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P. 42

SHOTGUN SUPPRESSOR?

TESTED: BANISH 12 ON BENELLI'S SBE3 P. 32



EXCLUSIVE!

SEEKINS HAVAK PH3

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BECKSTRAND

Best bolt-lift angle:
60-, 75-, or 90-degrees?



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POOLE

SARCO's S&W M10
Holsters & Parts Kit



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NANCE

Do Clear Ballistic's
gel blocks work?

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The subscribers' cover features a Seekins Precision Havak PH3 with a Vortex Razor HD LHT 3-15x42mm scope. It may be the best thought-out bolt-gun ever conceived. **p. 50**



BY TOM BECKSTRAND

THE SEEKINS HAVAK PH3
IS WHAT WE WANT.

THIRD TIME'S
THE CHARM.

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TAURUS 327, .327 FED. MAG., MSRP: \$500

WHY NOT TAURUS?

I was very interested in the fine article by Patrick Sweeney on the .32 H&R and .327 Federal ("More than Retro," September 2025). I wondered why he didn't use a Taurus 327 revolver? It will handle both the .327 Federal and the .32 H&R Magnum. Instead, he modified a Ruger SP101 for the .327 and used a Smith & Wesson Model 432 for the .32 H&R. I believe Taurus' revolver would have served Sweeney's testing fine, and without modifications.

Alan Swann
Mt. Olive, Alabama

I used a Ruger SP101 for the .327 Federal to duplicate the toolroom Ruger revolver that Federal had created for its .327 Federal testing and development. The .32, being a special model and an Airweight, deserved its own coverage. I might note that despite decades of shooting, I'm not sure I'd be enthusiastic to test an Airweight J-frame chambered in .327 were S&W even to make one. That would

be the definition of "Too much of a good thing." We had considered sourcing a sample of the Taurus 327 revolver, but chose not to overwhelm the point of the story, which were the cartridges. — P. Sweeney

MOM'S RANGE DAY

I really enjoyed Eric Poole's Editorial about his mom and her shooting ability ("Mother's Day," August 2025). I had a very similar mother who grew up on a South Texas farm with five brothers. She could outride and outshoot most men. She bought my dad an H&R Leatherneck .22 rifle with

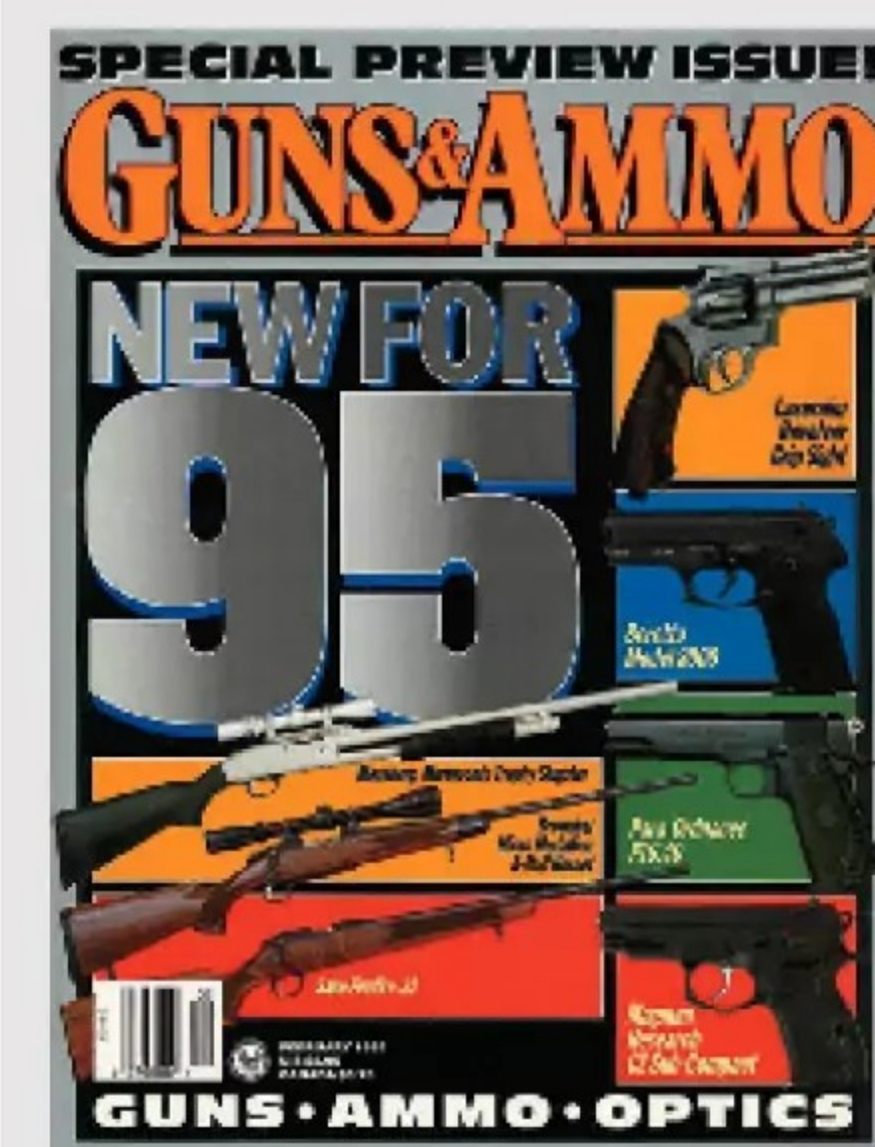
military peep sights right after the war. Out plinking in an old gravel pit one day with friends, my dad bet that my mom could shoot the head off a kitchen match at 10 yards with that .22. She shot and, instead of shooting the head off, she lit the match! This became family lore, but she confided in me later that she was aiming at the head and the bullet must have gone slightly high.
Don Cadden
Burnet, Texas

STRAIGHT PULL FOR A LEFTY

As a left-handed shooter, I am always on the lookout for new products that will make shooting easier. In that vein, I've been drawn to straight-pull-action rifles; not only for their ease of use, but also for the ability (in most cases) to adapt different chamberings. I've enjoyed writeups on the Blaser R8 and Strasser models, but those are too pricey for me. I also appreciated the Savage Impulse review, but it wasn't the right fit. Fast forward, I have learned about the Beretta BRX1. The rifle has been out

FEBRUARY '95

Then-Executive Editor Garry James wrote the preview of new firearms, ammunition and optics for 1995. Among the list were Beretta's Model 8000 pistol and A390 Comp shotgun, Browning's A-Bolt II in .22 Hornet, the HK USP .45, Remington LeadLess handgun loads, SAKO Finnfire, and a Leupold Vari-X III 1.75-6X scope. Magnum Research also imported the Baby Desert Eagle in .40 and .45, and several firearms from Czech Republic including Brno rifles, a CZ 75 Compact pistol and the CZ 600 bolt-action rifle.



for several years. I would love for Guns & Ammo to publish a review. It looks to be flexible, not too expensive, and from one of the oldest makers in the world.
Andy Papania
Commerce, Texas

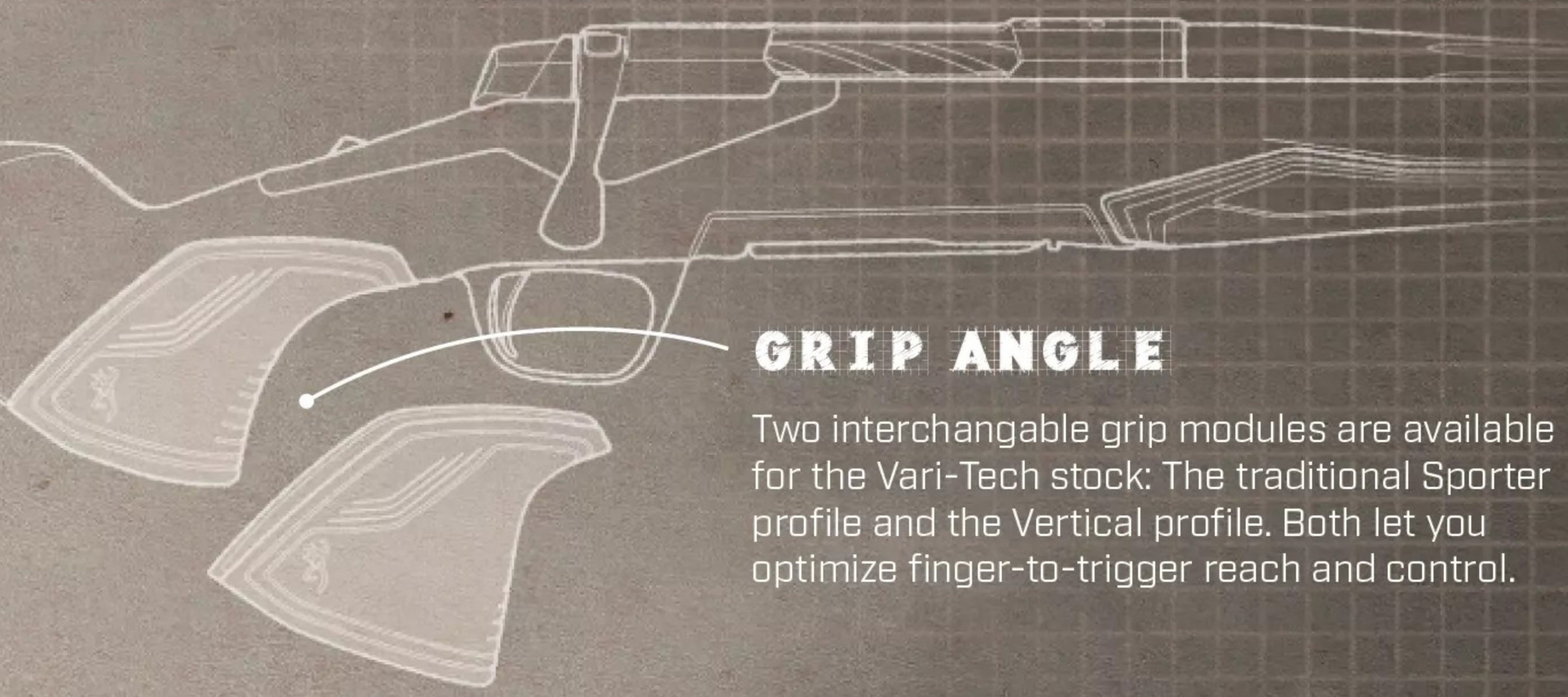
In fact, Beretta is the oldest firearm manufacturer in the world. It was founded in 1526 and turns 500 years old in 2026! Its ownership has been maintained by the Beretta family for 15 generations. I tested and evaluated the BRX1 for Guns & Ammo's "Precision Rifle Shooter" special interest publication, which was published in 2024. The magazine is still available for purchase at





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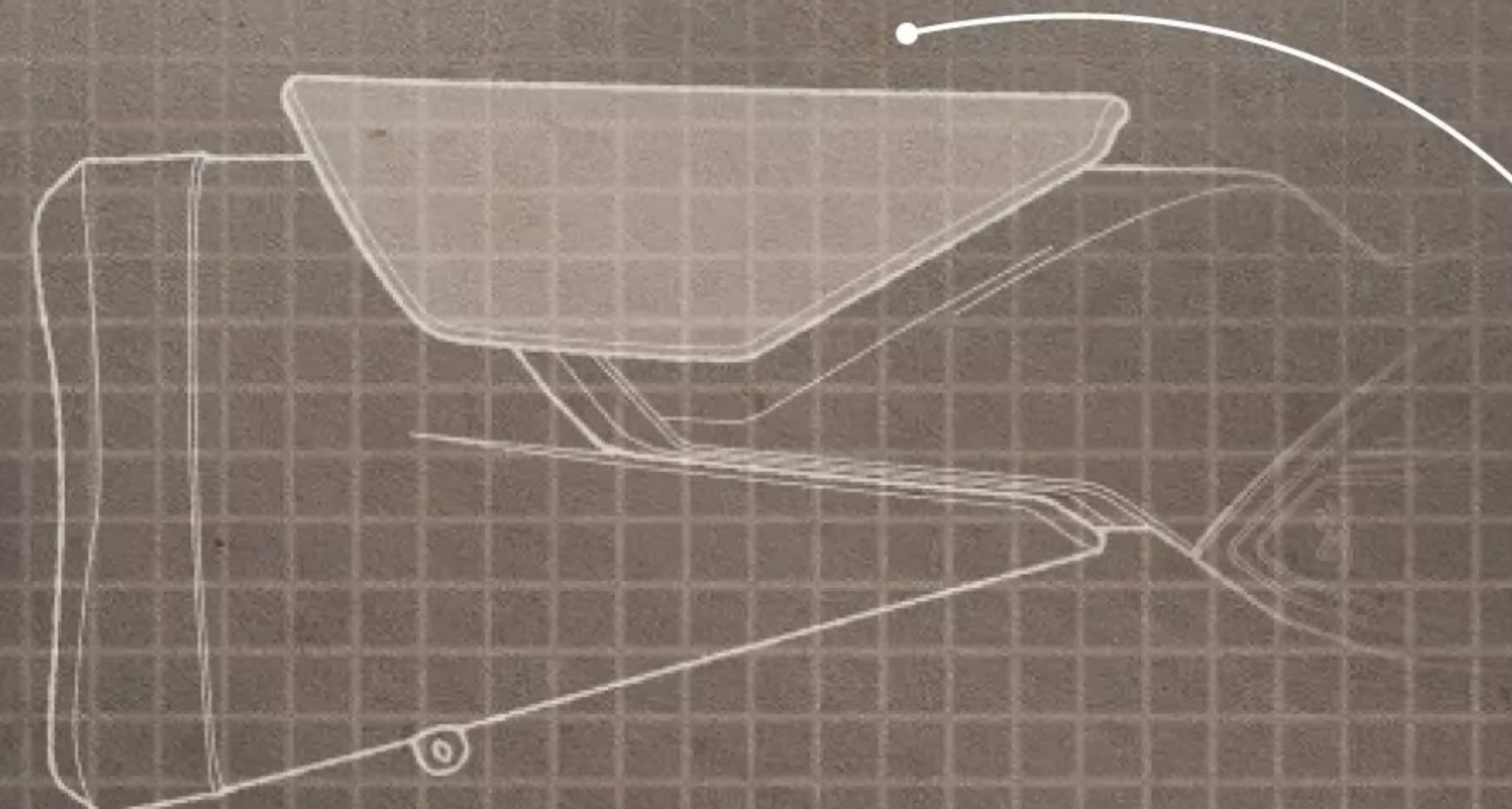
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osgnewsstand.com for \$10, shipping included. The rifle was extremely accurate — ahem, “precise.” — E. Poole

DEPUTIZED GAUCHO

Thank you for the excellent, detailed review of the Taurus Deputy (“Proof-house,” September 2025). It’s interesting to note that the new Deputy is almost a re-issue of the old Taurus Gaucho of about 20 years ago. (“Gaucho,” of course, is Brazilian for “cowboy.”) The Deputy reproduces many features of the Gaucho, such as the gorgeous polished black-oxide finish and the transfer bar; it lacks the beautifully executed color-case-hardened finish on the frame, hammer and trigger. It has some rather less-

attractive features, though, such as the strangely long base pin, grips with coarser checkering, and the unfortunately dull-finished hammer and trigger. I wonder why the good ol’ Gaucho was ever discontinued!

Gregory Allred
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

GRAMMAR POLICE

I saw the “Reader Blowback” letter on Dave Emary’s sniper rifles that stated two-groove ’03 barrels were less accurate than four-groove barrels. I would like to point out that General Julian Hatcher stated that testing proved the accuracy of the barrels were comparable.

Then I read your lovely editorial, “Mother’s Day.” In each of the first two

paragraphs, I saw glaring examples using the subjective “she and I,” where the use of the objective “her and me” was called for. The phrase “she and I” is in subjective case because it is the subject of the verb “went.” “Her and me” is in the objective case because it is the object of the preposition “to.” I use a simple trick to show me which to use.: Take the other person out of the phrase and read it. Then ask if Mother loved “I” or “me,” or did she raise “I” or “me.” Thanks to my 3rd, 4th and 5th grade teachers for this education.

Marshall Williams
West Virginia

Guilty as charged! I know better. Thanks for the correction, sir. — E. Poole

KALIFORNIA GUNS

I’m a long-time subscriber. Thanks for the great “Proof-house” article in the July 2025 issue on the Smith & Wesson M&P9 M2.0 CA-Compliant 9mm. We — the Red-Headed Stepchildren of Kalifornia — need more positive news such as this review. We’ve heard all the bad stuff. The M&P9 is a nice gun, but I’m still waiting on my future CZ Shadow Compact, S&W Bodyguard 2.0 and RIA 5.0. (For that last one, I want to be the only kid on the block with a square barrel.) All must be optic ready, of course. These days, when I drop by the website to check the California DOJ-approved handguns roster I’m like a kid on Christmas morning



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PASSION FOR PRECISION

wondering if Santa dropped by. He's been stiffing me on the good guns.

Tom
California

SIMPSON PRAISE

I'm a long-time subscriber and enjoy reading Guns & Ammo magazine. I was delighted to see Simpson Ltd. mentioned in the July 2025 issue. When my father passed, he left more than 300 pounds of ammunition in 9mm, .223, .30-'06, etc. Due to health issues, I'd never shoot it all. The issue was what to do with it. Pawn shops didn't want to touch it. Simpson Ltd. took it and was an absolute delight to work with. (UPS was more difficult than they were.) Simpsons took a well-earned 20 percent of the sales. My 80 percent covered the UPS fees to get the ammo to them. I couldn't have been more pleased with their service.

David S.
Fayetteville, North Carolina

SEMIAUTO SNIPER

Kudos to Dave Emary for his excellent World War II sniper series. Now, how about a sequel looking at the M1 Garand sniper configuration?

John Weiss
Spring Hill, Florida

TIGHT SHOTS

I am a medical technologist and an enthusiastic collector of long and short guns. I have seen the misuse of the term "accuracy" in multiple publications, including Guns & Ammo. In referring to the size of shot groups, the smaller the group the higher the "precision" — not "accuracy." Accuracy refers to how close the shots are to the bullseye. Precision refers to how close the shots are to each other. I have seen images published of shot groups that were tight but well away from the bullseye; these are always referred to as being high in accuracy, when they actually show poor accuracy but high precision. Precision is good, but only in conjunction with accuracy. I hope to see this corrected in future issues.

Roy Lane
Tampa, Florida

GROOVED BARRELS

Mr. Nelson, in his letter to the editor in the August '25 edition, brought up a very interesting point about the 1903A3 and -A4 having four- and two-groove barrels. Perhaps, a future article could compare both types of barrels for accuracy? Include the 1917 Enfield as well, since those were available with either 5-, 4-, or 2-groove barrels. There are enough that several

of each type could be tested to obtain an average accuracy.

Ted Barbour
Charlotte, North Carolina

Acquiring these guns would be quite expensive, as the values of 1903A3s, A4s, and 1917 Enfields have increased significantly. However, we'll pin your suggestion to the board in case the opportunity presents itself. — D. Emary

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ERIC R. POOLE

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THE RABBIT HOLE

MORE THAN 6 MILLION K-frame revolvers have been produced. Some accounts suggest the total number is closer to 10 million. This series of revolvers are built on a medium-size frame that was first introduced in 1899, and the legacy continues to include current production variations: Model 10 and 19 Classic with no internal lock (\$979 to \$1,099), the Model 17 Masterpiece (\$1,169), the Model 48 in .22 Magnum with 6-inch barrel (\$1,169), the Model 66 (\$999), and the Model 617 with either 4- or 6-inch barrels in .22LR (\$979), not to mention Performance Center options.

A few years ago, I made a trade with my local gun store and accepted a vintage Smith & Wesson K-frame to complete the deal. Until recently, it's been in a safe. I talked myself out of purchasing a new gun and decided to redirect my changing interests to learn everything I could about it before evaluating its performance potential at the range.

The piece is a blued .38 with a 4-inch barrel with checkered grips having a worn brass medallion. Marked under the square butt is the "C" prefix and serial number 1694XX. It doesn't have the desirability of a World War II-era Victory model — which would have a "V" prefix — and I've heard some believe the "C" stands for "commercial." In fact, Smith & Wesson resumed commercial production of the M&P at the end of World War II, continuing the serial number sequence from 1942. Smith & Wesson gave serial numbers an "S" prefix on or about December 27, 1944, at around serial number S769000, according to Richard Nahas' and Jim Supica's "Standard Catalog of Smith & Wesson." The "S" series was produced until April 1948 when the 2 millionth revolver was completed, which featured a short-throw hammer action.

The "C" prefix initiated the 3-million production range

of six-digit serial numbers starting on March 22, 1948. It was followed by the "D" series that was used until another million revolvers were completed in 1967. Knowing this, I first determined that my C-series K-frame was produced between 1948 and 1967. Of course, Smith & Wesson assigned a numerical naming convention to the M&P revolver in 1957, calling the M&P .38 the "Model 10" in 1957. Subsequently, my revolver was referred to as a "Pre-Model 10," which were made between 1948 and 1957.

We also know that the front sight changed from a round blade to a ramp-type blade in 1952, and that the upper sideplate screw was deleted in 1955.

Given my pre-Model 10 has a ramp-type blade sight and no upper side-plate screw, I further narrowed the date of manufacture from 1955 to 1957. Being the serial number is less than C200000, I surmise that mine was made closer to 1955.

Rather than spending money on a new gun, I saved money this month by shopping for this revolver at Sarco. (sarcoinc.com). I found a S&W Victory and Model 10 Survival Pack containing hard-to-come-by parts (\$60), a U.S.-marked M7-style shoulder holster (\$24) and hip holster (\$24) that could be mounted to the military issue web belt or threaded on a gun belt. At the range, I found the shoulder holster was eminently

useful. Draw-to-fire times producing an A-zone hit at 7 yards averaged a respectable 2.34 seconds for both holsters, even with its 10-pound, 5-ounce, double-action pull.

Group sizes at 25 yards from a benchrest were impressive, too, considering the sight. It averaged 2½ inches for five-shots using surplus 158-grain ammunition. With a single-action trigger pull averaging 3 pounds, 11.2 ounces, I look forward to testing this revolver with some wadcutters. For the enjoyment this revolver has brought me, it cost me little. I wonder what other guns I've been neglecting!



SARCO S&W MODEL 10/
VICTORY SURVIVAL PACK: \$60



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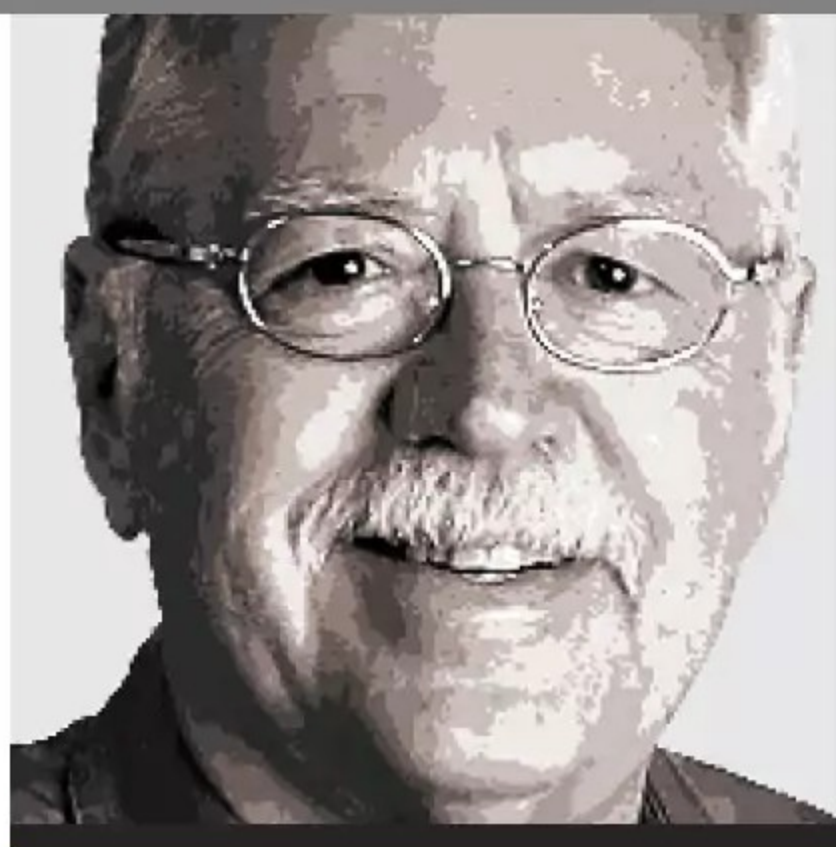
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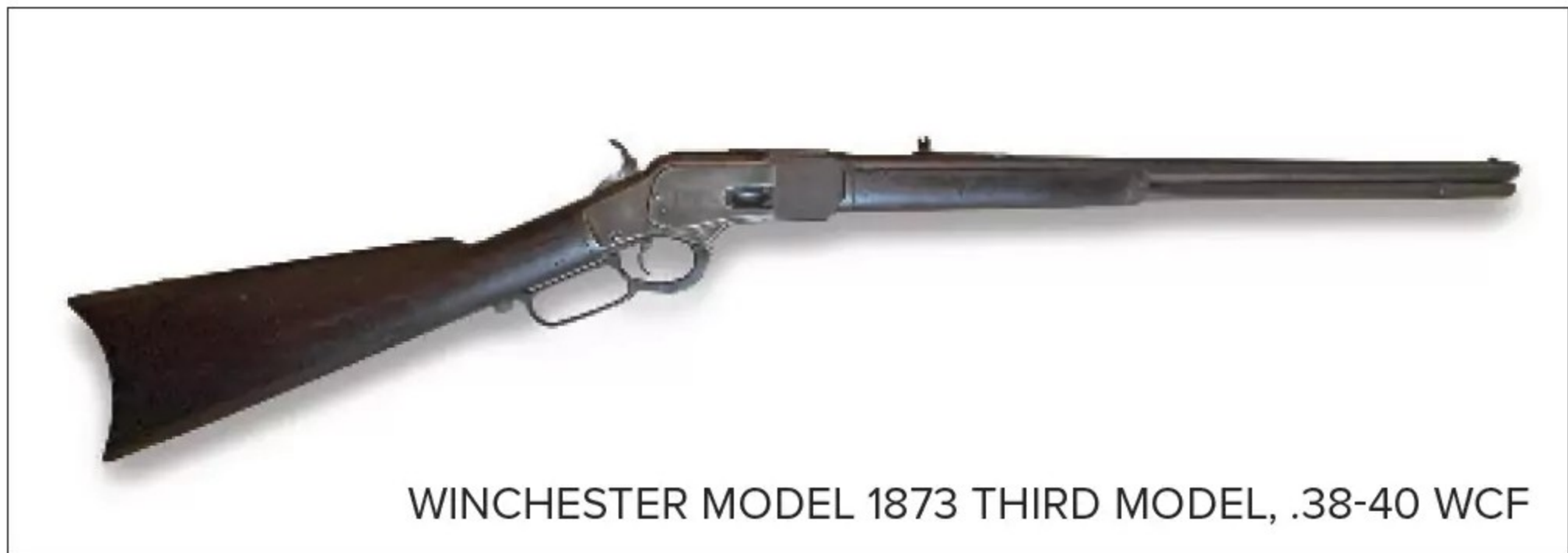
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“From your photos, it definitely appears you have a custom rifle built on a British Pattern 14 Enfield action.”

IDENTIFICATION & VALUES



GARRY JAMES
GARRY.JAMES@OUTDOORS.G.COM



WINCHESTER MODEL 1873 THIRD MODEL, .38-40 WCF



1873 WINCHESTER ID

Q: I have a Winchester 1873, serial number 160XXXA, in .38-40 caliber. I looked up the serial and found it was made in 1884. If I'm correct, they were made with 20- and 22-inch barrels and could be ordered with other lengths. This gun's barrel is 28 inches, so it must have been specially ordered. It's in good condition with no rust or pitting and a perfect bore. I don't know if it can be traced to where or who it was ordered by. Would be great to know its history and value.

B. A.
Email

A: You are correct. Your Third Model 1873 rifle was manufactured in 1884. Some 29,622 '73s were made that year. Carbines with 20-inch barrels and rifles with 24-inch barrels were standard. Calibers were .32-20 WCF, .38-40 WCF and .44-40 WCF. The custom octagon barrel does add some interest to

your rifle. You can obtain more information on it by contacting The Buffalo Bill Center of the West (centerofthewest.org), which, for a fee, will research your rifle and supply you with the information that's available. Without having all the details, I am loath to offer a value yet. If you will, please let us know

what you discover about your Winchester '73. I'd be glad to try and come up with a figure for you.

