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FIRST LOOK

KUNA

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY'S
SMG-STYLE 9MM PISTOL
FEATURING A ROLLER-
LOCK OPERATING
SYSTEM, WITH OR WITH-
OUT A FOLDING BRACE.

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200 YEARS SELLIER & BELLOT

G&A VISITS CZECH
REPUBLIC'S
LEGENDARY AMMO
FACTORY P. 56

BANISH 9K

AIMPOINT
ACRO C-2

+
WORLD
WAR II
SNIPER
RIFLE
SERIES

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THE **SPRINGFIELD ARMORY KUNA** IS AN SMG-STYLE PISTOL THAT'S FUN TO SHOOT AND IDEAL FOR DEFENSE.

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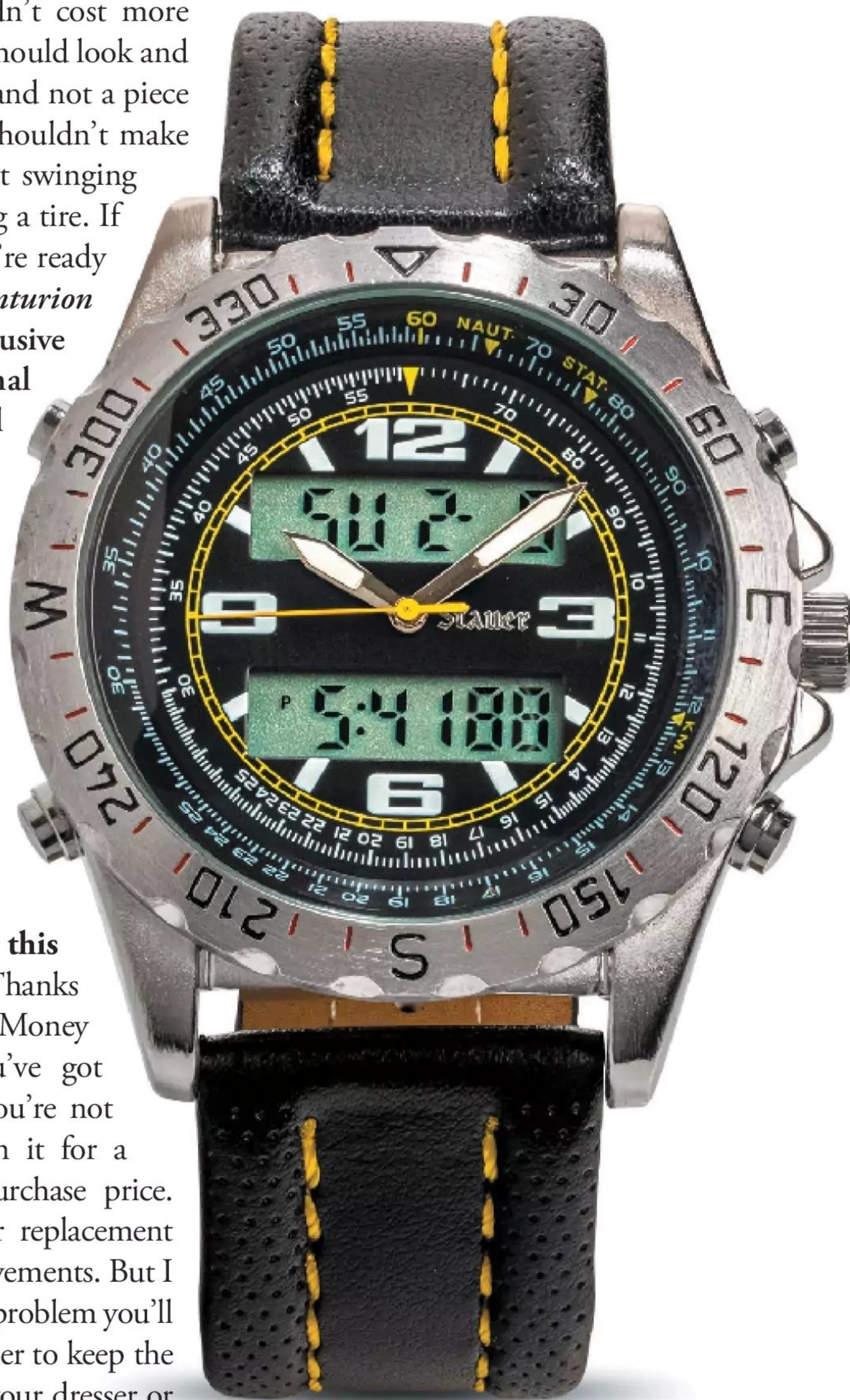
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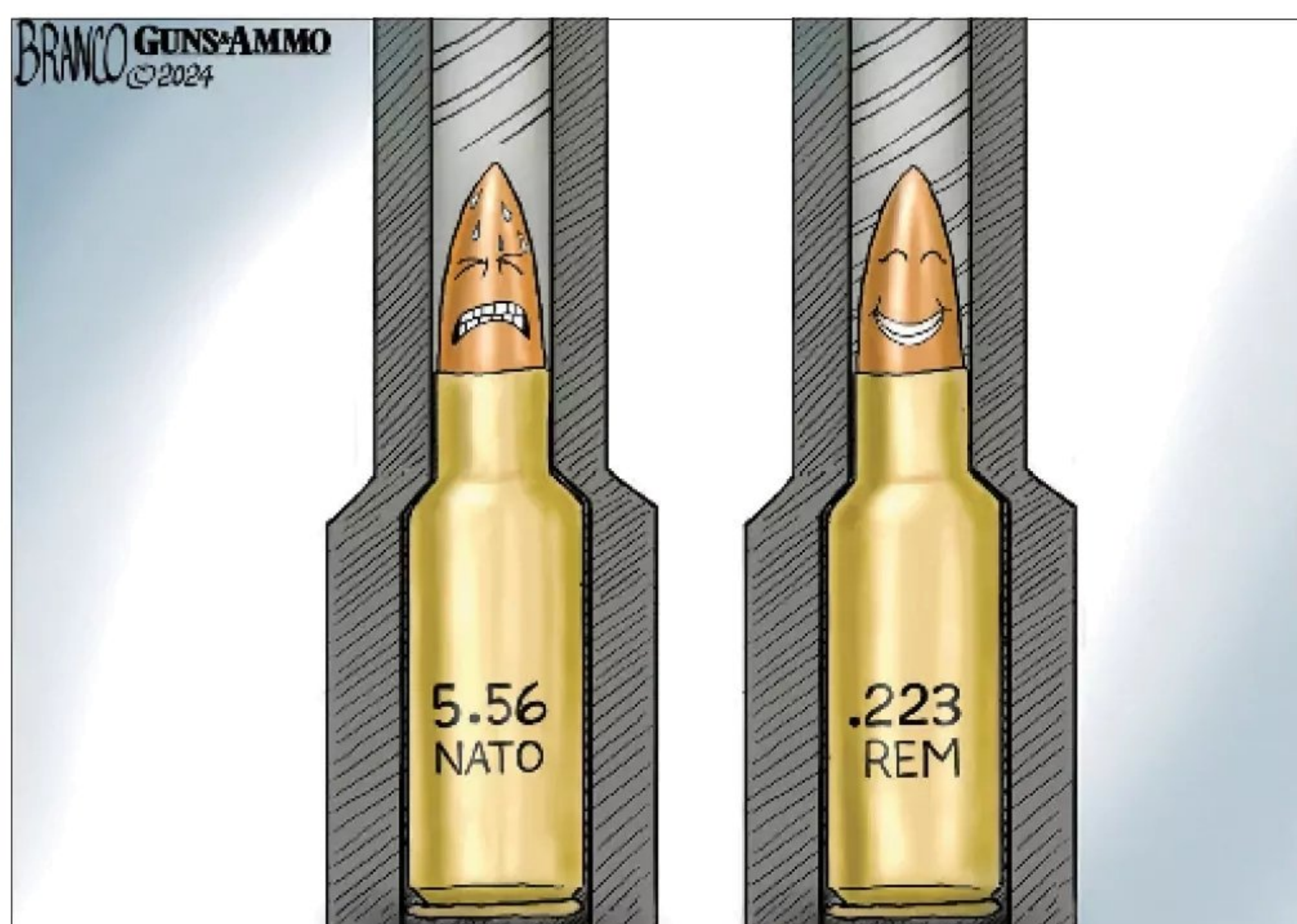


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.223 REMINGTON VS. 5.56 NATO

Mr. Emary, your impressive and informative "Bullet Board" column (March 2025) encouraged me to write and tap your expertise. I have a Tikka T3X Superlite stainless bolt-action rifle in .223 with a 22.4-inch barrel rifled with 1-in-8-inch twist. I've come into a quantity of factory 5.56mm ammunition I hope can be safely used in the Tikka. Some sources indicate that .223 Remington and 5.56x45mm NATO are essentially compatible while others caution against using 5.56mm rounds in .223-chambered rifles. I hope the Tikka action, which handles much larger and more powerful rounds, would have no trouble with 5.56 ammo, but I defer to your clear expertise in ballistics. Please advise.

Andrew Nelson
Rio Ranch, New Mexico

There are significant differences between the .223 Rem. and 5.56 NATO. The 5.56 chamber has a much longer freebore than the .223, and it is loaded to higher pressures. If you fire the 5.56 NATO round in a .223 chamber, you will get very high pressures from the 5.56 due to the shorter throat. You probably aren't risking the action, but you will be risking the 5.56 cartridge case's strength. You may experience pierced primers and hard bolt lift. I do not recommend firing the 5.56x45mm in a .223 Remington chamber.
— D. Emary

BEST DEER CARTRIDGE?

I am a retired whitetail deer hunter who is amazed at all the new-caliber rifles that have come out for deer hunting. I've hunted central New York for 65 years, mainly with a Remington .30-'06 pump gun. I've shot a lot of deer, many running, and I have owned a lot of deer guns, including a 7mm-08, shotguns and a .30-30 lever action. My dad hunted all his life with a .35 Remington pump gun, too, and my son uses a 7mm Short Magnum. Even so, I've concluded that the .30-'06 has the widest range of bullets and loads available

for deer hunting. I say that it still can't be beat.

Ron Eldred
Altmar, New York

Some cobwebs, but no flies on the great old .30-'06. Lots of cartridges have come and gone and will keep coming. The .30-'06 remains one of our most versatile and effective hunting cartridges. It may be a bit overpowered for deer (and recoil-sensitive folks), but it gets the job done and is still a great choice for elk and black bear.

— C. Boddington

WHAT IS OGIVE?

There seems to be more discussion and advertising related to cartridge ogive. Would you describe what "ogive" is? Why is ogive mentioned more so now than in the past?

Norm Briggs,
U.S. Army (Ret.)
Bonita, California

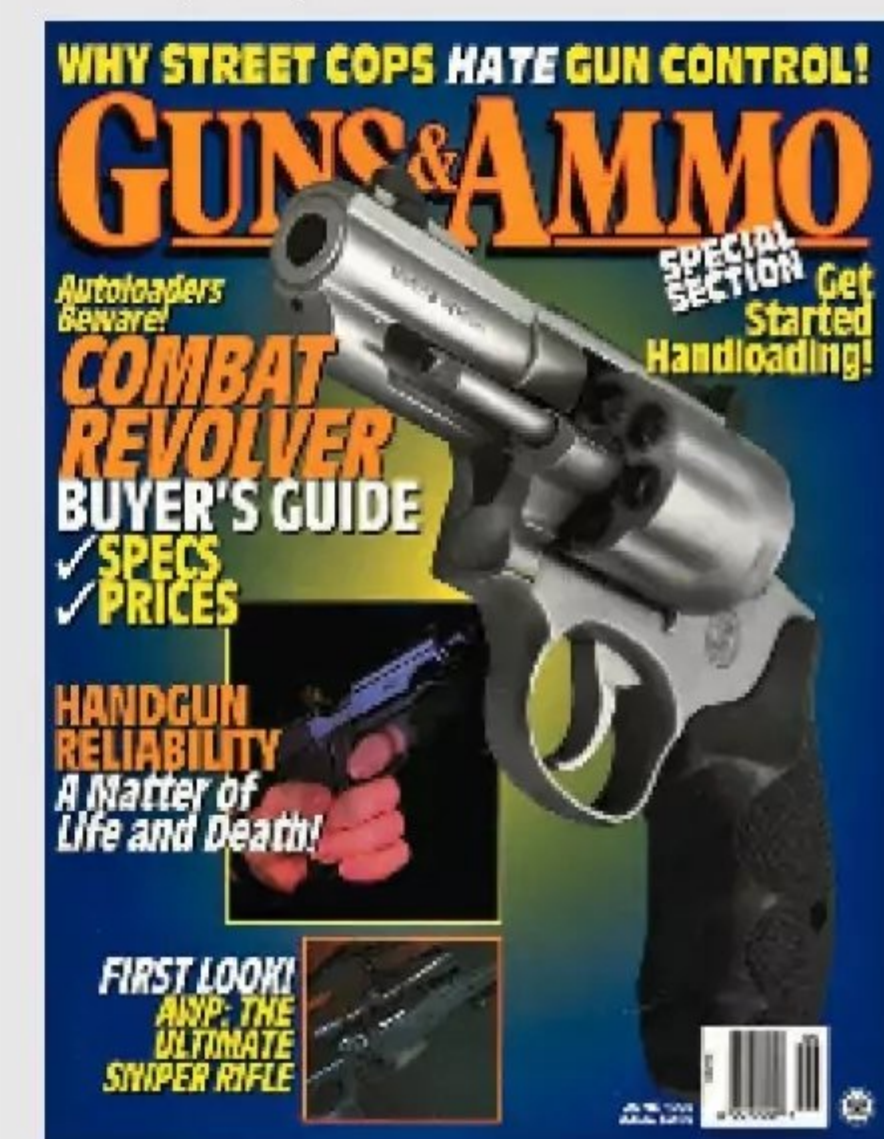
"Ogive" is the description of the nose of the projectile. The longer the ogive, and more gradual the taper of the ogive, the better the projectile resists air drag and the higher the ballistic coefficient (BC) of the projectile.
— D. Emary

ANTI-RECOIL

I read a lot of comments about rifle and shotgun recoil. What I never read about is the use of a PAST Recoil Shield. I have a slim frame and an aversion to black-and-blue. A few decades ago, I bought a PAST shoulder shield. I haven't thought about

30 YEARS AGO JUNE '95

Feature Editor Bill O'Brien presented the "Combat Revolver Buyer's Guide," listing 24 double-actions having barrels measuring between 2 and 6 inches, and in chamberings spanning the .32 H&R Magnum and the .44 Special. The average price was \$394.60.



recoil since! It fits under my shirt and is invisible. I don't understand why it's never mentioned by gunwriters.

Michael Labate
Email

Invented by Lincoln Flannery and Bruce Maier in 1982, patented in 1985, PAST Recoil Shields can be worn on either shoulder. The leather secures the gun in place against a foam pad while providing comfort to the shoulder. The pad is a half-inch thick and offered in four varieties including the Field Recoil Shield, Magnum, Mag Plus and Super Mag Plus. They are available from caldwellshooting.com starting at \$26.
— E. Poole

HOW TO FIX FINISHES

I'll admit it. I'm not a gunsmith, and I don't play one on TV. However, I do work on my own stuff. I have used



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cold blue to fix a scratch on a blued gun, but many are finished with Cerakote or have some other coating or baked-on paint. What do you recommend for touching up a scratch on one of these coated guns?

Cliff Daly

Florence, Kentucky

If you're just looking to hide a scratch, you could try to match it with hobby enamel and a small brush. Enamel touch-up paint won't hold up like the base finish, but for a little scratch it should work fine. Unfortunately, if you feel the scarring demands repair, the best way to correct a ceramic-coated or baked-on finish is to disassemble the firearm and blast the original finish off, meaning that you'll

need to start over with the substrate. Ceramic coating and similar types of modern finishes are not my favorite for a variety of reasons, this being one of them.

— K. Wood

BRASS CATCHER?

I am with an American Legion post that does funeral Honor Guard duties. A couple of years ago, I saw Guns & Ammo TV feature a device that fit on a rifle and collected the fired brass. We use M1 Garand rifles, and sometimes it is hard to find our brass in the grass or gravel. We give the brass to the families of the veteran. Can you tell us where we might find such a device? Several of Guns & Ammo's editors and writers

are veterans, so I know you understand what it means to the families.

Danny Purdy

Madison, Missouri

Caldwell offers brass catchers including two types for the AR-15 (\$18 to \$40), a Brass Trap that can be mounted on a tripod (\$60), and a Universal Brass Catcher (\$30) that can be fitted to bolt-action and semiautomatic rifles. The Universal Brass Catcher may fit your needs for use with the M1 Garand. Visit caldwellshooting.com.

— E. Poole

GUN NAMES

I just read another ad for a new pistol that caused me to write. The way gun manufacturers name products

is baffling, and it's been gnawing at me for a while. I would not be surprised to see some rifle or pistol named "7#A59" and its successor "7#B22." My experience in manufacturing taught me that talented people who make things should not be allowed to name them.

Craig Smith

Houston, Texas

Manufacturers often invite input regarding names for new products. The challenge is identifying a name that is legally available for copyright or trademark. This is why we see many brands default to using alpha-numeric naming conventions, acronyms or an odd-spelling of words.

— E. Poole



THE TRUTH

All the excitement over reciprocity, congressional proposals and Supreme Court decisions, while giving gun owners some benefits, do nothing to resurrect and implement the original intent of the Second Amendment or educate the masses on the same. Nowhere in America can someone purchase a firearm from a dealer without complying with the government's permission slips, paying a fee (restitution), and providing state-issue identification. Constitutionally, this system cannot denote a "right." We have supremely failed to differentiate between a right and permission or privilege.

Dave Smith

Camp Verde, Arizona

MORE BUDGET GUNS

I enjoyed Eric Poole's column, "Budget Guns," in the April 2025 issue. I'd like to add Keystone Sporting Arms to the list. Their focus is youth .22 LR single-shot rifles, but they make great single-shot pistols as well. Manufactured in Milton, Pennsylvania, they have a lifetime warranty and are priced at well under \$200. These single-shot bolt-action pistols are a bargain at twice the price. I scoped mine and it's a real tack-driver; a well-kept secret!

Bob Frost

Email

WHAT'S NEXT?

January 2025 Issue, 7mm PRC: Oh goody! Another new cartridge that won't fit into my rifle or pistol.

February 2025 Issue, .21 Sharp: Oh goody! Another new cartridge that won't fit into my rifle or pistol.

March 2025 Issue, 7mm Backcountry: Oh goody! Another new cartridge that won't fit into my rifle or pistol.

April 2025 Issue .338 ARC: Oh goody! Another new cartridge that won't fit into my rifle or pistol.

I wonder what could possibly be coming next month?

Craig Smith

Houston, Texas

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

People don't see me arrive to the range with my appendix-carried pistol — because it's concealed! You'd get a peak if you stayed around long enough to see me practice the Bill

Drill, Mozambique, or 10-10 Drill. Instructors critical of AIWB carry seem like they've been training open-carry shooters mostly, and that's fine. I'd wager that AIWB is now the most popular position for concealed carry, and top trainers use AIWB safely: Ernest Langdon, Gabe White, and John Lovell, for example. AIWB is not for beginners, those who can't keep their finger off the trigger, or those who want to see how fast they can holster a gun. I'm 74 years old and have been shooting handguns since 1963. I have had a concealed-carry license for nearly 50 years. In 2017, I went from 4 o'clock to appendix carry. I won't be going back.

Skip G.

Email 

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Is crisis fatigue deterring gun buyers?



ERIC R. POOLE

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"CRISIS FATIGUE" made headlines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The term was used by the medical industry to describe "a response to the prolonged stress that develops due to unexpected or difficult events." This anxiety exists among gun owners, too, and it has for decades. We can observe such fear in the pages of Guns & Ammo, first in advance of the 1968 Gun Control Act, then the 1986 Firearms Owners' Protection Act, the 1994 Federal Assault Weapon Ban, and with a respite until the 2012 Sandy Hook, 2017 Las Vegas, 2018 Parkland, and 2022 Uvalde tragedies. Fear of losing one's gun rights and the desire to provide for one's own self-defense was perpetuated during the national response to the 2020 death of George Floyd, as well as the Stand Your Ground case of Kyle Rittenhouse.

The pandemic sustained a fear of gun control during the Biden Administration, which remains in the second Trump Administration. Every senseless shooting and threat to further restrict Second Amendment rights extends such feelings among law-abiding gun owners. The reluctance of the U.S. Supreme Court to decidedly rule on subjects such as the extent of states' rights, as it applies to firearm regulations, suppressors, and so-called "assault weapons," has left Americans in suspense and generally hesitant to invest or participate in certain shooting activities. Working against gun sales is the lack of fear for new Federal controls with the pendulum hanging on the side of gun owners due to Trump's presidency and control of the U.S. Congress, but national sales reports are difficult to interpret in this bullish economy.

