.) features a U notch. The optics plate (r.) has a notch sight as well and is secured via screws and a mechanical fit with the slide cuts.

ACCURACY RESULTS | SPRINGFIELD 1911 OPERATOR 4.25 AOS

.45 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady American Gunner JHP	185	893	10	0.9
Federal Punch JHP	230	840	8	0.8
American Eagle Syntech TSJ	230	755	10	1.4

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Target Shooting Inc. Model 1500 rest with a Vortex Defender-ST red dot. Velocities are averages of 10 shots using a Garmin Xero C1 Chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle. Abbreviations: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; TSJ, total synthetic jacket

propriate optic can be attached to the slide using a separate pair of T10 screws. The mounting plate has a plain black suppressor-height rear sight that is positioned behind the optic. Finally, the optic is attached to the mounting plate with yet another pair of T10 screws.

I used this system to mount a Vortex Defender-ST optic with a three m.o.a. red dot. The red dot co-witnessed with the iron sights which, to me, is a must-have if an optic is going to be mounted. Optics can and do fail, and the ability to transition the eye immediately to the sights is key.

The handgun comes with the cover plate/iron sight installed. A coupon allowing the shooter to buy an optic mounting plate at the discounted price of $49 is included. Additional Agency Arms optic plates are available on Springfield Armory's website, retailing at $129.

These six different plates are designed to work with the Hex Dragonfly, Hex Wasp/Holosun 507k/Shield RMS, Trijicon RMR/Holosun 407c, Leupold DeltaPoint Pro/EOTech EFLX, Aimpoint ACRO and Holosun 509.

I've been shooting and tinkering with 1911s of various stripes since before I could drive, so there was certainly a great familiarity with the Operator 4.25 before I ever dropped the hammer on a live round. I've always been a fan of the Commander-length guns and don't discriminate between steel and aluminum frames.

The beavertail grip safety and extended thumb safety were comfortable and easy to manipulate. I liked this gun from the start.

During testing, it became immediately apparent that this was an extremely accurate handgun. Part of this equation was the fact that the three m.o.a. dot allowed for a very precise hold on the 25-yard target.

Although some shooters might consider the Operator's duty-weight trigger too heavy for shooting tiny groups, my results prove otherwise. All three loads I tested shot very well, with Federal's Punch slightly edging out Hornady's American Gunner for the best accuracy.

Even though the Operator 4.25 AOS is an aluminum-frame handgun chambered in .45 ACP, recoil was reasonably mild even with full-power defensive loads. The texture on the VZ Grips did a nice job of keeping the gun from rotating in my hands, and the felt recoil was straight rearward, allowing for decent speed on follow-up shots.

The Operator 4.25 AOS is also available in 9mm Luger, which would be great for people seeking a bit less recoil and slightly more capacity.

When it comes to reliability, 1911s can be finicky when compared →



The slide has been milled to allow mounting of either a traditional rear sight or an AOS adapter plate for your choice of optic.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
1911 OPERATOR 4.25 AOS

TYPE: 1911
CALIBER: 9mm, .45 ACP (tested)
CAPACITY: 8+1
BARREL: 4.25 in. forged stainless steel; fully ramped, supported
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.9/5.25/1.5 in.
WEIGHT: 31 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: Cerakote-finished forged carbon steel slide, forged aluminum frame
GRIPS: VZ Grips G10
TRIGGER: three hole; 4 lb., 14 oz. pull (measured)
SIGHTS: white-dot rear, tritium front; slide cut for AOS system
SAFETIES: ambidextrous thumb, grip
PRICE: $1,184
MANUFACTURER: Springfield Armory, SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM



Since the Operator uses an aluminum frame, a ramped barrel is incorporated to provide a slick and durable feeding surface.

AN 'A' FOR AOS

← to more modern designs—especially when they deviate from the five-inch Government-length system. Other than one failure to feed, the Operator 4.25 AOS was completely reliable during my testing.