“FRENCH CONNECTION” ERROR?

Q: I enjoyed “The French Connection” in G&A, August 2025. On page 79, you referenced American firearms designer Stephen Vincent Benet. I'm not sure who you meant, but Benet was an American poet who was born in 1898 and could not possibly contribute to firearms design in the mid-1800s. Thank you for an

otherwise great article.

J. B.
Email

A: Thank you for your kind comments about my French revolver story. Actually, the Stephen Vincent Benet referred to was a brigadier general in the U.S. Army and served as Chief of Ordnance beginning in 1874, retiring in 1891. His grandson was the author Stephen Vincent Benét, a writer I have enjoyed since childhood. Likely, the younger Benét's best-known works are the epic poem “John Brown's Body” and the short story

AUCTION BLOCK

A custom Mauser 98 in .458 Winchester Magnum by Jerry Fisher, Tom Burgess and Steve Huff realized a hefty \$22,500 at a July 10 Sportsman's Legacy sale. Made in 1984, the rifle was built on a standard-length Mauser action. The 24-inch, tapered, heavy sporter barrel has a pop-up front sight blade, Mag-na-port — four ports — and a quarter rib with a fixed express leaf and two folding leaves with gold sighting lines. The highly refined and polished action features a jeweled bolt body and follower, custom bolt handle, and checkered bolt knob. The stock was fashioned from stout-grained AA English walnut and was properly dimensioned as a dangerous game rifle. Appointments include a pointed ebony forend tip, partially bordered wrap checkering and a scalloped thumb-cut recess. Engraving involves an aggressive elephant bull of outstanding detail, elaborate leaf and vine patterns, and other accents. The rifle is unfired and has never been displayed or taken afield. Finish is more than 99 percent with only trace suggestions of handling. For more information concerning this and upcoming sales, visit Sportsman's Legacy at sportsmanslegacy.com.





CHARLES DALY COMMANDER 1911-A1, .45 ACP, 80%: \$355



COLT MODEL 1903 POCKET (MODEL M), .32 ACP, 55%: \$575

“The Devil and Daniel Webster,” which was made into a film in 1941. The movie was nominated for Academy Awards in two categories, “Best Actor” (Walter Huston) and “Best Music Scoring of a Dramatic Picture” (Bernard Herrmann). Herrmann won. The screenplay was by Benét and Dan Totheroh.

**CHARLES DALY
1911 & COLT
POCKET MODEL**

Q: I have a Commander-size Charles Daly 1911 auto pistol in .45 ACP (SN CD004XXX) that I got from an estate sale for \$350. I associate the “Daly” name with high-quality shotguns and English double rifles. I don’t know if my Charles Daly 1911 is from the same Daly or not. It is in excellent shape. It shows signs of wear, dull

patina, but mechanically it is excellent. The slide is tight, and it shoots any .45 ACP ammo I give it accurately. Can you tell me about this gun’s history, value, etc.? I’ve also included pictures of a Colt .32 ACP (SN 412XXX) I recently acquired. It’s worn but is mechanically tight and shoots very well. Some info on the history and value of this gun would be appreciated, too.

**P. L.
Email**

A: The Charles Daly name on your auto pistol is a current trade name used by Chiappa Firearms, which incorporates a wide selection of shotguns and handguns. You can check them out at charlesdaly.com. I’d say you got a decent deal on your .45.

Your Colt 1903 Pocket Hammerless was manufactured in 1932. This superb little pistol is one of my favorite autos. Some 517,215 were manufactured between 1903 and 1945. Calibers were .32 ACP and .380 ACP. Your specimen appears to be in about 50- to 60-percent condition. I’d value it between \$500 and \$650.

**FRENCH PINFIRE
REVOLVER**

Q: I am contacting you to see if you can provide any information about what I think is a French pinfire revolver that was given to me by an elderly aunt. The gun belonged to her husband.

There are no identifying marks or writing on the barrel or on the gun, at least not that I can see. I am attaching photos and would appreciate any information you can give me about the revolver and, if possible, a value.

**J. M.
Chaska, Minnesota**

A: Your pinfire is certainly Continental, likely French or Belgian; I would lean toward the latter. It is a pocket-size double-action, with a folding trigger. The caliber is likely 7mm. Quality of the piece is moderate, though it certainly appears serviceable. I’d say the little fellow dates from circa 1875 to 1880. Value,

HOLLYWOOD HARDWARE

STAR WARS (1977)

This heavily embellished British Sterling L2A3 submachine gun was carried threateningly by an Imperial Stormtrooper in the iconic 1977 film “Star Wars.” To disguise its origins, the piece was heavily modified by the addition of a collection of assorted bits and pieces including windshield wiper blades and parts from a copy machine. (Courtesy National Firearms Museum, Fairfax, Virginia, and Prop Store of London.)



BELGIAN PINFIRE REVOLVER, 7MM, 40%: \$210



ENFIELD PATTERN 14 SPORTERIZED RIFLE, .416 RIGBY: \$1,750

assuming it functions, is in the \$175 to \$250 range.

.416 RIGBY “ENFIELD”

Q: Last year, I received a large-bore rifle from my dad. It has “.416 Rigby” on the barrel and shoots .416 Rigby bullets. Dad said the receiver was an “Enfield.” I have not been able to cross the manufacturer markings to Enfield in any documents I have researched for a more detailed identification. The magazine is custom-made, and the trigger is aftermarket. It is very accurate and fun to shoot. If you are able, please provide any details and value. I appreciate anything you can do to help.

V. R. S.
Email

A: From your photos, it definitely appears you have a custom rifle built on a British Pattern 14 Enfield action. The action was quite popular with gunsmiths for that purpose, as it was a robust and reliable mechanism. The P.14 action was later used by the U.S. in World War I as the Model 1917, modified from .303 to .30-’06. After the war, Remington marketed a commercial version of the gun as the Model 30. It was offered in a wide range of chamberings. As noted above, your rifle is unquestionably a one-off, and without a maker’s name I’m afraid that I cannot help you further. It

looks like a decent piece, though. Assuming the bore is OK, I’d value it at around \$1,750. If you can find out who made the rifle, it might be worth a bit more. Pattern 14s were manufactured in the U.S. for the British by Winchester, Remington and Remington-Edystone.

MORE ON “ELABORATE 1911”

[Referring to the “Elaborate 1911” Q&A in the August 2025 “Gun Room.”] The picture doesn’t give much detail. Based on the history given by the owner, it may be a Llama, an early Model CE-IXA before the vent rib on the slide was added. My old “Blue Book of Gun Values” suggests they were available in blued finish with factory engraving with simulated pearl grips. “Spanish Handguns” by Gene Gangarossa, Jr. says the IXA came out in 1955 and had a grip safety, which was not on the previous Model IX. Later, a ventilated rib was added to carry both the front and rear sights. It doesn’t say what year the vent rib was added. I searched the internet for a picture of an early model or early engraved model but drew a blank. I found other resources indicating the IXA arrived in 1950 or 1952.

K. W.
Attica, New York

A: Many thanks for the

added information on the fancy Spanish auto. It looks like a very nice piece, and it has been my experience that Llamas were quite nicely made and eminently serviceable.

DELTA ELITE

Q: A growing interest in the 10mm Auto cartridge led to an obsession to find an original blued Colt Delta Elite 1911. After almost 2 years of searching, I finally found one that was too good to pass up. Its condition could be classified as a carryable collectible, meaning it’s in good condition but not so nice as to never shoot or carry it. It has a light roll mark on the left side, and the ejection port shows some wear. The grips, though, appear to be in excellent condition, and I’m pleased with how it shot during a brief range ses-

sion. I would love to know what percentage you would rate this piece and if you have any other insights on the Delta Elite that would be interesting to learn. The pistol’s serial number is DE07XXX.

J. O.
Columbia, Missouri

A: The Colt Delta Elite is a fine pistol and the first manufactured by a major firearms company in 10mm caliber. The Colt Series 80 variant appeared in 1987 and was manufactured until 1996, resulting in what enthusiasts term its “First Generation.” In 2009, the pistol was resurrected in a second generation, incorporating various cosmetic and functional changes. It was produced until 2015 when the pistol again received a bit of a makeover resulting in the Generation “2½.” Delta Elites were offered in blue, stainless and bright stainless. Several styles have been purveyed by Colt, and the pistol is still listed in the firm’s lineup. Your Delta’s serial number indicates it was made in 1987, the first year of manufacture. I’d value it at \$1,500. **GA**



COLT DELTA ELITE, 10MM AUTO, 95%: \$1,500



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Is the U.S. military reconsidering its options for a modern sidearm?



JAMES TARR

THE BIG “IF”

WE WON'T DEBATE the merits of whether the U.S. military should replace the SIG Sauer M17/M18 (P320) in service, which appears to be a possibility as of this writing and was the springboard for this “think piece.” However, if you were to imagine a present where the U.S. military no longer had an official handgun, what would the replacement be?

While there are many great designs that would be well-suited as a sidearm for the U.S. military, currently the two guns most likely to be downselected, in my opinion, are the Beretta M9A4 and the Gen5 Glock. Ironically, neither of these guns meets the criteria set forth in the military's Modular Handgun System (MHS) program, which resulted in the adoption of the SIG Sauer P320 on January 19, 2017. Most of those specifications were irrelevant or unnecessary for a military service handgun. They were created by a board of officers who formulated a collection of specs for a new pistol system that met marginal utility standards and trends of the time. Why not pick from one of the proven handgun designs already on the market?

Why these two pistols? Introduced in 2021, the Beretta M9A4 is the latest iteration of the Beretta 92 series, which was adopted by the U.S. military as the M9 in 1985. The M9 had a proven track record with the U.S. military, and the M9A4 offered as many of the modern upgrades the military wanted as the platform allows.

As for the Glock design — even before SIG Sauer's P320 was adopted, many military units — large, small, elite and otherwise — abandoned the M9 for various reasons in favor

of various models of Glock pistols. Even with the adoption of the M17/M18, many units continued to employ a Glock. Glock makes the most popular handgun design in the world, and it's Safe Action System is as tested and reliable as any in history. The pistol already had its foot in the door with U.S. armed forces. Alas, let's consider the pros and cons of each, and then I'll give you my prediction.

BERETTA M9A4 9MM

The M9A4, being based the previous general-issue U.S. service pistol, offers a huge advantage: It's a known quantity.

The M9 was the military's designation for the Beretta 92FS, a full-size 9mm semiautomatic pistol with an aluminum frame. It was originally fed by a 15-round magazine, but 18-round mags were developed for the M9A3/A4. It features an iconic open-top design and is a double-action/single-action (DA/SA)

hammer-fired gun. Having an external hammer, the first pull of the trigger is DA, cocking the hammer. Subsequent single-action

shots are fired with the hammer cocked. The slide has a bilateral safety, which also decocks the hammer. The M9A4 offers substantive improvements versus the M9. It has a frame rail for mounting a light; optic-ready slide; an extended, threaded barrel for suppressors; improved texture on the frame; forward cocking serrations; and a smooth, light DA trigger pull. The flat backstrap of the Vertec-style grip makes it easier to reach the trigger for that first shot, too.

PROS: It's soft shooting, in part because of a high bore. It's also reliable. I can already hear some vets screaming, “That gun was not reliable!” It's a reliable design, provided



SIG SAUER M17 (P320), 9MM

BERETTA M9A4, 9MM

you weren't pounding in tent stakes with it and had quality magazines to use. Magazine quality was a bit of an issue 20 years ago. When the Federal Assault Weapons Ban was in place — 1994 to 2004 — newly manufactured so-called “high-capacity” magazines weren't available commercially. The peacetime military were often issued sub-contracted heavy phosphate finished mags, later replaced by PVD sand-resistant magazines with vertical debris channels.

DA/SA handguns aren't nearly as popular as they were in the 1970s and '80s, but some argue that it's a better choice for minimally trained soldiers given the longer, heavier first trigger pull is harder to operate unintentionally.

CONS: The M9 is a big, full-size gun. It's not particularly heavy, but it's large and the reach to the trigger for that first double-action pull is long — even with the modern M9A4. The size of the M9, as well as its safety and decocker design, is why specialized units opted for another gun when given the choice. That DA/SA operating system, whether better or worse than a striker-fired one, is out of fashion. It has a high bore and doesn't seem to point as naturally for a lot of people. Even with a low optic cut such as the design by Langdon Tactical (langdontactical.com) — which was recently adopted by Beretta — an optic sits pretty high up, making the big gun even bigger.

GLOCK GEN 5 9MM

Glocks are issued and used in limited numbers by comparison throughout the U.S. military. The majority are either the Glock 17 or 19, but how many of them are Gen 3s, 4s or 5s? I doubt anyone knows. There are evolutionary changes differentiating the generations, but they are all polymer-framed, striker-fired pistols. Flush G17 magazines hold 17 rounds of 9mm. The compact G19 feeds from standard 15-round magazines. The trigger experience is the same every time, but the Gen 5 models have a few substantive improvements, most done at the request of the FBI. The trigger pull is lighter and actually tests at the advertised weight. These have forward cocking serrations, a slight magazine well molded into the grip, and an aggressive grip texture.

PROS: To some, Glocks are boring and ugly. Yet, they're the most popular pistol in the world for a combination of reasons. They're size efficient, holding a lot of ammo while being light. There is minimal muzzle rise due to the low bore, even with the light weight. Glocks are the standard



Though a Glock MOS is not pictured, the M9A4, M17/M18 and G17/19 feature optic-ready slides and threaded barrels. These pistols are also offered in an FDE color, the military preference.

for reliability. The simple design makes the pistol point almost naturally, and you can almost use the flat-topped slide as an intuitive aiming device. Combine that with its integral safety lever. Press the trigger and it fires. There's no additional safety to deactivate during a critical moment. The Glock is shootable for any skill level.

The grip size of the G17/G19 is more friendly to people with small hands, too, and the reach to the trigger is shorter than an M9's. The Modular Optic System (MOS) is one of the worst for mounting an optic to a pistol, but many companies make improved plates for

the MOS models. In 2025, Glock and Aimpoint debuted the COA optic with A-Cut slides; it appears to be a superior way to mount an optic to a handgun's slide, and the U.S. military has trusted Aimpoint red dots since the Persian Gulf War.

CONS: While there is a safety lever on the trigger, there is no manual safety on the Glock, and the military likes those. If something gets wedged inside the triggerguard and it presses the trigger safety lever, the gun could be fired. Glock has never made a model with a manual safety, because the design is “Perfection.” (Just ask them.)

MY PREDICTION

Even though the U.S. military has history with the M9, I don't think the M9A4 would be chosen. Not for the reason of being too big, or the DA/SA operating system is out of reach or out of fashion, but because it has too much baggage. Complaints among some in uniform for being too large and unreliable affected its reputation. Many of them never wanted to see the military retire the M1911A1. Others didn't like the 9mm over the “manstopping” .45 ACP. There are all sorts of reasons, some justified and some not.

It seems that many in the military who have a choice of handgun wants some flavor of Glock, and I believe that could be the omen. Thinking about this very subject, I posted this prediction on my Facebook page.

If SIG Sauer were to lose its government or military contract for the M17/M18/P320:

1. Expect Glock to fill in the gap.
2. Expect the military to demand a new trial for a new military model. If Glock were to win, it could be a “Gen 6.”
3. Expect all the Gen 6 changes to be neutral at best, perhaps with the capability of swapping G17/G19 slides on the same frame — but more likely dumb. Maybe Glock wouldn't do it, but I'd also expect a thumb safety. **G&A**

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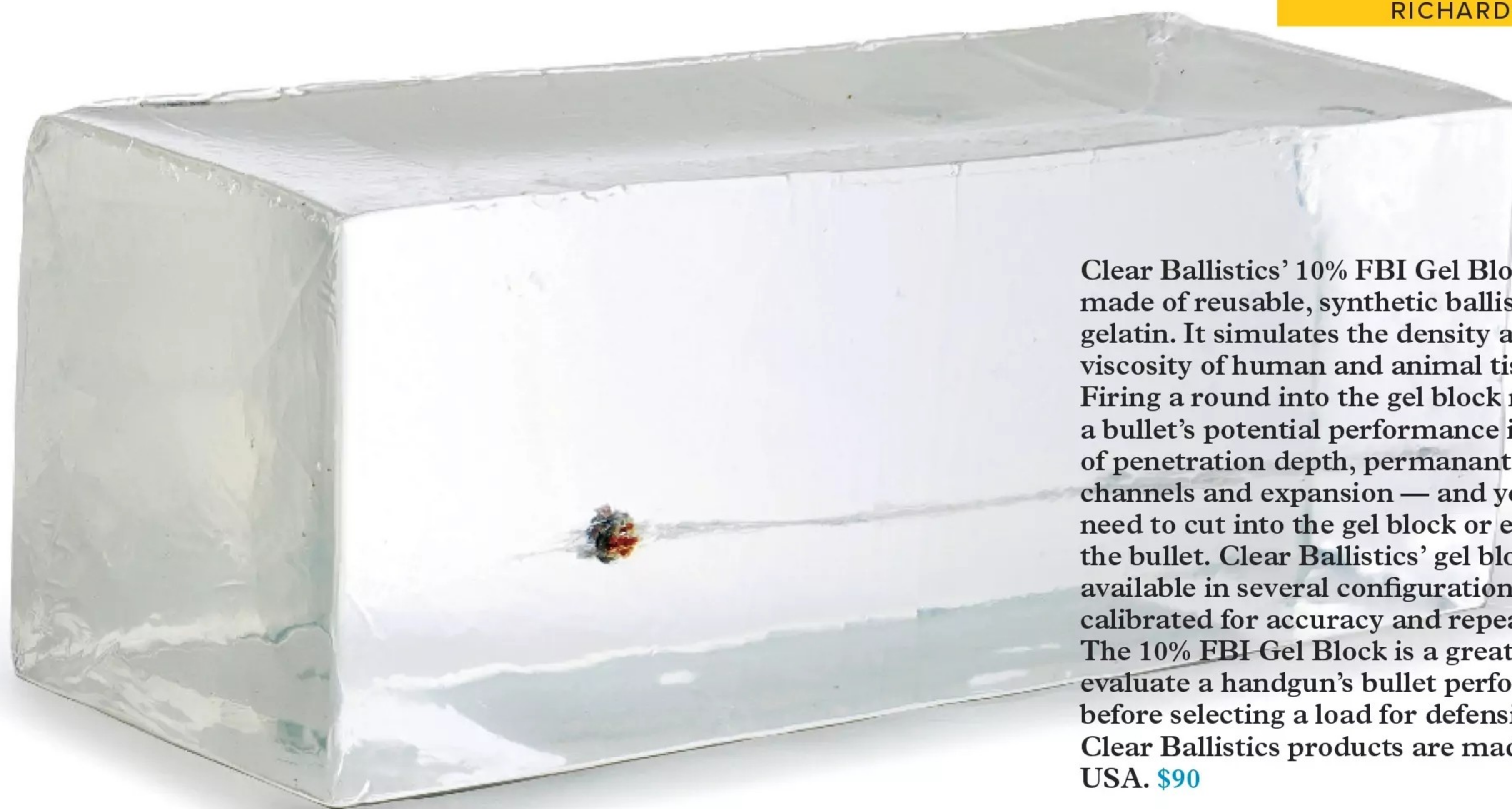


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RICHARD NANCE



Clear Ballistics' 10% FBI Gel Block is made of reusable, synthetic ballistic gelatin. It simulates the density and viscosity of human and animal tissue. Firing a round into the gel block reveals a bullet's potential performance in terms of penetration depth, permanent wound channels and expansion — and you don't need to cut into the gel block or extract the bullet. Clear Ballistics' gel blocks are available in several configurations and calibrated for accuracy and repeatability. The 10% FBI Gel Block is a great way to evaluate a handgun's bullet performance before selecting a load for defensive use. Clear Ballistics products are made in the USA. \$90

PROOF IN THE PUDDING

ON APRIL 11, 1986, eight FBI agents confronted two armed robbery suspects in what would become known as the FBI Miami Shootout. One of the key takeaways from the infamous gunfight was — despite some well placed hits — the agents' bullets did not immediately incapacitate the suspects. It brought into question the ballistic capabilities of the rounds the agents' revolvers and pistols were loaded with, and resulted in the FBI's ammunition test protocol. Among other elements, it involves firing projectiles into a 10-percent ballistic gelatin blocks from 10 feet. The most points are awarded for the optimal penetration depth. The FBI describes this as between 14 and 16 inches.

While the FBI ammunition test protocol provides valuable information about the terminal ballistic performance potential of a bullet, the exact process is more cumbersome than most are willing to tolerate. The gelatin used is organic, and storage often requires refrigeration because it is

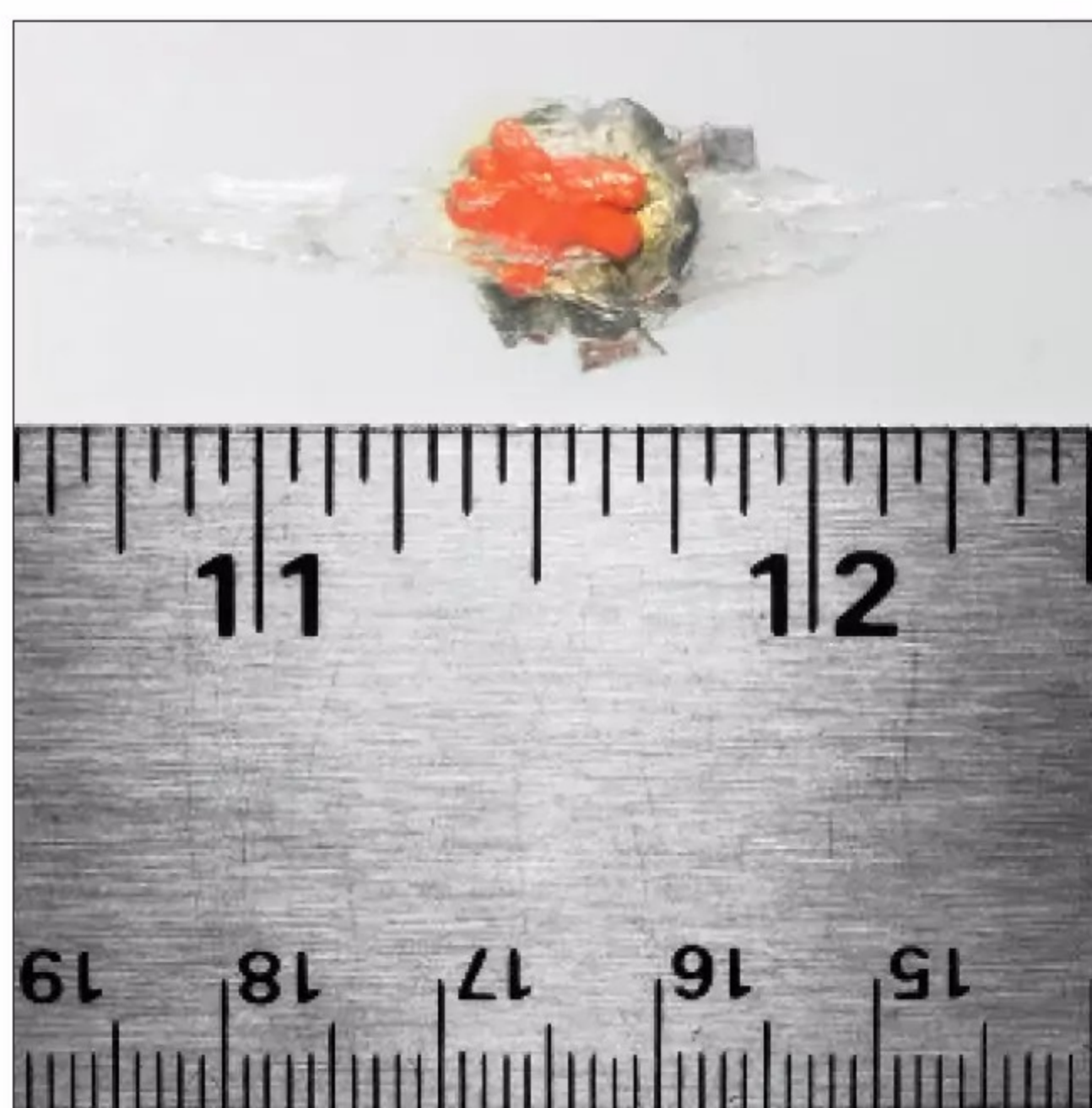
temperature sensitive. Organic gelatin cannot be reused.

"Ballistics testing isn't just for labs," said Jeremy Scott, Clear Ballistics co-founder and vice president of marketing, "It's for every shooter who wants confidence in their ammo."

Founded in 2010, Clear Ballistics (clearballistics.com) offers synthetic ballistic gelatin in many configurations. Its

gelatin is temperature stable from 32- to 100-degrees Fahrenheit. It's shelf stable from minus 10 degrees to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Clear Ballistics gel blocks may also be melted down and re-used up to 10 times. Just purchase the appropriate mold from Clear Ballistics and follow the step-by-step instructions detailed on its website.

Aside from convenience, the main benefit of Clear Ballistics gel is that — unlike yellow organic gelatin — it's clear. It provides a window into a bullet's penetration, wound channel and deformation without having to remove the bullet. (Eventually, of course, you'll need to remove the bullet to measure



Hornady's 115-grain, 9mm Critical Defense load was used as a control to evaluate Clear Ballistics' gel block. It features a Flex Tip to prevent clogging.