"The increased interest in gun ownership is not something accurately reflected by numbers put out by the ATF every month," said Mark Keefe, NRA spokesman. "It's a personal decision guided by external conditions and a desire to provide for one's own personal security. More people have decided to rely less on the government and become responsible for their lives."

"There is too much emphasis on overall NICS checks," added Nancy Bacon, vice president of Southwick Associates. "There are pockets of fear that we see through NICS checks in certain states, but we're not seeing it nationally. Look at Washington state; NICS checks dropped significantly last year due to new laws enacted. Other states will do the same. Gun owners are being picked apart state by state with legislation. Since the pandemic, the economy

has hit the middle class. But we've gained 22 million new gun owners since 2020, so we must help those people become participants in our sports and activities."

"People have stockpiled," said Neil Davies, marketing director for Hornady. "They are taking a wait-and-see approach. I think we're back to the new normal. Ammunition sales are good, but we don't expect a surge in purchasing as we did during COVID. People are fatigued, but every time there's a natural disaster they're going to stock up. More people are shooting firearm sports that consume a lot of ammo, such as precision rifle and 3-Gun. Shotgun sports are up substantially, especially in high schools. The level of consumption is high. Those who bought a gun in the last few years didn't buy a deer rifle that holds three rounds. As a manufacturer, we're looking at what we have the most orders for. People voted for their favorite cartridge during COVID and gravitated to rounds that are produced often and available. Vintage cartridge manufacturing is now a cottage industry. There was a panic for reloading components, but that, too, has softened. Generally, people are no longer reloading for savings; they're after performance, primarily, or reacting to a lack of availability for a particular cartridge. And then there's still the issue of powder availability."

New and innovative products are still important for brands to maintain relevance. For Ruger in 2025, that took the form of the RXM. A chassis pistol supports follow-on grip sizes and colors, for example, which keeps the product line moving forward. Expect more of this approach as companies look to liquidate products sitting on shelves.

"Discounts, rebates and incentives are indicators that a company has too much inventory," Chris Agnes, publisher of Guns & Ammo said. "Just look at all the emails and flyers. Smith & Wesson is offering a free Viridian RFX15 green-dot sight with new pistols through April 30, 2025. Purchase any Walther PDP base model pistol and get three free magazines until April 30, 2025. Purchase any new Winchester Super X pump-action turkey hunting shotgun through May 31, 2025, and get a \$25 rebate. The situation is like investing in stocks; don't buy high, buy low. You make money on the 'buy,' not on the 'sale.'"

During a crisis, people buy what's available. In my opinion, now is the time to buy what you want. There may be no better time to buy firearms and ammunition. 

10

SUBCOMPACCURACY

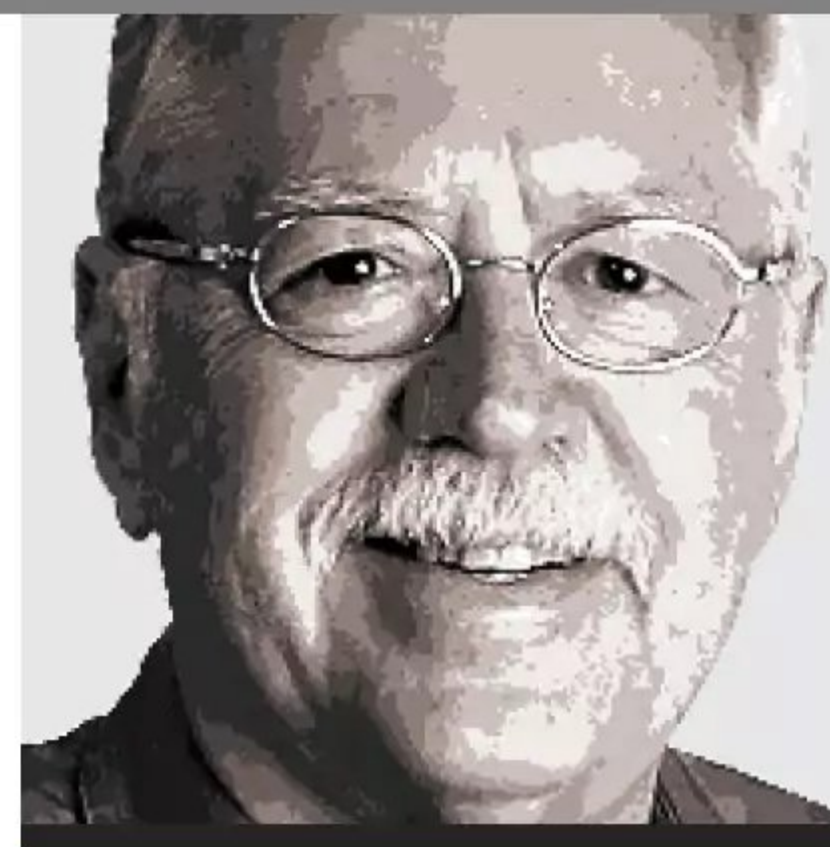
10



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BELGIAN DOUBLE SHOTGUN

Q: A friend has an old double-barrel 12 gauge. Can you tell the make, model and age from these photos?

D. G.

Email

A: The most telling barrel marking is the Liege “EL” provisional proof, indicating the gun is Belgian. It appears to be a moderate-grade export piece. The choke markings date it from circa 1910 to 1924. Unfortunately, I cannot find the circled crown/“ML” logo that appears on the top lever in any of my resources, and without a

maker’s name anywhere else on the gun I am unable to tell you precisely who the maker was. Condition of the gun, with the exception of the stripped, cracked stock and badly fitted recoil pad, seems OK. Assuming it is in decent mechanical condition and the bores are good, value would be in the \$200 to \$300 range.

MODEL 1893 WINCHESTER?

Q: I need to know if this a real 1893 Winchester lever action with serial number 277XXXP in “.44” caliber on the brass elevator “1 1000” on top of receiver, but no manufacturer that I can find. The stock is in great shape, and there is little pitting, but the bluing is gone.

J. W.

Email

A: Your photos show you have a Third Model 1873

Winchester rifle in .44-40 manufactured in 1888. Some 28,606 ‘73s were made that year. The crude “1 1000” stamping on the top of the barrel is an inept attempt to elevate the arm’s appeal into a rare and valuable “1 of 1000” rifle, only 139 of which were made. Condition of this piece appears to be somewhat lacking. Assuming it works and has a decent bore, I’d value it in the \$850 to \$1,200 range. The .44-40 caliber and octagon barrel are features that do work in its favor.

REMINGTON MODEL 742 SEMIAUTO RIFLE

Q: I purchased a Remington Woodmaster, .30-’06 Springfield semiautomatic rifle, Model 742 with serial

AUCTION BLOCK

Korth Sport Model .22 LR

An excellent-condition Korth Sport Model .22 LR revolver realized a substantial \$4,500 at a February 29, 2025, Sportsman’s Legacy sale. Made in Ratzeburg, Germany, in 1969, the gun is superlative in every respect. Features include a 6-inch barrel; adjustable rear sight; and wood target grips, fixed, right hand, fit medium-size hands. The bore is flawless, bright and shiny. The triggerpull and cylinder locking are also very good. The metal finish is approximately 97 percent with trace thinning at the muzzle and over the guard. There’s a light turning ring and a small area of scratches on the left side of the frame directly below the rear sight blade. For more information about this and future sales, visit Sportsman’s Legacy at sportsman-legacy.com.





number A6901XXX in 1973. While visiting with a local gunsmith, he told me that my gun model's chamber was "weak," "dangerous" and "prone to explode or backfire." I do not wish to leave to my grandchildren a gun that might harm them. Please advise.
K. R.
Email

A: Your photos picture a nice-condition Remington Model 742 Woodmaster Deluxe Carbine. From what I understand, the gas-operated 742s had something of a reputation for jamming, though I have not run across accounts of the guns actually blowing up. Perhaps there was something in the makeup of your particular rifle that bothered the gunsmith. If you have concerns, a second opinion is definitely in order.

**GARAGE SALE
SHOTGUN BARRELS**

My wife purchased several barrels from a garage sale in Sun City, California. Do you have an idea what they are? Our subscription to Guns & Ammo has been active for the last 35 to 40 years, and we have enjoyed your column. However, we get it a week late every month because our mailman reads it, too.
Vince Moreno
California

A: Thank you for being such a faithful reader! I'm glad you found my column of value. Something of a cheeky mailman. Perhaps you could buy him his own subscription for Christmas. These barrels are quite interesting and something of a poser. I checked with my shotgun go-to expert Terry Wieland for his

thoughts on them. Separated shotgun barrels of this style were originated by Remington for the Model 32 in the early 1930s, and later taken up by Krieghoff in Germany. Unfortunately, your barrels don't really look much like either. They are interesting in that they have trunnions, an early feature devised by Boss & Co. in England during the early part of the 20th century to reduce shotgun frame depth. This set appears to be in .410, 28 and 20 gauges, likely for skeet shooting. Probably the gun for which they were made was a 12-gauge that went its own way with the original barrels affixed. As this set is unmarked and lacks European proofs, it is likely they were custom made or prototypes built in the U.S., probably in the 1950s or '60s. Workmanship appears to be competent, though I can see some rough file work from your close-ups that indicate they may very well have been one-offs.

**REMINGTON UMC
1911 .45 AUTO**

Q: I'm Looking for information on the pictured Remington Model 1911 .45 ACP pistol with serial number 7XX. This pistol was

brought to my attention by the widow of a U.S. Marine who served in Vietnam and recently passed away from Agent Orange exposure complications. The pistol shows an expected and considerable amount of wear given its age, and I question if there would be any monetary value were she to place it up for sale. I'm not certain as to the specifics on how he acquired possession of this firearm, but there does not appear to be any documentation or records of its purchase. I also wonder if, in your opinion, this pistol could or should be fired? Any information you can provide, from a historical standpoint, would be greatly appreciated.
A. C.
Email

A: The widow has a Model 1911 U.S. Government Model manufactured by Remington UMC (Union Metallic Cartridge). Some 21,500 Remington UMCs were manufactured from 1918 to 1919, making them somewhat scarce and sought-after by collectors. The pictures show a decent-condition pistol, though it seems to be completely lacking any finish. There

HOLLYWOOD HARDWARE

**"TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES"
HECKLER & KOCH UMP, .45 ACP**

The exotic Heckler & Koch UMP was deemed an appropriate sidearm for the "T-800" portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 2003 film "Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines." In the plot, this .45-caliber submachine gun was one of many recovered from a hidden graveyard cache of small arms, cleverly secreted in an empty coffin. (Courtesy of National Firearms Museum, Fairfax, Virginia and Cinema Weaponry, Glendale, California.)



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is a dullness to the gun that also indicates it might have been the victim of some sort of acidic rust remover. However, without actually viewing the piece in person, it is difficult to tell. In good shape, these guns are sound and can be fired, but before you run any ammo through it, take it to a gunsmith and get a clean bill of health. Assuming the pistol does not have any serious cosmetic problems (other than lack of bluing), I'd value it in the \$2,000 to \$2,500 range. The three-digit serial number is also something of a plus; Remington UMCs were numbered from 1 to 21,676.

CAP AND BALL PISTOL ID

Q: A friend has had this in his family for several

generations but does not know where it originally came from. It appears to be a Land Pattern piece with Birmingham proofmarks, which was converted to cap and ball. That is all I have been able to find out about it. It is 15-inches long and has a bore of about three quarters of an inch. I don't know how to judge its condition. The nipple is rusted in place but all other parts seem to be intact, and it can be cocked and fired. Any information you could provide about its history and possible value would be appreciated.

L. I.
Email

A: Your friend has a late British New Land Pattern pistol. The "W.R." royal cypher indicates it was made during the reign of King William IV (1830 to '37). New

Land Pattern cavalry pistols with various stylistic nuances first appeared around 1799 and continued to be made until the late 1830s. Caliber is .67. Considerable numbers of these guns were sold to Britain's ally, Portugal. As you surmise, this pistol was originally flintlock and was converted to percussion fire. It does not appear to be ordnance work. Right now, the market for more common flintlock and percussion single-shot military pistols is declining. As the condition of this specimen is not particularly stellar, I'd value it in the \$300 to \$400 range.

MARK VI WEBLEY REVOLVER

Q: I have grown accustomed to studying your writings and respect your vast amount of knowledge. That being said, I could think of no one else to get my questions answered. I have attached several pictures of a Webley .455 that was left to me. I had my local gun guru clean and inspect it, and he gave an enthusiastic thumbs up that it was mechanically sound and safe to fire low-pressure .45 ACP rounds. I have no intentions of firing this gun, however, I do intend

to pass it down to my son and his children. Can you venture an educated guess on the history and possibly the insurance value on it? Thank you for the many years of hosting the "Gun Room!"

D. W.
Vancouver, Washington

A: This is one of my favorite handguns. It is a British Mark VI Webley military issue .455 revolver. Introduced in 1915 and manufactured until 1926, the Mark VI was a superb firearm, seeing much use in both World Wars, though it had been officially replaced by the .380 Enfield No. 2 revolver in 1932. With the exception of having its cylinder "shaved" to handle .45 ACP rounds in half-moon clips or .45 Auto-Rim, your example seems to be in fairly decent condition. Thousands of Webleys of various "marks" were altered in the U.S. to .45 ACP during the 1950s to handle the more readily available .45 ACP. As the ACP produced higher pressures than the .455 Webley, it is not recommended to fire the altered guns with full-charge .45 ACP or .45 Auto-Rim. GA



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Nighthawk Custom celebrates 20 years.

JAMES TARR

MILESTONES

MOST GUNSMITHS are just that, an individual who found an interesting career making and repairing firearms. Some become artists in metal. Occasionally, a company grows around them. Nighthawk Custom's story is a bit different. It was started by four people who knew the custom 1911 business and believed they could make guns distinctive — and superior. They succeeded and celebrated 20 years in 2024. As CEO Mark Stone likes to say, "You have to build a better product, at a better price, with better customer service, and do something that separates yourself."

Two of Nighthawk's founders were gunsmiths with more than 20 years in the business. Mark Stone was approached by them for having a mind for business, finance, the people, and facility, and became the sole owner of the company. Stone had built several climate-controlled storage buildings in the Berryville, Arkansas, area and hadn't rented one out. That building became the first roof over Nighthawk Custom, and it's still in use today. However, Nighthawk expanded significantly in the last two decades. The company now employs more than 100 people and recently acquired Cooper Firearms of Montana, which is now Cooper Rifles of Arkansas (cooperfirearms.com).

Nighthawk started with just two 1911 models, the Global Response Pistol (GRP) and the Talon. I distinctly remember the GRP. Nighthawk introduced it at the height of the War on Terror, and it was meant to be the ultimate fighting iteration of the 1911 — everything you need and nothing you don't. Nighthawk now offers more than 50 variations of the Model 1911, both single- and double-stack.

"One gun, one gunsmith" is Nighthawk's philosophy. Each pistol is built from start to finish by a single gunsmith. His initials are stamped on the frame under the left grip panel. Each pistol is then test-fired before it leaves the building. When Nighthawk started, it focused on doing the

best prep work in the business. Landon Stone, Nighthawk's director of marketing reiterated, "When we started, we focused on extensive prep, taking all the machine marks out, deburring, smoothing, [and] putting hand bevels on everything." Modern machining has improved tolerances

but every piece in a Nighthawk pistol is hand-fit. In fact, the parts are deliberately machined to be slightly oversized to ensure every pistol can be hand-fit to perfection by a master gunsmith.

The company wasn't satisfied with certain parts from a few suppliers, so Nighthawk engineered every component from scratch for its pistols. It has its own machine shop, in fact, producing parts in-house to aerospace-grade tolerances. As Landon explained, "This

way, we have control over our destiny. Our parts are better than ever, and it makes it easier for us to prototype." All parts are machined from barstock billet steel.

Nighthawk produces a number of factory models for immediate availability, but it specializes in creating custom shop works on customer-supplied guns. Landon explained, "What's cool about Nighthawk, when you look at our lineup, no matter your style, whether you're a 70-year-old who likes a classic 1911 or someone wanting a BBQ gun with color-case hardening, a carry gun, or a double-stack competition gun, we've got everything in our lineup. No one else does it this way."

Traditional single-stacks are competing with double-stacks in popularity, but 9mm is now more popular than the .45 ACP among Nighthawk customers in both single- and double-stack models. Landon said the answer is simple: "They're so much more enjoyable to shoot! They're also cheaper to shoot, and it's easier to rack the slide."

In 20 years, things have changed. Landon shared, "When Nighthawk started, I think a lot of people bought our guns to stick in the vault. Many of our guns ended up



To commemorate its 20th anniversary, Nighthawk Custom built 20 examples of a unique 1911 and knife with distinctive features.

as safe queens, but now our customers use our guns a lot more than they used to. That's the good thing about all these new finishes such as diamond-like carbon (DLC), which we have on a lot of guns. They're built to run and hold their value. It makes a difference knowing that if I take my gun out and put it on a wood table, it won't get scratched. DLC also makes them easier to clean, which encourages people to take them out and use them."

Nighthawk Custom is also the U.S. distributor of German-made Korth revolvers. Some will argue that Korth's are the finest revolvers on the planet. If you don't understand why a high-end 1911 shop would be interested in importing German wheel guns, I can tell that you've not had the opportunity to handle a Korth. Once you see and feel the workmanship, the butter-smooth trigger pulls, and see the modern features — including the quickly replaceable cylinders in alternate calibers — you'll understand why a Korth revolvers cost what they do.

"It's been an incredible partnership with Korth," Landon said. "The U.S. market loves its guns. As soon as you pick one up and open the cylinder, you can feel the quality. Those are all billet-machined parts. There's really nobody else who builds a revolver like that. It's a smaller market, for sure, but those who know, know."

Nighthawk Custom is also the exclusive U.S. importer of Cosmi shotguns from Ancona, Italy. Many American

gun owners may not be familiar with these unique, luxury grade and hand-built shotguns, but they fit in perfectly with Nighthawk's upscale catalog. The Cosmi is both a break-open and a semiautomatic shotgun, complete with gorgeous wood and engraved receivers.

To mark its 20th anniversary, Nighthawk created a limited-edition model. Only 20 of the 20th Anniversary models were produced, a gorgeous single-stack sporting several new and notable features that will appear on future models. Look for the square triggerguard — a first for the company — and an integral magazine well machined as one piece with the frame.

Nighthawk's goal is to maintain the reputation for the highest quality. The company doesn't want to jeopardize the brand while growing. That's why it has shied away from the crowded striker-fired pistol market, and they have no plans to build AR-15s. However, Nighthawk is excited about the recent acquisition of Cooper Firearms. Landon said, "We see a lot of opportunity with Cooper. No one is making rifles like them; high-end wood, hand checkering and bluing." Cooper offers both traditional "heritage" rifles as well as modern models with carbon-fiber barrels.

As bizarre as it sounds, the 1911 is more prevalent now than it was a century ago. That statement is especially true for high-end custom versions. With 20 years behind it, it appears Nighthawk Custom is just getting started. **GA**



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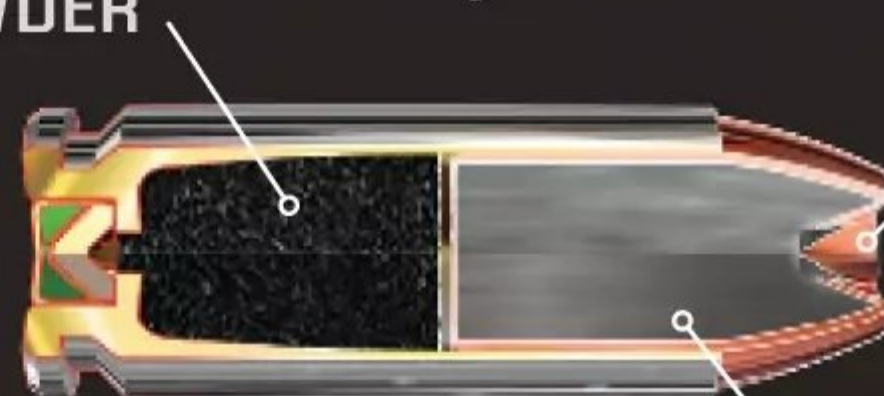
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Holosun DRS-TH

RICHARD NANCE

THERMAL OVERLAY

A RED-DOT SIGHT IS VISIBLE to its user regardless of lighting conditions, but it may not be enough to see the dot in darkness. Regardless, you must positively identify a target. That's where the Holosun Digital Reflex Sight - Thermal (DRS-TH) may provide a distinct advantage. When mounted to a firearm's optic rail, the unit's 256x192 thermal sensor displays heat signatures. Flip down the lens cap and use the DRS-TH — as you would any other red-dot sight — to reveal a living target hiding in the shadows of daylight or within the dark.