So what role would the Operator 4.25 AOS fill? In my mind, this would be a great all-around defensive handgun for a shooter who is comfortable with the 1911 but wants the latest in terms of capabilities. It is compact enough to be carried concealed but large enough for serious shooting.

The fact that it can be used with an optic and/or a light increases its versatility. We are seeing more and more people choosing to carry handguns with both an optic and a light; the Operator 4.25 AOS provides that option in a relatively compact format.

I've tested a great number of 1911s built by Springfield Armory over the past several years. Every one of them has been well-built, reliable and accurate. From my experience, the company is building some of the best factory 1911s for the money right now. Not only are they great guns right out of the box, they are ideal candidates for custom tweaks thanks to the host of aftermarket parts available.

There was a time when the thought of putting an optic on a 1911 was pure blasphemy. Times have changed, though, and it is apparent that the handgun optic is here to stay. They have proved to be reliable and durable, proving many naysayers (like me) wrong.

More and more shooters and law enforcement agencies are adopting them, thanks to their tangible benefits. Still, not everyone is ready to make that leap. With the AOS system, Springfield Armory offers the option of adding an optic without the commitment.

Having a handgun adapted for an optic after the fact can be an expensive proposition. Rates for this type of machine work generally start at $150 and go up from there. Add in the requisite overnight shipping and you're looking at close to $300 total.

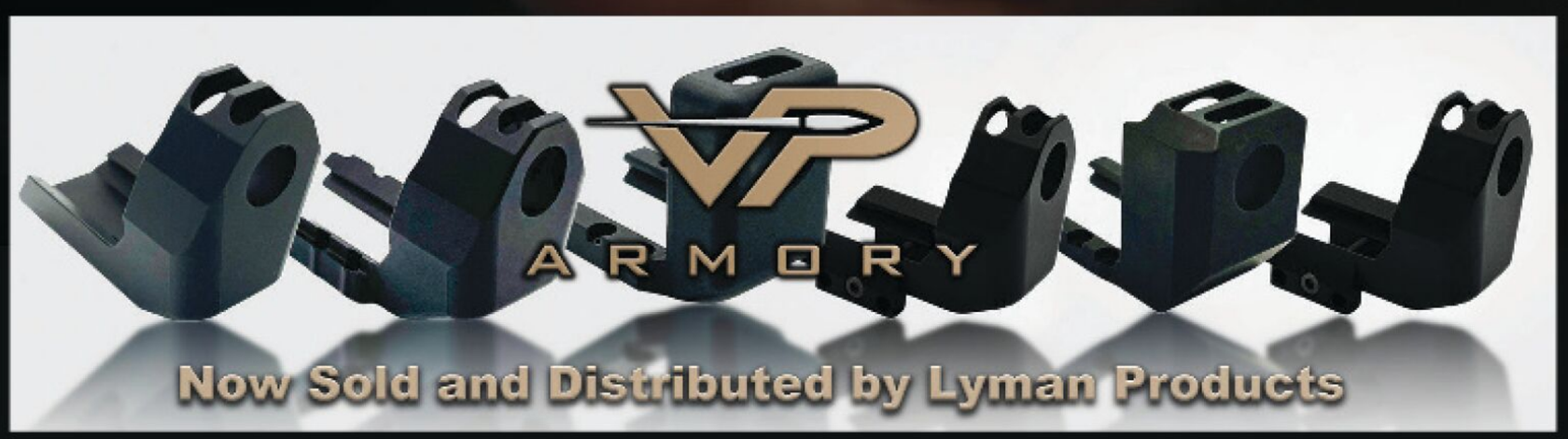
Once you've paid the tab, you're committed to the optic cut. Most systems don't allow the option of going back to a clean slide with an iron sight. Taking all that into consideration, the Operator's suggested retail price of under $1,200 means this handgun is priced competitively with comparable guns on the market—with the added bonus of the AOS.