LOW VIS LOUD STATEMENT

INCOG X IWB HOLSTER



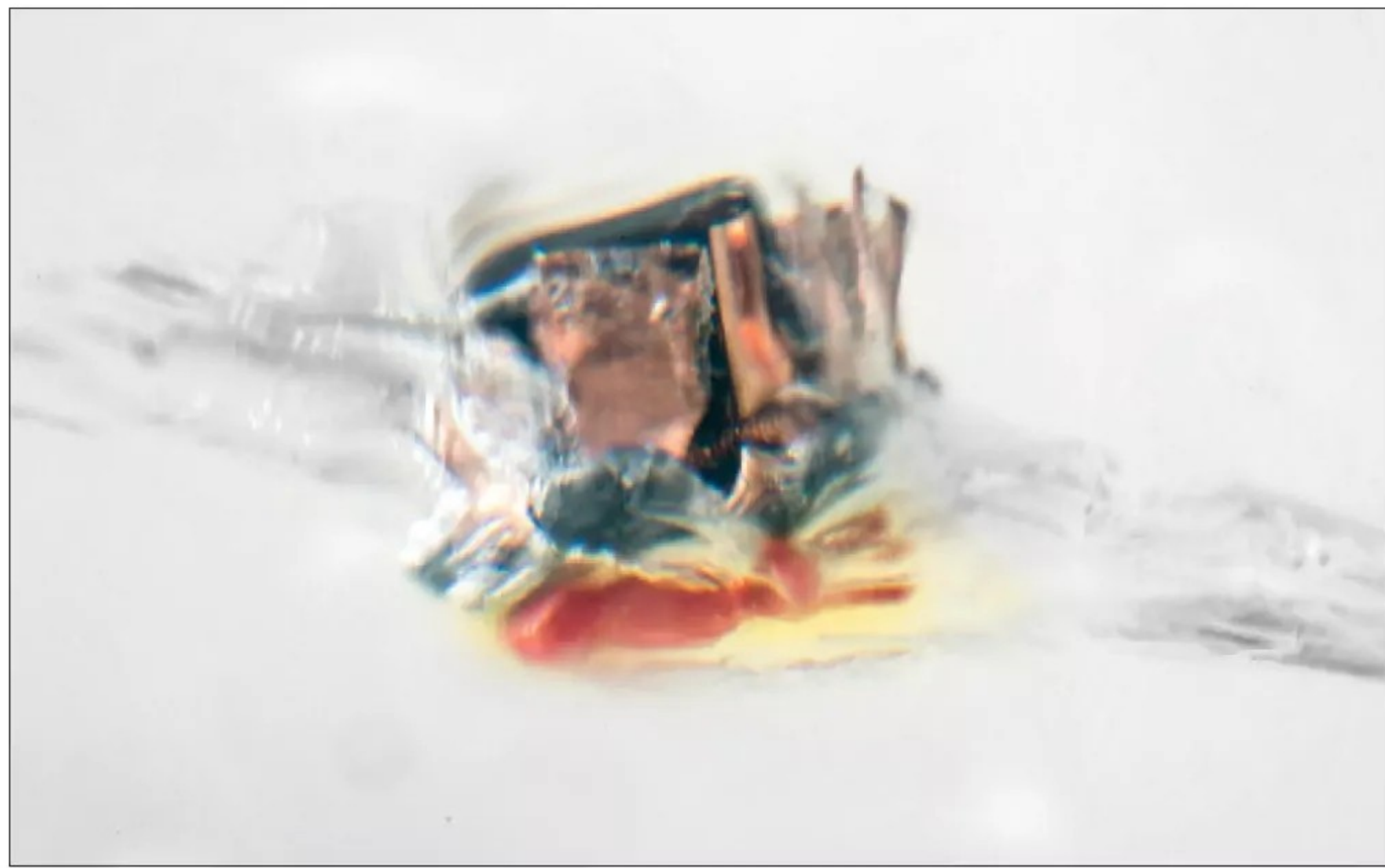
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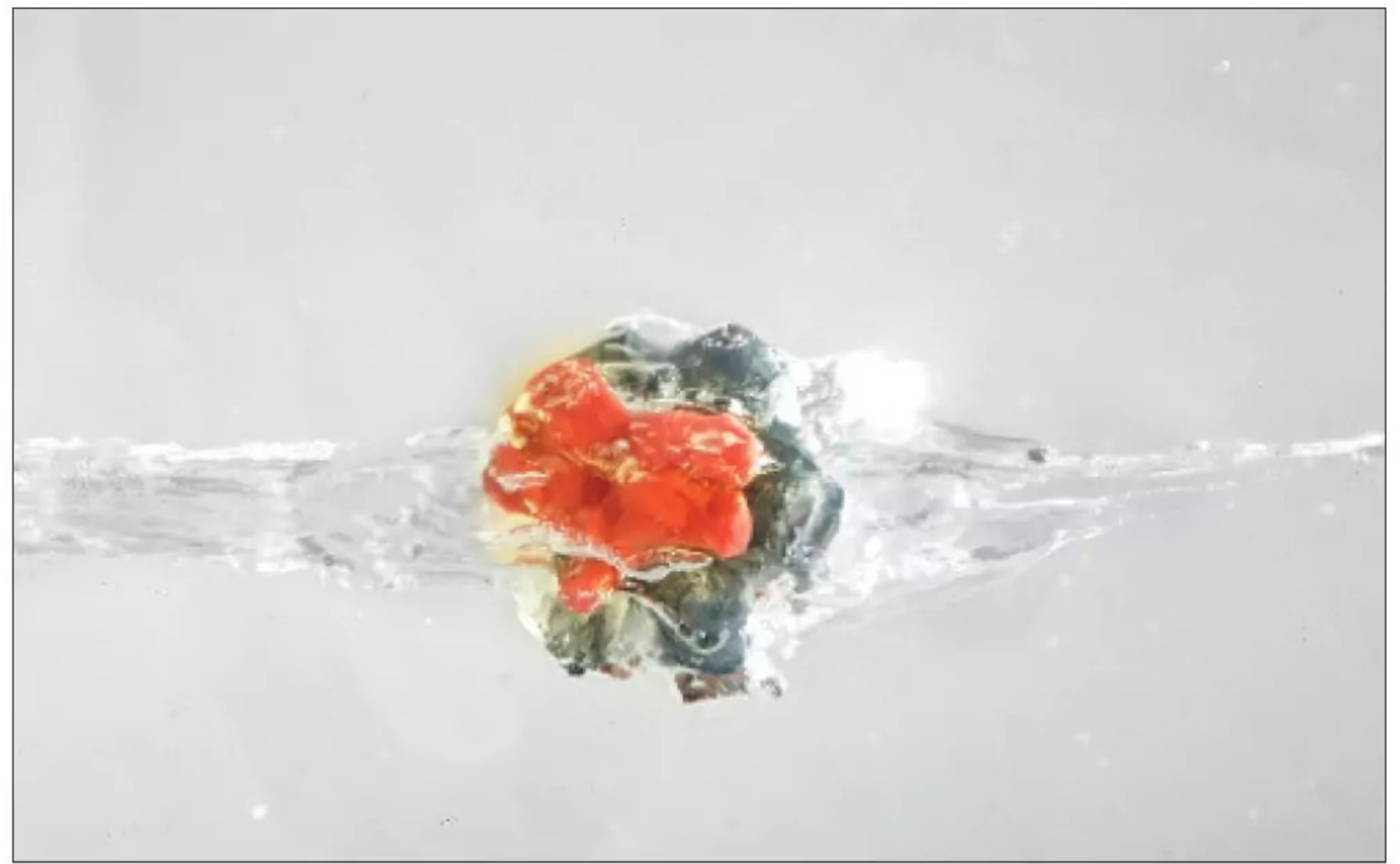


As a bullet expands, also called “bullet upset,” it will often tumble as velocity decreases and cut permanent tissue damage.

expansion and weight retention.) Clear Ballistics’ gelatin products are odorless and non-toxic, too, making them suitable for use at indoor ranges. They won’t mold or rot the way organic gelatin can, either.

While Clear Ballistics’ 10-percent gelatin blocks may produce slightly different results than the gelatin blocks used in FBI testing, they provide a reasonable indication of how a bullet is likely to perform upon impact with a human or animal. All the same tests that are included in the FBI protocol can be conducted with Clear Ballistics gel blocks.

In addition to offering gel blocks, Clear Ballistics makes



Revealed in G&A’s test of the Clear Ballistics 10% Gel FBI Block, Hornady’s flexible tip stayed with the expanded bullet.

ballistic gel head and torso dummy targets. There’s even a lower torso target and mold kit available. Hunters, if you prefer, squirrel, turkey and rabbit gel targets are also available. For entertainment, Clear Ballistics even sells a gummy bear target, a zombie target, and a Kentucky Ballistics T-Rex target.

RIFLE & HANDGUN RATED

If you’re interested in testing bullet performance from a rifle, Clear Ballistics’ 20-percent gel blocks are the answer. These are higher density blocks similar to the gelatin used

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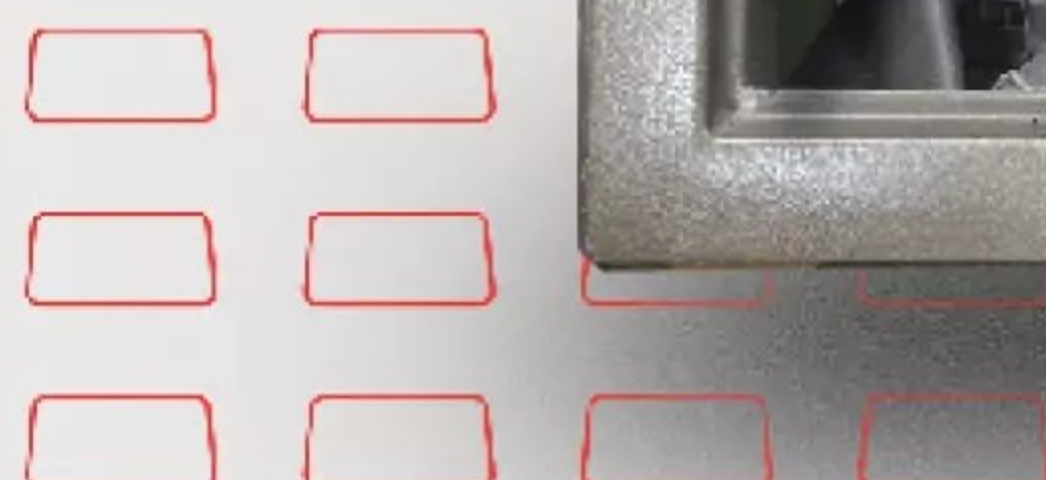
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In addition to showing how deep a bullet penetrates, gel blocks will approximate a bullet's permanent wound channel.

in NATO test standards. The 20-percent gelatin features increased rigidity to stop bullets sooner. Of course, Clear Ballistics' gel blocks can be positioned one behind another to maximize the chance of the bullet being contained within the gel rather than passing through, making the wound channel more informative.

The 10% FBI Gel Block measures 16-inches long, 6-inches high, 6-inches wide, and costs \$90. For additional value, you can purchase the FBI block mold for \$97, enabling you to re-melt the block for multiple uses.

Consistent with FBI test protocols, Clear Ballistics gel



After noting penetration depth, a bullet can be removed, examined, and measured for its expansion and weight retention.

blocks come with a calibration card to confirm a .177-caliber BB fired at 590 feet per second (fps) — plus-or-minus 15 fps — penetrates between 8.5 to 9.5 centimeters.

If you're the type of shooter or hunter who wants to see how a particular bullet performs when it impacts a simulated human or animal target, Clear Ballistics has you covered. Custom gel blocks are available, too, and you may want to purchase a cooker or complete re-melting kit. Clear Ballistics' products will help you make a more informed decision in determining the round to carry in your firearms. For more information, visit clearballistics.com. 



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On a hot Texas night, Jesús Cobos and his Kawasaki Ninja hit a small patch of gravel going 55 mph and slid down the asphalt road. Jesús received severe road rash on the left side of his body. His right side was protected by his Trijicon RCR[®], which not only received the brunt of the road rash, but still held zero.

See Jesús' story at [Trijicon.com/RCRRoadRash](https://www.trijicon.com/RCRRoadRash).



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The question of optimal bolt lift finally has answers.



TOM BECKSTRAND

ACTION TWIDDLERS

A CONVERSATION I WITNESS with increasing frequency deals with bolt lift, which is defined as the amount of effort required to move the bolt handle from the closed, fired position to the open, cocked position. It usually focuses on how light or heavy the lift is and how many degrees of motion are required without much discussion or understanding on why there is so much variance. I hope to shed some light on the subject.

LIFT & FORCE

The first step to understanding the importance of bolt lift is to realize when it matters. If the bolt-action rifle is going to have a traditional hunting scope without a magnification throw lever, how many degrees of bolt lift it requires doesn't matter — it's only a question of personal preference. Pick an action that you like and go for it. However, if the scope has a large ocular housing or has a throw lever on the power adjustment ring, a receiver with a 75- or 60-degree bolt lift is likely a better choice.

Problems arise when we become convinced that we need the lightest bolt lift possible, for whatever reason. While a light lift is pleasant and disturbs the shooting position less, there is no way to cheat physics. Firing pin weight and the amount of force provided by the firing pin spring determine how far back the pin must move in order to provide reliable cartridge ignition. Lifting the bolt to cock the rifle creates enough potential energy that, once released, yields enough kinetic energy to reliably and consistently fire the rifle.

As a rule, 90-degree lifts are the easiest to manipulate because they allow the bolt handle the greatest range of motion to create the needed potential energy. Ninety degrees of lift has dominated the bolt-action scene for decades, because the most popular actions existed long before magnified optics became mainstream. The three biggest names are the Winchester Model 70, the Remington Model 700, and the 98 Mauser (with its many variants). Although the Remington 700 came along in 1962 when magnified optics were fairly popular, scopes had 1-inch maintubes and

small ocular housings (the part of the scope closest to the shooter's eye). There wasn't much cause for concern over bolt handles getting close to scopes when cycling the action.

Scopes started changing around 2010, and that's when the trouble began. Scopes became larger and more expensive because we, as a shooting community, wanted more magnification, more field of view and more elevation adjustment. This required bigger eyepieces — especially the desire for increased field of view — that started to get uncomfortably close to bolt handles with 90 degrees of lift. Making matters worse was the addition of short throw levers that protruded from the magnification ring that allowed for rapid change in magnification levels. If that throw lever was parked in the wrong place, quickly manipulating the bolt resulted in skinned knuckles and some strong language.

The easiest solution is changing the amount of bolt lift required to cock the action, and most custom action manufacturers started offering these bolts within the last few years. Other big manufacturers, including Ruger and Tikka, offer bolt-action rifles with either 75- or 70-degree lift from the factory. These do require a little more effort to open, when compared to a 90-degree lift, but a guy would have to pay attention to notice.

LUG IT

Seekins Precision recently redesigned its bolt-action rifles and moved lock, stock and barrel from two-lug to three-lug bolts. This changed the bolt lift from 90 degrees to 60 degrees and was done to create large bolt lugs on an action strong enough to fire a steady diet of high-pressure ammunition. Some clever engineering allowed Seekins to go to a 60-degree lift while still making it lighter than most 90-degree actions.





A Savage 110 with a 90-degree lift. If the ocular housing is too large or low, the bolt handle will come close to the scope.

While there are some real advantages to receivers with 60 to 75 degrees of bolt lift, the 90-degree action still dominates the custom rifle world because it remains so easy to get the lightest bolt. However, no one ever discusses the ramifications of making the lift light at the expense of everything else. For those who obsess over light lift (usually competitive shooters), the most frequent qualifying metric that gets thrown around states, “It’ll always ignite the primer, so I can get away with this light firing pin spring.” The fastest way to lighten the lift is to reduce the force of the firing pin spring in the bolt body. Doing so is a horrible idea that few recognize.

About 25 years ago, the Army Marksmanship Unit did a detailed study on rifle ignition systems and concluded that hitting a primer hard enough to just ignite it isn’t a good enough solution for ultimate accuracy. It discovered that the primer had to be hit hard — but not too hard. I checked the veracity of this study with Ian Kelbly, a custom rifle manufacturer whose grandfather shot benchrest alongside Mike Walker, the engineer who designed the Remington 700.

The Kelbly family has been shooting benchrest and F-class competitions since Grandpa and Mike were blasting away, so there’s a lot of family history around testing and developing rifle ignition systems for extreme accuracy. Kelbly told me that the family learned a long time ago that a good firing pin spring force of 24 pounds is ideal for rifles with ignition systems similar to the Remington 700. He went on to share how the U.S. F-Class team once told him they were going to use 28-pound springs in the firing system, working under the assumption that more energy to the primer was better. They didn’t ask Kelbly’s opinion, so he didn’t tell them that he had tested that once upon a time and found that their extreme spreads and standard deviations of their ammunition would both increase, resulting in increased vertical stringing at long distance. He followed up a year later and the team told him they had gone back to 24-pound springs because they learned that lesson out on the firing line.

WHEN IT MATTERS

Firing pin spring force doesn’t matter much when blasting whitetail deer at 200 yards, but it matters a lot as distances to the target increase and target size decreases. The



A Ruger American has a 75-degree bolt lift. It clears most ocular housings, but it may not clear magnification throw levers.



The Seekins Precision Havak PH3 has a 60-degree lift. No scope configurations interfere with operation of the bolt handle.



smartest guys I’ve talked to in the firearms industry concerning bolt lift and firing pin spring force are Ian Kelbly, Mark Gordon at Short Action Customs, Wade Stuteville of Stuteville Precision, and Aaron Davidson of Gunwerks. I’ve even reviewed spreadsheets with Davidson that looked at firing pin fall distance, firing pin weight and spring force to analyze how much energy is getting delivered to the primer. I’ve never been so happy to associate with rifle nerds as during these conversations because I’ve learned so much.

Next time someone tries to convince you that light bolt lift is essential and doesn’t mention spring force or the importance of delivering enough energy to the primer, know that you’re being sold a product that may not be a good fit for you. Rifle companies with dedicated engineers on staff are most likely to produce rifles with great ignition systems, regardless of how many degrees of lift the bolt requires. Seekins, Ruger, Tikka, Kelbly, and Gunwerks all provide great solutions for the “less than 90” crowd, and they pair well with the big scopes popular today. Rifle manufacturers producing two-lug 90-degree lift receivers are also likely sticking with tried-and-true spring force specifications — unless they start pushing light bolt lift as a selling feature. In those cases, ask about firing pin spring force, and if that causes a long pause in the conversation I’d look to a different manufacturer. People in the rifle manufacturing business who are stumped by that question need to reconsider their line of work. Unless I was just blasting whitetail at 200 yards or less, as long as the rifle goes bang, we’re all going to be just fine. **G&A**

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GAUGE	12
THREAD PITCH	Choke mounted, shotgun specific
DIMENSIONS	2.4 in. (H) x 3.1 in. (W) x 8.55 in. (L)
WEIGHT	1 lb., 1.6 oz.
MATERIAL	Titanium (3D printed)
FINISH	Cerakote, black or tan
MSRP	\$1,199
MANUFACTURER	Banish Suppressors, 877-904-5292, banishsuppressors.com

YEP, IT’S FOR SHOTGUNS.

INTO THE FIELD, shotgunners often go without hearing protection, which can obviously lead to hearing damage. Some feel the need for unhindered situational awareness, to hear the rustle of game, or communicate with other hunters (including beloved gun dogs). The Banish 12 is a dedicated 12-gauge shotgun suppressor. It was designed to provide hunters of waterfowl, turkey and upland game with a quieter and more pleasurable experience. Trapshooters, recreational shotgunners and new shooters also benefit from the sound and recoil-reducing characteristics of the Banish 12. Try a Banish-suppressed 12 gauge, and it’ll make you a believer.

UNIVERSAL?

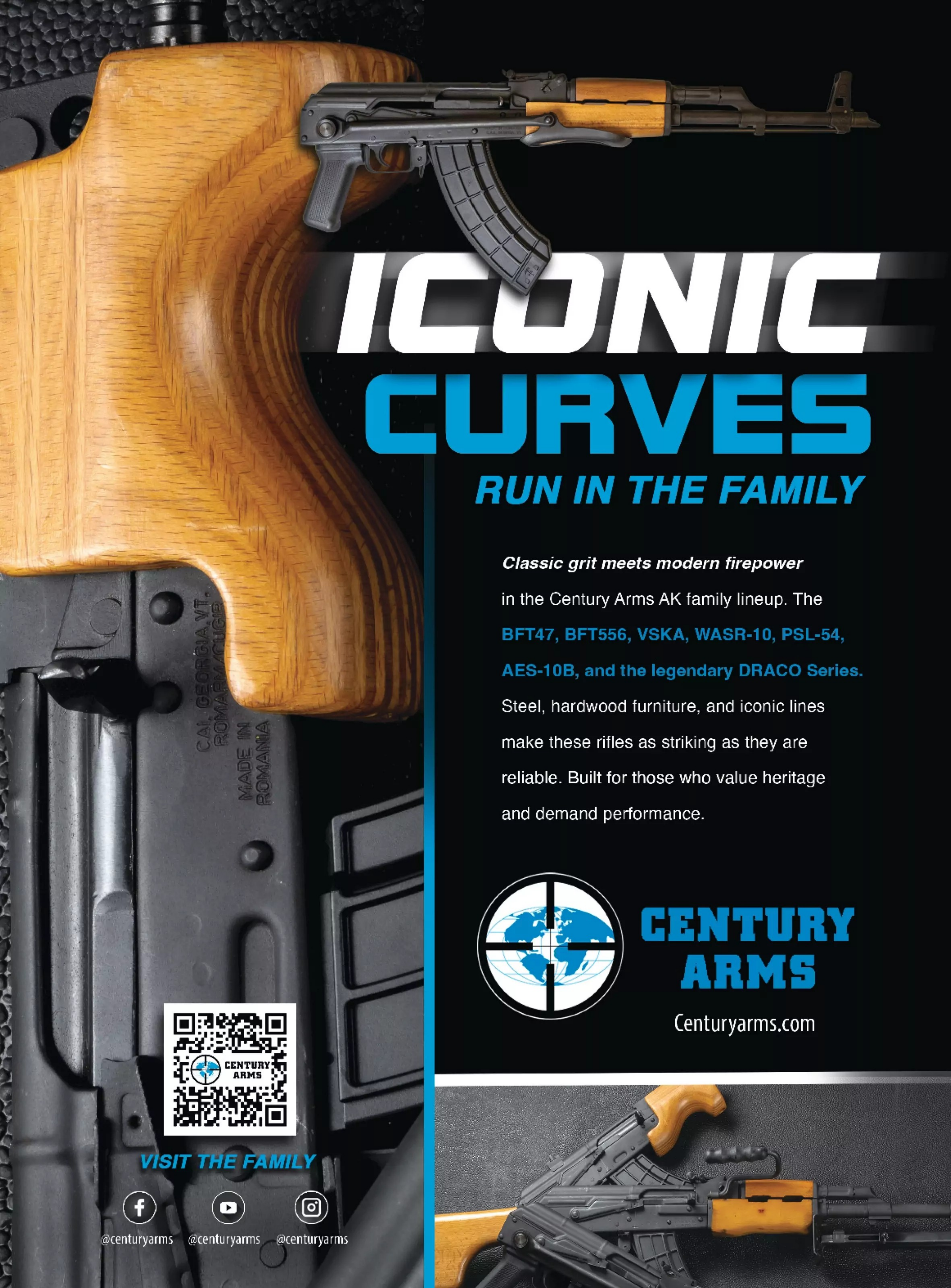
The Banish 12 attaches to many popular shotguns using a shotgun-specific choke mount. It’s compatible with traditional 12-gauge shotshells, from No. 8 to No. 2 shot, plus BB, BBB, 00 buck — even slugs! The Banish 12 can be used with all types of shot, too, including lead, steel, bismuth and tungsten. It’s a one-piece suppressor that comes complete with the choke mount of your choice, three endcap chokes, and a wrench.

Assembly is simple. Remove your existing choke, replace

it with the Banish choke mount and tighten it with the supplied multi-wrench. The suppressor then slides onto the end of the mount. With a twist of a threaded collar, it draws the suppressor against a high-temperature O-ring to a complete stop. The supplied wrench is then used to secure the assembly tight in place. This design allows for an easy upright index of the suppressor and can quickly be installed in the field.

Users can change between different shotguns with the purchase of optional choke mounts. The mounts are machined using 17-4 PH stainless steel and are black-nitride coated for ease of cleaning and corrosion resistance. Mounts are available for Benelli Crio and Mobil chokes, Beretta Optima HP, Browning Invector Plus, Mossberg Accu-Choke, Remington 870 and Remington Pro Bore.

The profile of the Banish 12 may appear odd, but it isn’t a traditional sound suppressor. Generally, the larger the internal volume of a suppressor, the better the sound reduction. Unlike a rifle suppressor that can be much longer with a smaller diameter, a shotgun suppressor must be short enough to accommodate the shot, wads and other materials that exit the barrel. The longer a shotgun suppressor is the more internal abuse it’ll endure, reducing its lifespan. Banish



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The Banish 12 kit includes the choke mount, three chokes and a mounting wrench. The choke mount is specific to different models of mounting interface. The Banish 12 is compatible with Benelli, Beretta, Browning, Mossberg and Remington chokes.

designers needed to be creative with the shape, optimizing internal volume, while leaving room for a proper sight picture. The result was a stout footprint of 3.2 inches with a height of 2.4 inches and an overall length of 8.55 inches. The flattened top of the Banish 12 is low enough to clear front beads and factory sights, providing an unfettered view side-to-side for tracking targets. The pleasing slope towards the center helps the user with centering the shotgun.

The Banish 12 is manufactured using additive manufacturing, otherwise known as “3D metal printing.” The process uses a laser to fuse layers of metal powder, which enables rapid production of complex and strategically hollowed designs that were impossible for CNC machines to create. Banish has experienced success with 3D-printed high-performance metals, including Inconel and titanium used in making its Speed K 5.56mm and Banish 9K 9mm. To keep the Banish 12 lightweight and strong, titanium was selected for its overall construction. Weighing 17.6 ounces, it keeps perceptive weight at the end of the barrel to a minimum.

Inside the Banish 12 are seven conical-type baffle sections with 12 longitudinal spars running the length of

the suppressor. Since it is 3D printed, it is a solid rigid piece. The spars act as a fence to keep wads and debris from entering the baffles. The design also generates added turbulence within the suppressor, effectively slowing down the expanding gases and reducing the sound. The main body is finished in your choice of black or tan Cerakote finishes.

Unlike other shotgun suppressors, the Banish 12 has interchangeable chokes on its endcap so shooters can modify the pattern. Chokes simply screw into the front of the suppressor, the same way you would install a choke into a

barrel. Each choke is labeled with dots for easy identification. The Banish 12 ships with a Full (1 dot) choke installed, while separate Improved Cylinder (4 dot) and Modified (3 dot) chokes are in the kit. Built to last, Banish 12 chokes weigh only .3 ounces and are 1-inch long. They’re crafted from 17-4 precipitation-hardening (PH) stainless steel and given a black nitride finish. Cylinder and Improved Modified chokes are available on the Banish website.



The Banish 12 suppressor is not user-servicable. Due to the longitudinal spars, it cannot be taken apart, either.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

Benelli sent Guns & Ammo a Super Black Eagle 3 (\$2,199, benelliusa.com) for testing the Banish 12. As expected,

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The Banish 12 mounting process is quite simple: (1) Install the choke mount into the shotgun barrel. (2) It is tightened with the included wrench. (3-4) Then the Banish 12 is attached to the mount. (5) Tighten the mount to the can and (6) insert the choke.

the Benelli's factory sights cleared the top of the Banish 12 when obtaining a sight picture. G&A's staff decided to install an Aimpoint ACRO S-2 (\$755, aimpoint.us) on the shotgun's rib for additional testing. It worked well, providing a full view downrange. With a variety of shotgun shells, we headed to the gun club. Test ammo included Federal Top Gun 2¾-inch, 7½ shot; Remington Gun Club 2¾-inch, 8 shot; Winchester Super Target 2¾-inch, 8 shot; and Winchester AA 2¾-inch, 8 shot. All were in the 1,145 feet per second (fps) range. For comparison, we also evaluated Federal's Ultra-Shok 3½-inch, No. 4 steel shot at 1,550 fps. (Note: According to Banish, users should not use shotgun shells with flight-control wads, including Federal's Black



With or without an optic sight, the Banish 12 shotgun suppressor does not obstruct the view when aiming at birds or clays.



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Cloud and Prairie Storm. Also, users should not attempt wadless slugs or rifled slugs. Lastly, steel shot should not be used in conjunction with the full choke.) For testing with Ultra-Shok, we changed to using an Improved Cylinder choke tube.

AT THE RANGE

Starting with Federal's Top Gun load — unsuppressed — we recorded a baseline and checked the ACRO's zero. The noise level was typical. Adding the Banish 12, we fired a few shots — and wow! It was quiet enough to remove hearing protection and go through the remainder of the box. (It sounded like shooting .22 Shorts.) Benelli's 28-inch barrel put the sound forward enough that most of the sound was directed beyond the muzzle. A person standing 15 feet to the side said, "It sounded like a normal shotgun about 200 yards away." While not scientific, you get the idea. It was quiet. We tested a few rounds of each 2¾-inch shell; same result.

Moving to the Ultra-Shot, the Banish 12 brought down sound levels, but we opted to keep the ear protection on. It had a bit more bark, akin to .22 LR.

Banish claims that the Banish 12 provides up to 21 decibels (dB) of sound reduction. With 2¾-inch (No. 8 shot) shells measuring 134 dB and 3-inch (No. 2 shot) shells measuring 138 dB, that was approximately the sound level we experienced. Since decibels are logarithmic units — each reduction of 10 dB reduces sound by half to the human ear — a 21-dB reduction brings the sound to a more comfortable level, about the sound of a .22 LR rimfire. For a 12 gauge shotgun, that's a significant improvement!

Overall, the Banish 12 will make shooting a 12-gauge shotgun more enjoyable for anyone who tries it. The balance at the end of the Benelli felt great, as well. Though there is some weight added to the muzzle of the barrel, which can carry momentum in the swing, we had no problem seeing and dusting clays while tracking and leading them. The next test will be afield on a game bird adventure.  — M. Fingar

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- William Blake, English poet



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TO & FRO

A SOFT RIFLE CASE is a simple tool that often goes underappreciated. However, shooters should know that they are not equal. Silicone-treated knit socks that cover a long gun will meet the minimal legal requirements for transporting long-guns to and from a range in many states. “Gun socks” can be purchased in most retail chains or online retailers such as Brownells and Midway USA for \$10. The most basic shotgun and scoped canvas rifle cases with zippers start at less than \$15. Perhaps you have no issue toting your long gun in an inexpensive case; if it works, it works! However, you may experience zippers that won’t hold

together, or an old pleather case holds moisture and causes certain guns to rust.

Another consideration is selecting a case long enough for certain rifles and shotguns, or tall enough to accommodate optics. You may find a pocket or two is useful to store spare chokes, paperwork, targets, small tools or dope cards. When you put some real money into a gun and scope, try not skimp on a soft case. For hunters and shooters that travel by air, some are also handy when packing a firearm within a hard case. What follows is an assortment of recommended soft cases that go beyond the minimum. — *G&A Staff*



BROWNING LONA O/U TAKEDOWN SHOTGUN CASE

Most high-end over/under and side-by-side shotguns are delivered in a fine, fitted hard case that could be used for general travel and transportation. They are usually given a soft inner liner, and the hard outer shell shields the gun and accessories from a reasonable amount of rough handling. However, these hard cases are often bulky or unusual in size, and in many instances a soft case is more practical to carry.

The Browning Lona soft-sided shotgun case is a short, compact canvas and leather case that’s ideal for transporting a shotgun when disassembled. The Lona takedown case measures only 35 inches in length, so it would even fit inside a larger suitcase. A fitted case isn’t always easy to fly with.