The DRS-TH has a 7075-T6 aluminum housing, which is anodized for durability and corrosion resistance. Considering the technology packed into the DRS-TH, it's surprisingly compact at just 3.7-inches long, 2.2-inches wide and 3½-inches tall. The multi-layer reflective glass is both clear and resistant to the elements, and shake-awake technology preserves battery life by powering down the LED when not in use. The slightest movement immediately powers the unit on so it's ready when needed.

A red-dot sight is sandwiched between the thermal sensor and the integral rail mount. The red dot is adjusted with just plus and minus buttons on the left side of the base, and pressing and releasing either button powers on the unit. The rubberized plus button brightens the reticle, and the minus button dims it.

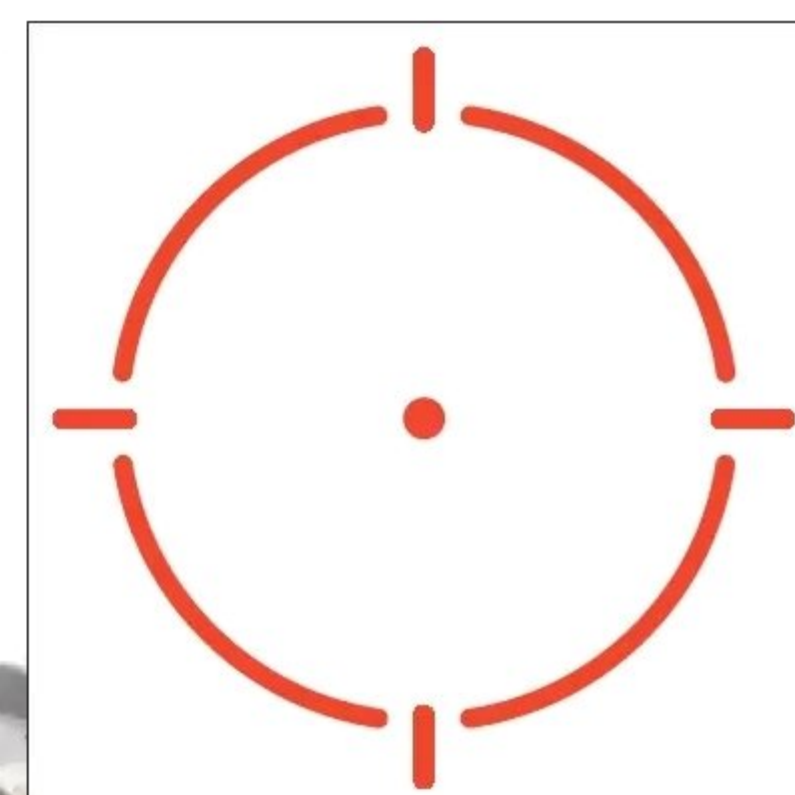
The DRS-TH offers three dot reticles: A 2-MOA dot, a 65-MOA circle, and a combination of both. The reticles have 12 brightness settings, including four night vision (NV) options. To switch reticles, press and hold both buttons. To power off, press and release both buttons. The wind-age adjustment is on the

left side of the base and the elevation adjustment is on the right side behind the battery compartment. Adjustments can be made using the supplied tool or a small standard screwdriver. Each click adjusts point of impact a half MOA.

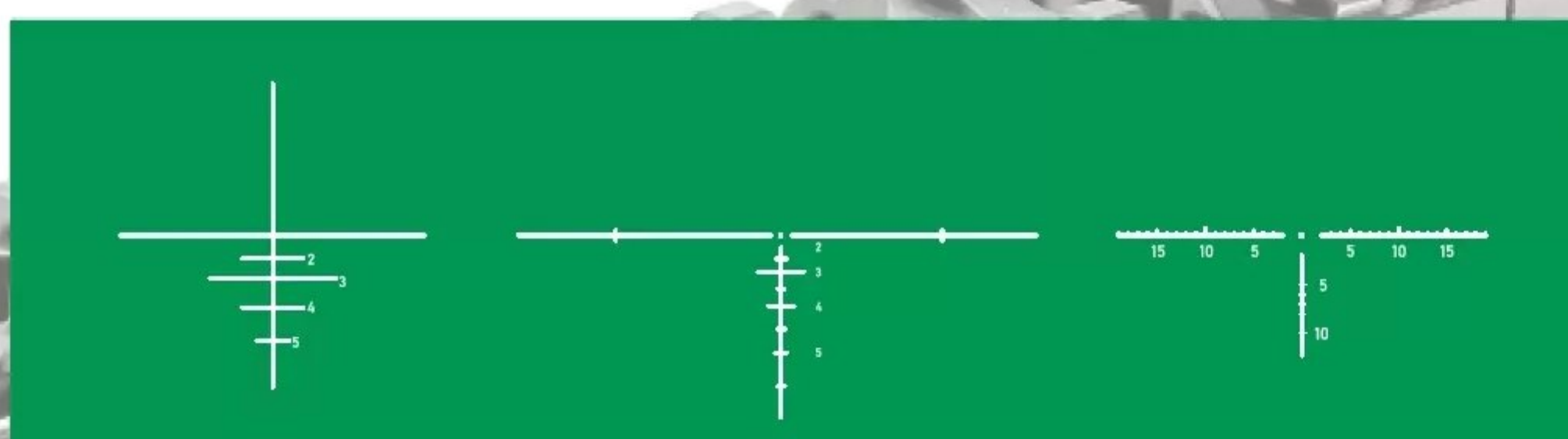
There are also three thermal reticles: A BDC for .223 and .308, an MOA T-reticle, and a .223 holdover-type T-reticle.

The thermal sensor is powered on and off by pressing and releasing the button on top of the unit. Other adjustments are made by working through an array of five buttons that face the shooter. The top-left button activates zoom, while the bottom left controls brightness. The center button takes the user to the settings menu, where you can zero the thermal sensor. The upper-right button enables the user to capture photos and record video. Use the bottom right button to toggle between reticles.

The DRS-TH represents an exciting technology, combining red dot and thermal features. While image quality is good up close, clarity does suffer as distance increases or the size of the target decreases.



The 65-MOA aiming circle and 2-MOA dot is ideal for quick target acquisition and aiming.



The thermal reticle is not a simple aiming dot or crosshair. Multiple options can be selected to account for holds and windage.

The Holosun DRS-TH combines red-dot and thermal technologies, providing a clever aiming solution for any lighting scenario. A 50-frame-per-second refresh rate ensures the display keeps up with the host firearm's movement. A digital zoom feature offers 1X, 3X and 5X magnification settings. Thermal modes are white hot, black hot, outline and highlight. An 18350 battery is estimated to power the 256x192-pixel thermal sensor for up to 10 hours, and the red dot for more than 50,000 hours. An onboard video recording system also lets users capture the action. **\$1,882**



Windage and elevation for the red dot can be adjusted using the included tool. The thermal reticle is adjusted with the rear controls.



The brightness-intensity level for the red dot is increased or decreased using the plus (+) and minus (-) buttons on the left side.



The DRS-TH works like a standard red dot sight. The thermal image is simply overlayed and viewed through the same objective.

However, as an entry level red-dot sight/thermal combo package, the DRS-TH is fun and serves its purpose.

Whether for training, close-range hunting, or perhaps even home defense, the DRS-TH enable users to employ a red-dot sight effectively in the low light. The 1¼-inch window provides a wide field of view, allowing one to monitor the dark target area or reveal the shadows in a critical situation. Be mindful of the safety rule, "Never point your gun at anything you do not intend to shoot."

The DRS-TH includes two 18350 lithium-ion rechargeable batteries, a multi-tool, wrench, lens cloth and a USB charging cable. It has an IP67 rating, so it can withstand rain. It's no more afraid of Mother Nature than it is of the dark. Visit holosun.com to learn more. 



The controls for the thermal component menu are simple and intuitive. It's important to configure the preferences before nighttime use.



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Dead Air Silencers Mojave 45



DEAD AIR MOJAVE 45	
CALIBER	.25 ACP to .45
THREAD PITCH	Multiple options
LENGTH	6.81 in. to 8.6 in.
DIAMETER	1.48 in.
WEIGHT	10.44 oz. (short), 12.7 oz. (long)
MATERIALS	Titanium
FINISH	Cerakote, Black or FDE
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MANUFACTURER	Dead Air Silencers, 801-857-4232, deadairsilencers.com

From pistols to leverguns, Dead Air Silencers' Mojave 45 is a versatile can that offers low backpressure and superb sound attenuation.

THE DESERT CAN

UNLESS YOU'VE BEEN STUCK on the International Space Station, you know that suppressors are the hottest-selling firearm accessory in the universe. The main reason is due to the transfer times. Unlike the past, when BATFE approval required an orbit around the sun, in 2025 you can buy a suppressor on Monday and be shooting it before the end of the week. It's an exciting time for suppressor users, but it's hard to keep up with all the new product releases.

Speaking of new suppressors, the most recent offering from Dead Air Silencers is the Mojave 45. According to Dead Air owner Mike Pappas, the Mojave 45 is a versatile and modular suppressor that works on everything from pistol cartridges to include certain rifle rounds.

"We designed the Mojave 45 primarily for handgun shooters," said Pappas. "You can run it on a 9mm, .40 S&W, .45 ACP or 10mm, but it also works great on PCCs, submachine-guns, lever-actions and bolt-guns

chambered in cartridges with small powder volumes and a larger bore. The Mojave 45 will handle subsonic and supersonic .300 BLK, as well as lever-guns chambered in .38 Special, .357 Magnum, .44 Special, .44 Magnum, and .45 Colt if the barrel is longer than 16 inches."

At the heart of the versatile suppressor are titanium-printed Triskelion baffles. According to Pappas, these were designed to minimize backpressure.

"The new Mojave 45 is 3D-printed from Grade 5 titanium," said Pappas. "The reason we did this was to achieve lower backpressure with the Triskelion baffles. Sometimes, however, manufacturers get too caught up in ultra-low backpressure and sacrifice sound performance. What's the point of low backpressure if you have to wear hearing protection?"

To minimize noise, the Mojave 45 is a hybrid design. Pappas and his team accomplished this by using Triskelion as well as standard cone baffles.



The Mojave 45 utilizes Dead Air's 3D-printed Triskelion baffles, which greatly reduce backpressure while shooting.

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[Trijicon.com/MROHD](https://www.Trijicon.com/MROHD)**





Greater length offers greater sound suppression, but it makes firearms less wieldy. The modular design of the Mojave 45 gives end-users the choice of length versus sound suppression, depending on the needs of the day.



To operate on a semiautomatic handgun, the Mojave 45 includes a PB500 booster assembly. This can be removed for use on fixed-barrel firearms, to include use on some rifles chambered for .300 Blackout.



Both the main body and the forward removable section are 3D printed. The main body is Triskelion and the forward section is a K-baffle design.

"Most people hear low backpressure and think *loud*," said Pappas. "The Mojave 45 isn't loud. It has excellent sound performance. To accomplish this, we paired the Triskelion low-backpressure baffles with standard cone baffles at the end to minimize noise."

The Mojave 45 is also modular. For maximum sound reduction, run it in the full-length configuration. To shave length, the front module is removable. Replace the endcap on the suppressor body for a 30-percent shorter suppressor.

From Dead Air Silencers, the Mojave 45 ships with a .578-28 threaded piston and PB500 booster assembly for use with semiautomatic pistols. However, you can swap this out with Dead Air's standard P-Series fixed mounts and adaptors — such as KeyMicro, 3-lug and P-Series Xeno



Multiple Mojave 45 adapters are available. These allow users to quickly swap between firearms with different thread patterns.

— to run it on a host of fixed-barrel firearms.

Clearly, the Mojave 45 is a capable suppressor. It works on pistols, carbines, and submachineguns in cartridges ranging 9mm to .45 Colt. In addition, the suppressor combines low backpressure with quiet performance. According to Dead Air Silencers' Engineer Everett Williams, this was made possible by the marvels of 3D printing.

"Titanium printing has its limitations that people don't often talk about," said Williams. "Just because you can

print something doesn't mean you should. When done right, however, it can be amazing. This is how we can get low backpressure but excellent sound performance with the Mojave 45 suppressor." **G&A**

— D. Faubion



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The shotgun target thrower that's as much fun as shooting.



Caldwell's Claycopter includes one rechargeable battery and a USB- to USB-C charging cord. Operation is easy to learn and arguably safer than any other trap thrower. Its spinning motor fires one or two eco-friendly targets in any direction or angle that it is pointed. **\$220**



CALDWELL CLAYCOPTER

INNOVATIVE IS A WORD that loses power if used too much, but it is the best descriptor for Caldwell's Claycopter launcher. The Claycopter is a hand-held target thrower with endless potential to reinvigorate the shotgun shooting sports. It could prove to be the best system for tuning up one's skills ahead of a bird hunt, too.

Reminiscent of the pigeon shoots of old, the Claycopter launches proprietary target discs from 20 to 100 yards in a flight pattern that's similar to a pigeon or dove. They can dip, dive and weave through the air, making for realistic sporting fun. If you have used manual sporting clay throwers, what may be the most important feature of the Claycopter is the fun that's shared by the thrower as well as the shooter.

THE LAUNCHER

It should be noted that Caldwell was not the first to invent propeller-style aerial targets.

Comparable designs were already on the market when the Claycopter was announced at the 2025 NSSF SHOT Show. However, the suggested retail price of those systems is usually more than \$800 with targets to match. The Claycopter has a suggested retail price of \$220 with affordably matching targets. More importantly, though, Caldwell's target

discs are available at major retailers from the start, including Academy Sports + Outdoors, Bass Pro Shops, Scheels and Walmart. It's a classic free-market story. Caldwell saw a good idea and knew that it could make it more affordable and support the product through nationwide retailers.

In addition to being more affordable, the Claycopter Launcher is superior, both mechanically and operationally. Mechanically, it operates like a kid's disc-throwing toy, though the launcher produces speeds of 15,000 revolutions per minute (rpm) to launch the Claycopter

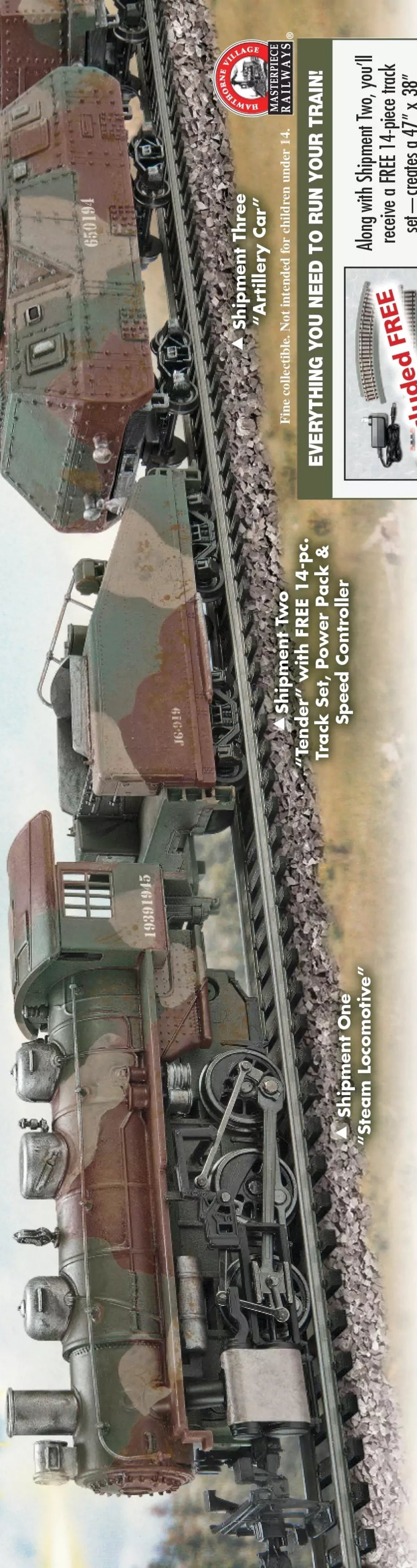


While they are more expensive than a normal clay target, they are reasonably priced for a specialty target. **\$13**

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Even when overcast, spinning orange Claycopter discs are easy to spot. The handheld launcher allows them to be sent in any direction.

discs. The pilot is a simple mechanism that secures the clay targets in place until the user is ready to throw them, and it is highly consistent in how the Claycopter releases the discs.

Single targets or true pairs can be launched, and the targets are made ready for release by holding down the forward safety button and pulling the trigger simultaneously. On the left side of the launcher is a master power switch, as well as a yellow dial to adjust the speed and range to launch targets. You'll also note a magazine-style release to detach the rechargeable battery pack.

The battery pack is somewhat shaped like an AR-15 magazine, yet reminiscent of a power tool battery. The design added improved aesthetics and ergonomics to the grip areas and control layout.

The battery is good for around 300 throws, and additional battery packs will be made available for those who have lots of shells and targets shoot.

THE TARGETS

The Claycopter targets are quite fascinating. A standard 108mm clay target hasn't changed much since its invention in 1880. The 110mm Claycopter target is only slightly larger, making for a comparable target to standard clays. They are made of an eco-friendly, biodegradable, plastic-like material instead of pitch. In fact, the Claycopter targets break down faster than standard clay targets, according to Caldwell. These were designed to deteriorate under ultraviolet (UV) light, so don't leave your targets exposed to the sun. Also available are 90mm Claycopter targets, which are the same size as the Midi targets used in many sporting clays matches.

Claycopter targets break well when shot, leaving no doubts of a hit or miss, yet they are stronger than a standard clay target for transportation. They come in 50-unit packages in what looks like an oversized Pringles can. The durability of these targets were tested during a trip to film Guns & Ammo TV segments. One was stowed in a checked bag. Despite the famously gentle handling of airport baggage handlers, not one target was broken upon arrival. If a few targets escape your shot, we can report that they even hold up to a grass landing for another go.



Propelling either one or two targets, the mechanism won't release the discs until the peak rpm setting is reached.



The adjustment knob averages throws to approximately four 25-yard increments, with 100 yards being about the farthest on a calm day.

AT THE RANGE

It's the propeller fan design that make Claycopter targets so much fun to shoot. After launch, they generally fly straight, following the thrower's point of aim. However, they will also float, plunge, duck, dive or perform other movements that mimic a real bird.

Editor Eric Poole and I tested the Claycopter and quickly made a game of it after a few warm-up shots. My favorite drill was to have the shooter facing away from the thrower, and waiting for the call of "Birds!" before turning to shoot. I had no idea if one target would appear or two, high or low, or in which direction. It's a great challenge.

The Claycopter is easy to take anywhere a shotgun can be safely shot. Besides a single-target hand thrower, the Claycopter is the most compact, portable target thrower on the market. You have to experience the fun for yourself to truly appreciate the Claycopter in action. Ammunition manufacturers should start ramping up shotshell production to keep up with the demand that this launcher will undoubtedly bring. I also suspect this is just the start of a new line for Caldwell, and I can't wait to see where it goes from here. 

— J. Oller



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NOT ONLY IS THE WORLD full of vehicles that I wish were available in the U.S. (cough*Toyota Hilux*cough), the same is often true of firearms. When I Googled “Springfield Armory Kuna” upon hearing Guns & Ammo was sending me a top-secret test gun about which I knew nothing but the name, and expecting no results, I found a few 2024 press releases out of Brazil announcing that HS Produkt had won a tender with the State of São Paulo, Brazil, for a sub-machinegun (SMG) meant for the São Paulo Military Police (PMESP). That Kuna SMG was — surprisingly — chambered in .40 S&W. Additional research showed me that Brazil is one of the few places in the

world outside of the U.S. where the .40 S&W cartridge has some popularity. Other than the Kuna SMG sporting a CZ Scorpion EVO-esque stock and a three-lug mount on the barrel, the SMG looks identical to the pistol introduced by Springfield Armory. Springfield Armory is only launching the 9mm evaluated in this review, available with or without a brace.

Like many of Springfield Armory’s products, the Kuna

WILD WEASEL

THE **SPRINGFIELD ARMORY** KUNA IS AN SMG-STYLE PISTOL THAT'S FUN TO SHOOT AND IDEAL FOR DEFENSE.

BY JAMES TARR | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR

is also made by HS Produkt in Croatia. HS Produkt has a proven record for designing quality guns, some of which have seen combat around the world. The Kuna has been in development for years.

As aforementioned, the Springfield Armory Kuna is a pistol that is offered with and without a side-folding brace. Empty and without a brace, the Kuna was tested on our scales at just 4 pounds, 6 ounces. With the provided Strike Industries brace, it was 5 pounds, 1 ounce. The Kuna sports a 6-inch barrel, and overall length without a brace is 15½-inches long. With a brace, the Kuna measured 16.35 inches with the brace folded and 24.35 inches with the brace extended.





