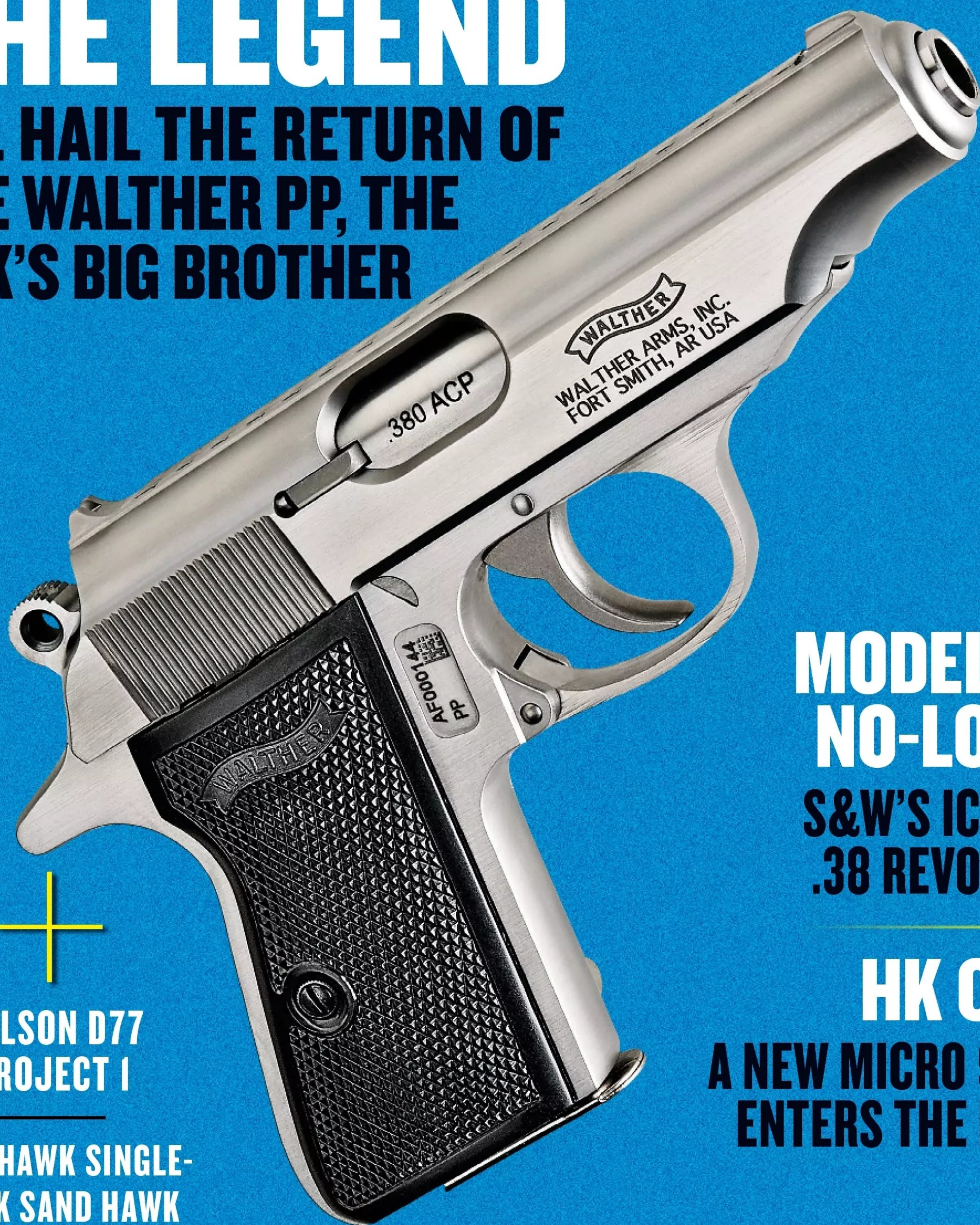


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FEATURES

26 RETURN OF A LEGEND

By KEITH WOOD

You've heard of Walther's PPK, right? Most have, but fewer know one of the most advanced pistols of its day: the PP. Now it's back.

32 WORTH THE WAIT

By RICHARD NANCE

Heckler & Koch bided its time while the micro-compact market took off like a rocket. Now it has its own entrant, the well-designed CC9.

40 PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

By BRAD FITZPATRICK

Wilson Combat didn't just tweak the 1911 platform with its new Division 77 Project 1 gun. It created a whole new paradigm.