Inside, the quilted cotton canvas guards against scratches and abrasions, and due to its size, the Lona is more discreet to carry in appropriate public spaces than those that are obviously concealing a long gun.

Available in flint or black canvas colors accented with leather trim, the Lona features an accessory pocket for extra chokes and tools. The Browning Lona takedown soft case not only protects your fine takedown shotgun, it complements Browning’s aesthetics, too. browning.com **\$130**



FALCO R202 WILD BOAR

The financial threshold serious shooters and hunters have invested in their firearms has increased. In 2025, a high-performance rifle and scope package retails between \$2,000 and \$4,500. It makes sense to carry said rifle and scope in a quality case with intelligent design features, protection and storage.

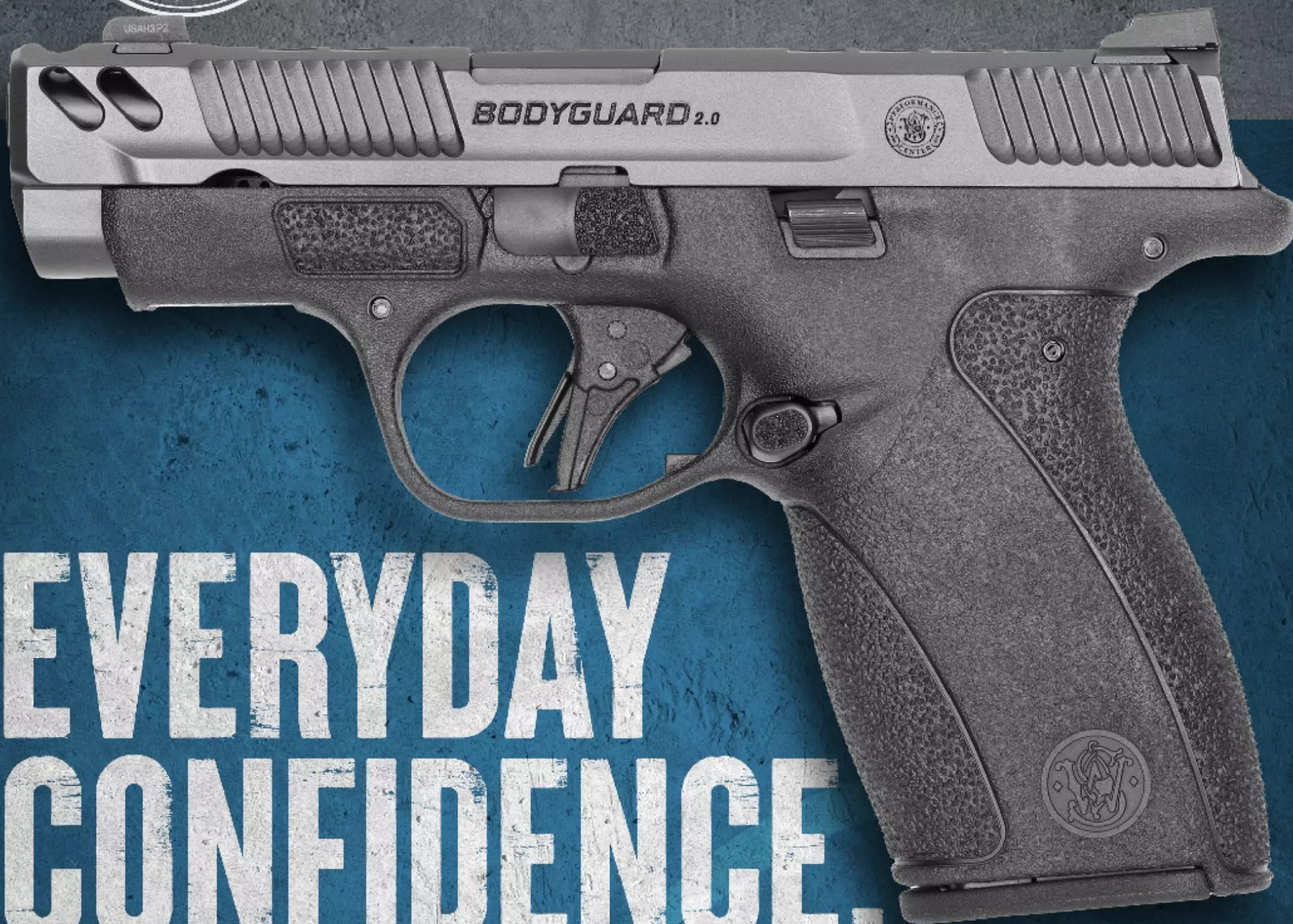
Falco, a premium-quality holster maker based in Slovakia, offers the model R202 Wild Boar soft case for hunters and shooters. The R202 is constructed from a durable polyester fabric with suede backing in natural green or brown colors. Inside is a plastic shield and multiple layers of special anti-press foams designed to protect the firearm and optic from impacts and abrasion, all hidden by a quilted lining.

The case is 49-inches long, 11.4-inches wide, 17.7-inches tall, and features YKK zippers. Multiple pockets on the exterior of the case offer storage, including two zipper-closed pockets and a large pocket with a flap secured by a button.

The Falco R202 Wild Boar is a luxury case for high-value firearms for the range or field. G&A Editor-in-Chief Eric Poole evaluated this case on a recent African safari, packing his scoped rifle in it within a hard case for international travel. It proved durable and was handy for carrying the rifle between the lodge and Land Cruiser. falcoholster.com **\$400**



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FEDERAL PREMIUM LONG-GUN SOFT CASES

Federal Premium's Long-Gun Soft Cases exude the classic combination of quilted cotton, leather, canvas and brass hardware with a touch of modern. The scoped rifle model and Premium Shotgun Case (shown) offer protection and utility. The waxed canvas cases feature top-quality zippers with fine leather reinforcements and brass hardware. The quilted aspect is not just a fine aesthetic choice, either. The liner makes it easier to slide firearms in and out each case.

The scoped rifle case is available in a 44- or 48-inch offerings, and the shotgun cases are 48- or 52-inches long. Both cases provide a large accessory pocket, ideal for storing shotgun chokes, tools or ammunition. Federal Premium's long-gun cases deliver an excellent blend of functionality with a design sure to stir memories.

An appropriate pairing with the Premium Shotgun Case is the Premium Shell Pouch (\$55). Constructed with the same fine materials, the 1½-inch web belt extends to 44 inches to fit securely around the waist. A matching canvas range bag (\$160) is also available. federalpremium.com **\$100**



LEUPOLD RENDEZVOUS RIFLE CASE

Available in a 50-inch rifle-length or a 36-inch carbine-length configuration, Leupold's Rendezvous Rifle Case is a semi-rigid soft case that blends characteristics of both a hard and soft rifle case. Internally, there is ample room with partition for two firearms, and the case includes four straps to keep the rifles in place — with optics, too! The padding is soft and sturdy. Combined with the semi-rigid exterior, guns and optics are shielded against rough handling. Externally, the rifle-length Rendezvous (shown) features two oversized pockets for essentials such as spare magazines, bipods, tools and ammunition. Zippered pouches are outside of that. The Rendezvous could be an all-in-one case and range bag. The carbine-length Rendezvous only has one large pocket. MOLLE webbing supports additional pouches for equipment.

Rendezvous cases are not waterproof, but the semi-rigid bottom resists damp surfaces to protect the interior's contents. It's a well-built case featuring quality materials and a smart layout for range or tactical use. leupold.com, **\$219** **G&A**

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THE SAR9 SOCOM COMP
9MM PISTOL DOES IT ALL.

BY JAMES TARR | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR





SARSILMAZ — pronounced as it’s spelled — is not a name that rolls smoothly off the tongue for a native English speaker. For that reason, when the 145-year-old Turkish arms manufacturer tried to make a splash in the U.S. market about 10 years ago, it created SAR USA, based in Miami, Florida. SAR USA is the exclusive U.S. importer, distributor and partner for Sarsilmaz and it makes great guns. Figuring out how to market them in the U.S. was a struggle, but the company is experiencing success.

The SAR9 design was first introduced by Patrick Sweeney in *Guns & Ammo*’s February 2018 issue. It’s a proprietary design to SAR USA and, at this point, a proven one. That isn’t to suggest it hasn’t seen continuous improvements and updates. SAR USA offers several models, and the latest for 2025 demonstrates how much they’ve learned about American firearms.

The SAR9 SOCOM Comp pairs the Gen 3 SAR9 SOCOM Compact with a compensator made by Dawson Precision (dawsonprecision.com). The SAR9 SOCOM Compact has been the company’s No. 1-selling pistol, and Dawson has made handgun accessories for the competition market for more than 25 years. Founder Dave Dawson has an enviable reputation.

The SAR9 SOCOM Comp isn’t so much a pistol as it is a package with all sorts of accessories and extras. It’s available in all black or OD green, as seen here.

The SOCOM Comp is a third-generation version of the SAR9. The SOCOM was originally designed for use by the Turkish military and police special forces, hence the name according to a member of SAR’s mar-

SAR9 SOCOM COMP	
TYPE	Recoil operated, striker fire, semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	15+1 rds, 21+1 rds.
BARREL	4.7 in., Dawson Precision compensator
LENGTH	8.25 in.
HEIGHT	5.4 in. (with 15-rd. mag.)
WIDTH	1.3 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 12.5 oz.
FINISH	Cerakote, OD Green (steel)
FRAME	Polymer, OD Green, int. palmswells; mag. well
SIGHTS	3 dot, tritium, drift adj.
TRIGGER	5 lbs., 4 oz. (tested)
SAFETY	Trigger lever, striker plunger
MSRP	\$800
ACCESSORIES	One 15- and one 21-round magazine, three sets of backstraps/grip inserts, cleaning kit, Dawson full power recoil spring, optic plate, cable lock
MANUFACTURER	Sarsilmaz, Turkey
IMPORTER	SAR USA, 833-727-4867, sarusa.com



keting team. After some incredibly extensive comparative testing — 90,000-rounds fired against Glock, SIG Sauer, FN, Walther and Smith & Wesson products — the SAR9 emerged as the winner, and was adopted by the Turkish military. The problem isn’t that the NATO-approved guns aren’t excellent, it’s that the SAR USA has struggled to get that news out.

THE DETAILS

This pistol is a polymer-framed, striker-fired 9mm supplied with one flush 15-round and one extended 21-round magazine. The cold hammer-forged barrel is 4.7 inches long and threaded ½x28. The standard SOCOM model sports an extended threaded barrel, but the special Comp model comes with Dawson Precision’s ICE compensator installed at the factory. Let’s review that first.

I’m well aware of Dawson Precision. I think I first used one of its fiber-optic sights in the 1990s. Dawson has been designing compensators and produces various models of his patented ICE compensator. The comp seen on the SAR9 SOCOM Comp was specifically developed for this pistol, and it complements the slide profile. The compensator has a single port with an expansion chamber and serrations on both sides that match the forward cocking serrations on the slide.



The Dawson Precision ICE compensator is easy to remove and install. An additional, stiffer recoil spring assembly is provided to ensure the pistol's reliability with a suppressor or no muzzle device.

Three-dot night sights were not tall enough to co-witness through an optic, but they are dovetailed and made of steel.

The compensator is aluminum and doesn't add much weight to the gun or barrel. That said, it's effective at directing recoil forces up instead of to the rear. As such, the pistol comes equipped with a lighter dual recoil spring system. If you prefer to remove the compensator and mount a suppressor, perhaps, the pistol includes the original spring, which is a bit stiffer.

The slide has a flat top and aggressive slide serrations front and back. The slots in front cut partially through the slide to reveal the black barrel underneath.

I like the look of this gun. The frame and slide are OD green, but all the assorted parts and controls are black, which contrasts nicely.

There are a lot of markings, but they are subdued and seem to add to the look of the gun rather than detract. On the left side of the slide, you'll see "SAR" in a square, with "MIAMI, FL" beside it. "Sarsilmaz" is marked on the frame nearby. On the right side of the slide is "SAR9C SOCOM", underneath the ejection port. Above the frame rail on the right side of the frame is "MADE IN TURKIYE". The Dawson Precision name is on the underside of the compensator.

This pistol comes standard with excellent day/night sights, and they are made of steel. The front sight has a tritium insert surrounded by a white ring for visibility in any light. The rear sight has a standard notch with tritium inserts to either side. The slide is optic-ready and comes supplied with a mounting plate for optics with the RMR footprint. The sample shipped to G&A was a little special; not only did it come with several different optic mounting plates from Dawson Precision but already had the Chameleon SRS8 optic from Cyelee Optics



The SAR9 SOCOM Compact slide is cut deeply to accommodate an adapter plate ahead of the rear sight. An RMR footprint adapter plate is supplied with fasteners, replacing the coverplate.



Texture exists at every touchpoint, including tactile index points for the support hand thumb or an idle trigger finger. Small raised squares provide traction for the takedown bar and mag release.

(cyeleeoptics.com). The Chameleon SRS8 has an aluminum body and an 8-MOA dot. It worked just fine during my tests. The SRS8 uses an RMR footprint, and SAR USA sells those adapter plates if you'd rather mount a Trijicon RMR or other optic to the SAR9.

The steel magazine release is thin and rectangular, having small raised squares for texturing. The magazine release is reversible, too.

The aluminum magazine well extends just a small distance from the bottom of the gun, and there are relief grooves on the side to assist with stripping out the flush magazine. The magazine well is removable, if desired. The base pads of both magazines are machined aluminum and anodized black.

The trigger on the SAR9 SOCOM Comp was upgraded. It has an aluminum body and a wide, flat,



Available in black or OD green, the SAR9 SOCOM Comp includes all the tools to support the compensator or suppressor use, including a standard and light recoil spring, spare mags, an adapter plate and coverplate.

vertically serrated face. The safety lever is aluminum and thinly serrated as well, anodized red. The trigger pull isn't especially short for a striker-fired pistol, but it is smooth, helping both speed and accuracy. The total pull weight was tested at 5¼ pounds.

One look inside the pistol — both frame and slide — and you'll see a familiar layout if you've ever taken apart a striker-fired pistol such as a Glock 19 Gen 3. I like this similarity because it means the inside of the gun is simple. Simple doesn't just mean fewer parts to break; it means a lighter gun. Light guns are more comfortable to carry, and because of the low bore, this one is enjoyable to shoot.

The serial number is etched into the side of the chassis and is visible on the right side of the gun through a cutout in the polymer frame. At the front of the frame is a one slot Picatinny-style rail for attaching a light. The triggerguard is somewhat large, with big serrations on the front. Following the modern trend, all the parts in the SAR9's frame are set inside a stainless-steel chassis which also forms the four rails (tabs) on which the slide rides. The chassis can be removed from the frame if you pop out enough pins, but the manufacturer does not recommend it and it's not part of the maintenance.

The slide-stop on this gun isn't that large, but I found it easy to drop the slide with just a swipe of my thumb. There is an internal firing pin safety/trigger block inside the frame, in addition to the safety lever on the trigger. If you look at the frame behind the slide-stop, you'll see a black pin. The original SAR9 had a manual bilateral



Both the black trigger and a red-anodized safety lever are serrated and compress flat. It tested at 5 pounds, 4 ounces.

thumb safety there. Turkey is a NATO member; given the modular interior and chassis, and the thumb safety, it's clear to me that the design of the original was influenced by the U.S. military's Modular Handgun System (MHS) specs that resulted in the adoption of SIG Sauer's P320 as the M17/M18. The frame of the SAR9 is reminiscent of an HK pistol, though. It features both replaceable backstraps and palm swell inserts on the sides. It comes with a total of three backstraps (S, M and L) and three sets of grip panel inserts. All are marked for size, and the grip panels were marked

"Right" and "Left", as well. The panels and backstraps supplied with G&A's test pistol were molded in a tan color, but standard pistols black (pictured) or green pieces. If you've never owned a pistol with a grip setup like this, it allows the user to mix sizes. For example, you can choose a medium backstrap and a large right panel and small left grip panel to best personalize the grip's fit to fill your hand.

The texture on the grip isn't as aggressive as some pistols, but the grip didn't move in my hand during testing. Actually, the grip of the SAR9 SOCOM Comp fit my medium-size hands as if it was made for it. In a way, it was. In designing the grip, Sarsilmaz engineers scanned a thousand hands and designed a polymer grip and frame that best accommodated all of those surveyed. It's what they call the "Thousand-Hand Grip." No, every possible configuration won't satisfy everyone, but they tried!

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The SAR 9 SOCOM Comp includes three sets of small, medium and large backstraps and grip panels, either black or tan. These can be combined in different size configurations for personal preference. The SAR9 SOCOM Comp was evaluated with a Cye-lee Optics Chameleon G-SRS8 with 8-MOA green-dot reticle. **\$200**

WHERE IT’S MADE & WHAT YOU GET

Let’s talk a bit about Sarsilmaz, since I mentioned its engineers. In 2015, I had the privilege to visit Turkey and learn first-hand about the operations at Sarsilmaz. I toured the headquarters in Istanbul, as well as its then-new manufacturing facility in Düzce (pronounced “doos-jay”) near the Black Sea. At the time, the new factory included 400,000 square feet. I’ve been told that it’s expanded to 1 million square feet. It is a state-of-the-art facility containing row after row of CNC machines. The building features great lighting, small potted trees for a bit of green, and floors so clean one could eat off them.

It was at the Sarsilmaz factory that I saw my first seven-axis CNC machine. I’d never even heard of a seven-axis machine before, and none of the other gunwriters on that trip had seen one either. Sarsilmaz performs every manufacturing operation in-house — not just machining the steel used to make firearms. There was injection molding for frames (and gun cases), and walnut blanks shaped into beautiful shotgun stocks by four-spindle lathes and old-fashioned hand rubbing.

“Sarsilmaz” means “unshakable.” Considering it is a fifth-generation family business that’s been around since 1880, the name seems apt. Sarsilmaz is Turkey’s oldest weapons manufacturer.

As mentioned, the SAR9 SOCOM Comp is sold as a package. In addition to the gun and attached compensator, a second heavier recoil spring is included, as



PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Black Hills 115-gr. JHP	1,172	40	22	1.9	2.8
SIG Sauer Elite 124-gr. FMJ	1,167	28	15	2.5	2.9
Winchester Defender 147-gr. JHP	956	27	10	2.6	3.2
Hornady Custom +P 124-gr. XTP	1,144	25	12	2.7	3.7

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 placed 12 feet in front of the muzzle.

well as a cleaning kit, tools for removing the compensator, optic plate, two magazines, and three sets of grip panels and backstraps inside the lockable hard case.

This gun is technically a “compact,” but it’s still a big gun that you can

get your entire hand around. I ran this comp’d 9mm hard and fast, and the gun was both controllable and perfectly reliable. I’ve shot SAR9 pistols at several venues now — including the 2025 OSG Editorial Roundtable where the SAR9 SOCOM Comp was revealed. They’ve all performed. The compensator doesn’t completely eliminate muzzle rise, but it definitely keeps it flatter.

I find it interesting that the SAR9 Compact is the company’s best-selling pistol. It’s a little big for most people to carry even before you add the compensator. I think the reasons for it are simple: It’s a good-looking pistol that’s priced competitively. It’s consistently fun to shoot, and is very reliable. **GA**

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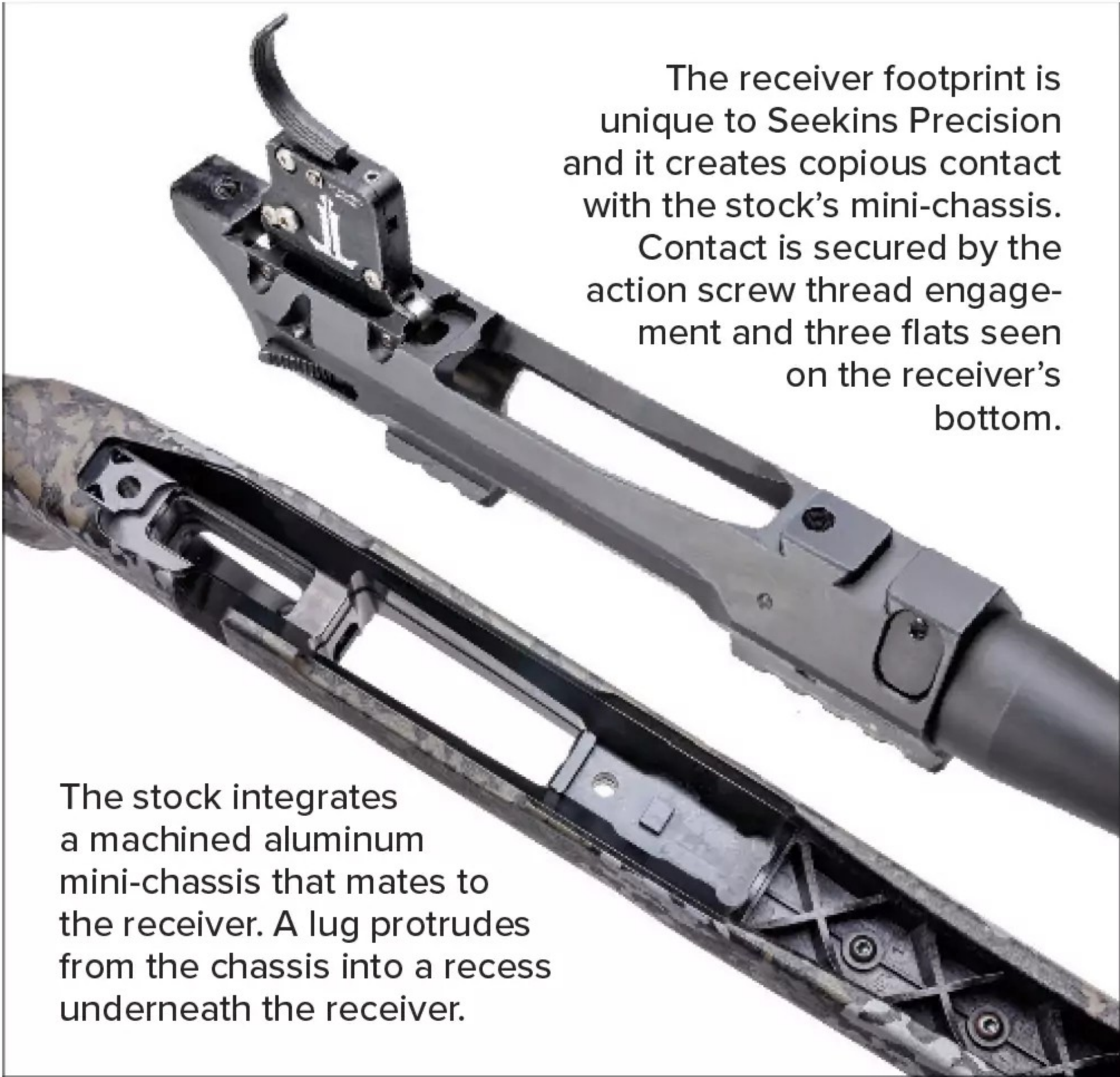


THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM.

THE SEEKINS HAVAK PH3 IS WHAT WE WANT.

BY TOM BECKSTRAND | PHOTOS BY MARK FINGAR





THE NEW-FOR-2025 Seekins Precision Havak PH3 shows just how far the rifle-shooting community has progressed in the past 20 years. Gone are the days of sending a factory action off to get blueprinted and fitted with a custom stock and premium barrels. Any advantages offered from that approach now come from the factory at a fraction of the price. This PH3 rifle provides a level of performance and flexibility that was unheard of even 10 years ago.

BRILLIANCE IN THE BASICS

When I look at Seekins Precision's Havak PH3, I see a rifle optimization problem executed flawlessly. It might sometimes seem difficult to see what makes one bolt-action rifle different from another, but the differences between the PH3 and just about every other bolt-action rifle available are hard to miss. For starters, the PH3 does not have a Remington Model 700 footprint; for that I'm thankful.

The Model 700 was first sold in 1962, and it was designed for convenient manufacture. It started life as a section of round pipe that was easy to spin on a lathe and turn into an action. Its ease of manufacture kept costs low and resulted in it becoming the most prolific bolt-action in several generations of riflemen. It also has warts that frequently get overlooked because it has such strong aftermarket support. The ugliest warts are the action screws, and how little they contact the receiver. The screws have to be watched and checked



The PH3 barrel features a 5/8-24 threaded muzzle to mount a muzzle device or suppressor. Seekins installs an effective radial muzzlebrake to each barrel.



The stock has an adjustable comb and flush cups for sling mounting under the toe and on each side of the forend. The forend also hosts two M-Lok slots that can be used to attach a bipod.

SEEKINS HAVAK PH3	
TYPE	Bolt action
CARTRIDGE	6.5 Creedmoor (tested)
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	20 in.; 416R stainless steel, 1:8-in. twist
LENGTH	40.5 in.
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 8 oz.
STOCK	Carbon fiber, adj, comb
LENGTH OF PULL	13.25 in.
GRIP	Texture, molded
FINISH	Cerakote
SIGHTS	None
TRIGGER	TriggerTech Primary, 3 lbs. (tested)
SAFETY	Lever, two position
MSRP	\$1,895
MANUFACTURER	Seekins Precision, 208-743-3400, seekinsprecision.com

regularly to achieve the best performance. Second, the two-lug bolt has to rotate 90 degrees to open and close. This means the bolt handle can come uncomfortably close to the scope when cycling the action.

The PH3 fixes those issues and brings several capabilities that aren't possible anywhere else. The PH3 has a footprint unique to Seekins rifles. There are three angled flats on the bottom of the receiver that match with flats of the mini-chassis in the stock. When combined with the three-fold increase in action screw engagement, the PH3 is more thoroughly immobilized in the stock than a Model 700 footprint. Seekins' rifles have a reputation for exceptional accuracy, and the

action's footprint is a big reason why. The receiver is held so firmly that Seekins' rifles will rarely — if ever — throw unexplained flyers when shooting groups.

Havak PH3 rifles chambered in short-action cartridges come with 20- and 24-inch barrels, while those



The bolt design ensures toolless disassembly to make it easy to maintain. Engineers incorporated an easy bolt head replacement feature for changing between standard and magnum bolt faces.

The biggest change from the Havak PH2 and PH3 was the move to a 60-degree bolt lift. This keeps the bolt handle away from the scope, so even the largest ocular housings pair well with the PH3.

in long-action chamberings have barrels in 22- and 26-inch lengths. The most popular models are the ones with shorter barrels because they will likely be used with suppressors. Every barrel comes threaded with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -24 thread pitch. Seekins Precision also delivers each rifle with its a radial muzzlebrake.

The stock and bottom metal are Seekins' own, which tip the scales at an even 3 pounds. The stock is made from carbon-fiber composite, and it has an aluminum mini-chassis inside. There is also a section of M-Lok along the underside of the forend to keep it clutter-free while also supporting the option to attach a bipod or tripod. The stock has an adjustable comb, which allows the PH3 to comfortably fit almost any shooter/scope combination.

ACTION DEETS

The real value of the PH3 comes when considering its many relevant capabilities. It has a three-lug bolt, so only 60 degrees of lift is required to open the action. Normally, a three-lug action is harder to open than a two-lug; three-lug bolts have to do

the same amount of work in 60 degrees as a two-lug bolt with a 90-degree. However, Seekins' engineers made a couple of significant efforts that made its bolt assembly easier to open than even most two-lug actions. The first significant design change was to wrap the firing pin spring around a bearing instead of around the firing pin as is typical. This approach allows the spring to spin independently of the firing pin. When

opening the action, the bolt body rotates, but the firing pin doesn't. This usually means the firing pin spring drags along the inside of the bolt body, which creates felt resistance. The use of a bearing means that the spring spins freely, eliminating any resistance to the bolt body's rotation.

The second engineering feat was the use of dual helixes where the bolt body and cocking piece meet. Lifting the bolt to open the action pulls the cocking piece and firing pin rearward. More than 90 percent of bolt-action rifles have a single angled ramp cut into the back of the bolt body, so opening the bolt drives the cocking piece up that ramp. Seekins uses dual helixes on the bolt body that match the two surfaces



The three-lug bolt enables the short 60-degree lift. The bolt includes dual ejectors, extractor, and small-diameter firing pin.



Seekins Precision makes the three-round, center-fed, carbon-fiber magazine that ships with each rifle. Common-use AICS-pattern magazines also work in the Havak PH3.

Within the triggerguard is the TriggerTech Primary, which adjusts between 1 pounds, 8 ounces, and 4 pounds with a crisp let-off. Integral to the triggerguard front is the magazine release.

on the cocking piece. Using both sides of the bolt body keeps the firing pin centered in the bolt body and the helixes spread the load across the entire angle instead of just loading it all on a single point. The result is less resistance when opening the bolt. I called Glen Seekins when evaluating this rifle to ask him about the light bolt lift, and to discuss its features.