The controls of the Springfield Armory Kuna in 9mm are either ambidextrous or reversible. The Kuna is a 15½-inch pistol without the optional brace attached. Folded, it measures just 16¼ inches.

WHAT IS A KUNA?

Since you’re probably wondering, the weasel-like pine marten is the national animal of Croatia where this pistol is made. Croatians call it the “kuna,” which was also the name for its currency before switching to the Euro. Kuna, the firearm, is a submachine-gun-style pistol with a short barrel. The 6-inch barrel is not especially thick, which helps keep weight down, and it ships standard with a multi-port compensator that marginalizes felt recoil. The barrel is threaded ½x28, so if you’re interested in shooting this suppressed — as we did — simply change out muzzle devices.

KEEP IT ROLLING ...

There is a lot going on with the Kuna, some quite interesting. Perhaps the most important is this: Unlike many new so-called “large format” 9mm pistols on the market, the Kuna doesn’t use a straight-blowback operating system. Rather, it cycles using a roller-delayed blowback action. “Roller locks” are nothing new. The most famous was in the HK MP5 and the larger ver-

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY KUNA	
TYPE	Roller-delay blowback, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	30 rds.
BARREL	6 in., Melonite (carbon steel), threaded (½x28)
LENGTH	15.5 in. (w/o brace); 16.25 in. (brace folded); 24.25 in., (brace extended)
WEIGHT	4 lbs., 6 oz (w/o brace); 5 lbs., 1 oz (w/ brace)
RECEIVER	Forged 7075 (aluminum)
BRACE	Strike Ind. FSA, folding
TRIGGER	5 lbs. (tested); flat face, single stage
SIGHTS	Folding, post (front); folding notch/aperture (rear)
MSRP	\$1,149 (tested w/ brace); \$999 (w/o brace)
MANUFACTURER	Springfield Armory, 800-680-6866, springfield-armory.com

sions of that design concept, the G3, HK 33, and so on. Unsurprisingly, the roller-system in the HK guns is a complicated bit of German engineering. The roller in the Kuna bolt, however, is shockingly simple.

When you pull the bolt out of the gun, you might not notice the roller at all. The bolt assembly is a chunk of steel, typical for pistol-caliber firearms. This one is not as heavy, though, because the roller system does some of the work. If you inspect the top of the bolt assembly above and forward of the breech face, you’ll see a simple spring-loaded stainless-steel roller, which locks into a recess in the top of the barrel above the chamber. The roller absorbs some of the recoil forces before it unlocks and moves up and out of the way. Once unlocked, the bolt can start its rearward travel, hence the name “roller delayed blowback.”



The Kuna bolt assembly has less mass than would be required for a comparable direct-blowback design. The delayed roller-lock design reduces the effects of recoil by pausing the impulse.



A monolithic aluminum upper receiver is secured to the polymer composite lower by two captured takedown pins. The bolt catch/release, selector and mag release are familiar to AR users.



Reduced to its major subassemblies, the Kuna retains the 6-inch barrel within the machined aluminum upper receiver when separated from the lower. With the endplate removed, the bolt, buffer, guiderod and spring assembly can be extracted from the rear.

THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

The Kuna has a modern, modular aesthetic. To me, it looks like a cross between a B&T APC9 (\$2,521, guns.com) or the CZ Scorpion EVO 3+ (\$1,199, cz-usa.com). The upper receiver, the serialized part, is machined 7075 aluminum, and it is somewhat beefy. The integral handguard has M-Lok slots for mounting accessories, and at the rear of the receiver on either side you'll find quick-detach (QD) sockets for mounting a sling.

The lower receiver is molded from polymer and held in place with two, big captive pins. Pop those out and the lower comes off the gun. The polymer end plate with the MIL-STD-1913 "Picatinny" rail at the back slides down a short distance before coming out. As with many 9mm SMGs, the bolt assembly pulls out the back of the Kuna for cleaning. The ejector is fixed and mounted to the receiver.

Atop the Kuna is 8½ inches of optic rail to mount the optic of your choice. The slots are numbered for reference, but helping set the Kuna apart from others are that the flip-up steel sights are integral. I like them. If you leave the sights down, pistol-style emergency sights remain. At the rear is a white-outline notch and at the front is a post with a white dot. Even with the brace attached, I was able to get my head down low enough to use them, but just barely. Flip the sights up and they snap into detents, but they don't lock. There is an aperture in the rear and a protected post at the front. The front sight is click-adjustable for elevation using the wheel just beneath it. The rear sight adjusts for

windage using a thumb wheel. There are hash marks on the receiver for reference, but the rear sight doesn't *click*.

The Kuna uses a folding charging handle at the front, which does not reciprocate when firing. It's mounted to the left side but is easily converted to the right side. The handle is made of steel, is smooth and feels great in your hand. When pulled out, it protrudes almost 1¾ inches from the receiver, which is big enough for at least two fingers — maybe three. It is spring-loaded and will fold as soon as you release it. Working the charging handle revealed that the bolt travel glided slick. Notable is that the charging handle can be operated with the brace folded.

Receiver controls are all bilateral. The safety lever is polymer and sports the same fine but surprisingly aggressive texturing that is on the pistol grip and magazine well. Oddly, the magazine release on the right side is polymer, but the one on the left is steel. The steel bolt catch/release lever on either side of the receiver is identical, and you can use it to lock your bolt one-handed, using just the tip of your trigger finger. In fact, this is the only problem I had when testing this gun. As I was getting used to it, I pressed the bottom of the bolt stop with my trigger finger while trying to hit the magazine release. A few repetitions, though, fixed that problem.

The trigger is straight with a nearly flat face. It feels good under the finger. The trigger pull was not surprising for a gun originally designed as an submachine gun (SMG); it's slightly long and mushy but not gritty or heavy. The reset



The charging handle is a non-reciprocating design that also folds forward when not in use. The handle can be reversed, also.



When folded, a fixed, pistol-type dot sight is available. When raised, the needle-post front sight is adjustable for precision.



Folded, the rear sight is Springfield Armory's white-outline U-notch; flipped up, an adjustable aperture for precision.



The Kuna borrows ergonomics and a control layout from the AR platform, but the textured grip, mag well, mag release button, and bolt catch/release wear Springfield's Adaptive Grip Texture.

was shorter than expected, so I could shoot faster than I expected. The total tested pull weight measured 5 pounds on Guns & Ammo's sample.

The Kuna uses standard AR-pattern pistol grips. You may have another preference, but I found I really liked Springfield's selection. It has a more vertical angle and good texturing. A hinged floorplate is at the bottom. I like storing spare batteries for my optic in Ziplocs, and keeping them inside my pistol grip.

The magazine well has a generous bevel, so if you can't reload the Kuna fast, you're doing something wrong.

MAG CHANGE

As the Kuna was originally developed in 9mm, and then .40 S&W for the Brazilian armed forces, it was designed

around the magazine. The magazines are great, and perhaps the Kuna will be offered in other chamberings sooner than later. Springfield Armory told G&A that it intends to keep them affordably price. (Rumors suggest around \$25 apiece.) With each Kuna, we get two magazines.

Magazines feature transparent polymer bodies marked for "10," "20" and "30"-round capacities on both sides. As with most dedicated SMG magazines, they are two-position feed. You'll see that there is a steel feed ramp with a generous double bevel attached to the aluminum receiver in front of the chamber to aid feeding. The walls in the magazine are thick, too. There are stainless-steel feed lips molded into the top of the mag for durability. The .40 S&W magazines are straight and I think they look cool. I'm not a big fan of the .40 S&W cartridge, but in a gun this size it would make sense. I suspect that version would do well for Springfield.

The magazines contain strong springs that require some effort to load, but they'll last a long time. With two-position-feed magazines such as this, here's a trick to save your thumbs: When the spring gets too stiff to insert a new cartridge, hold the cartridge atop the magazine in place with your thumb and tap the bottom of the magazine on something firm. Inertia will help to seat the round.

The Kuna magazine reminds me of the SIG Sauer MPX magazine. Both are beefy, and if you remember, the MPX, it was originally going to be offered in both .40 and .357 SIG, so the mag and magazine well were sized for accordingly. That's what I see with the Kuna. The magazine's external dimensions are big enough that it would be possible to even see a 10mm Auto in the future.



Magazines for the Kuna are proprietary and robust. Spare 30-round mags are projected to be affordably priced. **\$25**



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BRACE FOR IT ...

Should you choose to buy a Kuna with a brace, you'll get the Strike Industries single-folding FSA. (Strike also makes a dual-folding model.) I have prior experience with Strike Industries braces and I recommend them. This brace has a machined aluminum bar, and at the back is a polymer stabilizer arm brace. The locking mechanism is steel and provides a rock-solid mount. It has a strong detent to remain folded and deploys with a sharp tug.

You can mount the brace anywhere up and down the receiver rail section. Depending on how you're running the gun, you might find that traditional AR optics are too tall. An EOTech holographic sight seemed both too big and too tall for me. For most of my shooting, I mounted an Aimpoint ACRO P-2 on a Rep-tilia Corp. low rail mount. It was the perfect height for me. Another benefit was it added almost no weight to the gun.

My biggest question about the roller-delayed blowback operating system was how much of the recoil it might absorb, especially since it looked so simple. I shot the Kuna side-by-side to the latest Springfield Armory 9mm Saint Victor Pistol, which has a 5½-inch barrel (\$1,099, springfield-armory.com). Given that the Saint Victor 9mm uses a straight blowback operating system, it has a heavier bolt, and even though it's about the same size as the Kuna, it weighs 11 ounces more. The Kuna demonstrated that it still produced noticeably less felt recoil! That was great news. I also noticed that the bolt of the Kuna cycled faster than the 9mm Saint AR's. The cases were up and out of the receiver in the blink of an eye. The Kuna bounced a little with each shot, but it didn't climb. If I shot faster, it just bounced a bit faster. The recoil impulse reminded me a lot of the Scorpion EVO, but the straight-blowback Scorpion produced more felt recoil and bounce against the shoulder.

To test reliability, I put a variety of ammunition through the Kuna, everything from soft full-metal-jackets (FMJ) to hot +P jacketed hollowpoints (JHP). I've lost count, but



The Strike Industries single-side folding brace is low profile and ideal for concealment. When folded, the pistol is still operational.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Fiocchi 158-gr. FMJ	871	20	9	.9	1.3
Black Hills +P 124-gr. JHP	1,283	23	12	1	1.6
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,203	25	14	1.4	2.2
Winchester Active Duty 115-gr. FMJ FP	1,372	31	19	1.5	3

Notes: Accuracy is the average of four, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P chronograph set 12 feet in front of the muzzle.

I've tested hundreds of rounds from 10 different loads of assorted manufacturers' ammunition. The only problem I experienced was with the 90-grain +P load from Super-Vel; the wide mouth on that

hollowpoint caught the feed ramp on its way in. Accuracy was as good as you'd expect from a fixed barrel 9mm SMG. There was some velocity boost from its 6-inch barrel when compared to normal pistol numbers. The Kuna was a like a friendly, furry weasel, which considering its size and weight would make it a good choice if you're taking new, small or young shooters to the range. Honestly, when I first looked over the Kuna after receiving it at my dealer, I was a bit underwhelmed. The more I handled it, and the more I shot it, the more impressed I became. HS Produkt and Springfield Armory did everything right with this gun. If the caliber options materialize, the Kuna will stand out even further in this crowded segment. It was great fun to shoot, and it would work just as well as a home defense pistol as it would a travel bag companion for the road. I'm buying mine. Get your own.



HOT TAKES FROM THE WORLD OF FIREARMS

Today's firearms industry is innovative, exciting, and fast-paced. If you're a serious shooter, get the high-powered coverage you deserve from *Guns & Gear* hosts Ryan Gresham and Kevin Jarnagin. They'll bring you the latest firearms news, review the hottest new guns, ammo, optics, and accessories, go in-depth with product experts, and much more.

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STAND APART

SAVAGE ARMS UPGRADES ITS MICRO PISTOL WITH OPTICS, RAILS AND CAPACITY WITH THE STANCE XR.

BY JACK OLLER | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

WHEN IT COMES to line extensions that feature upgrades, the Savage Stance XR micro pistol offers a lot for almost the same price as the original Stance. The brand had been out of the pistol game for nearly 100 years when it first introduced the Stance in Guns & Ammo's February 2022 issue. That model has since been discontinued — technically — but it was replaced by an updated Stance XR line. I wrote “technically” because Savage continues to support customers of the original model, and because there remains many similarities between the original and the new-for-2025 model.

Savage has a limited yet remarkable history with handguns, and I think the company re-entered handgun manufacturing in one of the best ways possible. Many G&A history buffs are familiar with the story of the Savage Model 1907, so this article won't retrace the origin of Savage handguns. I bring it up, though, to point out how difficult and therefore impressive it is that Savage has brought back a manufacturing

category after 105 years. (The Model 1907 was discontinued in 1920.) To me, that is part of what makes the Stance's evolution fascinating.

Wanting to participate in today's popular handgun segment, Savage utilized a proven design and updated it to meet the needs of modern concealed carry. It was a brilliant way to enter a new market. Having a solid platform to build on, it improved its function and updated aesthetics. Savage focused on adding features customers wanted. If you're familiar with Savage's extensive rifle line, you already know that it excels at providing options. The Stance XR is all Savage.

FIRST, THE SIMILARITIES

Before I review the latest and greatest, allow me to point out the details that Savage kept for the Stance XR. Except for the new three-slot rail, the grip and frame are the same. In fact, the grip was regarded as among the best features of the Stance. The slim design paired with the sandpaper-like texture ensures a high grip with excellent control when fired. The Stance XR frame also includes the same backstrap options and interchangeability.



The Stance XR is available in three models. The only difference between them are the sighting arrangements. Otherwise, they are identical. Each model is available with either a FDE, black or gray polymer grip module.



The Stance XR retains the chassis-style design, and all models of the original Stance and Stance XR continue to offer an ambidextrous manual safety, which I confirmed functioned properly at the range. The chassis is not set up for user-servicing, though, and we don't expect an extensive aftermarket to introduce customizations. The Stance XR is optimized to run out of the box.

Finally, for the frame, Savage kept the molded overtravel stop behind the trigger, which prevents unnecessary trigger movement. On the slide, the aggressive serrations and lightening cuts were popular treatments, and the muzzle is still beveled for reholstering. The 3.2-inch stainless-steel barrel did not change, and the Stance XR slide has a black nitride finish.

WHAT'S NEW?

At a glance, the Stance XR looks remarkably similar to the original, but it received major updates. Whether you choose the three white dot, night sights or XP optic-mounted version, they share upgraded magazines, trigger safeties, recoil spring and a slide cut for red-dot sights. The dual-spring guiderod incorporates a captured recoil spring. It's a small element that highlights thoughtfulness, and it prevents a part from running away during maintenance. The trigger is similar, but a trigger safety was added to the XR, which aligns with the brand's safety focus.

Moving from a single-stack to a stack-and-a-half magazine increased the capacity of the Stance XR without the need

SAVAGE STANCE XR MANUAL SAFETY XP	
TYPE	Recoil operated, striker fire, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	10 rds., 13 rds.
BARREL	3.2 in., stainless steel
LENGTH	6.25 in.
WIDTH	.96 in.
HEIGHT	5 in. (w/o optic)
WEIGHT	1 lb., 6.4 oz.
FINISH	Black nitride (steel)
FRAME	Polymer FDE (tested)
TRIGGER	8 lbs., 1.6 oz. (tested)
SIGHTS	CTS-1500 red dot, QRO plate, XS Sights night sights
SAFETY	Manual thumb lever, ambidextrous (tested)
ACCESSORIES	Two interchangeable backstraps
MSRP	\$659
MANUFACTURER	Savage Arms Co., 800-370-0708, savagearms.com

to enlarge the grip module or internal chassis. The Stance XR includes one flush-fit 10-round magazine and an extended 13-round mag, bringing the Stance XR to the capacity expectations of modern everyday carry (EDC) pistols. It was a significant increase from the original Stance's seven- and eight-round-capacity single-stack mags. Those original magazines will not work in the Stance XR.

While the old mags are not compatible, many of the holster options supporting the Stance should accept the Stance XR. Even with the new

three-slot dustcover, Savage told G&A that it has been able to fit the Stance XR into Stance holsters with just a little bit of massaging. At the time of this article's writing, there do not appear to be holster options dedicated to the Stance XR and no production light-bearing options. It may be necessary to commission one from a custom holster maker if you decide to conceal carry the Stance XR with a light attached.

"XP" MEANS "RED-DOT READY"

Normally, a pistol line extension with an updated optic-ready slide doesn't need much explanation, but the way Savage designed this one is clever. The Quick Release



The texture of the grip is effective and the contours encourage a high hold on the pistol. The extended magazine offers enough room for a full firing grip.



A difference in operation or comfort between backstrap sizes when shooting was not observed during testing. Using a punch to remove the retaining pin, the backstraps were easy to change.



The railed dustcover is the only change to the frame of the Stance XR. While the barrel is crowned, the face of the slide features angled bevels to prevent snags when reholstering.



The bilateral manual safety lever was confirmed ambidextrous. The safety can be readily disengaged with either hand. The condition of the safety is marked "FIRE" when in the down position.

Optics (QRO) plate does exactly what its name implies, and it does so with a non-specific tool. Looking at the rear of the slide, you'll notice a non-descript set screw at the top-left portion of the backplate. By depressing this with something pointy — think punch, small Allen wrench or even a pen — it releases the adapter plate or slide cover. What is the advantage of this, though?

To start, this is incredibly convenient for training at the range. As much as I love red dots, it's important to practice with your pistol's iron sights. The QRO lets one rapidly remove and replace a red-dot sight and return to zero, without the need to completely unscrew and remove the red dot from the plate. You can start out shooting red-dot drills, pop it off for iron-sight practice, and then



The Stance XR trigger incorporates a safety lever. Behind it is an integral over-travel stop molded to the grip module.

reattach it in mere seconds.

Also, I'll admit that I'm not always as conscientious about keeping an eye on my batteries as I should be. With the incredible battery life of so many red dots, it's easy to forget how long ago they were last replaced. Should you realize your red dot's battery has died while outside the home, you don't need a specialized tool to remove the red dot for an unobstructed view of the irons. This is especially important if you put a red dot on the base model Stance XR, which comes with a simple three white-dot setup. You can't co-witness a red dot with the Stance's standard sights.

The night sight and XP models of the Stance XR come with a fantastic set of tritium night sights. These do co-witness through most micro red dots, just barely. It is enough of a sight picture to use in an emergency if the optic were to go down, but why not quickly remove the optic entirely? The QRO plate is one of the best optic-mounting solutions available for subcompact pistols.



The Stance XR is compatible with Glock 43X aftermarket sights. One would be hard-pressed to find a better alternative to the night sights included with the XP model, though.



Controls can be operated with the dominant hand. They are so low profile, though, that both hands were necessary to operate the controls with the non-dominant hand for one-hand drills.

On the subject of the QRO, each option of the Stance XR includes a QRO plate cut for the Shield RMSc mounting pattern, but a Trijicon RMRcc micro mounting plate is available upon request from Savage's customer service department. Should you decide that you don't like the quick-release plate, the Stance XR includes a means to permanently keep the optic plate or slide cover in place with easy-to-follow instructions in the manual.

AT THE RANGE

Testing the Stance XR started with confirming the zero of the Crimson Trace CTS-1500 5-MOA red-dot sight of the XP model. For the sake of transparency, know that I once worked in the marketing department for Crimson Trace; I do have a fondness for that company. With that in mind, I objectively think that the CTS-1500 is a fine, affordable red dot that's good for its intended purpose. It is a nice value-add to the XP model; it is not a "combat" optic. The lens and housing are made from durable polymer, which is perfectly acceptable for light EDC use and training but it is not a duty sight.

When zeroing the CTS-1500, there was an instance during the second string of fire when the dot jumped out



A loaded chamber indicator is at the rear of the barrel. Be mindful that it vents gas and residue that can occlude the optic.



The QRO system allows users to use a punch to depress the plunger at the backplate to line up two tabs and the dovetails, allowing removal of the adapter plate and optic assembly.

of place, which required a re-zero. I think it was a fluke because there were no more issues with the dot after 300 rounds of additional testing. It highlighted the impor-

tance of putting carry guns through a break-in period, especially if they may be used for defense. I'll also add that the Stance XR had no ejection or failure-to-feed issues during the course of this evaluation.