For someone seeking the shootability and classic attributes of a 1911 but with all the capabilities of a more modern defensive handgun, this should be an attractive option. Whether you want to mount an optic now or have the option of doing so later, you're covered.



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KIMBER KDS9c RAIL

THE 1911 IS AN ICONIC PISTOL, WITH ergonomics that give it an almost universal appeal and a trigger that is the envy of all others. The one drawback to the 1911 has been its relatively low capacity, with its single-stack magazines holding just seven or eight rounds. However, with the introduction of double-stack 1911s, you get 1911 functionality with twice as many rounds—making capacity on par with modern striker-fired offerings.

Kimber's KDS9c is a 9mm, double-stack 1911-esque pistol with an excellent trigger. The pistol's grip panels keep it nearly as slim as a traditional 1911 despite its 15- and 18-round magazines. A version of the gun with 10-round magazines is available for restrictive states.

The KDS9c lacks the 1911-style grip safety but retains the familiar thumb safety on the left side of the pistol. But as good as the KDS9c is, some shooters wanted a version with an accessory rail and an ambidextrous thumb safety, which is where the KDS9c Rail comes in.

The feature-rich KDS9c Rail enables you to mount a light, laser or combination thereof to the four-slot Picatinny rail, making it a true fighting pistol that's well-suited for both duty use and concealed carry. Unlike the original KDS9c, it also boasts an ambidextrous thumb safety that lefties and even righties forced to run the pistol left-handed will surely appreciate.

The KDS9c Rail is 7.75 inches long, 6.01 inches tall and 1.5 inches wide across the safeties. It weighs 29.6

KIMBER KDS9c RAIL

TYPE: hammer-fired semiauto centerfire
CALIBER: 9mm Luger
CAPACITY: 15-, 18-round mags supplied; 10-rounders available
BARREL: 4.1 in. stainless steel
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.75/6.0/1.5 in.
WEIGHT: 29.6 oz. (15-round mag)
CONSTRUCTION: 7075 aluminum frame, stainless steel slide
TRIGGER: 3 lb. pull (measured)
SIGHTS: TruGlo three-dot night; slide cut for optics adapter plates
SAFETY: ambidextrous thumb
PRICE: $1,615
MANUFACTURER: Kimber, KimberAmerica.com

ounces with an unloaded 15-round magazine and 30.3 ounces with an unloaded 18-round magazine. It features a 4.1-inch fully fluted, stainless steel barrel with 30-degree flush cut, deep crowning. A barrel ramp helps ensure reliable feeding and chambering.

The 7075 aluminum frame is plenty strong without being unduly heavy. It wears a KimPro gray or black finish that provides both lubricity and corrosion resistance. The undercut trigger guard and an extended beavertail facilitate a high hold that helps reduce muzzle flip, which could otherwise be substantial in a lightweight 9mm pistol.

Designed with concealed carry in mind, the bobtail-style grip provides a snag-free surface and reduces printing through your cover garment. While the beavertail is smooth, the area below it features crosshatch texturing, as does the frontstrap. Similarly textured grip panels help lock the pistol into your hand without being abrasive.

The thumb safety is oversize and serrated for easy manipulation. It produces an audible and tactile click when engaged and disengaged. It provides a ledge, upon which downward thumb pressure can further mitigate muzzle flip.

The knurled magazine release is reversible for lefties. Its size and oblong shape make it easy to use, but it doesn't protrude so far from the grip that you're apt to eject the magazine accidentally.

One of the pistol's best attributes is the curved, serrated trigger. Kimber lists the adjustable trigger as having a pull weight between 3.5 and 4.5 pounds, but mine was barely three pounds according to my Lyman digital trigger pull gauge. That's on the light side for a carry gun, but it was very smooth and clean breaking, which is conducive to accuracy.