“I actually increased firing pin spring weight by 1 pound on the PH3,” Seekins said, “and it still has a lighter lift than most two-lug custom actions on the market. We tested a bunch of actions on a machine to see where we fell on how much weight it took to lift the bolt handle to cock the rifle. Only a well-used Impact action beat us.”

Some riflemen obsess about light bolt lift. While I



The receiver sports integral scope bases, but it features an opening over the top of the bolt to allow for top-feeding the action. Making scope rings is how Seekins Precision got its start.

don't obsess over it, I do pay attention. Light bolt lift makes a rifle — especially a light rifle — more enjoyable to shoot because it takes less effort to cycle the action. Effortless is always desirable when trying to have fun.

The bolt also offers toolless disassembly, so getting the bolt apart for maintenance is a snap. The bolt head is removable, so it's also possible to chamber the same short-action receiver

in everything from .22 Creedmoor to 6.5 PRC. (I wouldn't be surprised to see .223 Remington pop onto the menu at some point.)

Realizing that caliber interchangeability is a good thing, Seekins also made it possible to quickly change barrels. Barrels only need to be threaded into the receiver and tightened to about 10 foot-pounds (ft.-

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lbs.). There is a small clamping mechanism built into the bottom of the receiver where the barrel threads into it. That clamp only requires 20 inch-pounds (in.-lbs.) to firmly hold the barrel in place. The Havak PH3 — thanks to the removable bolt heads and the quick-change barrel system — can be re-barreled or caliber-changed with basic tools. While no one is likely to change barrels on a regular basis, it is likely that many of us will benefit from the ease to replace a shot-



When the bolt is open, a lug is at the 6-o'clock position ready to press against a cartridge base. This gives the action positive engagement with the cartridge case head when feeding.

out barrel or set up a PH3 to experiment with a new cartridge. No gunsmith services required!

FAST & FURIOUS

In addition to the unique features the Havak PH3 introduces, it also includes tried-and-true innovations such as the TriggerTech (triggertech.com) Primary trigger and integral scope-mounting rails. New for the PH3 is the adjustable comb that ensures shooter comfort,

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making spotting impacts easier, even with large-objective scopes that sit a little higher on the rifle.

Based on the response to the PH3 — during a slow time for the fire-arms industry — Seekins Precision has discovered unprecedented success with this rifle. The Havak PH2 was a popular seller in 2024, setting internal sales records. Still, Seekins told

me that it had sold as many PH3 models between January and early May 2025 as it did in all of '24.

As big of a leap in riflery as is found in the Havak PH3, one of the features I love the most is the absence of a price increase when compared to the Havak PH2. The PH3 retails for \$1,895. When Guns & Ammo sent me to Lewiston, Idaho, to visit Seekins Precision and learn about the PH3 ahead of its announcement, we talked through different model configurations. I looked at every aspect of the PH3 in close detail. I asked what the price increase would be given the new features. Seekins grinned and said, “What price increase?” I thought I was going to faint. “You’re going to take over

the world,” I replied. It was all I could think to say.

While the good folks at Seekins Precision have no interest in taking on the world, they’ve made a splash with the Havak PH3. It’s a high-performance rifle with all of the cutting-edge

innovations packed into any rifle at any price. I believe it’s being sold for a song. **GA**

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Federal GM SMK 140-gr. BTHP	2,574	48	17.4	.42	.53
SAKO Scenar-L 136-gr. BTHP	2,608	11	4	.64	.72
Fiocchi Hyperfor. 142-gr. BTHP	2,626	21	7.6	.68	.72

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups from a rest at 100 yards. Velocity is the average of five shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph placed adjacent to the barrel.

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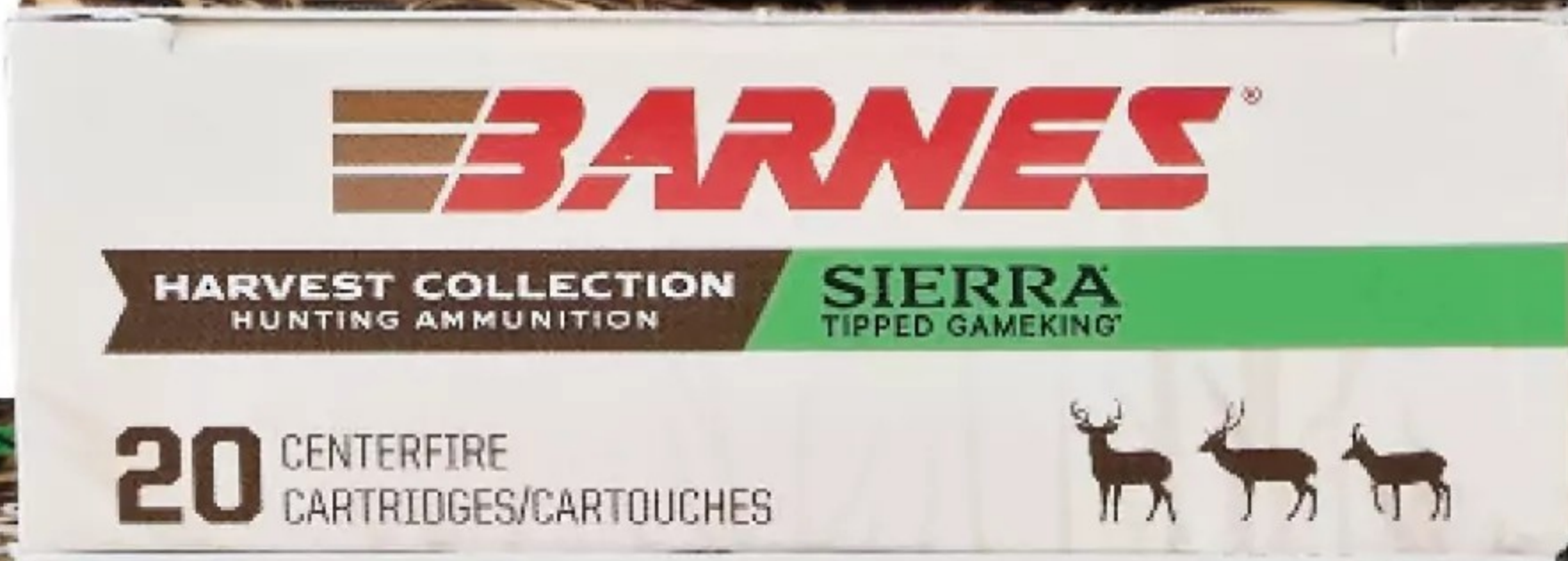
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PAIRED UP

BARNES BULLETS AND SIERRA BULLETS BAND TOGETHER TO CREATE THE BARNES HARVEST COLLECTION.

BY CRAIG BODDINGTON | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

SIERRA BULLETS acquired Barnes Bullets in 2020. They're good brands with great reputations and loyal followings and, until now, significantly different products — sort of. Most of us think of Barnes as the innovator in copper-alloy expanding hunting bullets, and of Sierra as a multi-generational leader in accurate lead-core bullets for both targets and hunting. Neither assessment is inaccurate, though neither is complete. They also parallel.

Fred Barnes established Barnes Bullets in 1932. The original Barnes was a cup-and-core bullet, i.e., lead core with copper jacket. Expansion was controlled by the thickness of the jacket and the amount of lead exposed at the nose. Barnes found an important niche in extra-heavy bullets, and in bullets for calibers and cartridges approaching obsolescence. It was Barnes Bullets that kept the big Nitro Express cartridges alive. I still have Barnes Original 250-grain .30-caliber bullets and Barnes Originals in .416, .409 and .475 calibers.

Randy and Coni Brooks acquired Barnes Bullets in 1974, then moved production to Utah. For

years, Barnes Originals were the primary products. In the 1980s, it introduced the copper-alloy Super Solid and began experimenting with an expanding copper bullet. It worked. Around 1987, Randy and Coni came to the old Petersen Publishing building at 8490 Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood and showed us a bucketful of expanded bullets. All looked much the same. Randy was considering calling it the “Super Soft” after his successful Super Solid for pachyderms.

“No, that suggests rapid expansion,” Randy said, holding one up. “As the petals peel back, they always make a cross. Rotate it 45 degrees and it makes an X. How about the X-Bullet?”

The Barnes X was launched in 1989. Nearly 40 years later, we think of Barnes' X bullets as tough, homogenous-alloy and deep penetrators.

Sierra started in a Quonset hut in post-war California in 1947. Sierra's was always a lead-core bullet designed for accuracy. Its Match-Kings won matches. The GameKings killed game. Like the Barnes Original, expansion was controlled by jacket thickness and the amount of





lead core exposed at the tip. Throughout my career, from his start in 1969 until retirement in 2012, the great shooter and hunter Bob Hayden was the face of Sierra. In 1990, he shepherded the move from Santa Fe Springs, California, to Sedalia, Missouri.

THE BARNES HARVEST

As of 2023, the two companies are separately together under the same roof: Bullseye Acquisitions, LLC. Although their roots are in bullet manufacturing, both expanded into branded ammo. Sierra’s GameChanger line was solid. Barnes expanded more; in time, a dozen different lines of factory ammunition. Barnes’ VOR-TX is probably the best-known. Naturally, Sierra GameChanger loaded Sierra bullets across its lineup; Barnes ammo was loaded with Barnes projectiles — until now.

The Barnes Harvest Collection makes it a bak-

er’s dozen, the 13th line of Barnes ammunition, and the first and only to feature anything other than a Barnes bullet.

Product names are supposed to be buzzy. I like them better when they have meaning. The Barnes Harvest Collection does both; they’re clever and descriptive. Loaded by Barnes, “Harvest” has a whitetail on every box. It’s designed as hunting ammo, on shelves for the

2025 fall hunting season. “Collection” implies a limited line. You won’t find any obscure numbers in this fall’s Harvest Collection of just nine cartridges, only good, solid, popular and versatile hunting rounds. You also won’t find a confusingly wide selection of bullet weights. In fact, it’s just one bullet weight per cartridge. All medium-to-heavy, versatile bullet weights well-suited to the types of game most of us hunt with these cartridges. All bullets are Sierra Tipped GameKing (TGK).



Sierra’s Tipped GameKing bullet is the hallmark of the Harvest Collection, distinctive for its large, green polymer tip. The 180-grain .30-caliber bullet is loaded in both .30-’06 and .300 Win. Mag. All Harvest Collection loads feature medium-to-heavy bullets.



The Harvest Collection .308 Winchester load with a 165-grain TGK was grouped in both a Howa 1500 SuperLite (\$1,039, howausa.com) and a Browning X-Bolt 2 Speed (\$1,530, browning.com). Results between the two rifles (same load) were consistent: 1.5 MOA average for five five-shot groups with just .026-inch difference between the two rifles.

I don't know who came up with the list for the initial nine cartridges in the Barnes Harvest Collection, but kudos to them. These are a great selection of cartridges, in my view, matched with ideal bullet weights for maximum hunting versatility. The nine cartridges and bullet weights in the Barnes Harvest Collection are as follows: 69-grain .223 Remington, 90-grain .243 Winchester, 140-grain 6.5 Creedmoor, 145-grain 6.5 PRC, 140-grain .270 Win., 150-grain 7mm Rem. Mag., 165-grain .308 Win., 180-grain .30-'06 Springfield and 180-grain .300 Win. Mag.

The propellants used are temperature-resistant with normal velocities, and load recipes are proven for accuracy. Good brass with good primers, too. Again, all bullets are Sierra TGK, and all with boat tails. Not "low drag," just good aerodynamic bullets with G1 BCs listed on the packaging.

GOOD OL' GAMEKING

The TGK is a polymer-tipped version of Sierra's famous GameKing. I think it's important to revisit GameKing, especially since the Harvest Collection is a Barnes load that's linked in our minds to deep-penetrating copper-alloy bullets. I like Barnes and other copper-alloy bullets, especially on larger animals. I also like bullets with big and rapid expansion because they shorten tracking jobs.

Per Barnes' product description, "The Harvest Collec-

tion was designed to give hunters an incredibly precise and potent ammo option for whitetail and thin-skinned game." Hayden once gave me a hard time because I described his GameKing as a "soft bullet." It is, compared to a "hard bullet" such as the Barnes X or TSX. Neither is intended as a negative term. Hard bullets penetrate well; soft bullets expand more and do more damage. Provided you have adequate penetration to and through

the vitals, I like bullets that expand and disrupt vital organs, especially on deer-sized game.

Sierra's great GameKing is not a hard bullet, and it expands rapidly. Jacket thickness is important, and so is bullet weight. With bullets designed to expand rapidly, the best way to ensure penetration is to go up in bullet weight. None of the Harvest Collection loads use light-for-caliber bullets. All are

at least medium weight. Velocity is necessarily lower than might be possible with light-for-caliber bullets. That's also a good thing. High velocity is a great enemy to bullet performance and a primary culprit in premature expansion.

Barnes doesn't define so-called "thin-skinned game," and neither will I. The Harvest Collection is intended for deer-sized game. However, in the larger cartridges — say 6.5 PRC and greater with these bullet weights — I'd have no qualms using them on elk.

Through the years, I've taken a lot of game with good ol' GameKings. Deer and sheep with 150-grain



Harvest Collection's .223 Remington load with 69-grain TGK was grouped using a S&W M&P15. Naturally, the 16.1-inch barrel resulted in significant velocity loss, but it was consistent and produced small extreme spread (ES) and low standard deviation (SD).



Boddington is a long-time fan of the old Sierra GameKing. He used a 150-grain .30-caliber GameKing from a .300 H&H to take his first desert bighorn sheep in 2003. From what he’s observed since its introduction, Sierra’s Tipped GameKing (TGK) works even better.

.30-calibers, elk-sized game with 200-grain .30-calibers and 220-grain 8mms, even several Cape buffaloes with 300-grain .375 GameKings. Penetration was always adequate, and terminal performance was devastating.

THE TGK IN AFRICA

The polymer tip, colored green on the TGK, changes things a bit. It prevents battering in the magazine, which is unavoidable with lead-tipped bullets, and it gives a truer downrange ballistic coefficient (BC), verified by Doppler radar in the Harvest Collection. All copper-alloy expanding bullets work similarly. Without a softer core that can upset or “mushroom,” they all



Boddington has used Sierra GameKings in numerous rifles, including on New Mexico elk. This bull was dropped in his tracks to a 220-grain GameKing from a rifle chambered in 8mm Rem. Mag.

have skived noses with cavities under the tip. Upon impact, material is driven into the cavity, which causes the nose to peel back into petals.

All polymer-tipped bullets work much the same. On impact, the tip is driven down into the bullet, initiating expansion. This can be controlled or retarded by core-bonding, dual cores or mechanical features. In the case of the TGK, there is an open pocket between the polymer tip and the top of the lead core. Upon impact, the tip is driven down into that pocket. Initial expansion is rapid and violent, then slowed by jacket thickness and sheer bullet mass. This was the old GameKing’s secret and it’s now the TGK’s secret, ensuring adequate penetration and surprisingly good weight retention.

In 2023, I hunted South Africa’s Eastern Cape with Fred Burchell at Frontier Safaris, north of Port Elizabeth. I didn’t bring a rifle, so I borrowed Fred’s competition rifle. It was a suppressed heavy-barrel Remington Model 700 Sendero in 7mm Remington Magnum. The ammo we had was Sierra GameChanger with 150-grain TGK, the same bullet loaded in the Harvest Collection’s 7mm Rem. Mag. load. I had no qualms about a 150-grain bullet in a fast 7mm for African plains game. However, this was my first hunting use of the TGK bullet.

PERFORMANCE: BARNES HARVEST COLLECTION

CARTRIDGE	BULLET	G1 BC	MUZZLE	VELOCITY (FPS)/ENERGY (FT.-LBS.)			TRAJECTORY (200-YD. ZERO)			
				300 YDS.	400 YDS.	500 YDS.	100	300	400	500
.223 Remington	69-gr. TGK BT	.370	3,000/1,379	2,275/793	2,048/659	1,854/527	1.6	-7.1	-15.3	-43.1
.243 Winchester	90-gr. TGK BT	.390	3,200/2,407	2,479/1,229	2,263/1,024	2,059/847	1.2	-6	-17.7	-36.2
6.5 Creedmoor	140-gr. TGK BT	.563	2,700/2,267	2,241/1,561	2,098/1,369	1,961/1,196	1.9	-8	-23	-45.9
6.5 PRC	145-gr. TGK BT	.597	2,910/2,727	2,456/1,942	2,314/1,724	2,177/1,526	1.5	-6.7	-19.1	-38.1
.270 Winchester	140-gr. TGK BT	.508	2,960/2,724	2,425/1,828	2,260/1,528	2,102/1,373	1.5	-6.7	-19.3	-38.7
7mm Rem. Mag.	150-gr. TGK BT	.545	3,000/2,998	2,497/2,074	2,339/1,822	2,188/1,595	1.4	-6.4	-18.3	-36.3
.308 Winchester	165-gr. TGK BT	.517	2,680/2,632	2,185/1,749	2,032/1,513	1,886/1,303	2	-8.4	-24	-48.1
.30-'06 Springfield	180-gr. TGK BT	.545	2,760/3,045	2,280/2,079	2,132/1,817	1,989/1,581	1.8	-7.7	-22.1	-44.2
.300 Win. Mag.	180-gr. TGK BT	.545	2,960/3,503	2,461/2,421	2,306/2,127	2,157/1,861	1.5	-6.6	-18.9	-37.7

Notes: Published figures using a 24-inch barrel. Actual velocities and trajectories will vary depending on barrel length and other barrel characteristics.

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Already confident in the Sierra TGK bullet, Boddington took a risky quartering-away shot on a fine kudu bull at 500 yards during the last evening of a 2023 safari with PH Fred Burchell. The 150-grain 7mm TGK performed perfectly. The animal fell just over a ridge.



Weighing up to 2,000 pounds, an eland is on the large side for a 7mm ammo loaded with 150-grain bullets. Although Boddington fired twice into the shoulders, this excellent bull was down with a 150-grain TGK in Sierra's GameChanger load; it's the same bullet now loaded in the Harvest Collection 7mm Rem. Mag.

Again, no reaction. Not good. Then he took one step forward and collapsed. Both bullets were in opposite shoulders. Not pretty, but it had good weight retention and all the needed penetration.

At sunset on the last evening, I was still looking for a good kudu. With Burchell calling range, I took a risky quartering-away shot at 500 yards. We heard the bullet

hit, then the bull went over the ridge and was gone. We found him 50 yards down the reverse slope with the bullet angled from the last rib through the chest cavity. I was thinking, *Lucky shot — and a great bullet!*

On the first evening, I flattened a one-horned kudu at 325 yards, down on the spot. The bullet went through both shoulders and was still going; great performance. At that time, the Burchell property was overstocked with impalas and ostriches, so we traded shots and took several of each. Confidence was built quickly. I needed it when, late one afternoon, we spotted three eland bulls feeding under a tree at the base of a ridge. *Gulp.* We hadn't considered eland. Cape eland are the smallest race, but a big bull can still weigh a ton. When discussing adequate rifles and cartridges for African plains game, I usually finish with "except for eland," which I put inside .375 territory. One of the bulls was exceptional. It was too good an opportunity, and the meat is to die for.

I had a solid rest at about 300 yards. The big bull was broadside facing left. I put the crosshairs tight behind the shoulder about a third up, allowing for a little drop. There was no visible reaction to the shot. All three bulls stood frozen. I worked the bolt fast but before I could shoot again the big bull swapped ends, now broadside facing right. I tried the same shot on the opposite side.



Boddington's first experience with Tipped GameKing (TGK) bullets was on the range in South Africa with a Remington Model 700 Sendero in 7mm Rem. Mag. The ammo was the Sierra GameChanger with 150-grain TGK bullet, and the results were spectacular.

PERFORMANCE

Both the old GameKing and newer Tipped GameKing are fine hunting bullets. It's important to keep in mind they are hunting bullets. I've seen spectacular

accuracy from both versions, but they aren't to be confused with Sierra's equally long tradition of match and target bullets, which are not hunting bullets. The TGK is a hunting bullet; the Barnes Harvest Collection is hunting ammo. It will be plenty accurate for its intended purpose, but like all factory loads the Harvest Collection is just one assemblage of components. Accuracy will vary from rifle to rifle. Here's some rare, good news: Barnes' Harvest Collection is not priced as premium ammo. Suggested retail for the seven non-magnum cartridges is \$40 for a box of 20 and \$45 for the two belted magnums.

For a story like this, I like to follow the G&A protocol of five, five-shot groups at 100 yards. As the chart shows, because I had enough of that load, I grouped

kurz

adj. Deutsch. 1a. A comparatively short length.
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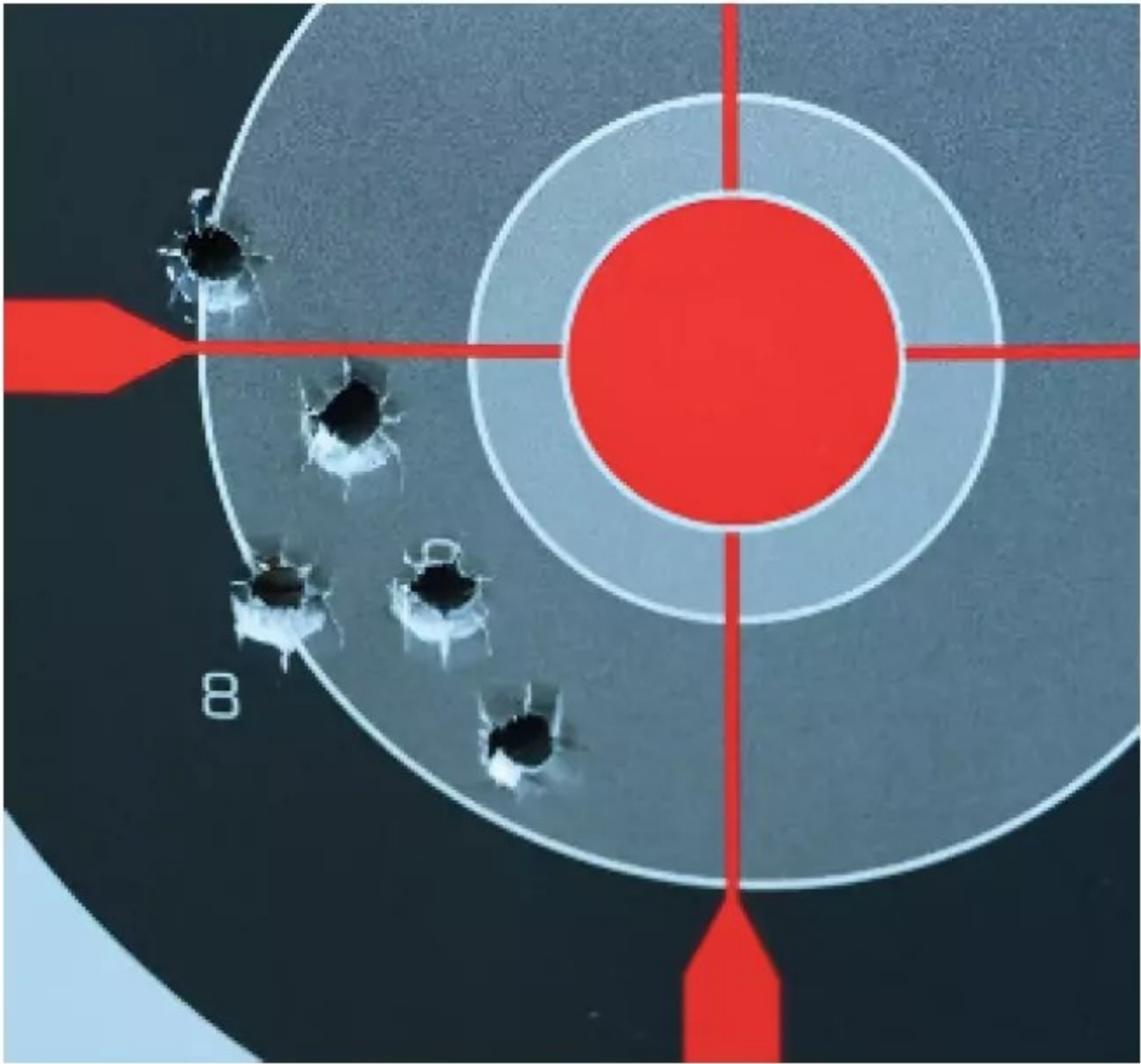


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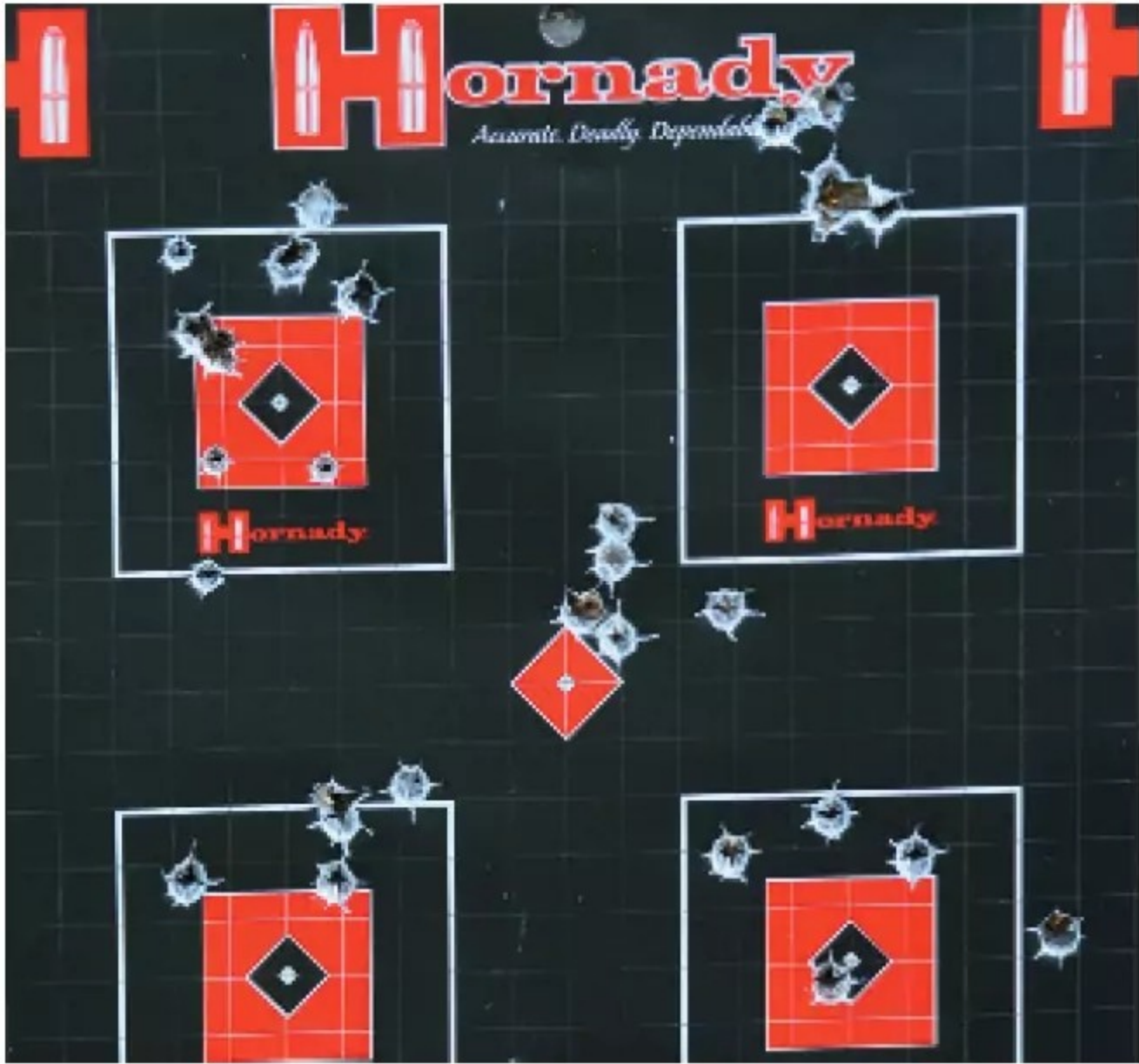
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A typical group from a Smith & Wesson M&P15 in .223 Rem. tested with the Harvest Collection's 69-grain TKG load. The rifle produced an average five-shot group measuring 1½ MOA from 100 yards.



The Harvest Collection's .308 Win. loaded with 165-grain TKG was tested using a Howa SuperLite bolt-action rifle with 22-inch barrel. The average five-shot group measured 1.488 inches from 100 yards.