Should you carry or train with a red dot on the Stance XR, it's important to keep an eye on and regularly clean the objective lens of the red dot, regardless of brand. The loaded-chamber indicator atop the barrel hood leaks a fair amount of gas when fired. This isn't an issue in a defensive situation should you start out with a clean lens, but if you shoot the Stance a lot, it may be necessary to clean the lens of grime

from escaping gases before the sight picture through the optic becomes occluded.

When judging a pistol's accuracy, it's important to consider G&A test protocol. The Stance XR is an accurate pistol for what it is, but the heavy trigger amplified imperfections in fundamentals. Benched at 25 yards, I always produced a flyer in each five-shot string. The trigger has a short amount of takeup, but the pull weight seems to stack to the wall. G&A's sample measured 8 pounds, 1.6 ounces, using a Wheeler digital trigger gauge. Trigger-finger fatigue also became a factor for evaluators when attempting slow,



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The 10- and 13-round magazines are new for the Stance XR, and will not feed the original Stance 9mm pistol. The stack-and-a-half staggered design kept dimensions similar, though.

methodical shots for accuracy.

The Stance XR still shot well enough for defensive ranges, and within center mass at 25 yards. At 10 yards, which is a more likely distance for defensive engagements, five-shot groups measured less than 2 inches. I also noted that the Stance XR shot equally well with the Crimson Trace optic and the night sights at any distance. Regardless



Disassembly of the Savage Stance XR is the same as the original. When reassembling, the guiderod and spring assembly must be oriented correctly, otherwise the slide will not align properly.

of preference for a dot or irons, the Stance XR ran well with both aiming solutions.

While running drills with the Stance XR, the safety lever was confirmed to be ambidextrous. The term “bilateral” is a better descriptor of the mag release and slide catch/

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release lever. The controls work as advertised when tested with the dominant hand, but it was challenging to work the slide and magazine release with only my left hand. It required support from both hands to fully utilize the controls.

The Stance XR ate all tested loads without issue. As long as I kept my thumbs off the slide, slowing slide velocity, it even ran the lightweight 65-grain NOVX load, however, I don't recommend NOVX for defensive carry in this gun. It's better to stick to common 115- to 124-grain defensive ammo.

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Black Hills +P 124-gr. JHP	1,125	52	18	3.25	4.8
Fiocchi Range Dyn. 115-gr. FMJ	1,030	30	11	3.8	7.8
NOVX Self Defense 65-gr. LF P/C	1,546	36	12	4.25	5.3
SIG Sauer V-Crown 124-gr. JHP	1,082	25	9	4.75	6.3
Hornady Crit. Def. 115-gr. FTX	1,041	22	8	4.75	7

Accuracy is the average of five, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. Velocity is the average of five shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph set adjacent to the barrel.

PARTING SHOT

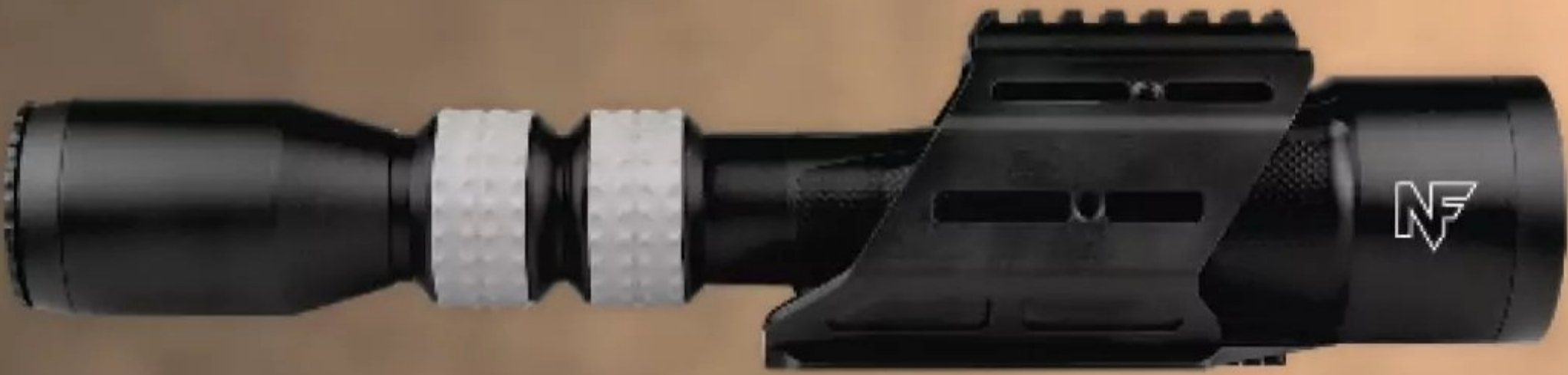
I really liked the Stance XR as an off-body carry gun. With the manual safety and the heavy trigger pull, I have no fear letting it bounce around in a small, otherwise empty compartment of my backpack. It should also appeal to those who are safety-conscious about appendix carry. A heavy trigger and manual safety are not a bad thing when carrying a pistol so close to precious cargo.

Lastly, the price point is quite appealing to those looking for an American-made EDC-ready pistol. Savage has only increased suggested prices by a rough average of \$20 between comparable models of the Stance and Stance XR, even with the upgrades. Savage knows how to put together a nice package for its customers; just look at its long guns. I only hear good things about its customer service, too. With the Stance XR checking all the boxes for a modern EDC pistol, Savage has become a one-stop-shop for all your firearm needs — rifles, shotguns and now pistols. **G&A**

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FOUND: Stash of 126-Year-Old \$10 US Gold Liberty Head Coins Survived the Melting Pot for Decades, Now Nearly Gone

A Glimpse into American Numismatic History

You may be familiar with US vintage gold coins. One of the most popular types is the \$10 Liberty Head gold coin. It's one of the most iconic pieces in American numismatics. Minted from 1838 to 1907, the \$10 Gold Liberty Head coin not only served as a medium of exchange but also as a reflection of America's growth and prosperity during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A time when many US circulating coins were still made of gold!

An All-American Coin

The \$10 Liberty Head coin was designed in 1838 by Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint Christian Gobrecht. The obverse features a left-facing portrait of Lady Liberty wearing a coronet inscribed with "LIBERTY." She is surrounded by 13 stars representing the original colonies, with the minting year below. The reverse shows a heraldic eagle with a shield on its breast, an olive branch in its right talon and arrows in its left talon. Above the eagle is the motto "IN GOD WE TRUST".

Minted at the Historic Philadelphia Mint

Many of the \$10 Liberty gold coins were produced at the Philadelphia Mint, identified by the lack of any mint mark on the reverse side of the coin. The Philadelphia Mint was the first U.S. Mint established way back in 1792. Nicknamed both the "Ye Old Mint" and the "Mother Mint", it has moved or been reconstructed multiple times to accommodate production demands.

It's Amazing There Are Any Gold Liberty Head Coins Left!

The production of US gold circulating coins ended abruptly in 1933, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order

6102, which required American citizens to turn in their gold coins and bullion to the Federal Reserve. As a result, most gold coins in circulation (including Gold Liberties) were melted down. Coin experts believe an abnormally large number of 1899-P \$10 Gold Liberty Head were melted, explaining why it is exceedingly difficult to find.



A Tiny Mintage

Another reason the 1899-P \$10 Gold Liberty Head is difficult to find is because of how few were made. Of all \$10 Gold Liberty Head coins struck, only 5% were struck in 1899. Even smaller, the coins struck at the Philadelphia mint only account for 2.95% of all \$10 Gold Liberty Head coins struck. Talk about small numbers!

Supplies are Limited

Due to the collectability, rarity and condition of these 126-year-old gold coins, we have only 27 of these 1899-P \$10 US Gold Liberty Head coins in MS62 collector's condition available. Call toll-free 1-833-304-6533 now to secure yours before our limited supply runs out!

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1899-P \$10 Gold Liberty Coin MS62 Highlights

- Certified authentic and in collector's grade MS62
- Struck in 1899, over 126 years ago
- Just 5.01% of all \$10 US Gold Liberty Heads were struck in 1899
- Only 2.96% of all \$10 US Gold Liberty Heads were struck at Philadelphia in 1899 and far fewer survive today, in any condition!
- Each contains 0.48375 troy ounces of gold
- Diameter of 26.8 mm



CZECH ENDURANCE

**SELLIER & BELLOT CELEBRATES 200 YEARS
OF AMMUNITION PRODUCTION.**

WORDS & PHOTOS BY ALFREDO RICO

THE DENSE CZECH FOG limited visibility to 50 yards. Along the treeline, 20 hunters were spread out to the left and right of me at 40-yard intervals. We were excitedly waiting for the horn to announce the start of the driven hunt. Once the mellow bellow finished reverberating through the air, hounds and humans barked up a storm, scaring fallow deer our way. As a guest of Sellier & Bellot's bicentennial anniversary, I was in the Czech Republic for my first traditional European hunt. It was unlike anything I experienced before.

PRAGUE

Two days earlier, I landed in Prague. Setting foot on European soil was another first for me. I stayed at Hotel Josef, which is in Prague's Old Town. Walking a few blocks through the cobblestone streets led me to a large square where the Church of Our Lady Before Týn towered above surrounding buildings. The 14th century Gothic



The 15th-century Astronomical Clock in Prague still tracks the time, sun, moon and zodiac calendar.

church is reminiscent of a fairy-tale castle, except it is colossal with a menacing black-spined roof. At the other end of the square stands the Old Town Hall with its 15th-century Astronomical Clock, an engineering and scientific marvel of the period. The 600-year-old working clock displays four different times, the sun, the moon, and the zodiac calendar. It predates Galileo, thus the sun revolves around Earth. Hourly, a skeleton symbolizing death rings a bell as 12 apostle statues pass by two windows and greets the crowd below. Walking beyond the clock funneled me

onto Charles Bridge over the Vltava river near the 9th century Prague Castle that dominates the skyline. It is impossible not to be mesmerized by the millennium-old city.

The next morning, we traveled 44 miles south to Vlašim for a factory tour of the Sellier & Bellot ammunition plant. Sitting in the frontmost seat of the chartered bus, I *oohed* and *aahed* at





The factory in Vlašim includes a 200-acre wildlife preserve supporting a managed population of 51 red deer and 28 fallow deer.

the architecture. The neo-renaissance architecture of the National Museum in Prague contrasted greatly with the minimalist, concrete buildings of Communist-bloc-era design. The former exuded humanity; the latter buried it.

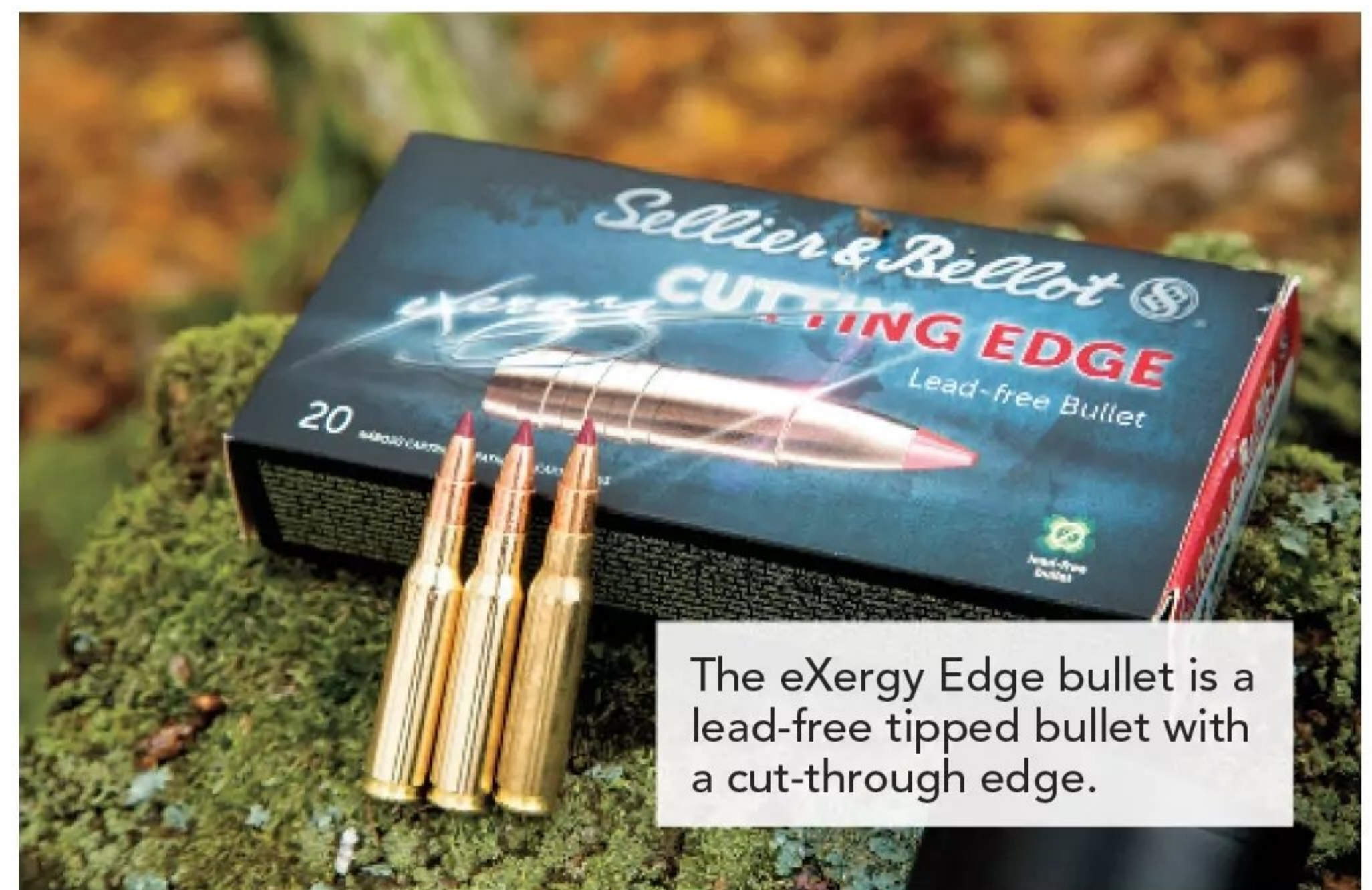
THE BICENTENNIAL

Prior to the visit, I wasn't too familiar with Sellier & Bellot, other than they had a great reputation for making affordable 9mm ammunition. I often mispronounced the name with a silent "r" and "t." At the headquarters conference room, I asked Vice President of Sales and Marketing Josef Strnad about its pronunciation. He enunciated, "Sel-lee-er and Bel-lot." I now sound out the consonants.

Sellier & Bellot was founded in 1825, in Prague, by Louis Sellier and Jean Maria Nicolaus Bellot. They requested the privilege to manufacture percussion caps from then-emperor of Austria, Franz I. They were in the right place with the right product. Percussion caps were the disruptive technology of the time. Due to the ease of loading, faster lock time and water resistance, percussion firearms quickly overtook flintlock designs in demand.

Thanks to its mass production ingenuity, the year 1830 saw Sellier & Bellot expand to international markets. It produced more than 60 million percussion caps and became the low-price leader of the era. Bringing costs down popularized percussion caps and subsequently flintlock conversions.

In 1870, S&B produced its first centerfire cartridges using Flobert's rimfire and Lefauchaux's pin-primer cartridges. A few years later, its annual output grew to 10 million cartridges. In 1895, it expanded into hunting cartridges and copper primers for ammo production.



The eXergy Edge bullet is a lead-free tipped bullet with a cut-through edge.



Despite advancements in bullet design, traditional and modern bullets make up the S&B product lineup.

During World War I, S&B produced handgun cartridges for the Austrian army. At the end of World War I, Czechoslovakia was created. In 1922, a Czechoslovak law mandated that companies seeking Ministry of Defence contracts must be under Czechoslovak ownership, and the Czechoslovak Industrial Bank acquired most of the shares of S&B.

In 1936, the company relocated to Vlašim. Two years later, the Nazis

invaded and Sellier & Bellot was ordered to produce ammunition for the Germans. After years of brutal occupation, the Soviet Red Army and Czechoslovakians drove the Germans out. In 1945, the Soviet Union set up a provisional government and soon Sellier & Bellot was nationalized. It became the main small-arms ammunition supplier for the Czechoslovak army. The 1989 fall of Communism affected Sellier & Bellot tremendously, though. The Communist government had greatly overstocked army ammo storage facilities, which left no new military orders for years.

Sellier & Bellot's slide back to privatization began in 1992,

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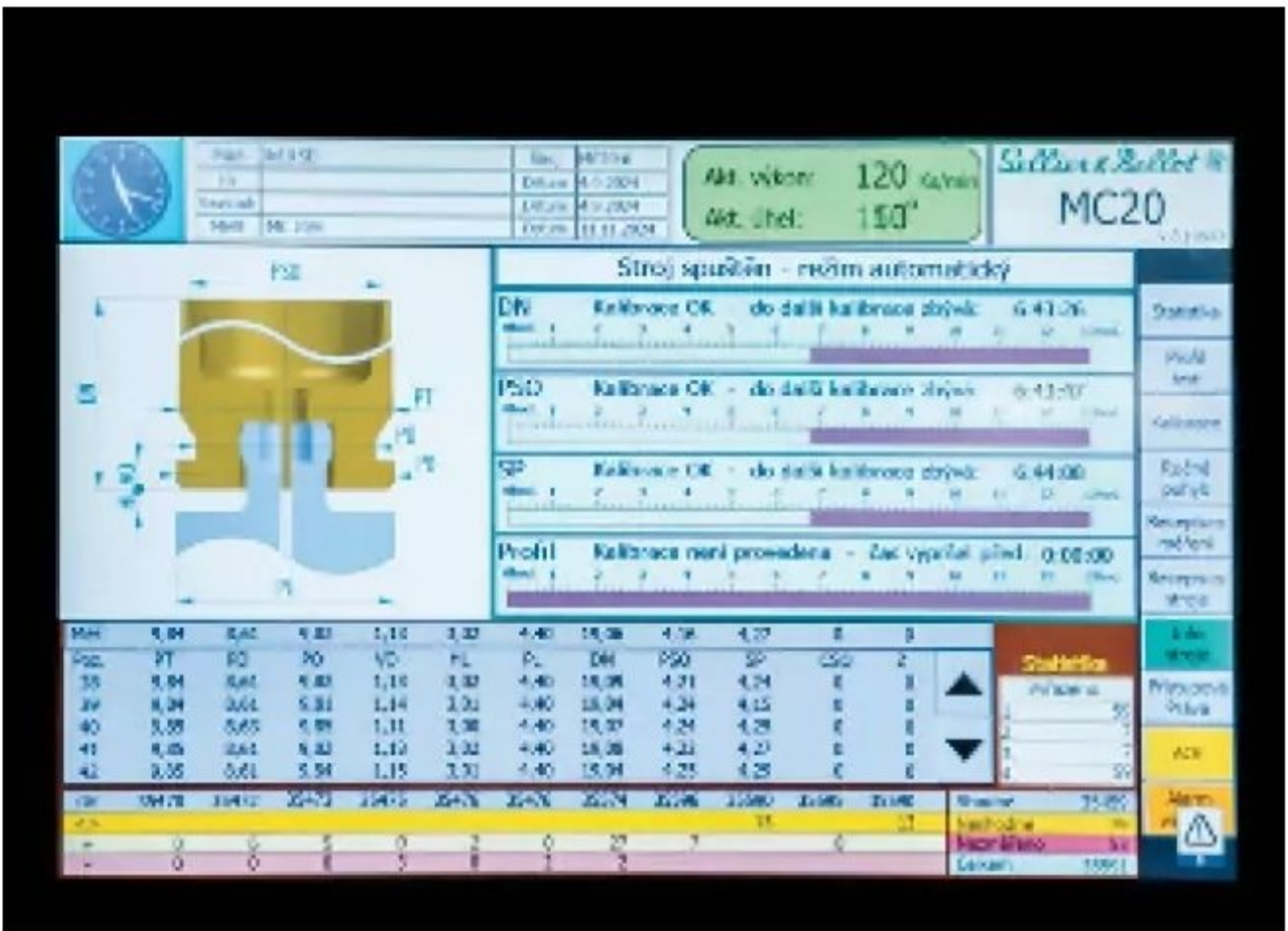




Every Sellier & Bellot bullet is weighed and checked for specs using computers.



The case heads are measured accurately in an instant.



A screenshot of a cartridge details the many measurements each machine makes.

which is when the Czech government began large-scale privatization of state enterprises through a process of voucher privatization. Under this program, the government sold shares in state-owned companies to Czech citizens in the form of vouchers. In 1992, the Velvet Divorce took place, which is when Czechoslovakia was peacefully split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The transition from state-owned to a joint-stock company was rocky. By 2003, Sellier & Bellot was on its feet. The period between 2014 and 2024 saw continued growth, especially. As of 2024, its European market share was heavily invested in law enforcement and military sectors. The U.S. market makes up about 20 percent of its revenue. Marking a new chapter in its history, Sellier & Bellot became a member of Colt CZ Group SE in 2024. They expect total ammo revenue to exceed \$300 million.