50 LOOK, MA—NO LOCK!

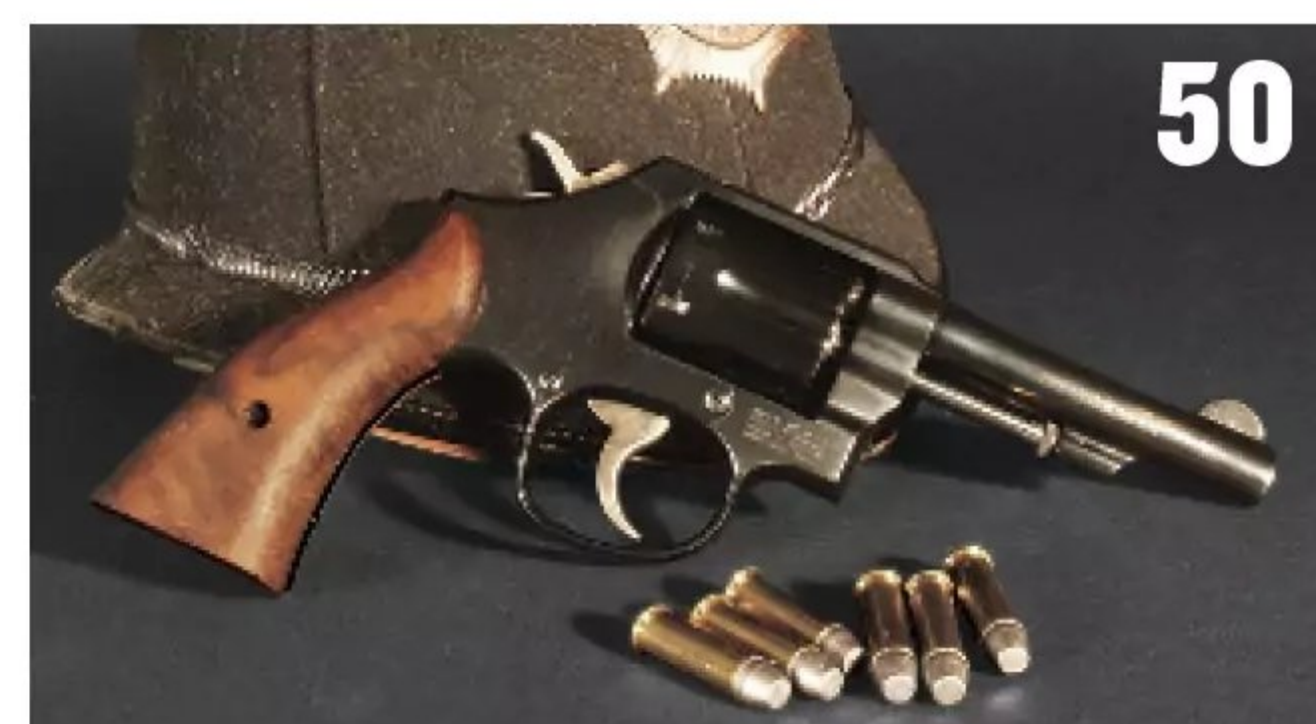
By J. SCOTT RUPP

Smith & Wesson's Model 10 Classic—an iconic revolver if there ever was one—is noteworthy for what it doesn't have: the internal lock.

58 DESERT DEMON

By RICHARD NANCE

Nighthawk Custom's famous Sand Hawk 1911 gets a new brother: the Sand Hawk Single Stack.



DEPARTMENTS

6 FRONT FOCUS

8 SPEEDLOADS

- The benefits of competition
- Taurus 22 TUC
- Great new gear

16 EN GARDE

RICHARD NANCE

How to use your handgun as an impact weapon.

18 ESSENTIALS

BRAD FITZPATRICK

This cleaning kit from Otis is the only one you'll ever need.

72 BACK PAGE BEAUTIES

STAN TRZONIEC

Wilson Combat CQB

FIRING LINE REPORTS

68 WALTHER PDP F-SERIES PRO 3.5

By J. SCOTT RUPP



The acquisition, ownership, possession and use of firearms are heavily regulated. Some models may not be legally available in your state or locale. Whatever your purpose for lawfully acquiring a firearm – know the law, get trained and shoot safely.

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HANDGUNS (ISSN # 1068-2635), AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025, VOLUME 39
NUMBER 3. Published bimonthly by OUTDOOR SPORTSMAN GROUP®, 1040
6th Ave., 17th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Frequency is subject to change
without notice. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional
mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address change (Form 3579) to Hand-
guns, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539. Return undeliverable Canadian
addresses to: 500 R. 46 East, Clifton, NJ 07011. Canada Post Publications
Mail Agreement No. 41405030.