The Harvest Collection's 165-grain TKG load for the .308 Win. was also tested in a Browning X-Bolt 2 Speed. The average group size measured 1.514 inches. The chrono reported excellent consistency.

the 165-grain .308 Winchester load in a Howa SuperLite and a Browning X-Bolt 2 Speed, both with 22-inch barrels. I also followed the five-group protocol with a Smith & Wesson M&P15 in .223 with a short 16.1-inch barrel. That was the limit of available ammo for five-group averages, but I added reduced protocol of three five-shot groups with a Springfield Armory Boundary in 7mm Rem. Mag. and a Blaser R8 with .270 Winchester barrel.

Shooting was done on calm, hot days in June and early July 2025. There were no issues with wind or precipitation, just a lot of time waiting for barrels to cool. All series started with clean barrels, preceded by two fouling shots, and the rifles were well-scoped. I think the results were representative of what I and the rifles could do that day.

TKG is an accurate bullet, and Barnes loads good ammo. These rifles were all known to be reasonably accurate, but all have produced better accuracy with some loads and worse accuracy with others. Again, that's the nature of factory ammo, just one assembly of components. Not all rifles are going to like it. Across five rifles in four different cartridges, I was struck by the consistency: Group averages varied from 1.239 inches to 1.514 inches.

Accepting losses to shorter barrels, velocities were spot-on. However, for hunters who use ARs in .223 for deer and hogs, note that although the Harvest Collection 69-grain .223 load is rated at 3,000 feet per second (fps) in a 24-inch barrel; velocity loss in my 16.1-inch AR barrel was significant: 2,689 fps. This

PERFORMANCE

RIFLE	BARREL (IN.)	CARTRIDGE*	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	ACCURACY (IN.)	BEST GROUP (IN.)
Howa 1500 Superlite	22	.308 Win. 165-gr.	2,568	18.3	7.5	1.49**	.75
Blaser R8	23	.270 Win. 140-gr.	2,782	24.7	55.4	1.24***	.79
Springfield Boundary	24	7mm Rem. Mag. 150-gr.	3,012	57.4	19.1	1.31***	1.17
Browning X-Bolt 2	22	.308 Win. 165-gr.	2,558	38.4	14.5	1.51**	1.13
S&W M&P15	16.1	.223 Rem. 69-gr.	2,689	20.3	7.9	1.51**	1.18

Notes: Velocity is average of 10 shots using an Athlon Rangecraft Instrumental at the muzzle. *Cartridges were Barnes Harvest Collection loaded with Sierra Tipped GameKing boattail bullets. **Accuracy is average of five, five-shot groups at 100 yards fired over sandbags. ***Accuracy is average of three, five-shot groups at 100 yards fired over sandbags.

creates a major loss in energy, which my chronograph calculated from its rated 1,379 foot-pounds (ft.-lbs.) down to an actual 1,109 ft.-lbs. at the muzzle,

dropping from there as the bullet slows down. Even with heavy bullets, I'm not excited about using the .223s for larger deer.

When testing the ammo — including my handloads — I don't see a lot of single-digit standard deviations (SD). With these four loads in five rifles, I saw two. The 69-grain .223 load had an SD of 7.9 with an extreme spread (ES) of just 20.3 fps. Through the spotting scope I wasn't excited by the groups I was seeing, but .22-caliber holes are smaller than 7mm or .30; the average was right in there at 1.507 inches.

Even more consistent was the 165-grain .308 load in the Howa Model 1500 SuperLite: SD was 7.5 and ES was just 18.3 fps. In the Browning X-Bolt 2, the same load wasn't quite as consistent; ES was an acceptable 38.4, with a good SD of 14.5. No two barrels are alike.

An anomaly of note: My Blaser R8 shoots well with most loads. It had slightly the best average at 1.239 inches. (Remember it was tested to three groups, not five.) That series produced the single best five-shot group of .788 inch. That was despite — by far — the greatest extreme spread and worst standard deviation. Possibly, it a bad chronograph reading. Unfortunately, there was not enough ammo to recheck.

The Barnes Harvest Collection was accurate and, excepting that oddity, wonderfully consistent. It's good hunting ammo loaded with a good bullet. For sure, it's going to take a lot of game this fall.



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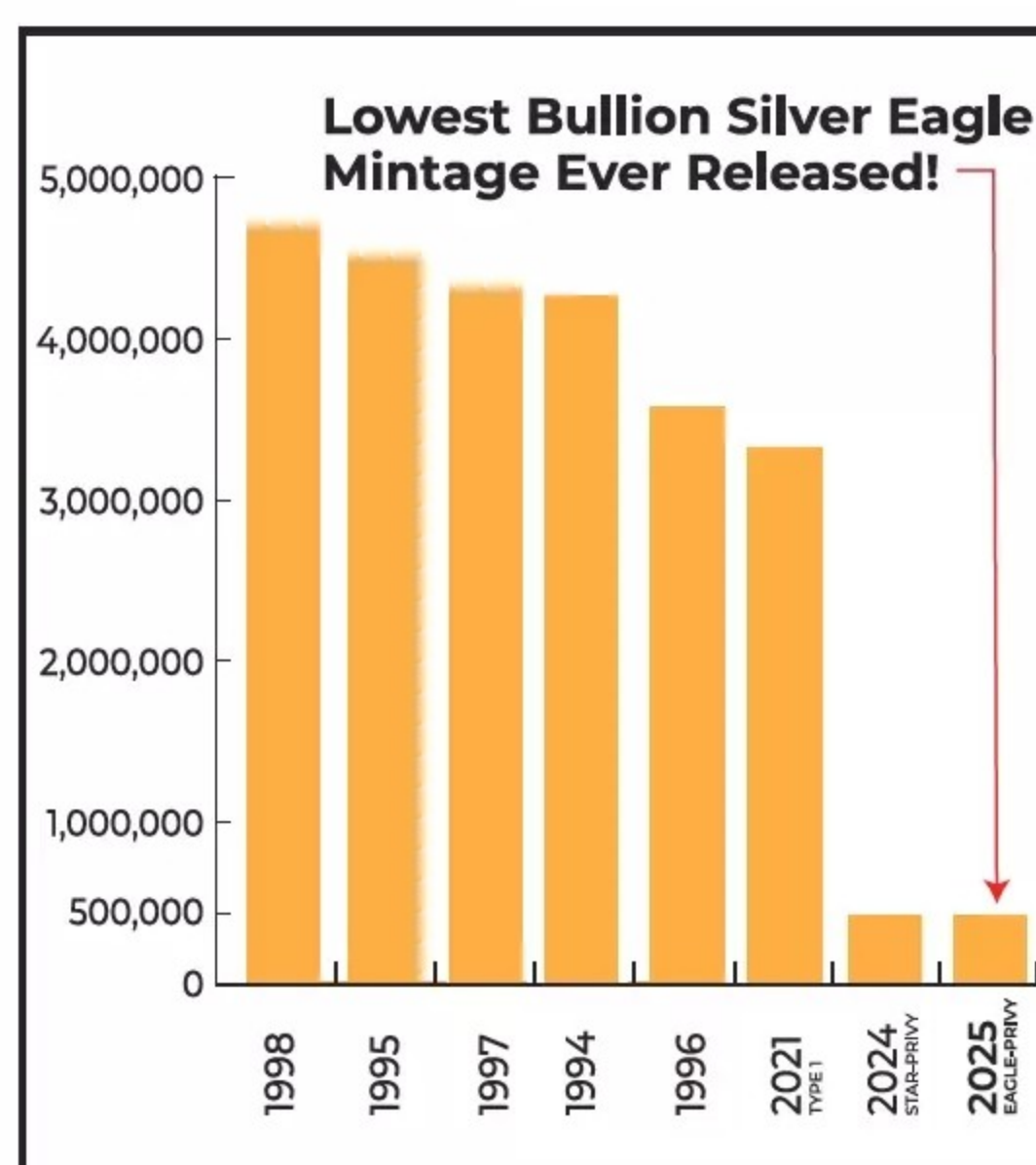
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GUNS & AMMO ATTENDS ROB LEATHAM'S AND JASON BURTON'S 1911 MASTERY COURSE.

BY KEITH WOOD



I'M NOT SURE whether it was inspired by "Thomas Magnum's" Colt Mark IV/Series 70 seen in "Magnum P.I." on the Magnavox in our living room, or the surplus Remington Rand in Dad's closet, but I can't remember not loving the Model 1911. I've been shooting, tinkering with and collecting 1911 handguns for 40 years, so when I had the chance to attend Rob Leatham's and Jason Burton's 1911 Mastery Course, I booked a flight for Arizona.



Professional Shooter Rob Leatham has an infectious enthusiasm for shooting. His sense of humor kept the class fun and engaging.

Leatham and Burton are giants in the Model 1911 community. Leatham has been called “the greatest handgun shooter of all time” (robleatham.com). Burton, owner of Heirloom Precision (heirloomprecision.com), has quickly risen to the top of the custom handgun trade by turning 1911s into functional works of art. Their 1911 Mastery Course is a melding of talents, a three-day experience dedicated to shooting and understanding what Burton refers to as “God’s gun.”

The course was conducted at Rio Salado Sportsman’s Club in Mesa (rsscaz.com). It’s an impressive facility just outside of Leatham’s hometown. I showed up with a pair of Springfield Armory Garrison models chambered in 9mm, 2,000 rounds of 147-grain Fiocchi Range Dynamics ammunition, as many magazines as I could scrounge up, and an open mind.

EQUIPMENT

Other students carried a healthy mix of single-stack 1911-style handguns chambered in either .45 ACP or 9mm. There was a Nighthawk, a couple of Dan Wessons, and a vintage Colt built by Steve Nastoff. The plurality of the guns, though, came from Springfield Armory; the 1911 TRP was the most common.

A number of shooters used red-dot optics, which I saw as both a sign of the times and a reminder that most of us were well north of 40 years old.



Travis McCamish, an MMA fighter-turned-competitive shooter was an assistant instructor. (Visit mccamishtraining.com.)

I wanted to shoot the course with similar yet contrasting pistols. My first blued Garrison (\$868, springfieldarmory.com) was completely stock except for a pair of Hogue 1911 Gov’t Model checkered walnut grip panels (\$60, hogueinc.com). I lubed the handgun, test-fired it briefly, and packed it in a travel case.

The second was one that I was in the middle of personalizing when the time came to train. I’d replaced the thumb and beavertail grip safeties with machined parts from Stan Chen of Chen Custom (store.chencustom.com). I also added one of his shooter-installed checkered mainspring housings with an extended magazine well. Chen also provided the rear sight for my build. The fire control components were from Harrison Design (\$135, harrisoncustom.com), as was the fiber-optic front sight. The factory grips were replaced with G10 panels from VZ Grips (\$65, vzgrips.com).

The second Garrison’s frontstrap was checkered 25 lines per inch (lpi). I didn’t have a chance to finish the pistol before running it through the course; most of the blue wore off. To secure whichever Garrison I was carrying at the time, I selected a Safariland ALS Mid-Ride Level I retention holster (\$202, safariland.com) on the company’s low-profile Battle Belt (\$180), along with four Blade-Tech Signature single-mag pouches (\$30 ea., blade-tech.com).

Both handguns performed well throughout the

course. Other than some feeding problems that were caused by a magazine I managed to single out, there were no mechanical issues. A few of the students' guns produced minor hiccups during the class, but were all quickly diagnosed and corrected by Burton.

THE RANGE

The first morning was spent on the range with Burton and USPSA Grand Master Travis McCamish, who assisting Leatham. It didn't take long to realize that Leatham is no ordinary instructor — and this was no ordinary shooting course. Dogma was shattered, and egos were bruised. Leatham isn't there to make people feel great about themselves, he's there to make better shooters.

Focus on the front sight. Squeeze the trigger. Feel for the reset. Don't grip the gun too hard.

"Forget all of that crap," Leatham told us. Immediately, he discarded many of the typical handgun shooting "truths" before the first bullet went down-range. It would be easy to dismiss his opinion and cling to what has been preached for a century, except for the fact that Leatham has won eight IPSC World Championships, 11 Bianchi Cups and 34 USPSA National Championships.

The saying "slow is smooth and smooth is fast" was one of Leatham's favorite targets. "Slow is slow," he said. "You have to jerk the trigger to shoot fast," he told us. "Learn to jerk the trigger without moving the gun."

Instead of focusing on the front sight, emphasis was placed on properly aligning the handgun. Both sights matter, as does the target. Flinching was also addressed in depth. Avoiding any flinch is impossible, but timing the flinch can mean the difference between a hit and a miss. Flinching after the round leaves the muzzle is not only harmless, but it can also be helpful in resetting the gun correctly for the next shot.

Leatham ran us through a series of drills that allowed us to demonstrate each of these principles — and to unlearn bad habits. He singled out students when necessary to prove a point. The goal was a healthy balance of speed and precision, pushing ourselves to learn when it was time to slow down and when to speed up.

I have never seen an individual more at home on the range. Leatham was passionate about shooting, and he was full of enthusiasm. He wasn't merely going through



Jason Burton is a pistolsmith. When students' guns produced a failure, his experience helped training resume quickly.



Leatham never missed a teachable moment. His technique often involved working with one student for the benefit of the class.

the motions but was fully immersed in our class. He can almost smell someone miss. He has an amazing sense of humor, too, keeping the mood light but serious. It was the most fun I've ever had during a class, even when it was my turn to be singled out.

Leatham was nearly across the range and with his back turned when I "double-tapped" a target; I'm not sure how he heard that above the cacophony

of gunshots, but he did. He stopped the class and had everyone gather around my position at the extreme left side of the firing line. Leatham used this as a teaching opportunity to stress the principle that every shot should be a deliberate act. He had me present the Garrison and load the trigger until it met the wall just before the break. On his command, I was to fire a single shot. He repeated the command with escalating speed. Regardless of the cadence, my shots went into the same hole. It wasn't shaming; it was merely a teaching opportunity for everyone. Lesson learned.



Students used a variety of single-stack 1911s, even some with red-dot optics. Notably, the Springfield Armory TRP was a popular choice.

As the course progressed, the firing line continued to move backwards. It's easy to look great while blasting away at short-range targets, but hitting with speed and precision at extended ranges exposes the pretenders.

THE CLASSROOM

As much as I love to shoot 1911s, I'm equally fascinated by the design and construction. For the second half of the first two days, the students moved into a classroom to learn the functional nuances of the pistol. Burton led this portion of the class while Leatham chimed in with self-deprecating humor regarding his own gunsmithing prowess.

It was quickly obvious that Burton has a deep appreciation for the platform, too. Much of the instruction circled back to John Moses Browning's genius. The goal of the classroom portion of training seemed to be to give students an understanding of how the Model 1911 actually works — not only as an appreciation of the design but as a practical means of keeping the gun running in real-world conditions.

The firing cycle of the 1911 was discussed step-by-step. Special attention was paid to the extractor, which Burton calls the “brain” of the 1911. Each student's extractor was closely inspected by Burton,

with adjustments made as needed. The intricate and crucial relationship between the barrel and its various locking surfaces was also covered in detail. That discussion helped students appreciate just how much work goes into building a pistol to the standards of a 1911 pistolsmith.

Burton led students through a detailed strip of the 1911, and each of us disassembled our own pistols. Using a slideshow that combined original design prints and photographs from his own collection, Burton discussed each component in detail. Common failure points, including cracks that can form on the ejector and firing pin stop, were identified so that we would know to inspect those areas on a regular basis.

Burton also talked about custom touches that can improve the performance of a 1911. He discussed the pros and cons of several after-market parts, and which brands he prefers for specific applications.

THE GUN LAB

The final day of the course was spent at the range. After a final morning of instruction, students returned to the range to experience what Leatham calls “Gun Lab.” We formed different groups and lined up at four unique stations spread across two range bays. Each station was set up with a different course of



Instructors explained and demonstrated each drill before asking students to complete tasks.

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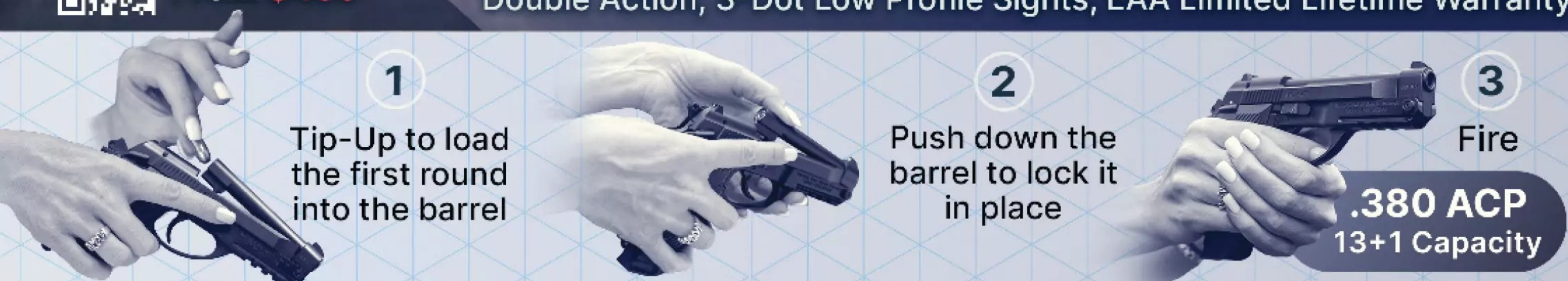
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Burton led the classroom portion of the course. Students learned how to detailed strip, inspect, and reassemble their own 1911s.

fire and featured a specific array of steel targets.

Leatham is a fierce competitor, and Gun Lab drove that point home. We shot the stages against the clock and scores were recorded. Once every student had the chance to shoot each stage at least twice, scores were tallied and a final competition bracket was created.

Pairs of shooters shot the stage head-to-head; the winner advanced. Competitors engaged two reduced-size silhouette targets with two rounds each before performing a reload and hitting a small round target at a greater distance. Whoever made all their hits and successfully engaged the center target first won. (Everyone but Leatham participated in this.)

There were some talented shooters in my class, and the competition was fierce. Burton was the 2022

Arizona State IDPA Champion, and McCamish is a Grand Master across three USPSA divisions.

When it was my turn to shoot, I experienced my only non-magazine malfunction after three days of shooting. As it turned out, it was self-induced. The retention system on the ALS holster requires a sweep of the thumb to disengage. As the result of an awkward grip on the pistol during my draw, I failed to disengage the grip safety. Recognizing the issue, I shot fast and hit well but I couldn't make up enough time to win.

I quit shooting handgun matches when my kids were born and have yet to return. After Gun Lab, I realized that I need to get back into the competition circuit and sharpen my skills.

TAKEAWAYS

One of Leatham's fundamental truths is that shooting is simple but not easy. This is not a course for beginners. It's one for serious 1911 aficionados to hone their shoot skills and better understand the inner workings of the legendary handgun. The teaching was fast-paced and intense, but lighthearted.

If you are an individual who appreciates the single-stack 1911 as we do, I cannot recommend this course enough. For me, it was the best of all worlds: A high-level shooting course, a practical guide to maintaining and customizing one of my favorite handguns and even a history lesson of sorts.

"This class is meant to be a higher education of the 1911 platform," Burton told me. "We want to convey

not only the best techniques for performance-based shooting but also establish a solid understanding of how the 1911 platform works and why it is designed the way it is. The end goal is for each student to walk away a more confident and a better enduser of the 1911 pistol."

"No model of handgun offers a better blend of historical relevance with pure performance," Leatham added. "This platform has great importance to me. I have used the 1911 for decades,

and I have built a shooting career on its performance. For those who don't require magazine capacity to get the job done, nothing beats the 1911. Working with my friend Jason, who is both a master of the technical aspects of the gun — and is also a great shot — is a pleasure for me." **G&A**



The 1911 Mastery Course reinforces an understanding of the inner-workings of the Model 1911, including small parts identification.



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POLIZEI

THE SIG SAUER P6 IS ENTERING COVETED COLLECTIBLE TERRITORY.

BY PATRICK SWEENEY | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

ONCE THERE WERE TWO Germanies. West Germany, the democratic one, had a problem. Its various police organizations were armed with a list of .32- and .380-caliber pocket pistols. In the 1970s, they were faced with terrorists armed with much heavier weapons, and sending out officers with a pocket .32 was not appropriate in the eyes of the German police. They requested a standard 9mm replacement, which was downselected to three candidates. In an un-German fashion, they adopted all three.

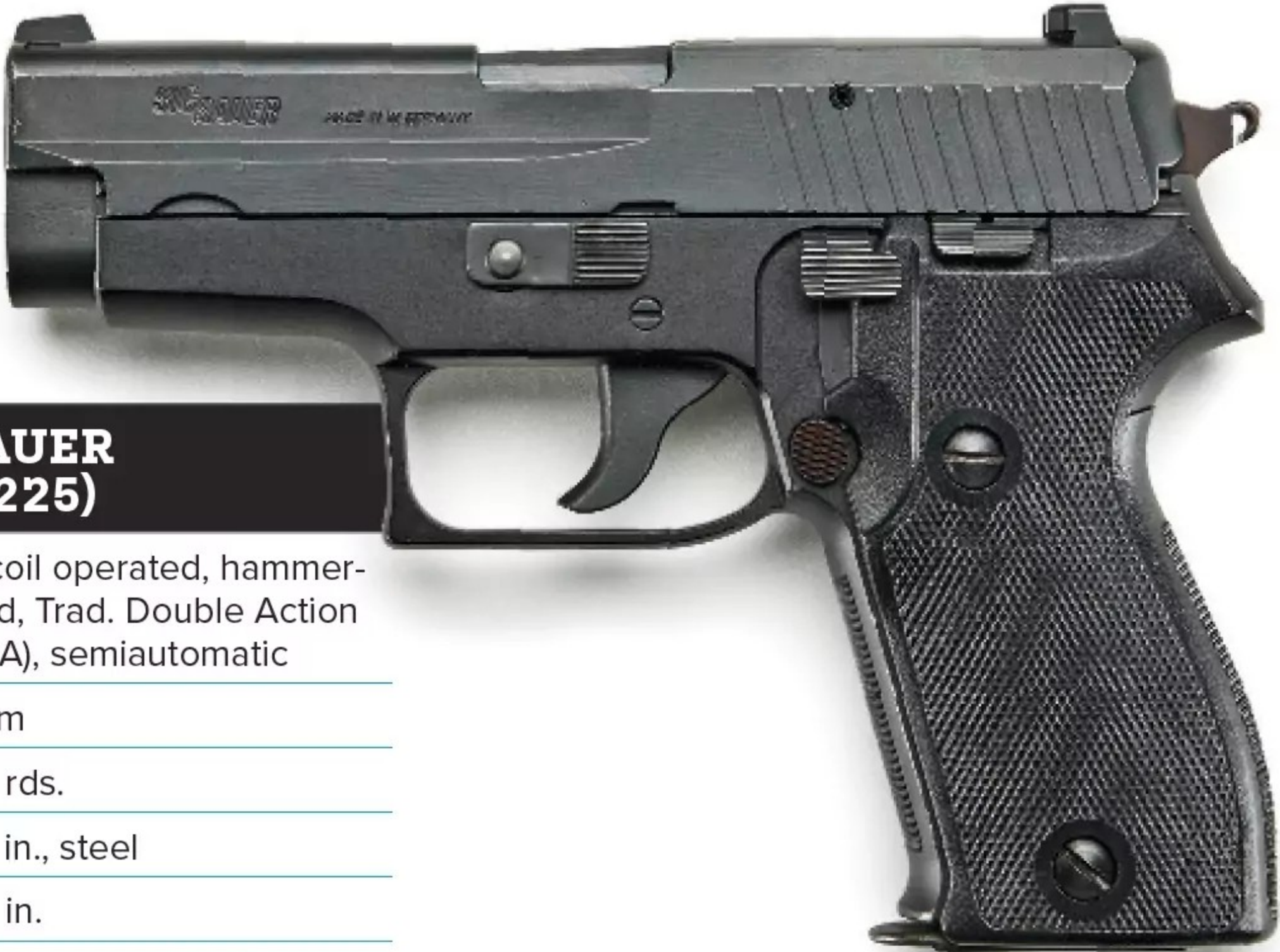
WEST WAS BEST

In the mid-1970s, each German state was free to choose from one of the three pistol candidates.

One of the most fascinating was the P6. (There was also the Walther P5 and HK P7.) The P6 was made by SIG Sauer in the fir-

ing mode we now call “Traditional Double Action” (TDA). Derived from the P220, the P6 was thought by many to be a “Commander-size” P220. Since it was for West German police use, it did not have the caliber options the P220 offered. The P220 was adopted in Switzerland to replace the P210, an extensively machined and expensive pistol. One detail of manufacture that made the P220 much less expensive to produce was the slide. Instead of machining it from billet or a forging, the slide was fabricated by pressing thick sheet steel into a channel. Then, the nose — or bushing area of the slide — was welded to the channel and the breechblock (with firing pin channel, etc.) was pinned in place at the rear.





SIG SAUER P6 (P225)	
TYPE	Recoil operated, hammer-fired, Trad. Double Action (TDA), semiautomatic
CARTRIDGE	9mm
CAPACITY	8+1 rds.
BARREL	3.6 in., steel
LENGTH	6.9 in.
WEIGHT	1 lb., 14 oz. (tested)
FINISH	Blue (steel), anodized (aluminum)
GRIPS	Plastic panels, checkered
SIGHTS	3 Dot, drift adjustable
TRIGGER	4 lbs., 2 oz. (SA); 11 lbs. (DA) (tested)
MANUFACTURER	SIG Sauer (West Germany)



German police-issue models were marked “P6”. The upper slide mark on this example indicates a manufacture date of June 1979.

Since the barrel locks up on the ejection port opening, the thick-walled steel was plenty strong enough to take the load. It was so much so that the initial importation of the P220 was successful, which was done through Browning who offered the “BDA” in .38 Super, .45 ACP, in addition to the standard 9mm. (There was also a super-rare 7.65 Luger version.)

For the West German police proposal, the pistols had to be more compact than the existing P220 was at that time. Compared to the P220, the P6 has the barrel and slide shortened from 4.4 inches to 3.6 inches, and a half inch or so taken off the butt of the frame. The nine-round 9mm magazine capacity of the P220 dropped to eight for the P6. The layout of the P6 is easy to understand once you realize it isn’t a striker-fired pistol. The slide has fixed sights on top and a generous ejection port. The rear sight is drift adjustable. There are cocking serrations on the rear of the slide, behind the ejection port, and the extractor is internal.

Forward of the ejection port you can see the slide has been expanded to create room (and steel) for the slide rails. Above that, the slide is no larger than it needs to be in order to enclose the barrel and hold everything together. This profile is perhaps more familiar as that of the P226, which was SIG Sauer’s entry to the XM9 Service Pistol Trials in the early to mid-1980s.

It is on the left side that the SIG Sauer shows its details. There is a slide-stop lever at the rear of the frame, on top of the checkered plastic grips. This is convenient for closing the slide on a reload, but when I first started to shoot the various SIGs, it was a real problem for me because I was accustomed to riding my thumb on the safety of a 1911. That’s the exact space where the P220/P225/P226 slide-stop lever sits. I went through an entire SIG Sauer law enforcement class during the early 1990s; not once did a slide ever lock open for me when empty. I got really good at doing slide-rack reloads in that class.



The breechblock of the P6 was not machined with the slide. It is a separate component held in place by a stout roll pin.



SIG Sauer’s P-Series featured a serrated thumb-operated decocking lever in front of the slide-stop lever and above the magazine release button. With the hammer cocked (1), press down on the lever with the thumb (2). The hammer safely falls forward, even when loaded (3).

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Original SIG Sauer P6 (P225) magazines are unique. They are not P220 magazines, and the P6 doesn't accept the newer P225A1 magazines. Originals on gunbroker.com average \$175 each.



German police-issued pistols featured three white-dot dovetailed sights. The P225s imported into the U.S. were upgraded with tritium sights. Aftermarket SIG Sauer replacement sights fit, also.



Forward of the slide-stop is the decocking lever. Yes, the decocking lever is on the frame and not the slide as so many other TDA 9mms of the 20th century. Pressing the lever down with your thumb safely unlocks the hammer. As you release the lever, the hammer rides down. The lever is spring-loaded and pushes the thumb back to the top as you let go. The magazine release is a thumb button, not a heel clip as was so common in European usage back then. Forward of those is the takedown lever. Again, the same as the P220/P226: Lock the slide open and unload. Rotate the lever down. Then, unlock the slide and ease it forward and off the frame.

The frame is aluminum, with the triggerguard squared and a vestigial hook at the corner. (That was all the rage back in the '70s.