THE FACTORY TOUR

The Sellier & Bellot facility covers 370 acres and employs 1,653 people. It includes three ammo-producing factories, a machine manufacturing plant and a range. Each ammoplant is a carbon copy of the other. Much of the ammo-making machinery is made in-house, too. A 200-acre wildlife preserve is at the back of the property.

The ammo plant is like many modern ammo plants I've visited. The factory manufactures all components except powder. The brass, projectiles and primers are all made to exacting standards. Brass rolls are punched into cups, which are then extruded into cases by large presses. Reels of lead

What makes Sellier & Bellot unique among other ammo factories is the degree of quality control. The cases and bullets that come off the production line are fed to computerized and automated quality control systems. All cases go through two separate inspections. One is an optical case test that images the case head and extractor groove, taking many measurements. The numbers are analyzed in the blink of an eye. Another optical machine inspects the entire case for blemishes. Each bullet is also weighed on a computerized scale. The components that fall outside the spec are automatically removed from the line. There are banks of such machinery running at the same time. During the time I spent watching the machines, only a few cases and bullets were rejected.

The cases and bullets that pass inspection head to another building for assembly. Multi-stage presses assemble the ammo in a carousel. Powder level is checked on each case in these machines, too. Once assembled, they are quality checked by employees before being boxed and cased. The cases are sent to the shipping warehouse where they are inventoried and shelved by a robotic system.

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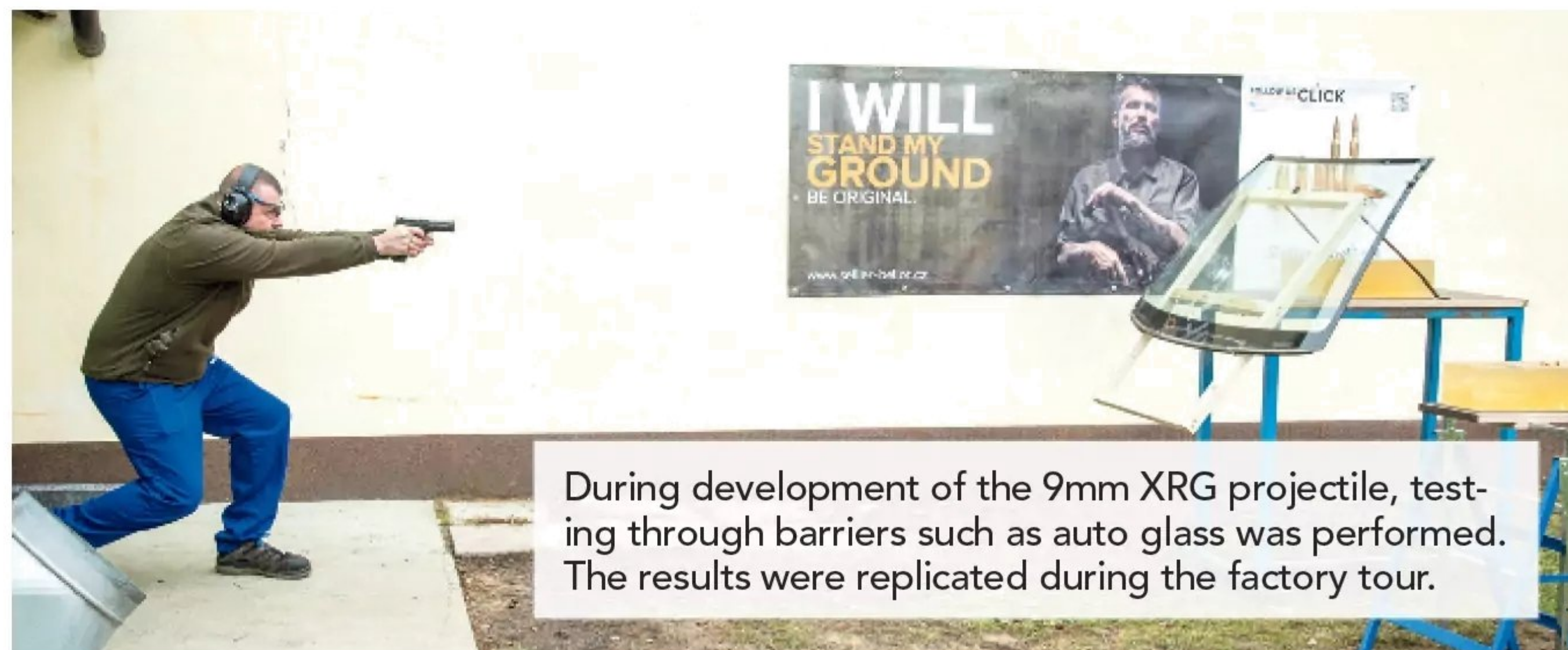




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During development of the 9mm XRG projectile, testing through barriers such as auto glass was performed. The results were replicated during the factory tour.

AT THE RANGE

The factory tour included range time. There, I shot frangible ammo, 5.56 NATO training rounds, a dangerous game load and several types of pistol ammo. The XRG Defense round was especially noteworthy. The 9mm XRG ammo uses a solid-copper, 110-grain hollowpoint that maintains close to 100 percent weight retention, regardless of the barrier it passes through. When shot through clothing and into gel, the projectile expanded like a flower. When shot through a auto-glass, the nose deformed inward.

What was impressive about the range time was the volume of ammo we shot. Every time I emptied a 30-round or standard-capacity handgun magazine, I was handed another. I almost felt bad for the employees having to load the mags, but they did so with grins on their faces. What the high volume of shooting showed me, though, was how reliable the ammo performs. I never experienced a hiccup or malfunction from the four rifles and two handguns that I used.

THE HUNT

After the factory tour, the group headed southwest to Moravia where I would experience my first traditional European hunt. The hunt began with a ceremony where a large group of hunters gathered around a makeshift square of pine branches. The square was empty, but after the hunt it would be filled by the day's kill. A horn blower made a speech about respecting wildlife, the traditions of the hunt, and wishing for a good harvest. We then headed out to our hunting spots. I was handed a CZ 600 chambered



A 9mm XRG bullet was recovered from ballistic gel after passing through a windshield (above, left). The expanded bullet passed through cloth and into gel (above, right).

in .308 Winchester, along with a box of S&B's eXergy Cutting Edge ammo. The .308 cartridge featured a 165-grain blue-tipped, solid-copper bullet.

In the dense fog, it was eerie hearing hounds and beaters as they got closer. I didn't see them. Every hunter faced forward and stayed in their stand while game was driven from behind. This kept our rifles pointed in the opposite direction of the game drivers. Despite seeing a herd of fallow deer behind me, they skirted my firing lane. I didn't fire a shot in the day's three hunting sessions, but I tremendously enjoyed the unique experience.

The next morning, we headed west to Český Krumlov for a traditional pheasant hunt. The small town has a population of 13,000 and a famous medieval castle, Český Krumlov Castle. After centuries of war, invasion and occupation, Český Krumlov has become a popular tourist destination.

The pheasant hunt was similar to the deer hunt. We started with ceremonies and were spread apart for the shooting. There were two exceptions: One, a kennel of bird dogs joined the hunt to scoop up the felled birds. The other was that the pheasants were driven toward us. To keep the game drivers safe, we only shot birds above the tree line. I was armed with an

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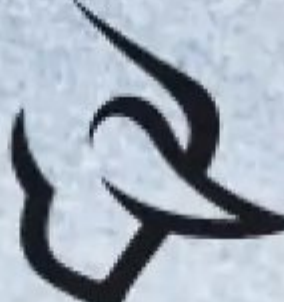
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S&B Express HP shotshells are only available in Europe. As with its other loads, they produced a tight pattern and packed a wallop.



Six Reeve's pheasants were among the fowl shot during the driven hunt that produced an assortment of roosters and hens.

over/under, 20-gauge shotgun. The ammo was Sellier & Bellot's Express HP, 2¾-inch shells, a 1⅜-ounce load with No. 4 shot pellets. The Express HP ammo is only available in Europe.

Unlike the deer hunt, a lot of pheasants crossed my shooting path. The 20-gauge shells had plenty of reach, too, and the pattern was tight enough to drop birds instantly at the distances that my rusty skills were comfortable shooting. When the hunt was over, I had shot more than 120 shells; they all went off without issue. At the

closing ceremony, there were 1,200 birds in the pine-lined square, including roosters, hens and six Reeve's pheasants.

When I arrived home, six boxes of Sellier & Bellot 9mm was waiting for me. Printed on the top of the box is a silver, crowned, two-tailed lion. It's the national symbol of the Czech Republic, and its use in the area dates to 1210. After 200 years and despite gargantuan obstacles, Sellier & Bellot has come full circle to employ machinery and technology to be a leader of quality, affordable ammo. That's a win all shooters can celebrate. **G&A**

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Many revolver enthusiasts objected to locks on both aesthetic and mechanical grounds since their introduction. The lock was often located above the cylinder release latch and required a key.

UNLOCKED POTENTIAL

SMITH & WESSON REINVIGORATES
ITS CLASSIC REVOLVER LINE
WITH "NO-LOCK" MODEL 10, 19
AND 36 REVOLVERS.

BY PATRICK SWEENEY
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ



UNLOCKED, spoken “,ən'läkt.” It’s a transitive verb meaning “To free from restraints or restrictions.”

In case you missed it, Smith & Wesson launched a classic revolver line at the 2025 NSSF SHOT Show that lacks the internal safety lock. They include the Model 10, 19 and 36 Classic. All three are solid frame designs made of carbon steel with forged parts that are finished with a high-polish blue. New shooters — or those who have spent their time learning to shoot only with 9mm pistols — may not know the significance of this announcement. Back in the 1990s, during the Clinton administration, there was a lot of angst about the future of firearms in America. Lawsuits, prospective legislation and nightly TV news harangues all aimed squarely at firearms. As a result, the then-management of S&W added internal locks to its revolvers starting in 2001, locks that required a key to lock and unlock them for safe storage. Much-hated in some circles — and disparagingly named in ways we can’t even print — they have persisted until now.

The three Classic Series No-Lock revolvers have been the historic mainstays of S&W production for a century and a quarter now, beginning with the introduction of the M&P .38 Special in 1899. While they are made in the classic manner, out of forged steel, S&W has not abandoned the good engineering details they have added to the designs through the decades.

One notable update is the cylinder retention lug. On the older models, this part was press-fitted into the frame and swaged to stay in place. Its purpose was to keep the cylinder on the yoke when you ejected the empties. Now on all three — and all current-production S&W revolvers — it is an integral part of the frame. Having had to replace a few of those studs as a gunsmith back in the day, I applaud the change.

MODEL 10 CLASSIC

The Model 10, the fixed-sight .38 Special model, has been in production since 1899 for good reason. It is small enough and light enough to be easy to carry, but heavy enough that the recoil of .38 Special is not a problem for most shooters. The 4-inch barrel of two of the Classic Series No-Locks — and all the millions that were made before them — provides a long enough sight radius for accurate shots. The barrel length ensures you get most of the velocity a .38 Special can generate. When fed target wadcutters, the Model 10 or 19 can, in the right hands, put all six shots into the same ragged hole on the target, time and again. I know that as I’ve done it in various competitions.

Six shots in this modern world of high capacity 9mm pistols might not seem like a lot, but for target shooting, training and self-defense, six rounds can be plenty. One thing I noticed while chronographing loads is that cur-

With its K-frame, exposed ejector rod, and smooth walnut grips, the no-lock Model 10 Classic harkens back to the Victory Model and Smith & Wesson’s original M&P revolver line.

rent .38 Special ammunition is right there in the mix with the ballistics of 9mm ammunition. In the old days, that wasn’t so much the case. You are not giving up power to go wheelgun. The no-lock Model 10 Classic has the same external dimensions as all the other Model 10 revolvers, so any speedloader made for the “K” frame will feed your 10.

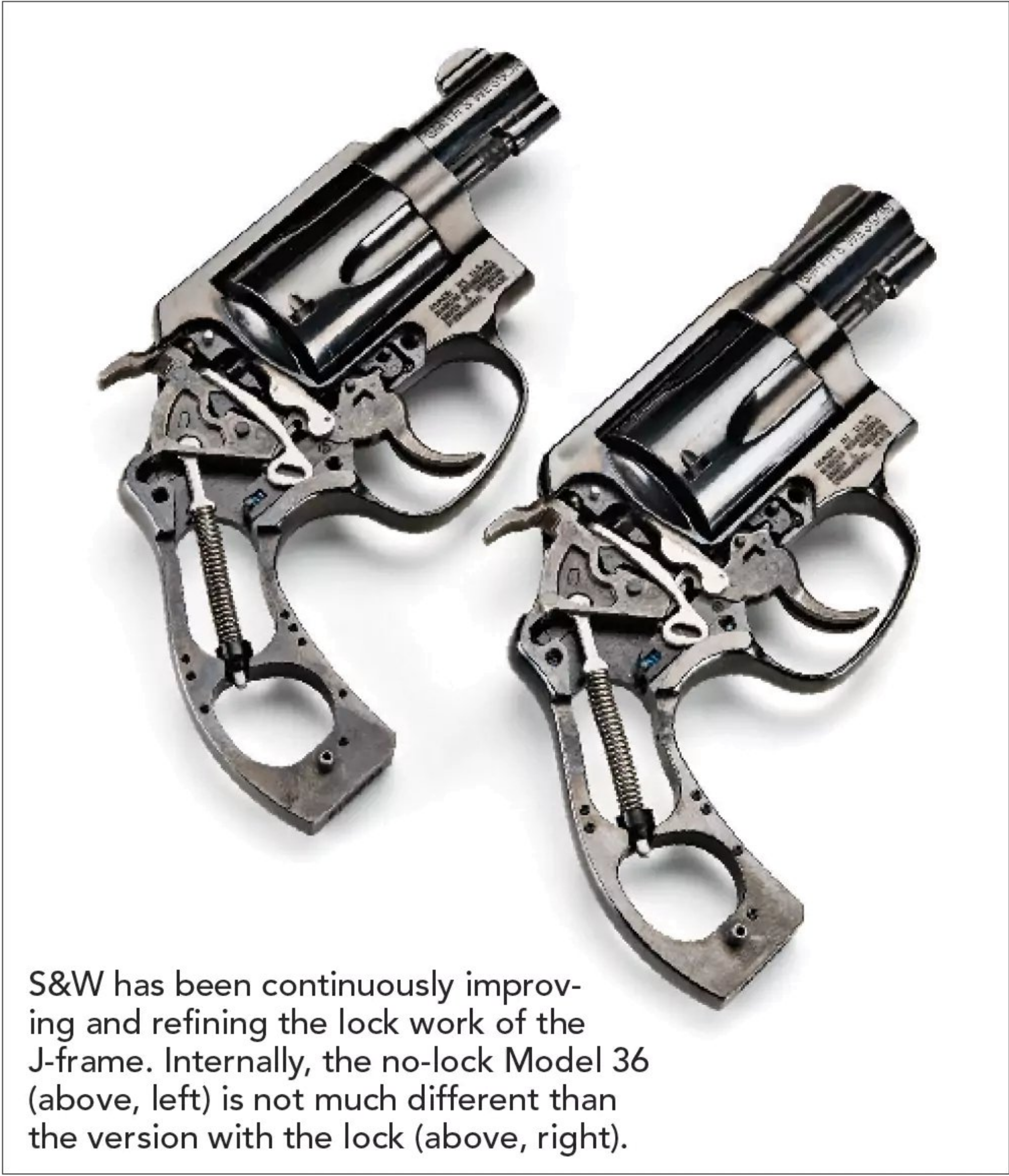
The no-lock Model 10 Classic has the tapered barrel of its predecessors, and the ejector rod also has the large knob on the tip, like the ones I saw in so many Detroit police holsters during the Reagan era. Adding to the retro vibe, S&W elected to go with smooth hardwood grips made by Tyler Gun Works (tylergunworks.

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 10 CLASSIC	
TYPE	Revolver, double-action/single-action
CARTRIDGE	.38 Special
CAPACITY	6 rds.
BARREL	4 in., carbon steel
LENGTH	8.87 in.
WIDTH	1.45 in.
HEIGHT	5.85 in.
WEIGHT	2 lbs., 2.6 oz.
GRIPS	Tyler Gun Works, walnut, smooth
FINISH	Blued (steel)
SIGHTS	Fixed blade (front), fixed notch (rear)
TRIGGER	3 lbs., 13 oz. (SA), 10 lbs., 4 oz. (DA)
MSRP	\$979
MANUFACTURER	Smith & Wesson, 800-331-0852, smith-wesson.com

com), looking even further back to the era when the K frame — then known as the M&P — was being made for the war effort, World War II that is. If you want to use more modern grips, they will fit just fine. It is a simple matter to unscrew the old and bolt on the new.

MODEL 19 CLASSIC

The original Model 19 was developed at the urging of the late Bill Jordan with the marriage of the K frame and the .357 Magnum cartridge. With adjustable sights and barrel lengths from 2½ to 6 inches, it was the



S&W has been continuously improving and refining the lock work of the J-frame. Internally, the no-lock Model 36 (above, left) is not much different than the version with the lock (above, right).



The firing pin in S&W revolvers migrated to the frame in 1997 for more consistent ignition. The Model 10 features a fixed notch in the topstrap while the Model 19 sports an adjustable rear sight.



Owing some credit to Bill Jordan, the Model 19 revolver was the mainstay among law enforcement for decades. The no-lock Model 19 Classics respect the original design, but with modern construction.

mainstay of law enforcement officers who were allowed to carry .357 Magnums. (Many departments long had a “no Magnums” rule.) It had, and still has, the capability of using both .38 Special and .357 Magnum ammunition. With .38 Special ammo, even the +P loads, the M-19 is a real pussycat. It has enough extra weight compared to the M-10 that recoil becomes even less of an issue. However, when you load up full-power factory .357 Magnum ammo, you will find it a lot more exciting than the 9mm you may have been shooting up to this point.

One aspect of the M-19 that might not have been passed down to the current generation is that Jordan saw the M-19 as a “practice with .38s, carry .357s” revolver. You can shoot .357s all the time in yours if you want, but departments saw .357 Magnum ammunition as being much too expensive. The constant wear-and-tear on the revolvers would eventually lead to the development of the L-frame and the 686 series. “Constant wear and tear,” you

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 19 CLASSIC	
TYPE	Revolver, double-action/single-action
CARTRIDGE	.38 Special/ .357 Magnum
CAPACITY	6 rds.
BARREL	4.25 in., carbon steel
LENGTH	9.87 in.
WIDTH	1.45 in.
HEIGHT	5.85 in.
WEIGHT	2 lbs., 5.4 oz.
MATERIALS	Hardwood, checkered
FINISH	Blued (steel)
SIGHTS	Fixed, red ramp (front), notch, adj. (rear)
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 1 oz. (SA), 9 lbs., 7 oz. (DA)
MSRP	\$1,099
MANUFACTURER	Smith & Wesson, 800-331-0852, smith-wesson.com

ask? When I was first working in gun shops and shooting S&W K-frame revolvers in PPC competition, Detroit PD required quarterly qualifications. Four times a year on the range, and the serious officers who worked in dangerous precincts practiced more on their own. Now, before you get all worried, the firing schedule back then — with older M-19s not built

to today’s standards — meant an M-19 might need some work before an officer retired. Might. That was several thousand full-power .357s per year. Me, I’m not worried, not with the new ones. The wear and tear will mostly be on you. After a day of testing the M-19 with full-power .357 Magnum ammunition, I had a blister on the web of my hand, so ease carefully into Magnum territory when you get yours.

Oh, and there was one more detail of the M-19 that



The Model 19 Classic (above, top) has a bull barrel and red-ramped front sight, while the Model 10 Classic (above, bottom) wears the historic fixed half-round blade at the front of its tapered barrel.



As with original Victory models, the Model 10 Classic features smooth hardwood grips and the serial number marked on the butt of the frame.



The Model 36 Classic is rated for +P ammunition. With history dating to the dawn of concealed carry, it has a 1.88-inch barrel, arched backstrap and a fixed sight.

caught my eye: The new lock. The originals used the ejector rod engaging a spring-loaded plunger under the barrel to secure the front of the cylinder, as on the Classic M-10. The no-lock M-19 Classic uses a spring-loaded plunger mounted on the frame to engage the yoke, locking the cylinder at the front. It is much like the third lock on the old Triple-Lock revolvers that Elmer Keith used in his development of the .44 Magnum. This is done because the M-19 uses the newer S&W assembly method of a barrel inside a sleeve. The sleeve has the rib, the front sight, the ejector rod shroud, and it cannot hold the front locking plunger like the M-10. The barrel threads into the frame and, when torqued, it locks the sleeve in place.