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515-237-3699.

Subscription rate for one year is \$23.94 (U.S., APO, FPO, and U.S. possessions).
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Bodyguard 2.0 Loader

Your article in the February/March issue on the S&W Bodyguard 2.0 encouraged me to get one. I love the gun, but there is one important thing you left out: This .380 would be a lot easier to load if you can find a mag loader for it.

LOUIS ORTH

Mr. Orth: I've been using an UpLula universal pistol magazine loader (UP60), and while it says it's for 9mm to .45 ACP, it works fine on the shorter .380. If you can't find one at your local gunshop, most big retailers like Midway USA, Brownells, etc. carry its products, according to the Maglula website.—Scott

March of the Oddballs

For the .22 Jet, Remington necked down the .357 to use .222/.223 diameter bullets, and the Smith & Wesson Model 53 had a switchable hammer face and both centerfire and rimfire frame-mounted firing pins—allowing it to shoot the Jet or .22 rimfire via chamber inserts or auxiliary cylinders. The .256 Winchester Magnum was in the same era, a .357 necked down to .257 and inspired by high-velocity wildcats in K-22 guns for small varmints at extended range.

PAUL ERICKSON

I guess I might be the last old fart at 74 years of age with a functioning S&W Model 53 in .22 Jet. Factory Remington ammo was a 40-grain jacketed softpoint flat nose in .222 diameter. I haven't shot it in years, but I think maybe it's time to pull it out of the safe.

RICK LAVATY

I own a Ruger Blackhawk revolver in .357/44 Bain & Davis. I shoot 158-grain jacketed hollowpoints. I also own a contender in .22K Hornet. Both guns are a lot of fun and very accurate

WES

Years ago I was looking at guns in our neighborhood gun store, where I found a single-action revolver made by Great Western Arms. The caliber on the gun is .357 Atomic. The revolver shoots .38 Specials and .357 Magnums as well, but I have never found a .357 Atomic round. I no longer shoot the revolver but keep it as part of my collection.

BILLY WILES

The first gun I ever bought was a Walther P99 in .40 S&W. I was very new to guns and calibers, and I bought a box of .400 Cor-Bon by mistake. I have never seen a gun in this caliber for sale, and I don't recall ever seeing a review of it either.

ED WISE

Mr. Wise: Developed in the early 2000s, the .400 Cor-Bon is basically a .45 ACP necked down to .40 caliber. I'm not aware of any major maker currently producing a gun in this chambering, but it appears you can find barrels for a drop-in conversion. I'm sure a reader out there can enlighten us further.—Scott



New Handguns TV Season Starts Soon!

The popular "Handguns" television show, now in its 12th season, kicks off its new season on Sportsman Channel at the end of this month. At press time we didn't have a final schedule to share with you, but we can tell you that the first few episodes will be Best New Carry Guns, Common Carry Mistakes, Top Defensive Skills and Mythbusting.

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

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COMPETE WITH WHAT YOU CARRY

STOP CARING ABOUT DIVISIONS AND START FOCUSING ON REAL TRAINING.

By Jack Hennessy

“GAMING IT” IS WHAT I CALL IT WHEN A competitive shooter takes every advantage made available based on one’s division. He or she may chamber custom loads, work with lighter connectors, French-fry-crisp aftermarket triggers, a ported slide cut and engraving at the cost of hundreds. There’s nothing wrong with it—not in the least—but it’s not why I show up at matches.

Working to climb a leaderboard, striving to outshoot those lined up on one’s left and right, is a great way to hone one’s skills, and it’s the perfect motivation for many handgunners. Divisions such as Production in U.S. Practical Shooting Association and Steel Challenge; Stock Service Pistol in International Defensive Pistol Association; and MOS in the Glock Sport Shooting Foundation allow for match attendees to compete using the same

setups they might use as a carry or home-defense handguns.

But what about those daily-carry handguns that might include a weapon-mounted light, maybe a compensator or a ported barrel? Any one of these would push a competitor into an “open” or “unlimited” division. In these divisions, participants are taking every possible advantage, checking all the boxes to have the best chances of finishing first—like the gun setups I described earlier.

Fun fact though: In my experience watching fellow competitors at matches I’ve attended over the past couple years, the handguns that malfunction are always the Gucci custom setups—the Frankenstein builds that can get finicky when loaded with certain factory ammo or when a gust of dirt, courtesy of some serious south-central wind, gunks up the gun during a slide cycle.