It was when a company could not sell a new pistol design without it.) For export and commercial sales, the P6 was offered as the P225. Exported to the U.S., the P225 was (obviously) marked "P225," and came with night sights. Other than sights and markings, the two pistols were identical.

The P6 in German police use was thusly marked "P6." (No surprise there.) Each German state that bought them had them stamped with the property marks of the state. They also had the date of manufacture or acceptance by the state and an inventory number. Collectors fuss over details, so we'll cover them here. I have two P6s. The one made in 1984 came in a cheap plastic box with a hinged cover. The serial number is on the box, and the slide is marked "NW," for the North Rhine-Westphalia state



The serrated, low-profile decocking lever is on the frame, between the serrated slide-lock lever and 90-degree-rotating disassembly lever. Below is the angled-face, serrated, magazine-release button.



The triggerguard is square and slightly hooked. Integral to the frame is a high-grip junction atop the frontstrap. The stamped-metal trigger is curved and without texture.

police. It is marked "Made W. Germany" on the left side of the slide. The box has an officer's last name handwritten on a label affixed to the box. The label keeps falling off, the glue having quit the job years ago. The other, made in 1995 (near the end of the contract) is marked "Made in Germany" on the left side, has the same "NW" on the right, and both have inventory numbers as well. The box for the 1995 one is a SIG

Sauer P225 box, but with an owner's manual in German inside and a label with the matching serial number on it. The issued officer's name is handwritten on the box.

MEASURING UP

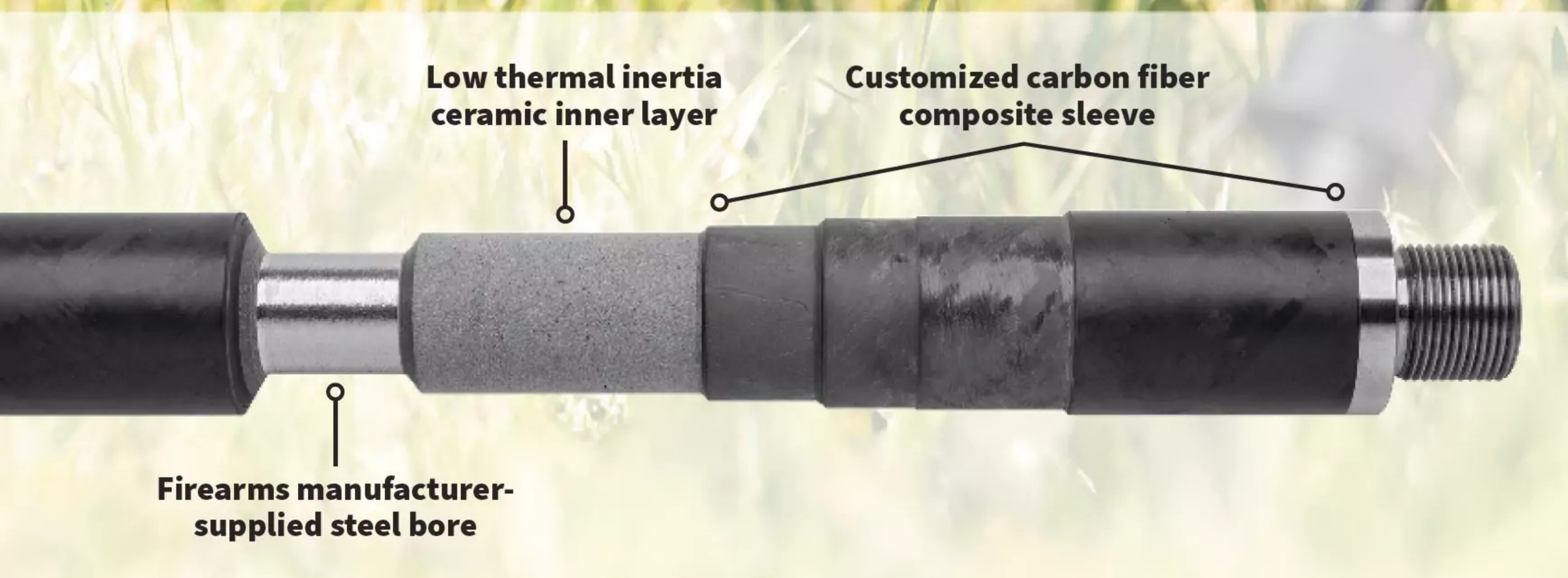
The P6 is not a P220. In the course of altering it to meet the police requirements, SIG Sauer made changes

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The SIG Sauer P6 (P225) disassembles like many recoil-operated pistols of the era, and it is easy to service and replace worn or broken parts. The grips have a reputation for being fragile, so don't over-tighten the screws or lose the lockwashers during reassembly.



Police P6 holsters did not facilitate quick deployment. The drop-leg, swivel design had two snap buttons to secure the flap.



P6 and P225 magazines differ only in the markings on the baseplate. The P6 eliminated the former heel-retention system.



The infamous P6 "crush hammer" spur was intended to let department armors know if a pistol had been dropped or mishandled.

that some objected to. One is that the mainspring is heavier than that of the P225. This was supposed to make the trigger pull a problem, but neither of mine have problematic triggers. The feed ramp was designed for FMJ, which was all that was available in the 1970s (and it took longer for European agencies to approve JHPs than in the U.S.), and apparently the feed ramp geometry was changed later to be more reliable with

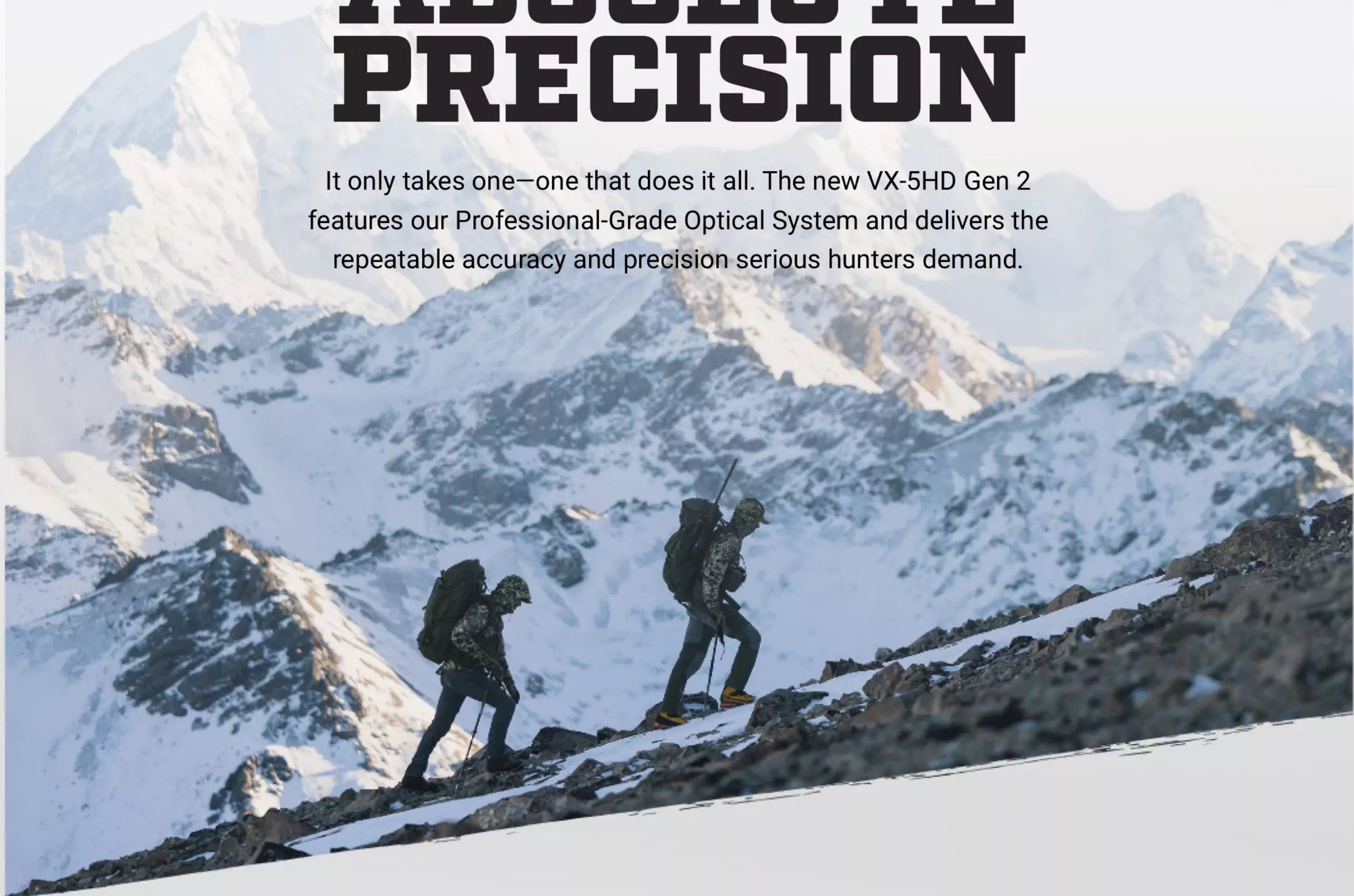
JHPs. Both of mine are the same, appear unaltered, and neither has had any problems with JHPs.

The big issue is supposed to be the magazines. They are not P220 magazines. Left fully loaded, the P6 feed lips are apparently not strong enough to take the stress and will spread, causing feeding problems. This is all over the internet as received wisdom. I haven't left mine loaded, as they are collectibles and range queens,



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but I find it difficult to believe that SIG Sauer would get cheap on magazines in such a fashion, especially on a police contract. The only difference

between P6 and P225 magazines are the markings on the baseplate. P220 magazines won't work in a P6/P225, and the new P225A1 magazines won't work, either. It would have been a nice gesture on the part of SIG Sauer to make the new P225A1 magazines work on the old P225 and P6 pistols, but they didn't.

The strangest detail of the P6 is the hammer. The small rowel of the hammer spur has a narrow cut through it, so the loop is not complete. This is the *Deformationssporn*, meaning "deformation spur." It was a requirement for the contract, made that way so department armorers could tell at a glance if a pistol had been dropped, and if in the dropping had impacted on the hammer spur. The mind reels. Did German police officers have an epidemic of dropped pistols in the 1970s? Was the P6 firing system so delicate that being dropped sidelined it? Did the armorers' union feel they needed job insurance? We'll never know. (At least, we won't until someone pries the info out of the contract writer.)

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Hornady Critical Duty 135-gr. FTX	1,016	29	16.2	2.3	2.6
Federal Punch 124-gr. JHP	1,121	20	8.1	2.4	2.6
Black Hills Honey Badger 100-gr.	1,210	41	18.8	2.5	2.7
American Eagle Syntech 115-gr. TSJ	1,110	25	13.0	2.6	2.9

Notes: Accuracy is the average of four five-shot groups at 25 yards off a Champion shooting rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Labradar chronograph set to read 15 feet from the muzzle.

AT THE RANGE

I took both of mine out to the range to give them test runs and I found out several interesting things, and had pleasant reminders. One, my grip has changed since that LE class so many years ago. I no longer trap the slide-stop down. They both locked open after the last shot, every time. They both hit exactly to the sights, which was not at all surprising. They shot very well, although not to stellar levels. I guess we're all spoiled by high-performance pistols these days, expecting everything to shoot into 2 inches or less at 25 yards. In the late '70s and on into the mid-'90s, expecting a service pistol — especially one with a short barrel — to deliver consistent sub-3-inch groups would have been marvelous.

I was reminded of just how wonderfully ergonomic the P6/P225 is, and what a joy it is to shoot. All the ammo tested shot well, if not up to Bullseye standards. By 1970s police standards, the P6s practically were Bullseye guns! I had to renew my concealed pistol license (CPL) with the then-updated and "improved"

state standards. The new law required classroom work and range time, regardless of how long one had a CPL. Curiously, while we were required to discharge a suitable handgun at a target, there were no time limits, distances or scoring required. (It only demonstrated that one can make loud noises in a safe manner.) The retired trooper teaching the class was curious to see the P6, only knowing about the state-issued P226s he'd used. He was satisfied with my putting the required rounds through the same hole and signed off on my renewal.

Even as compact, accurate and ergonomic as the P6s are, the lack of new magazines make me a bit leery of using one as a carry pistol or home defense gun. When they first arrived as surplus, prices were reasonable. As of 2025, they are creeping into collectible status and values are rising (\$550-\$950, gunbroker.com). In the words of the '60s band Small Faces, "I've got mine." 



Imported P6 pistols will have the importer's mark on the frame and the year of manufacture on the slide.



The distinctive lines of the slide are an artifact of the slide-manufacturing process, giving the SIG Sauer P6 its distinctive look.



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Browning X-Bolt 2 Hunter 6.5 Creedmoor



WESTERN MACNAB

BROWNING TURNED the contemporary design of its X-Bolt 2 platform and gave it further appeal among traditional sportsmen by shaping its wood stock from American walnut.

“We’re still selling more composite-stocked models,” said Rafe Nielsen, director of marketing at Browning. “During the course of five years, we’ve seen a significant increase in demand for wood stocks.”

Introduced in 2024, the Browning X-Bolt 2 Hunter is available in three barrel lengths to optimize the performance of your favorite cartridge. The top three best-selling chamberings for the X-Bolt 2 are the short-action 6.5 Creedmoor, the long-action .300 Winchester Magnum, and the 7mm PRC. Though the X-Bolt 2 Hunter is only available in the most popular nine chamberings, the X-Bolt 2 line supports 16 cartridges.

The Hunter isn’t the only wood-stocked X-Bolt available from Browning, either. There are nine models with actions set in either a

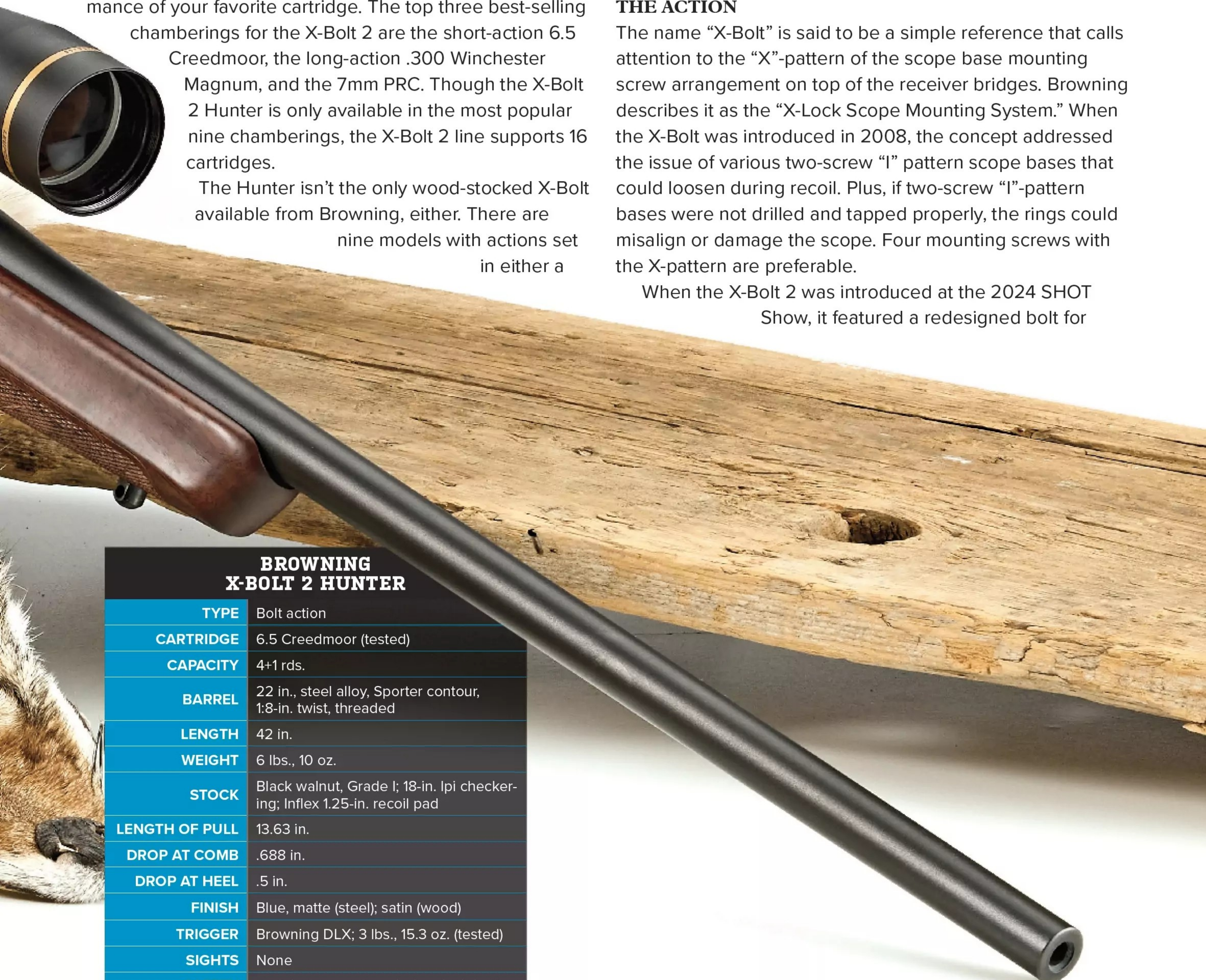
high-gloss walnut in the Medallion series, the light-colored high-gloss Medallion Maple, a Dark Maple, a Medallion with a carbon-fiber-wrapped barrel, a high-gloss White Gold Medallion with a bright stainless barreled action, a target-inspired McMillan LR WHD, and a rugged two-tone gray Hunter Laminate model.

For its long-term evaluation, Guns & Ammo received the X-Bolt 2 Hunter in 6.5 Creedmoor for testing.

THE ACTION

The name “X-Bolt” is said to be a simple reference that calls attention to the “X”-pattern of the scope base mounting screw arrangement on top of the receiver bridges. Browning describes it as the “X-Lock Scope Mounting System.” When the X-Bolt was introduced in 2008, the concept addressed the issue of various two-screw “I” pattern scope bases that could loosen during recoil. Plus, if two-screw “I”-pattern bases were not drilled and tapped properly, the rings could misalign or damage the scope. Four mounting screws with the X-pattern are preferable.

When the X-Bolt 2 was introduced at the 2024 SHOT Show, it featured a redesigned bolt for



BROWNING X-BOLT 2 HUNTER	
TYPE	Bolt action
CARTRIDGE	6.5 Creedmoor (tested)
CAPACITY	4+1 rds.
BARREL	22 in., steel alloy, Sporter contour, 1:8-in. twist, threaded
LENGTH	42 in.
WEIGHT	6 lbs., 10 oz.
STOCK	Black walnut, Grade I; 18-in. lpi checkering; Inflex 1.25-in. recoil pad
LENGTH OF PULL	13.63 in.
DROP AT COMB	.688 in.
DROP AT HEEL	.5 in.
FINISH	Blue, matte (steel); satin (wood)
TRIGGER	Browning DLX; 3 lbs., 15.3 oz. (tested)
SIGHTS	None
SAFETY	Switch, two position; bolt-unlock button
MSRP	\$1,250
MANUFACTURER	Miroku Firearms Mfg. Co., Japan
IMPORTER	Browning, 800-333-3288, browning.com



Finish of the barreled action is a non-reflective matte blue. The uniform finish is an appropriate complement to the satin-sheen stock and intended

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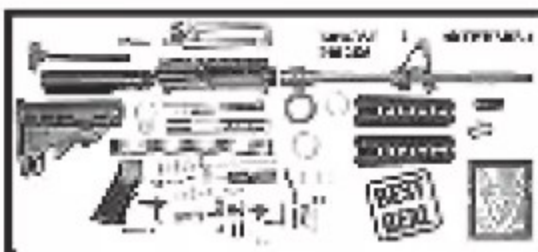


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Several Options!

1903A3 C stock (full pistol grip) Walnut stock, new, w/o handguard unstained. \$169.95 #SPF276-W

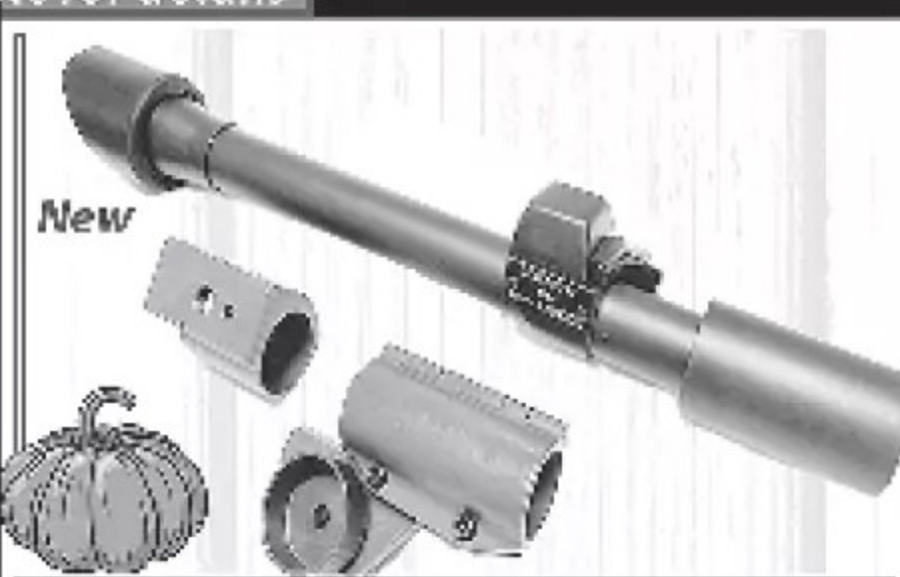
1903A3 C stock w/ handguard, unstained. Walnut \$199. #SPF278

1903A3 C stock w/o handguard, stained. Walnut \$189.95 #SPF276-WS

AR15 Flat Top Upper Receiver in the white. 100% machined. \$45. #AR500

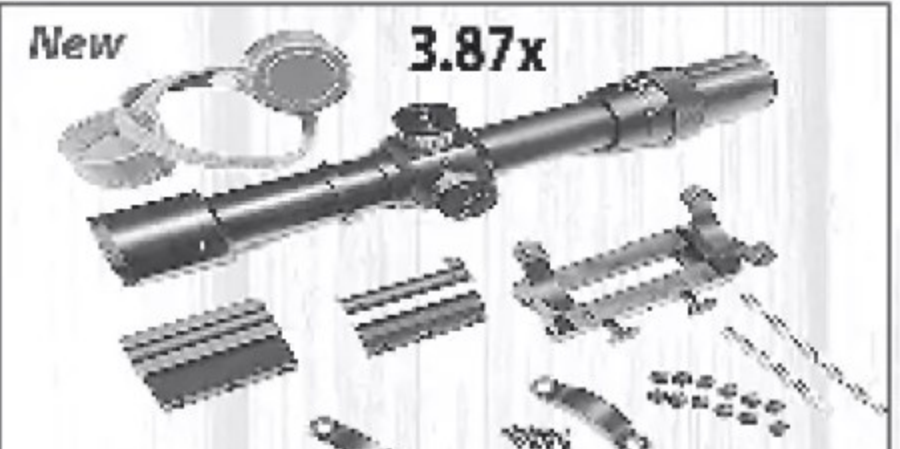
AR15 Flat Top Upper Black ox. finish, complete \$64.95 #AR196

Ruger 10/22" Stock and handguard set like the above item, but made for the Ruger 10/22 rifles. More fun, controllability & easily stored. Stock & handguard matching stain. \$150. #STK362



M84 Scope, Base, & Mount
Want to build an M1 Garand Sniper Rifle? This set will get you on your way. Brand new mnfr. Scope with rubber eye cup and Govt. ID plate like the original. Scope made w/ the same engineering drawings as the original scope. Scope optics are crystal clear w/2.5 power. Precision steel M1D Mount for the barrel and M1D Scope Clamp Included. New

\$399. #GRD260



Russian 'PE' Scope Ensemble

Early WW2 Sniper Scope model as used by some of the best Russian snipers like 'Zaytsev' of Stalingrad fame. Newly manufactured with mounts, both hex and round, lens covers, drill & tap set, and canvas cover. See more on Web site. For Mosin 91/30.

\$449. #SCP064



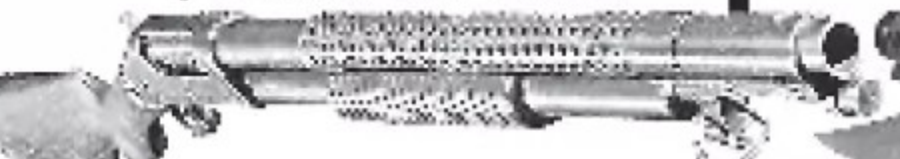
U.S. M73 Sniper Scope
Newly manufactured 2.5 power sniper scope with mount. Perfect for building that 1903A4 Springfield Sniper Rifle that you want! Tube is 3/4" diameter. \$365. #SCP039



Winchester 97 Ventilated Handguard w/ Bayonet Lug
Back in Stock! simple to install

WW1 Design for Trench Warfare. Steel with brass bead front sight and sling swivel. Lug fits the U.S. 1917 Bayonet. Order quickly because these always sell out!

\$129. #W97058



USMC Combat Knife
as used from WW2 thru Desert Storm. New. Made w/ 3Cr13 stainless steel and honed edge. Comes w/ scabbard. \$39.95 #BAY390



M16/AR15 Cleaning Kit with Pouch

Perfect for most firearms w/ barrels under 31 inches. Standard GI type cleaning kit w.rod assy., bore brush, chamber brush, cln.brush, oil bottle, cln.patches, & pouch. \$11.50 #CLN262



Mosin PU Scope
Good for out-fitting Mosin Nagant rifles and SVT rifles. New manufacture w/ 3.5 x 20 optics & original style mount. See more on the Web Site \$135. #SCP063



AR15/M16 Scope for carrying handle mounting
Like the Vietnam era scope, this is newly manufactured with 4 x 20 optics. Perfect for AR15 marksmanship! \$95. #SCP067

BRAND NEW! Unstained



P17 Enfield Rifle Stock, Walnut
Precision milled from walnut, it has been made to GI Specs. The stock is unstained, and comes with stock bolt & nut. This is only for the stripped stock and as with all new stocks, may need slight fitting although we found that the stock fit our barreled actions perfectly. Perfect replacement stock! \$195. #P17089



M16/AR15 USGI BIPOD
Original Bipod \$24.95 #AR139



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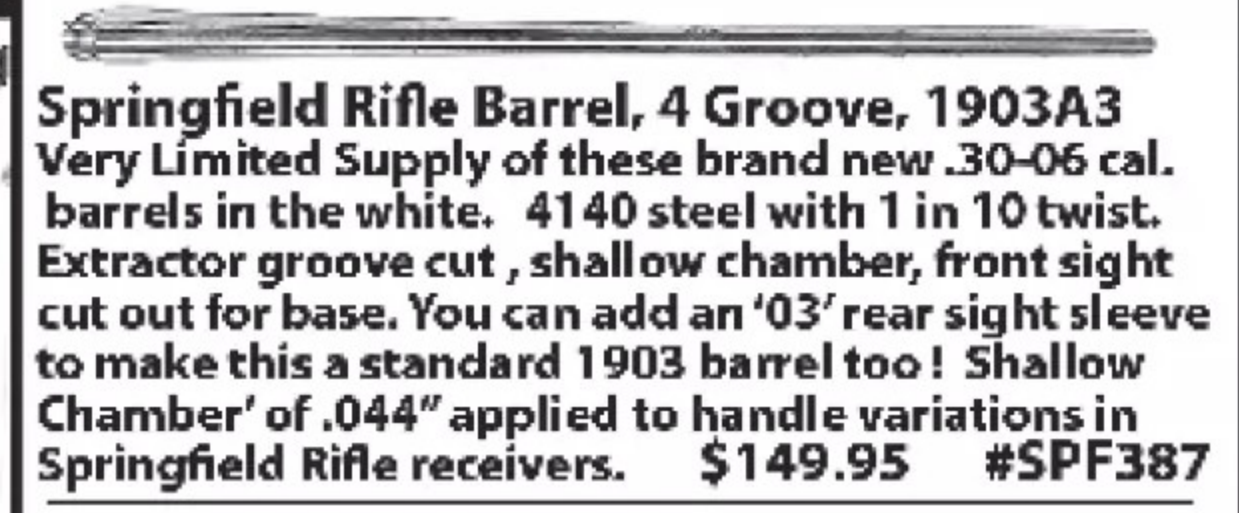
Shown, is the Medium to Large frame Shoulder Holster for right hand draw & holds single stack mags. \$55. #HOL257



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Adjustable mag. pouches.