MODEL 36 CLASSIC

As the backup gun of choice for many decades, the five-shot Smith & Wesson J-frame revolver first saw the light of day as a .38 Special at the 1950 annual convention of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The new frame size was necessary because the older frame

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 36 CLASSIC	
TYPE	Revolver, double-action/single-action
CARTRIDGE	.38 Special
CAPACITY	5 rds.
BARREL	1.88 in.
LENGTH	6.94 in.
WIDTH	1.33 in.
HEIGHT	4.3 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 3.64 oz.
MATERIALS	Hardwood, checkered
FINISH	Blued (steel)
SIGHTS	Fixed (front); notch, adj. (rear)
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 4 oz. (SA), 11 lbs., 8 oz. (DA)
MSRP	\$849
MANUFACTURER	Smith & Wesson, 800-331-0852, smith-wesson.com

— known as the “I” frame, if you’re keeping track — had been used for various .32s and the .38 S&W, but it wasn’t large enough for the cylinder length needed for the .38 Special. The new revolver received and kept the name “Chief’s Special” until 1957, when S&W switched over to the model number system.

The no-lock Model 36 Classic has the same no-taper barrel that became the standard in 1975. It has the rounded, half-moon front sight that

was the norm until the ramped-sight barrel replaced it. As in the old days, the barrel is just shy of 2 inches long, and the cylinder holds but five rounds. The short barrel also means the ejector rod isn’t long enough to fully eject the empties. For that, you’ll have to track down an earlier M-36, one with a 3-inch barrel.

One modern change on the M-36 that I noticed, and approve of, is the double-action (DA) trigger pull. The J-frames always had a reputation of having rather stiff DA trigger pulls. Where the K-frames could be easily made much lighter and smoother, the Js were problematic. S&W

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 19 CLASSIC

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Black Hills 158-gr. JHP	1,200	47	18.1	1.7	2
Horn. Amer. Gunner 125-gr. XTP	1,398	59	23	1.8	2.1
Federal Classic 158-gr. JHP	1,178	98	40	1.9	2.2
SIG Sauer Elite Ball 125-gr. FMJ	1,414	91	41.5	2	2.4
Notes: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Champion shooting rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Labradar chronograph set to read at 15 feet from the muzzle.					

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 10 CLASSIC

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Federal +P 129-gr. Hydra-Shok	971	23	8.4	1.5	1.7
Winchester +P 130-gr. SXT	950	95	35.9	1.6	1.8
SIG Sauer +P 125-gr. V-Crown	1,013	89	33	1.7	1.9
Notes: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Champion shooting rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Labradar chronograph set to read at 15 feet from the muzzle.					

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 36 CLASSIC

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Federal +P 129-gr. Hydra-Shok	845	42	15.9	1.8	2
Winchester +P 130-gr. SXT	858	117	46.8	1.9	2.2
SIG Sauer +P 125-gr. V-Crown	880	99	39.4	1.9	2.1
Notes: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Champion shooting rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Labradar chronograph set to read at 15 feet from the muzzle.					



The Model 19 Classic uses Smith & Wesson's modern sleeve-over-barrel approach, which improves its accuracy potential.



The Model 19 includes a serrated, fully adjustable rear sight that's paired with a serrated ramped blade at the front with red insert.

has made some interesting engineering changes in the geometry, and the trigger pull is a bit lighter, but much smoother and more even than the old guns. Where the old guns used to “stack” — that is, the trigger pull would get heavier as you pulled through — this one does not.

I used the same loads for the M-10 and the M-36 to see what the difference in barrel length would produce. Yes, a shorter barrel does cost you velocity. That's something you must weigh against the smaller size that makes the M-36 a lot easier to carry.

Another change from the old days is that these three are all internal firing pin designs. Instead of having a firing pin pinned to the hammer, the hammer strikes the firing pin — which is spring-loaded and held in the frame — to detonate the primer. This has been the case in S&W revolvers for some time, and I'm glad to see they kept it even while building classic revolvers.

AT THE RANGE

It was like stepping back in time. The smooth DA trigger stroke of each of these revolvers was easy to manage, and knocking down steel plates and poppers was a breeze. Over at the rifle range, the clean and crisp single-action (SA) trigger pull on each made tagging the gongs at 100 yards easy. Well, I'll admit it was a bit more difficult with the M-36 than the other two. The shorter sight radius meant aiming errors were magnified, but I still managed to start out with three hits from five shots and finished five-for-five a few cylinders later. It was a

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There is no rubber or polymer with these guns, just wooden grips and blued steel. The solid walnut grips on the Model 10 were crafted, inspected and marked "TGW" by Tyler Gun Works.



A +P five-shot .38 Special is still a viable defensive tool, even in the age of striker-fired polymer pistols. Learning how to shoot a revolver will make you a better shooter overall, too.

clue that I had been neglecting my revolver practice of late.

The Smith & Wesson no-lock revolvers are cool and hearken back to the days of muscle cars and 8-track players, so why get one now? Shooting should be about fun, at least some of the time. An accurate firearm is fun to shoot, and you can't get much more accurate than a revolver. There is also the skills-building aspect of this. You may

be a hotshot at your gun club with your 9mm, but how are you with a revolver? Best of all, learning to shoot a DA revolver accurately will make you a better shot with your 9mm auto. It's all about sight alignment and trigger control, and a double-action revolver really works you on that. Once you've learned it, you will be a much better shooter with everything. **G&A**

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SNIPER

WORLD WAR II SNIPER RIFLE SERIES, PART IV: AMERICA'S **SPRINGFIELD ARMORY M1903A4** WITH M73B1 SCOPE.

BY DAVE EMARY | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR

AFTER LEARNING THAT MY FATHER trained with an M1903A4 in England during the summer of 1944, and later jumped into Holland with it as a first scout for I Company, 101st Airborne, 506th Regiment, I have been particularly interested in World War II sniper rifles and tactics.

Before he passed away, I asked Dad how he trained in England with the 03A4. He said that he spent several months on a known-distance (KD) range and shot to

500 yards. He didn't have special ammunition; they just used what they had. The soldiers involved with this training knew that if they could cover a 50-cent piece with three shots from 100 yards, they would have reached the pinnacle of shooting. No one ever did.

Part of the training required the first scout to be issued tracer ammunition and stay about 300 yards ahead of the company. When the scout found a German position, he was to fire at it with tracers so everyone else knew where to send rounds. As my father recalled, the problem with that tactic was that everyone learned where he was on the battlefield — including the Germans.





The Weaver Model 330-C scope was selected for the M1903A4, later designated the "M73B1." These had drum-shaped knobs.

I asked how far he would have considered firing at an enemy target, and he replied, "150 yards to 200 yards, maximum."

This distance seems a little short to me, so I asked why. "The rifle just wasn't accurate enough to reliably hit a person that could shoot back much past that," he said. That settled it. I decided that I would either purchase,



The M1903A4 safety was a copy of the Mauser Model 98 safety with three positions: Fire, a safe position that allows the bolt to open, and safe with the bolt locked closed.

assemble or borrow several World War II bolt-action sniper rifles, acquire period ammunition and compare the performance.

THE RIFLE & OPTIC

Following Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1941, the effectiveness of properly trained and equipped snipers, and their widespread deployment by the Soviets, became



The M1903A4, just like all other M1903 rifles, featured a magazine cutoff that prevented rounds being fed from the magazine. It is a two-position lever with either the cutoff "ON" or "OFF."

apparent. The U.S. ignored sniping during the interwar period and had no sniper program prior to World War II. There was no research available regarding the making of a legitimate sniper rifle, so the Model 1903A4 was a design



Tested ammunition included different arsenals and eras of the M2 Ball and M2 AP.



The M1903A4 was equipped with a Mauser 98-type bolt that has the third safety locking lug and claw extractor. The M1903A4 had a bent bolt handle, too, which was ground for clearance of the scope.

of desperation. It has not been regarded as a premier sniper rifle by many evaluators, but it was broadly issued by the U.S. Army and Marines for every theater and earned a reputation for reliability.

Approximately 29,000 M1903A4 rifles were produced. Typically, receiver markings of the M1903A4 are unique. The standard roll marks for the M1903A3 are evident, but they are upside down when compared to the M1903A3.



The M1903A4 used the easier-to-produce stamped-steel barrel bands and forend cap of the M1903A3. The M1903A4 did not have sights besides the the Weaver 330-C/M73B1 scope.

They appear on the left side of the receiver with the serial number on the right side of the receiver.

I am not aware of any accuracy specification that was applied to the M1903A4, but barrels used for these rifles were carefully selected to be as close as possible to the minimum dimension specifications. Significant numbers of these rifles were produced by Remington. The rifles were primarily stocked in a “scant” stock with a partial pistol grip, but many were set into a full pistol grip “C” stock. The M1903A4 was standardized and accepted in January 1943.

A commercial Weaver 330/330-C — an established hunting scope with 2.75X magnification — was mounted and later re-designated the “M73B1.” Having a small objective, these non-waterproof optics were the best stopgap available on the market. The M73B1 had a three-quarter-inch maintube with elevation and windage drum-style turrets that featured quarter-minute-of-angle (MOA) click adjustments.

The click adjustments were rather crudely produced, however, with deeply knurled turrets and a notched spring-steel plate that rubbed on the knurls to provide the tactile clicks. The quarter-MOA adjustments were reasonably accurate, though, and repeatable. The M73B1 scope allowed users to focus the eyepiece and separately focus the reticle. The low 2.75X magnification of the scope was partially offset by a very fine crosshair reticle, which made aiming fairly precise to ranges of 300 to 400 yards.

Starting with a variant of M1903A3 that lacked iron sights, the scope was mounted in Redfield rings on a Redfield Junior base mount. So desperate was the Army for scopes that buyers were sent throughout the country to sporting goods stores to buy up inventories of the Weaver



The M1903A4 had the A3 buttplate, which had a trapdoor feature to access a compartment often used to hold a cleaning rod.

330-C. After the war, the Weaver-made M73B1 was replaced by the Lyman M81/82, a military version of the Alaskan scope.

Guns & Ammo's test rifle started out as a 1903A4 reproduction built by Gibbs Rifle Company. I replaced the stock with an original C stock and handguard. I also replaced the Gibbs scope with an original Weaver 330-C. It was as close

as I could create without paying more. The bolt works smoothly and the trigger tested at a clean 4 pounds on a Lyman gauge. In weight, the M1903A4 was the lightest of the four guns tested for this series at 9.7 pounds.

AMMUNITION

Dad used the ammunition he was issued during World War II, primarily .30-caliber M2 Ball or M2 armor piercing (AP) loads. He said there was never any special ammunition he knew about for snipers. He was given some tracer ammunition for the jump into Holland, but he never used it. Since then, I have not seen any stories concerning special ammunition used by U.S. snipers during the war. I have read numerous reports that snipers preferred



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AP ammunition because it was more accurate. I have also learned that snipers preferred certain arsenal ammunition, particularly Denver Arsenal Ball ammunition when they could get it. The M1903A4 was capable of very good accuracy, and performance limitations were often due to the loads available and the variation of issued ammunition accuracy.

To evaluate the M1903A4, I acquired a small amount of 1944 Denver M2 Ball and 1953 Lake City M2 Ball. Both were loaded with lead-core, flat-base, spitzer bullets that weighed approximately 152 grains. I also acquired some 1944 Lake City M2 AP rounds and a small amount of 1953 Twin Cities M2 AP; both were loaded with a hardened steel-core, flat-base spitzer bullet weighing approximately 165 grains.

AT THE RANGE

Testing was done on a known-distance (KD) range in New Mexico with targets positioned at 100, 200, 300, 400 and 500 yards. We fired at the B27 human silhouette target to match the sight picture a sniper would have seen. With each issued ammunition, we only fired three-shot groups at each range due to the limited supply of ammunition. The M1903A4 was zeroed using a five-shot group of a handload consisting of 46.5 grains of N135 and a Hornady 168-grain A-MAX bullet. We fired a three-shot group with



The M1903A4 used the same simplified, stamped floorplate and triggerguard from the M1903A3.

the selected issue ammunition and then touched up the zero. Incidentally, the M1903A4 was quite easy to zero and proved accurate with the Weaver 330-C scope. After zeroing, we fired across increasing distances and dialed the elevation turret for the range come-ups while predicting trajectory performance of the ammunition. These adjustments were quite precise and correct, not to mention that they were repeatable with the Weaver 330-C scope.

G&A Editor-in-Chief Eric Poole was the man on the trigger for accuracy testing while I spotted shots and gave wind calls. We did not try to dial for wind; that's a good



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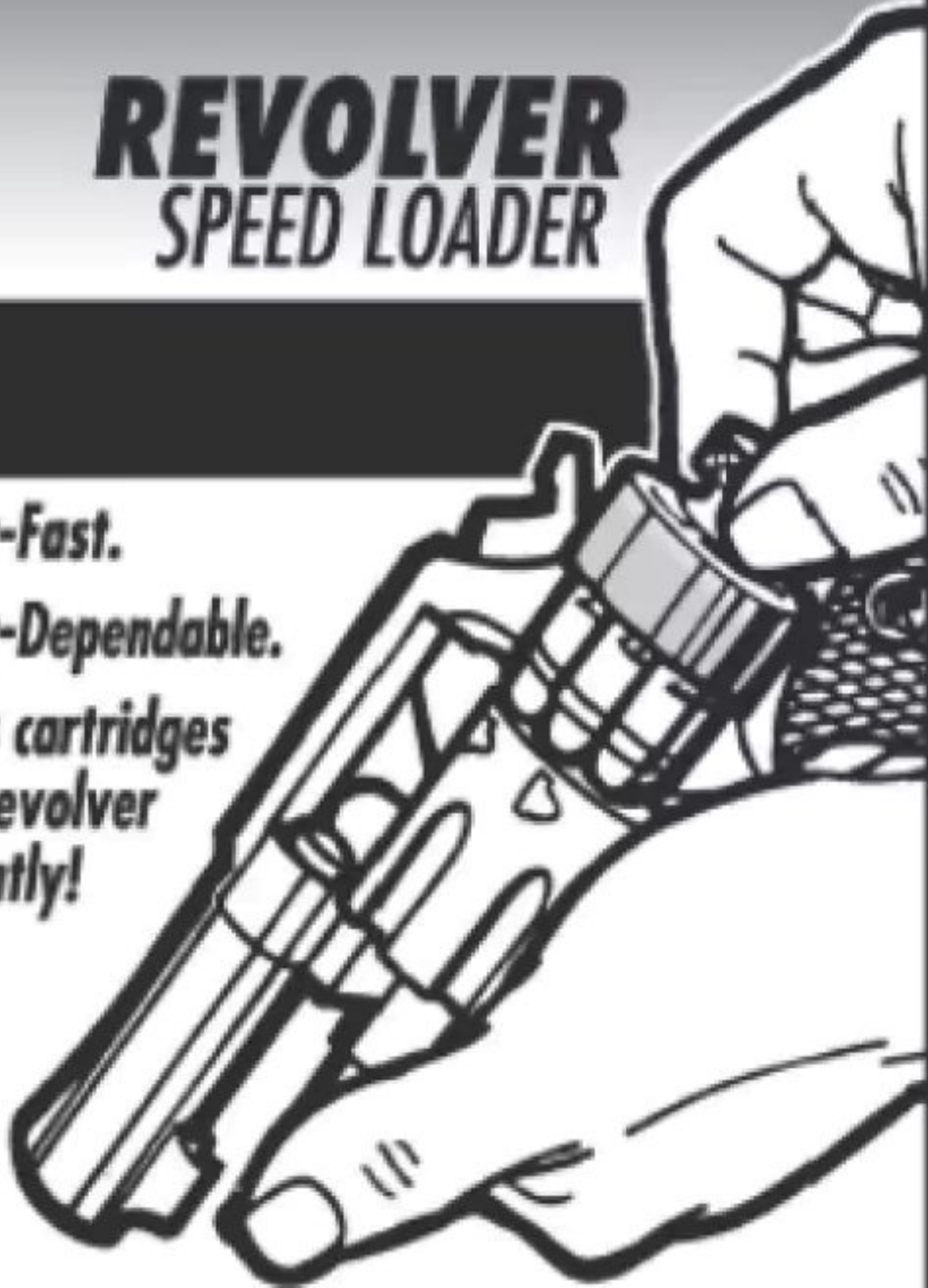
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The M1903A4 was an accurate and effective sniper to 400 yards. It was the lightest of the World War II sniper rifles tested. Scope turrets offer quarter-MOA adjustments, too.

way to get into trouble with an old scope. It is not possible to “zero” the turrets of the 330-C. You have to remember the zero setting and how many clicks or turns you have on the turrets. This can lead to confusion if you’re dialing on two turrets. Additionally, these old scopes have backlash and crosstalk between the turrets that we don’t consider today. To adjust, keep making changes in the same direction or go beyond the desired setting and come back to it in the same direction every time.

Our standard practice was to shoot in the same wind condition based on wind flags and observed vegetation. By the afternoon, it was too windy to read mirage. We succeeded most of the time, but several groups showed an obvious miss of a wind change. With the low-power scope, wind corrections were generally “Hold right-half,” “Hold right-edge of silhouette,” or “Hold right-edge of cardboard,” for example. Greater resolution wasn’t possible, especially beyond 300 yards due to the low power of the scope.

Fighting a fishtailing, 12:00-to-2:00, 10- to 20-mph wind for the duration of this test, we had a bullet that often landed left or right of an otherwise respectable group. Measuring the elevation dispersion was always a better result than the windage of the group, particularly at 500 yards. So, it is hard to conclude from our limited test that the M1903A4 preferred one type of ammunition more than another.

CONCLUSION

As Dad reported, 200 yards may have been a bit conservative for the effective range of the M1903A4, but G&A’s results depended a lot on the ammunition. Despite shooting extremely well with handloaded ammo, the M1903A4 with period issue ammunition was a 2-MOA rifle. Based on our testing, snipers would have barely been able to hold shots to the size of a human torso at 500 yards under most battlefield circumstances. The accuracy potential was far more limited by the ammunition and scope used than the inherent qualities of the rifle. Head shots would have been iffy beyond 200 yards, but torso shots would have been possible to 400 yards — and maybe 500. The handloaded match ammunition showed the potential of these rifles, and the limitations were affected by the low-power Weaver 330-C/ M73B1 optic and its thin reticle, and the ammunition variables. By 500 yards, target resolution was difficult with the 2.75X magnification scope, even in ideal light conditions. At that distance, the thin crosshair — with so little magnification — covered more than half the target.

The conclusion to the World War II Sniper Rifle Series will offer a comparison of the four bolt-action rifles, the optics and ammunition. It will highlight the pros and cons of each system and compare our performance results to 500 yards. **G&A**



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UPLAND ART

PERCHED IN THE FOOTHILLS of the Apennines, the towering Torricini of the Ducal Palace rise above the walled city of Urbino. The city where Benelli firearms are made is a monument to the 15th century Renaissance and the achievements of Duke Federico da Montefeltro. The palace — and much of Urbino — was built by the duke, who sold his military service and fought wars with his army to pay for it. He loved art, literature and great thinkers. He knew Greek and Latin, and learned to draw, fence, practice horsemanship, and appreciated music and dancing as well. His patronage inspired artists such as painter and architect Raffaello Sanzio, one of the Italian masters. Today, Urbino draws artists from around the world to attend its fine arts academy, graphic design school and visual communication program.