Like the frame, the stainless steel slide wears a KimPro black finish. It has serrations both front and rear

ACCURACY RESULTS | KIMBER KDS9c RAIL

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense	115	1,152	5	2.3
Black Hills +P JHP	124	1,152	7	2.0
Wilson Combat HBFN	135	941	12	2.5

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from Caldwell Handy Rest NXT. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded from a Garmin Xero C1 chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle. Abbreviations: HBFN, hollow-base flatnose; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



The KDS9c Rail has an ambidextrous thumb safety and an extended slide stop. The undercut trigger guard, extended beavertail and crisp trigger make it easy to shoot.



The four-slot Picatinny rail distinguishes the KDS9c Rail from the original and increases its capability by allowing the use of lights and lasers.

to provide a solid gripping surface, whether you're checking the chamber or racking the slide.

TruGlo night sights adorn the slide to provide 24/7 aiming regardless of lighting conditions. Like most pistols these days, the KDS9c is cut for optics. It comes with adapter plates to accommodate Shield RMSc/Holosun K, Trijicon RMR and Docter footprints. The sights are not suppressor height, so you won't see them through the window of an optic.

For testing, I mounted a Trijicon SRO. From a bench at 25 yards, it printed five-shot groups that averaged between two and 2.5 inches with bullets ranging in weight from 115 to 135 grains. The two best groups measured just over an inch.

I shot several rapid-fire groups at 10 yards, with equally impressive results. The KDS9c Rail felt well balanced, and the dot settled predictably after each shot. This enabled me to register hits in the upper chest about as fast as I



The KDS9c is cut for optics and comes with adapter plates for Shield RMSc/Holosun K, Trijicon RMR and Docter footprints.

could pull the trigger. The only hiccup during my test, which consisted of about 150 rounds, was a single failure to feed a Black Hills 124-grain jacketed hollowpoint round. I tapped the back of the slide with my palm to correct the problem. I think that could be chalked up to the pistol needing a bit more of a break-in period.

Double-stack single-action semi-autos are gaining in popularity, and if you're fan, you're really going to appreciate the KDS9c Rail.



COLT BLUED PYTHON

SITTING AROUND AFTER AN INFORMAL handgun shoot at the club where we were discussing different guns, one of the group said, "There's nothing like a Python." We all nodded our heads in agreement.

The Colt Python made its debut in 1955, with production ending in 1999, although the company's custom shop continued building them until 2005. Then in 2020 Colt brought the legend back—but at first only in stainless. Now there's a blued version.

My custom-shop blued Python was built in 1977, so I was able to compare that first generation with the new second. With a few exceptions, the new one is a good clone of the original.

The target-style rear sight has been redesigned and the topstrap enlarged in thickness over the cylinder for strength. This sample was equipped with the shorter 4.25-inch barrel—there's also a six inch—and it balances nicely in the hand.

These guns still host that famous Colt blue finish, and while the company doesn't use the term "royal blue" in the specs anymore, it does come very close to the original in brilliance. And credit must be given for the lack of tool, buffing or polishing marks anywhere on the gun.

Obviously, the ventilated rib is what makes this gun unique, and Colt spared no expense to make it right. Rather than use a sleeve, the company forged the barrel as one piece, machining the vents during production with stylized cuts at the rear of the vent rib as it mates with the frame.

The muzzle is crowned more so than the original, but the barrel still has the full underlug. The front sight is ramped with a red insert and is user-interchangeable via a set screw at its base.

The cylinder is fluted and chamfered on the forward edges. Timing of the cylinder notches to the bolt is nearly perfect. Drag marks on my Python are hardly noticeable despite years of shooting.

The hammer has a beavertail shape and is checkered. The trigger is service width and has a non-slip surface. The single-action pull was a bit disappointing at a full six pounds with a hint of creep; double action was a bit over 12 pounds.

The satin-finished wood grips have checkering that is flush instead of raised as on the original. The grips are complemented by a gold rampant-colt medallion.

For those who have waited patiently, Colt has taken a bold new step with the reintroduction of this legend, and the return of the blue finish is most welcome. What my friend at the club said was correct: There's nothing like a Python.

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