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



Springfield Rifle Barrel, 4 Groove, 1903A3
Very Limited Supply of these brand new .30-06 cal. barrels in the white. 4140 steel with 1 in 10 twist. Extractor groove cut, shallow chamber, front sight cut out for base. You can add an '03' rear sight sleeve to make this a standard 1903 barrel too! Shallow Chamber' of .044" applied to handle variations in Springfield Rifle receivers. \$149.95 #SPF387

Original USGI Springfield 1903A3 2 Groove Barrel Packed in grease since the 1940s, they are new, but need to be degreased. Might be the last of these new old stock' barrels on the market! \$189.95 #SPF080

More BARRELS For Your Projects

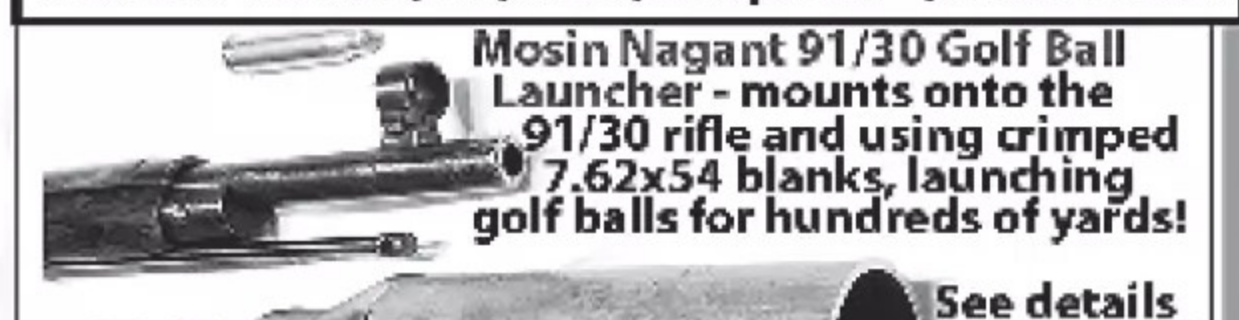
AK74 Barrel, new, 5.45x39, 15.413" long with in the white, 906" breech \$125. #AK088

M14 Barrel, new, 7.62 Nato, 22" long, Parkerized \$175. #M14124

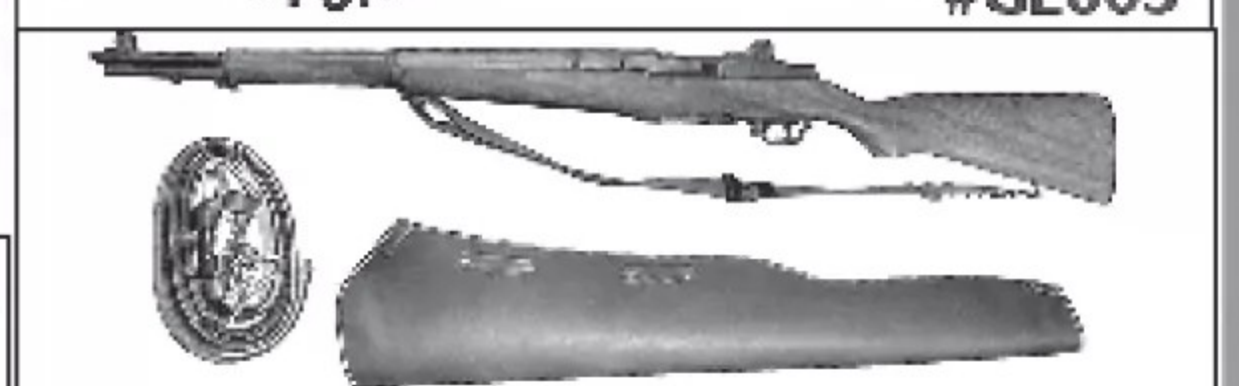
CETME C Barrel, new 7.62 Nato, 18" long, 5/8"-24 thread on muzzle end, in the white. \$189. #G3108

G3 Barrel, new 7.62 Nato, new, in the white, very few in stock. \$189. #G3108

AR15 M4 Barrel, 16", new, complete. \$160. #AR426



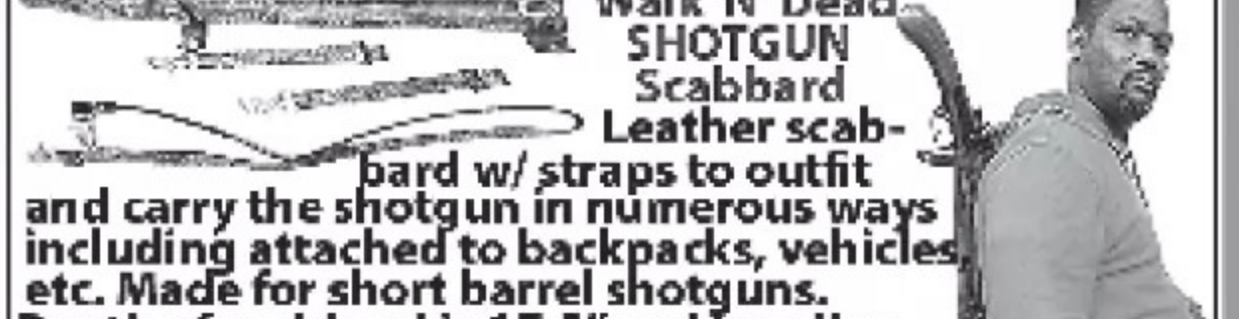
Mosin Nagant 91/30 Golf Ball Launcher
- mounts onto the 91/30 rifle and using crimped 7.62x54 blanks, launching golf balls for hundreds of yards! See details on our Web Site. \$69.95 #GL003



WW2 Cavalry & Vehicle Rifle Scabbard (Leather)
Heavy duty Leather gun scabbard offered in two versions: Lined and unlined. Newly manufactured and accurate to the original and comes with straps. Brown leather LINED Scabbard \$44.95 #GRD382 UNLINED Scabbard \$39.95 #GRD137



WW2 M1/M2 Cabine Leather Scabbard
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SCABBARD with Crocodile pattern leather \$54.95 #HOL188-CROC (Also works great as an Arrow Quiver!)



FAL BIPODS, Original, 4 FLAVORS

A. FN original Heavy Barrel bipod with the original Flash Hider Bearing. Unavailable for years! \$84. #FAL277

B. FN original Heavy Barrel Bipod w/o Flash hider bearing. \$52. #FAL273

C. Dutch FAL Quick detach Bipod, rare original. \$150. #FAL010

D. Israeli FAL H.B. Bipod \$52. #FAL007



A single recoil lug is bedded to the walnut stock, and the forend is inletted to free-float the barrel for increased accuracy potential. The front and rear action screws are also factory bedded.



The Browning DLX trigger is a refined design that retains the familiar “gold” appearance. Factory set at 3½ pounds, it can be adjusted to the SAAMI minimum of just 3 pounds.

use in the field.

THE WOOD STOCK

Though Browning offers rifles and shotguns set in Turkish and French walnut, the X-Bolt 2 Hunter features an American black walnut stock. Stock blanks are sourced and sent to Japan where they are contoured, laser checkered, inletted and bedded.

“We always try to select the highest grade possible as demand will allow us because we like to produce nice guns,” Nielsen said. “Though French walnut is always more appealing from a visual standpoint, heavy [recoiling] calibers require straight grains. Therefore, these are made from Grade 1 blanks.”

The stocks are inletted to free-float the barrel, even as it’s subject to heat, which was confirmed with the dollar-bill test at the range. The recoil lug and action screws are also bedded to isolate the effects of recoil and float the barrel.

The X-Bolt 2 Hunter is a return to the basics of



The triggerguard and magazine well are aluminum and secured to the action by two screws. The polymer center-feed magazine is a rotary design, cartridge specific and reliable. \$63



a sporting rifle. Underneath, the triggerguard and bottom metal protects the DLX trigger and accommodates the light-weight, polymer, rotary, detachable polymer magazine.

Some traditional hunters may loathe the polymer magazine, but manufacturing simplicity dictated this detail. Caliber specific and available in different colors, floorplates can be purchased for an additional charge; spare magazines start at \$63 (browning.com). Magnum cartridge magazines hold three rounds, while standard cartridges hold four. The magazines are a direct, center-feed design that weigh just 6.4 ounces.

TRIGGER TIME

Browning’s DLX trigger deserves favorable attention. Many who purchase a rifle have been conditioned to believe we need to look for an aftermarket trigger. With the X-Bolt 2, there is no need to replace the DLX trigger! Browning specs the trigger to be factory set at 3½ pounds, and it can be user adjustable down to 3 pounds. It features

PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Norma Whitetail 140-gr. JSP	2,667	49.6	16.1	.24	.36
Hornady Match 140-gr. ELD-M	2,625	39.7	12.9	.77	1.0
Black Hills Gold 147-gr. ELD-M	2,657	25.2	9	.79	.93
Hornady Precision Hunter 143-gr. ELD-X	2,542	27.4	9.7	.87	1.03
Federal Fusion 140-gr. JSP	2,753	52.8	18.8	.99	1.3
Browning BXR 129-gr. Matrix Tip	2,887	29.6	10.6	1.0	1.43

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five, three-shot groups at 100 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocity is the average of five shots recorded by a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph.

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three levers internally, and a second spring that prevents the DLX trigger from being adjusted below 3 pounds. Why a 3-pound minimum? The trigger weight is specified by the Sporting Arms & Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI), the governing body for the firearm industry. Browning is adhering to the standard, so we have no complaints. There was no creep and little take-up. Guns & Ammo tested the DLX trigger at 3 pounds, 5 ounces, where it remained consist even after firing several hundred rounds and hunting afield. After considering the range results, it is unlikely that most riflemen will achieve better results with a lighter trigger than the DLX.

Guns & Ammo's long-term test sample was fired at the range on several occasions and field tested in New Mexico on an antelope hunt. Six loads were evaluated at the range and a seventh Browning round was used for load development, becoming the Max Point. Browning's 6.5 CM Max Point load features a 140-grain deep matrix tip that results in rapid



Eric Poole invented the Western Macnab by taking an antelope, coyote and prairie dog in New Mexico in one day. Each fell to a 6.5 CM 140-gr. MaxPoint from the Browning X-Bolt 2 Hunter.



expansion. These projectiles provide quick energy transfer in medium-size big game such as whitetail deer, mulies and pronghorn antelope.

At the range, the Norma Whitetail 140-grain soft-point repeatedly proved to extract the best accuracy potential from the X-Bolt 2 Hunter. The best 100-yard three-shot group measured an unbelievable .235 inch! The second-best group also came from Norma's load, measuring .444 inch. Notably, Hornady

Match 140-grain ELD-M and Black Hills Gold with 147-grain ELD-M load produced .77- and .79-inch best groups. Other hunting loads with bonded or expanding projectiles, and those with lighter projectiles collectively averaged 1 MOA.

FIELD TESTED

Based on the 1925 Scottish novel, "John Macnab" by John Buchan, the Macnab Challenge is a test of sporting skill requiring the hunter to bag a salmon, a brace of grouse, and a stag between dawn and dusk in one day. G&A Editor-in-Chief Eric Poole used the X-Bolt 2 Hunter while pursuing antelope in New Mexico, stalking a buck from nearly 1,000 yards to 150 before setting up on a set of Primos Trigger Sticks (\$210, primos.com) equipped with a Leupold Tripod Shooting Saddle (\$150, leupold.com). The Leupold VX-3HD 4.5-14x40mm (\$600, leupold.com) scope was set to 10X when Poole brought the antelope down with one Browning 140-grain Max Point just above tall grass.

The antelope was taken at 8:50am on September 28, 2024, near Maxwell, New Mexico. Following another successful spot-and-stalk of speed goat for Winchester's Nathan Robinson, a coyote was later seen crossing a prairie and ranged at some 300 yards. Poole and Robinson chased the coyote on foot to an elevated mound where Poole sent one round from 250 yards in the kneeling position. The coyote's tail and legs were seen tumbling once over. The time was 5:27pm. With light still available, they hustled to a problematic prairie dog colony to invent the "Western Macnab Challenge." Before the sun set, Poole silenced the first of several prairie dogs at 6:23pm from 50 yards.

PARTING SHOT

Guns & Ammo's year-long evaluation of the Browning X-Bolt 2 Hunter in 6.5 Creedmoor has come to its conclusion. G&A's editors and contributors have repeatedly demonstrated the high value proposition of the X-Bolt 2. Every X-Bolt 2 has proven accurate and reliable. This test showed the versatility of this configuration in the field. The 6.5 CM is the most popular chambering for these reasons, and wood still has a place in the hearts of American riflemen. **G&A**

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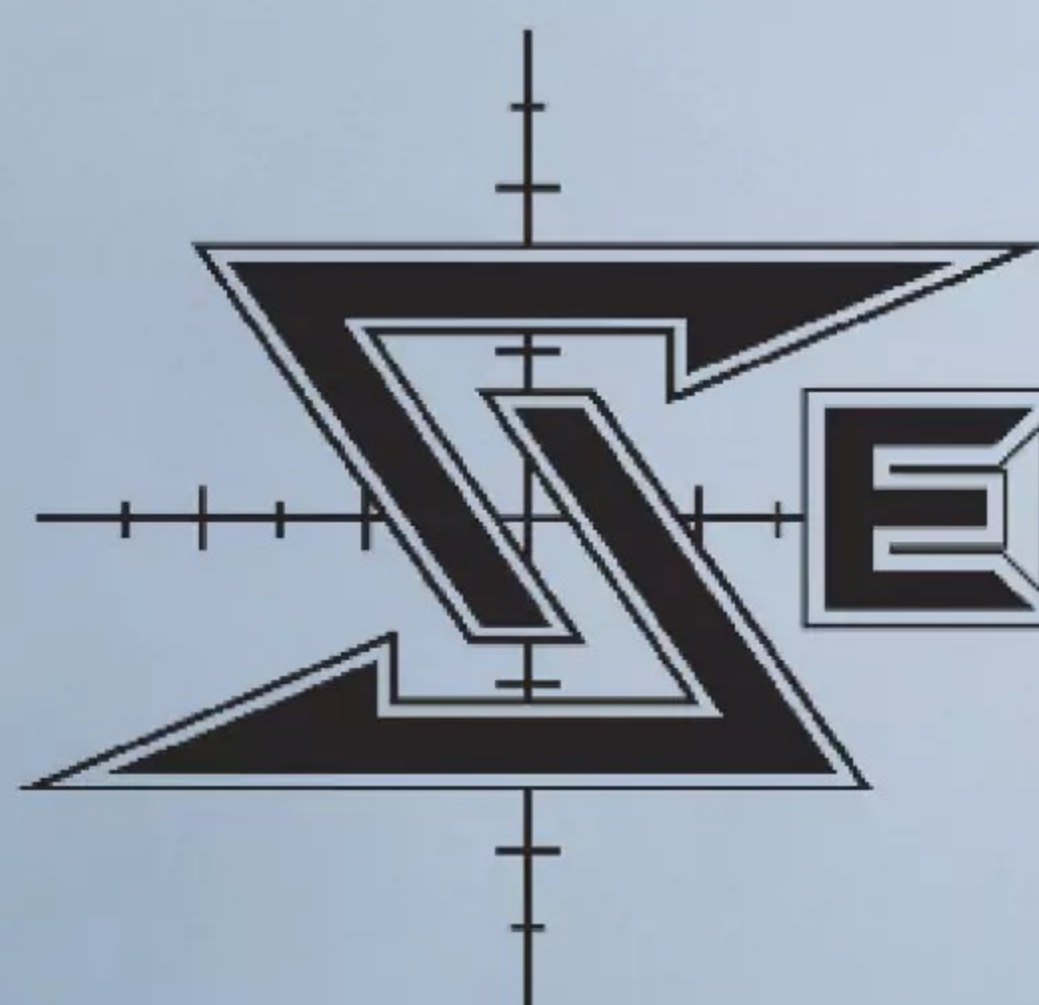
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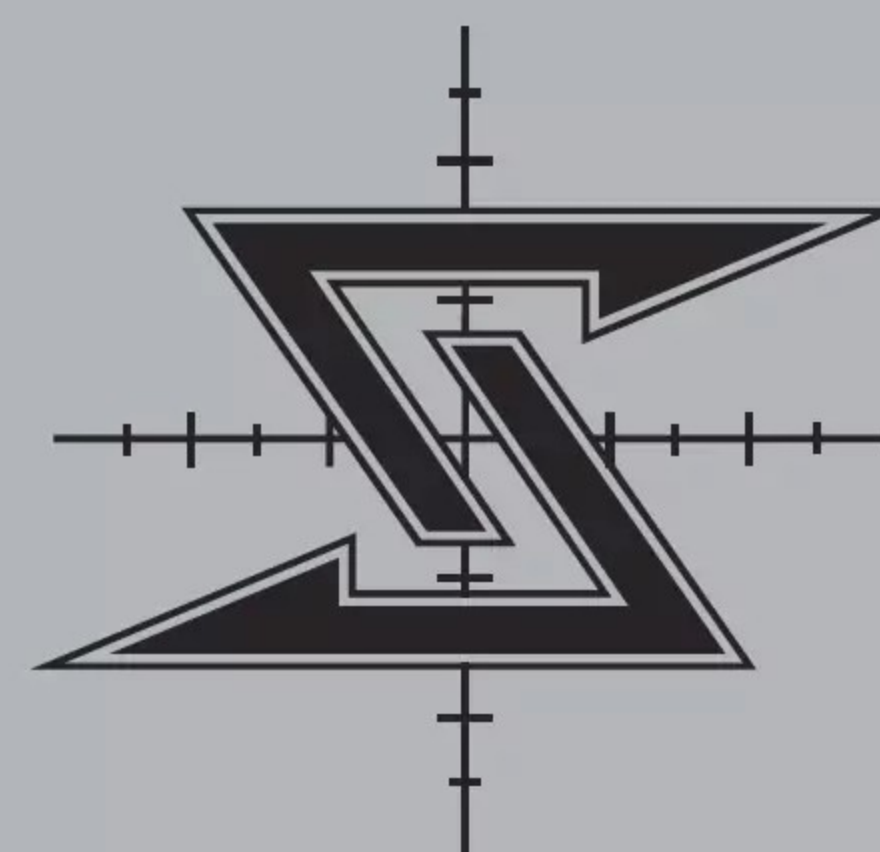


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New releases from the 2025 OSG Roundtable.

ON THE GROUND

AT THE TIME OF WRITING, I have recently returned from the 2025 Outdoor Sportsman Group (OSG) Editorial Roundtable, which took place at the Cameo Shooting Sports and Education Center (cameosec.org) in Grand Junction, Colorado. Guns & Ammo's editors and contributors were joined by OSG's shooting and hunting multimedia teams. It was our third annual visit to the complex, which was no less impressive. Multiple lanes accommodate distances to 2,000 yards, and there are areas for sporting clays and archery. Surrounded by mountains containing abundant wildlife, the range has a standing policy to call "cold" when bighorn sheep meander through.

OSG invites firearm and related gear manufacturers, who are eager to present and tease new products. Often, this includes unreleased guns, suppressors, ammo and optics that may be a year away from release. Aside from receiving a preview of what's to come, staff headed to the range for a hands-on evaluation and one-on-one discussions. A few of the products even went public as we tested them! To get the word out,

PACK A PUNCH

Small in size for its 7½-inch barrel, Century Arms' Draco Tactical is a compact, flame-throwing platform that's chambered in 7.62x39. **\$1,059**



"X" MARKS THE SPOT

The Smith & Wesson Shield X 9mm combines characteristics of the Shield series and the Bodyguard 2.0. **\$599**

G&A's writers photographed, inspected and tested these guns, then drafted their first impressions for publication on gunsandammo.com.

Carrying over design principles from the Smith & Wesson Shield series and Bodyguard 2.0 handguns, the M&P Shield X (\$599, smith-wesson.com) was an example of these new releases. It turned a lot of heads.

Canik's TTI Combat Smoke (\$1,150, tarantacticalinnovations.com) added a cool factor to the hot range. It sports the same set of high-speed features and functions as the TTI Combat, but with a new finish and a two-layer hard case of goodies. Century Arms' Draco Tactical (\$1,059, centuryarms.com) gave Rifles & Optics Editor Tom Beckstrand a hit of nostalgia for the shorty AK he once carried in Afghanistan as a Green Beret.

With some on-site photography and

"WHERE THERE'S SMOKE ..."

The TTI Combat series from Canik and Taran Tactical Innovations expands to include a bronze PVD-coated 4.6-inch barrel, and two-tone Smoke Edition finish. **\$1,150**



ANTONIO ACITELLI

a smooth round of edits, we had these exclusives posted on gunsandammo.com and our social media accounts the same day the guns were revealed.

Full reviews are on the way to our print publications, too, including Guns & Ammo and the Special Interest Publications (SIP, osgnewsstand.com).

Anything you'd like us to follow up on? Email us at gaeditor@outdoorsg.com. We'll keep pursuing the news. **GA**

TOP COMMENTS

In response to the "Connect" column, "Nicking the Niches" (August 2025):

I would like to see SIP publications related to NRL22 and PCCs. Also, more suppressor issues. Thank You.

— John K., Email

In response to "Connect," titled "Quiet Riot" (September 2025):

[Acitelli's] last paragraph asked a question. Yes, I'd like to hear more about suppressors. I have questions about them such as using one suppressor for multiple caliber firearms, and you didn't mention using ammo designated as built for use with suppressors.

I use a .22-caliber can on several Ruger 10/22 rifles. When I shoot suppressor loads, it works as advertised and is very quiet. When I'm not using subsonic rounds, the suppressor seems to have little effect. What should we know about this?

I have a multi-caliber can in .46 caliber, which has very little suppression effect on AR 5.56 NATO/.223 Rem. or .30-30 Winchester factory loads. It does OK with subsonic handloads, but it's not super quiet.

Lastly, I have two rifles that I love to shoot, both Browning A-Bolts. One is in .270 and the other in .243. Neither has a threaded barrel. Are there gun shops that can thread my barrels?

FYI: My gun shop's range has multiple cans that can be rented for range time. Your suggestion was spot on. I found that's the best way to check them out before a purchase. I really enjoy your articles!

— Jay T., Email



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KEITH WOOD

Is the market trending down or just normalizing?

SALES SLUMP

THE FIREARM INDUSTRY seems cyclical, perhaps more so than other economic sectors. It's an open secret that the market is performing slower in 2025, especially when compared to the record-breaking sales of 2020. When looking at the numbers, this is more of a normalization than a true "slump."

There are numerous reasons for the drop in sales. With a Republican president and control of both houses of Congress, there's not an immediate, overbearing legislative threat to firearm ownership at the federal level. The overall economy may be slowing, though the data isn't exactly clear. The reality is that so many firearms have been purchased in recent years that many consumers don't see a need to buy more.

According to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) data provided by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF, nssf.org), firearm sales peaked in 2020 when more than 21 million background checks were completed. Contrast that with the 10 preceding years when the average was 13 million NICS checks. Month-to-month 2025 data shows that checks were down around 8 percent compared to 2024; the total number hovered above 15 million. More than 300 million background checks have been completed since 2000. That translates to 1.2 firearms for every adult in the U.S.

Most firearm companies don't publish earning figures but publicly traded companies — Ruger and Smith & Wesson — do. Across 10 years, both brands tracked the same demand waves. There was a 2016 election bump, a steeper 2020 to 2021 spike, then multi-year normalization. Amplitude was bigger at S&W, swinging from \$530 million in 2020 to \$1.10 billion in 2021, then back to \$480 to \$540 million in 2023 to 2025. Ruger's top line was steadier into the downcycle but

was still 27 percent below its 2021 peak by 2024.

I reached out to several industry friends for this column, including some who produce components for a variety of makers. Anecdotally, it seems that sales vary wildly from company to company. Niche makers with traditionally long

backlogs are still experiencing high demand. Companies that cater to a broader consumer base are subject to a softer market. From my perspective, it appears that firearm enthusiasts are still buying. Members of the general public — those who bought guns out of panic in 2020 — are not.

The suppressor market is an interesting case. Thanks to the enactment of the One Big Beautiful Bill, the \$200 tax on

suppressor transfers will discontinue on January 1, 2026. Manufacturers and retailers are enticing buyers to get ahead of that demand surge by offering \$200 discounts. If you're in the market for a suppressor, now is probably the time to buy. I predict widespread backorders once America's semiquincentennial arrives.

It's easy for me to say, since I'm not in the business of producing or selling firearms, optics ammunition or accessories, but I see some positives in this normalization. The current environment may allow companies to take a breath and innovate rather than simply trying to meet unprecedented demand. In today's market, consumers are more discriminating than ever, and will patiently search for the right product that meets their needs rather than buying what's available.

From the consumer side, I see this as an opportunity. Discounts are being offered across the industry, and products are often on the shelf or ready to ship. These times won't last forever. Building a sustainable supply of ammunition and reloading components is probably a wise move. The 2028 elections will be here before we know it. **G&A**





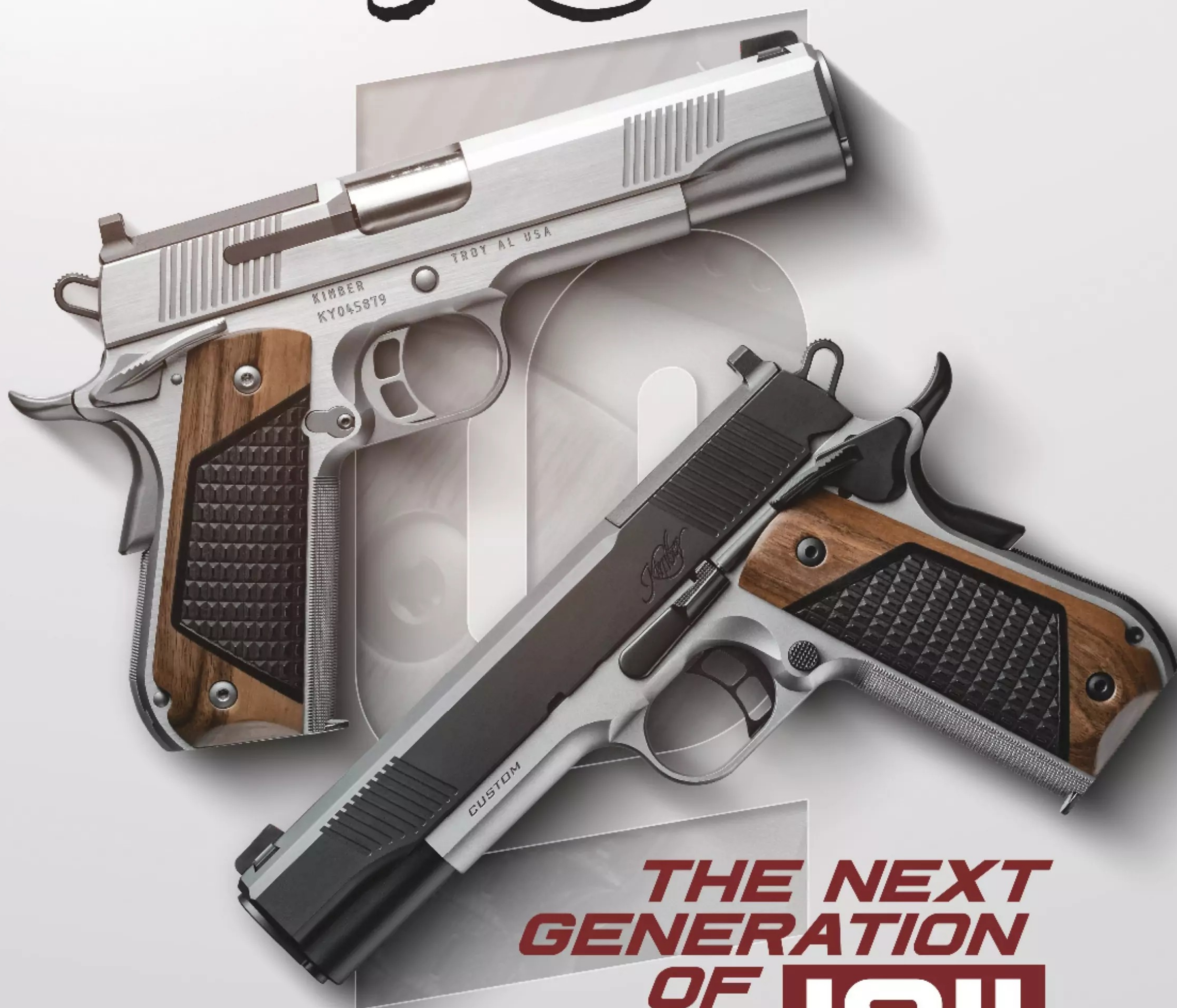
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