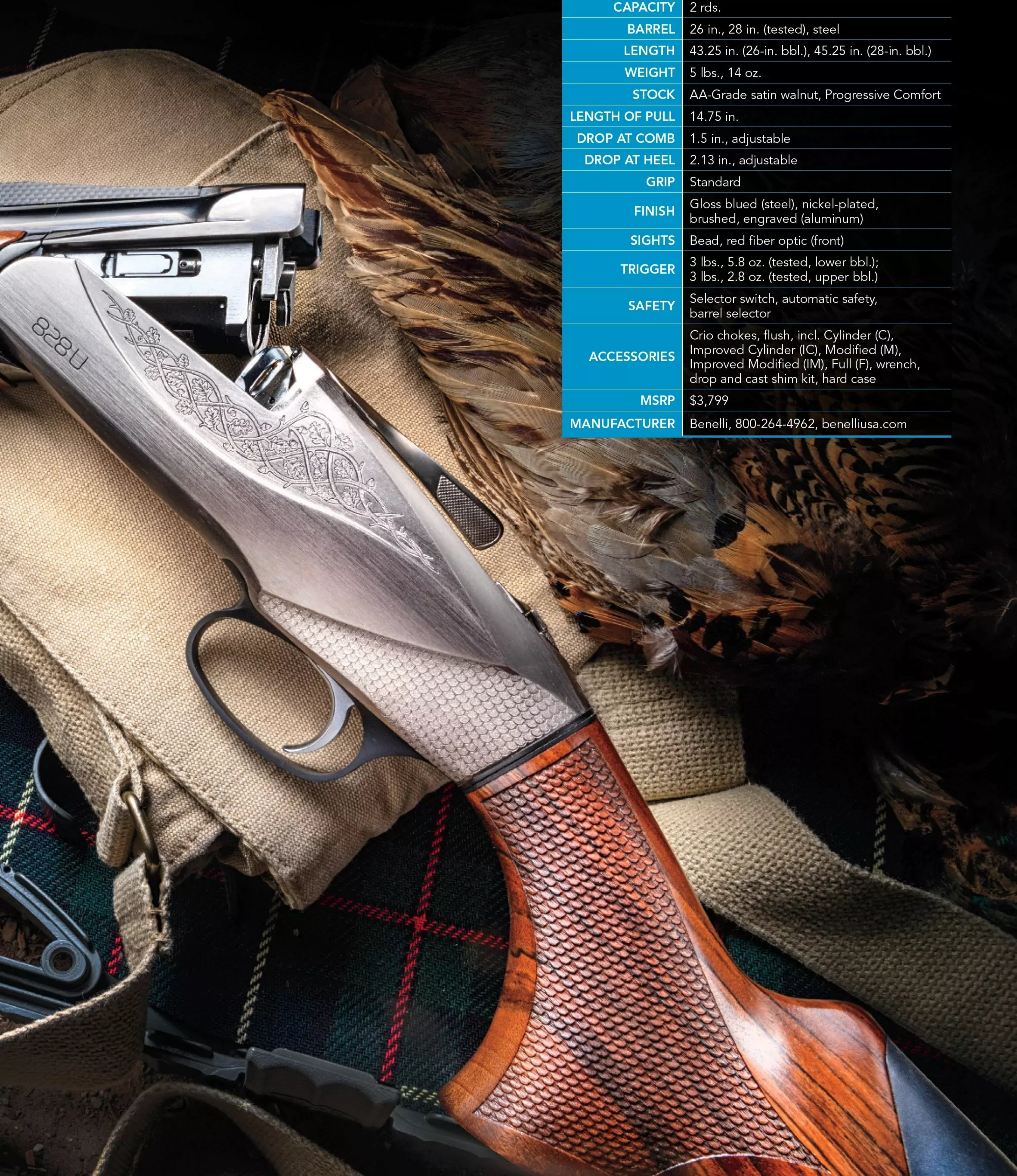
Beneath the walls of Urbino is Benelli. Founded in 1967, Benelli operates a modern manufacturing facility that blends fine art and innovative firearm technologies. In 2019, Guns & Ammo Publisher Chris Agnes and Editor-in-Chief Eric Poole toured the factory, studied the region's influences, and hunted the surrounding upland fields. From this experience, the 828U was launched in 20 gauge for 2020.

The 12-gauge 828U was introduced in the March 2015 issue of Guns & Ammo. The first over/under

design for Benelli, it was awarded G&A's 2015 Shotgun of the Year award. The 20-gauge version has proven no less special. A version with a 28-inch barrel was the subject of a long-term evaluation, used to take clays and bring down ringneck pheasant on the San Fiorano Estate in the Marche Hills.

THE GUN

It could be argued that the 20-gauge version of the 828U is better balanced than its predecessor. In fact, it tested a half-pound lighter than the 12-gauge original. With the action open, it hangs in the hand beneath the hinge. The lines guide a shooter's hands and fingers to the controls and forearm, while artistic grooves and shapes provide comfort and confidence. Texture was created by laser-engraving designed to mimic the scales of a fish. Even the graceful lines on the aluminum receiver were inspired from the living world, the shape of a mallard's wing in flight. Leafed ivy engraving conjure thoughts of roosters hiding afield, highlighting its aesthetics. The sliding safety selector punctuates the art-inspired functionality with a shape akin to a duck's foot, although checkered with a sliding serrated bar for selecting which barrel to fire first. The action-release lever, too, is artfully arched and offset with texture on its touchpoint.

**BENELLI
828U**

TYPE	Over/under, automatic ejectors
CHAMBER	20 ga., 2.75 or 3 in.
CAPACITY	2 rds.
BARREL	26 in., 28 in. (tested), steel
LENGTH	43.25 in. (26-in. bbl.), 45.25 in. (28-in. bbl.)
WEIGHT	5 lbs., 14 oz.
STOCK	AA-Grade satin walnut, Progressive Comfort
LENGTH OF PULL	14.75 in.
DROP AT COMB	1.5 in., adjustable
DROP AT HEEL	2.13 in., adjustable
GRIP	Standard
FINISH	Gloss blued (steel), nickel-plated, brushed, engraved (aluminum)
SIGHTS	Bead, red fiber optic (front)
TRIGGER	3 lbs., 5.8 oz. (tested, lower bbl.); 3 lbs., 2.8 oz. (tested, upper bbl.)
SAFETY	Selector switch, automatic safety, barrel selector
ACCESSORIES	Crio chokes, flush, incl. Cylinder (C), Improved Cylinder (IC), Modified (M), Improved Modified (IM), Full (F), wrench, drop and cast shim kit, hard case
MSRP	\$3,799
MANUFACTURER	Benelli, 800-264-4962, benelliusa.com



The Progressive Comfort recoil system also allows for adjustment of the shotgun's balance. Using steel or optional tungsten weights in the stock, it is possible to change the center of gravity.



To open the action, move the top lever from left to right and move the barrels downward. To close, move the barrel assembly up. When the lever snaps to the center, the barrels are locked to the receiver.



A tactile fish-scale texture supports control. The triggerguard features generous space for a gloved finger. Behind the triggerguard is the access hole for the provided tool to remove the trigger assembly.

The 828U surrounds the aluminum receiver with waterfowl design elements. The receiver can be bought with an anodized gloss black finish to handsomely complement the blued steel barrels or with a satin brushed nickel-plated finish for contrast. Being made from aluminum is notable because the 828U with a 28-inch barrel in 20

gauge averages just an ounce less than 5 pounds, or 2 ounces less with a 26-inch barrel. Despite its light weight, the recoil impulse is noticeably gentler than its 12-gauge counterpart. The feeling is a combination of the smaller 20-gauge ammunition and Benelli's Progressive Comfort recoil-absorbing system hidden within the rear of the stock and recoil pad assembly. Even when shooting high-energy 20-gauge ammo such as 3-inch shells filled with TSS, the Progressive Comfort design self-adjusts with its three sets of interlocking leaves having different levels of elasticity. The first set of leaves is flexible for light loads, while the second manages a bit stiffer load and the third tames the magnums. Where cheekwelds are made, you'll find Benelli's gel-comb cushion insert. With it, your face can slide



The extractors only eject empty shell cases when the action is opened after firing. Unfired cartridges are lifted by the extractors to facilitate their manual removal, if desired.



Similar to Benelli's semiautomatic shotguns, the 828U is different than most over/unders in that it can be shimmed for ideal fit. The plate-coupling system pairs shims for more than 40 fine adjustments.



Even after firing thousands of rounds, the forend exhibited tight fitment. To remove the forend for disassembly, squeeze the forend stock against the barrels before pressing the release button.



The trigger assembly can be removed when the shotgun is disassembled. A coiled wire tool is provided to assist with its removal for maintenance. The trigger can be adjusted into four positions, fore and aft, with a 1.5mm wrench.



The serial number is laser engraved on the receiver and concealed with the action closed. On either side of the barrels, an ejector rod and spring are activated by a small portion of gas from a fired barrel.

along the comb in comfort while the cushion intercepts recoil energy. Effective as these features are, the fine-figured grain appearance of the AA-grade walnut stock are preserved to ensure a traditional appearance.



Though the receiver is CNC-machined from billet aluminum, a unique, polished steel lockplate is placed behind the chambers. The action is secured as the gun is closed, forming the breech face. The lockplate supports the cartridge base and absorbs the violence during firing. Traditional over/under designs incorporate the breech face as an integral part of the receiver, meaning the recoil energy is transferred directly along the action and stock. Benelli's design also means that the receiver can be aluminum and the action is easier to open before it's worn in.

The 828U is cocked as the wing-shaped thumb lever is

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Five stainless chokes and a steel choke-removal wrench are provided. Included chokes are Cylinder (C), Improved Cylinder (IC), Modified (M), Improved Modified (IM), and Full (F).



A lockable hard case lined with plaid is included, and stoppers prevent the barrel and stocked action from sliding. The accessory case includes chokes, oil, tools and shims.

pressed to open the action, rather than a traditional design that cocks the action as its being opened. Under the forend, there are no ejector rods and springs, just a push-button release to separate the walnut hand-guard from the barrel as on many side-by-side designs. These design factors lend to the receiver's slim profile and handling qualities. At its widest, the receiver measures 1.567 inches and the forend 1.679 inches.

With the action open, the impulse ejectors exist within the sides of the

monobloc. The locking-plate design is not traditional, so recoil is directed back along the barrel assembly, as opposed to a shotgun's usual, integral breech face. The locking plate has lugs that hook into the bottom of the monobloc, joining the pieces when the action is closed. Benelli's approach to this also means that the hinge pin is not absorbing all the recoil. The 828U won't wear in the way that traditional over/under designs can wear loose, requiring service after a few thousand rounds.

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Benelli gave the 828U 20 gauge a red, fiber-optic front sight that's threaded into the carbon-fiber rib. The fastener behind the sight above the barrel can be unscrewed to release the rib for removal.

Benelli tested the steel locking plate with 20,000 firings, including 10 proof loads. We've only shot a few thousand.

Since recoil is managed differently, there are no tangs extending to the wrist or grip of the stock. This means that Benelli engineers could incorporate shim options to allow users to adjust drop and cast as on its semiautomatics. With the provided shims, users can select from one of 40 unique settings. This is a cost-effective alternative to custom fittings that are typical of high-end over/unders.

Underneath the receiver is a detachable trigger assem-



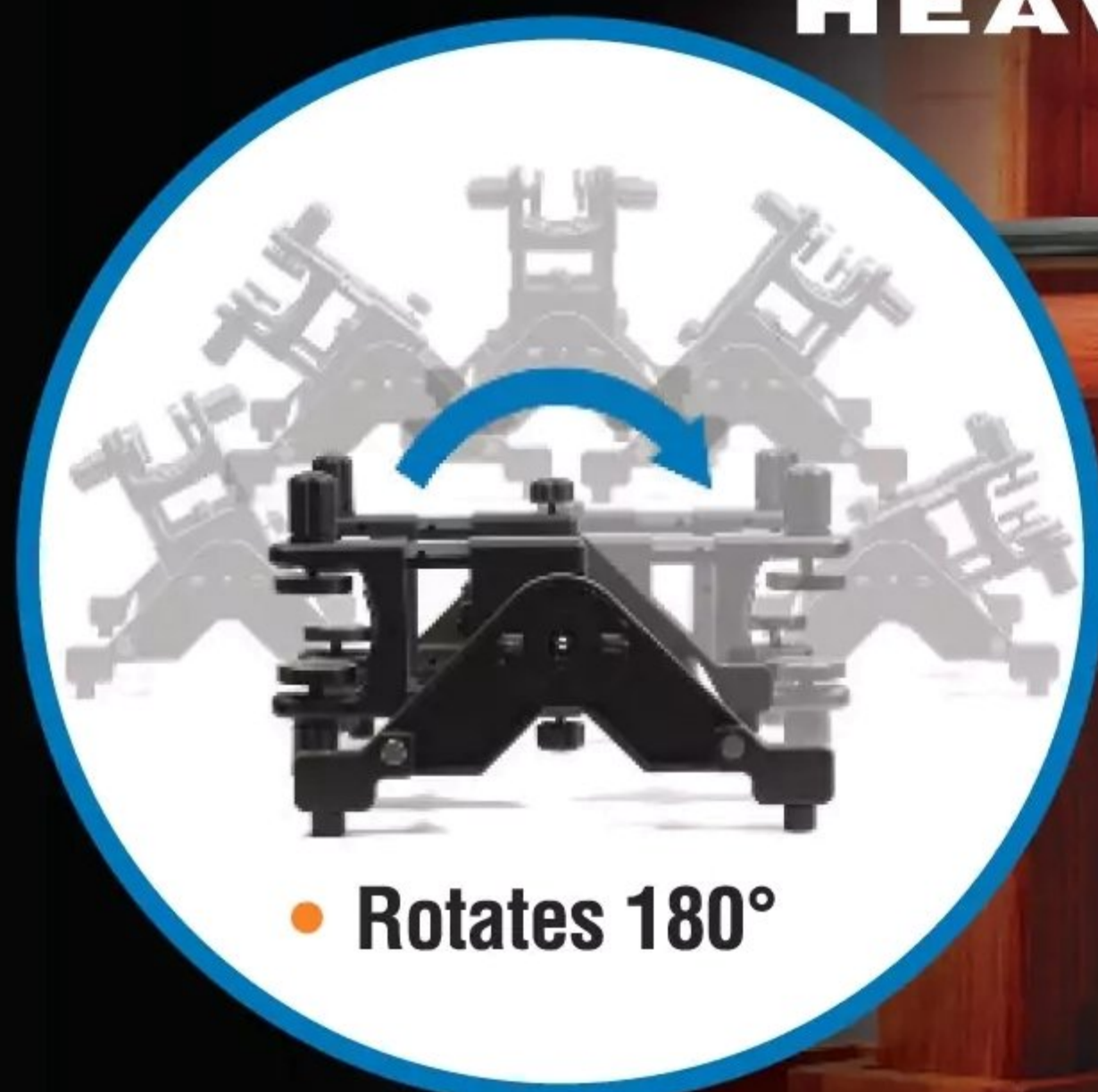
Featuring an artfully machined aluminum receiver and optional 26-inch barrels, the 20-gauge-chambered 828U is light to carry, mount and swing into action. It tested at 5 pounds, 14 ounces.

bly that can be removed for maintenance or for additional safety concerns afield, perhaps. A wire tool is provided in the accessory case to complete this process. Installed, the trigger was tested using a Lyman digital trigger-pull gauge. The bottom barrel produced a 3 pound, 5.8 ounce-pull while the upper barrel demonstrated a lighter 3 pound, 2.8-ounce pull. Of note, with each sweep of the lever, left-to-right, the selector resets to the "S" safe position automatically. If you use the 828U for clay shooting, you can remove the automatic safety feature by detaching the

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trigger assembly and removing a wire per the owner's manual. From stock fitment to safety preferences, configuring the 828U is user-friendly.

SIGHTING IN

Additional weight was saved with Benelli incorporating a carbon-fiber rib, which can be interchanged with another raised trap-style rib. It adds a modern touch to the 828U. The rib of this model features only a front, red fiber-optic bead threaded in. It worked well in the field and on the range through all daylight conditions, but there is no mid-bead for additional sight alignment.

Guns & Ammo's sample 828U 20-gauge with brushed-nickel finish has been carried to the range or field by most of the editorial staff for a few years. As new models arrive, this one remains popular for its handling, mounting and pointing qualities, as well as for its excellent trigger. It's recommended for upland hunters and — with the automatic safety disabled — sporting clay shooters. Those new to shotgunning also appreciated its light weight and low felt recoil, particularly when shooting standard 2¾-inch shells. However, it was just as effective at more distant game birds when using heavier and more powerful 3-inch payloads. With a 3-inch shell fed into each chamber, it functioned much like a standard 12-gauge and punched up a class. **G&A**



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M3 .50 cal. Tripod, New w/ T&E & Pintle. \$1,495. #MNT153

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Ok, that scenario may not mirror every experience, and many may choose to substitute the "AR" in that story with a bolt-action rifle, shotgun, or other firearm. Regardless, firearm ownership is often a hobby that involves minutiae the deeper you invest in it.

A popular online article suggests a resurgence of interest in choosing the right barrel and twist rate to stabilize .223 Remington and 5.56 NATO

BUILDING A COMPETITION AR:

Considering upgrading a stock rifle, or building one from scratch? Let's take your shooting experience to another level!



"Pairing Barrel Twist Rates with Bullet Weights for .223 and 5.56 NATO" is a guide written by Keith Wood to aid shooters concerned with destabilizing their bullets.

projectiles. Author Keith Wood wrote a simple overview on this topic that reveals how different barrel lengths and twist rates can be accurate with certain rounds and result in disappointment with others.

Another AR-centric article written by 3-Gun shooter Kenzie Fitzpatrick is gold for those interested in building a competition gun. It covers part prioritization, what to look for in a component, and how various parts affect a rifle's handling, felt recoil and accuracy potential.

That isn't to say every modification has to make a firearm more tactical or morph a platform into one for competition. Sporterized World War

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ANTONIO ACITELLI

I and II surplus were the original project rifles. Hunter-hobbyists created their version of a unique sporter for the field. Replacing one or two key components can make a meaningful difference. Guns & Ammo's SIP Editor David Faubion amped up a Weatherby 307 Alpine CT chambered in 7mm Backcountry. After installing a Timney trigger, Faubion carried that rifle to a piece of golden public land only accessible by helicopter. He used his project to take a fine bull elk.

I could go beyond this page. To read more on these subjects, visit gunsandammo.com. As always, I extend a question to you: How have you modified a gun lately? Do you experiment to determine how changes affect performance, or ease its use? Email us at gaeditor@outdoorsg.com about your projects and suggestions.

TOP COMMENTS

In response to the "Connect" column, "Tools of the Trade" (Feb. 2025): One thing I really enjoy is a Caldwell Target camera. No more interrupting the other shooters on the line to check a target. [It] uses Bluetooth to stream live video of a target to your device.
— Harry D., Email

In response to the "Connect" column, "Web Exclusives" (April 2025): Mr. Acitelli, another favorite, seriously, suggested that ideas be submitted to the editor for consideration. I suggest a review and analysis by Attorney Wood of "Bruen," and guns and marijuana ... Plus, you "opened the door," as they say in court, with that flaky Jan. 2025 cartoon. The CRPA periodical, "California Firing Line," Nov./Dec. 2024, p. 22, was a great reference. — Tim C., Email.



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KEITH WOOD

Mexico blames U.S. manufacturers for its cartel problems.

MEXICAN STANDOFF

ON MARCH 5, 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court held oral arguments in *Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc. v. Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, a case that could have significant implications for the future of America's firearms industry. This single case has the potential to bankrupt the nation's most storied gunmakers.

Mexico filed a \$10 billion lawsuit against a group of seven U.S. gunmakers and one distributor for their alleged role in that nation's epidemic of cartel violence. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Boston and was appealed to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals on the grounds that it is barred by the 2005 Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA). Smith & Wesson and its co-defendants petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case, hoping to overrule the Circuit Court's position and dismiss the case.

In its oral arguments before the Court, Mexico claimed that these U.S. gun manufacturers "Aided and abetted violations of specific federal gun laws and that those violations proximately caused Mexico's harm." Essentially, they are alleging criminal activity on behalf of the firearms industry in hopes of exploiting the exception to PLCAA's protections. Given the facts, Mexico's position is preposterous.

PLCAA allows for lawsuits in cases "in which a manufacturer or seller of a qualified product knowingly violated a state or federal statute applicable to the sale or marketing of the product, and the violation was a proximate cause of the harm for which relief is sought." No law enforcement agency has accused any of the companies targeted in the suit of criminal behavior.

During the arguments, the Court seemed skeptical of

Mexico's position. The fact is that firearms manufacturers sell to distributors who sell to dealers who sell to individuals. Manufacturers cannot control the illegal behavior of straw purchasers or rogue dealers due to the multi-tiered distribution system. Even if PLCAA didn't exist, Mexico's causation argument would be suspect.

As Smith & Wesson's attorney argued, this is precisely the type of case that PLCAA was intended to prevent.

"Congress's purpose was to prohibit lawsuits just like this one," Noel Francisco told the Court. "It was actually to protect Second Amendment rights by preventing plaintiffs from bankrupting the industry through frivolous lawsuits. After all, the Second Amendment doesn't really mean anything if there's nobody from whom you can buy a firearm."

Since most of the firearms industry is privately held, it would be impossible to accurately estimate the collective worth of the various companies. Smith & Wesson and Ruger, both of which are publicly traded, have a combined valuation of under \$1 billion. Suffice it to say, a \$10 billion verdict could easily bankrupt the defendants in Mexico's suit. That's the point — to put these companies out of business. This is anti-gun lawfare, pure and simple.

The allegation that U.S. guns are flowing to Mexico is true, but there's zero evidence that the gunmakers are complicit in that illegal arms trafficking. According to an experienced ATF official who spoke with Guns & Ammo off the record, the problem lies not with the firearms industry, but with the Department of Justice's historical failure to prioritize the prosecution of straw-purchaser cases. Hopefully, that will change under the Trump Administration. 



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