Most firearm experts, including the product engineers themselves, advise against getting too custom for a carry gun, especially when it comes to the internals, specifically anything having to do with the trigger group. So decisions need to be made, with the underlying question being: Are you competing to train, or are you competing to win?

For myself, competitions serve to test my ability to shoot accurately while under stress and, in the case of disciplines like The Tactical Games, while physically exhausted with a heart rate above 180 beats per minute.

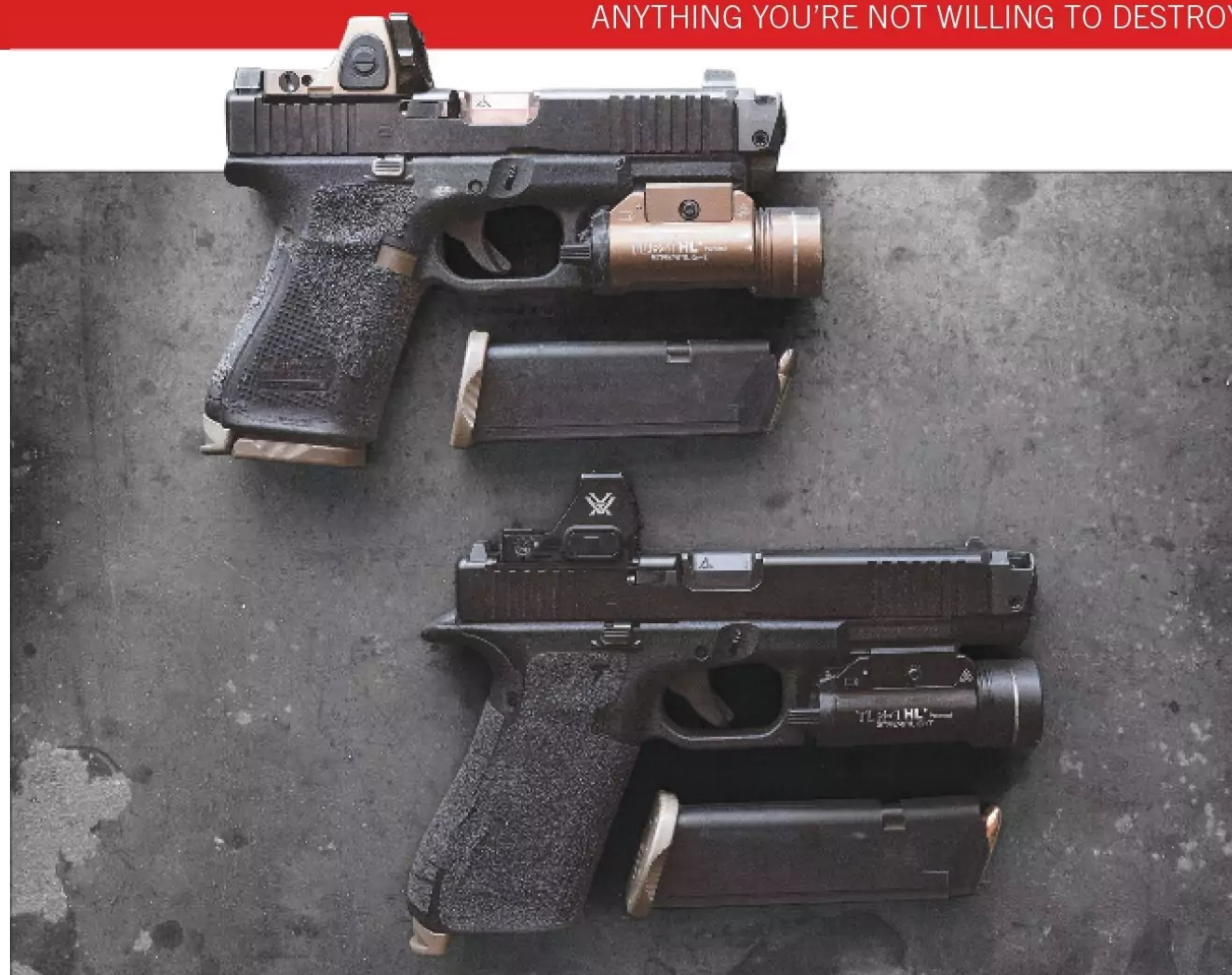
I run my Glock 47 Gen5 pistol mounted with a Vortex Defender ST and a Radian Weapons Afterburner and Ramjet compensator-and-barrel combo. A Streamlight TLR-1 HL sits secured to the rail while an 18-pound spring rests inside. All

other internals remain stock. This setup closely mirrors my main daily carry, a Glock 19 Gen5 with the same light, compensator and barrel but with a Trijicon RMR instead of the Vortex.

These handgun setups put me in the Unlimited division in GSSF and Open in USPSA. In those divisions, yes, competitors also often run compensators as well as aftermarket triggers and other fine-tuned internals—usually to suit the custom popcorn-puff loads they're shooting—but that is where I draw the line.

I keep all my triggers stock on all my Glock pistols for two main reasons: I trust the factory-installed safety features as they specifically relate to a stock trigger, but I also want that pistol to feel the same whether pulling to defend myself or dropping plates at a GSSF match.

I carry daily in Condition Zero—round in the chamber, safety off. Should I draw, the moment I align sights and pull the trigger, the pistol goes bang. Competition will never create the one-to-one adrenaline rush of a personal-defense encounter, but it remains the safest—and for me personally, the most enjoyable—way of gauging my progress and proficiency with a pistol. Still, while I will never be able to replicate how my body will



▲ The author's main daily carry setup (top) is similar to his competition gun, and that's his point: His goal for competition is to improve his competency with the gun that might save his life.

respond to a critical situation, I can control the exact feel and functionality of my equipment.

I respect the many varied reasons competitors choose to come out and support shooting sports. Attending matches and supporting our community is the most important thing.

Fellow division competitors may rock a tricked-out race gun, and while that may give them an advantage, it isn't part of my story. The only competitor who concerns me is myself. Are my times getting better? Is my immediate sight align-

ment more consistent? Am I making more hits with fewer penalties?

With other attendees waiting on deck or circulating nearby, their watching eyes serve to add further pressure. The shot timer jumpstarts my heart rate, and from there I remember to breathe, stay focused, manage a smooth trigger pull, one after another. That helps me become ever familiar with how that exact same pistol feels when I am stressed but intent on getting better and making every bullet count, always working toward an unconscious competency. ○

Fix It Sticks Field Pistol Sight Tool

Lots of rear pistol sights are touted as “adjustable,” but making those adjustments at the range is often easier said than done. The Field Pistol Sight Tool from Fix It Sticks (\$100, FixItSticks.com) is designed for polymer handgun sights, and it will not only move your sight but let you know exactly how far you moved it thanks to the laser-engraved scale.

While it does require a 1/4-inch driver—or, if

you're already in the Fix It Sticks universe, one of the company's T handles—for the adjustments, it's relatively simple to use. It clamps onto the slide via a thumbscrew-secured sliding bracket, which does take some fiddling to set up. Once you do, use said driver to push the sight. The tool also comes with a brass cradle for difficult sights. It folds up nice and compact, and note it's for sight adjustment and not removal.—JSR



OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB CAMPBELL

1964 NATIONAL MATCH 1911

ALTHOUGH I AM A FAN OF THE 1911 AND

something of a student, having written three books on this pistol, most of them I run across are not terribly interesting. However, the handgun illustrated here is one that I hold with a deep reverence because it is one of the legendary firearms built by Springfield Armory gunsmiths, back when Springfield Armory was still a government facility.

The most noticeable thing about this pistol is its Drake slide. The Drake Manufacturing Co. produced a run of slides for 1964 National Match pistols, and these slides were built to withstand constant practice and heavy competition schedules.

The triangle-marked rear sight is a fully adjustable unit similar to the Bomar. The front sight is interesting. This one appears hand cut, as many National Match gun sights were. As sights got heavier they were prone to taking flight from their staked-on perch, and until dovetail sights came along, Army gunsmiths silver-soldered them in place. This would appear to be a transitional sight, one of the last staked types.

The barrel and bushing are marked “NM” for National Match. The frontstrap is checkered in a credible cut with good borders—more for utility than art.

The frame’s serial number tells me it’s of Remington Rand manufacture, and it’s stamped “United States Property.” Prominent “M74” and “SA” markings indicate it was modified at Springfield Armory. A large “T” identifies the pistol as a 1964 National Match.

The hammer is the spur type. The grip frame is the standard 1911A1



▲ The 1964 National Match was built at Springfield Armory when it was still a government facility. ▼ Drake Manufacturing made a limited run of tougher, harder slides for this gun.

type with arched mainspring and standard grip safety. The Parkerizing shows some wear but is otherwise in excellent condition.

The pistol features a solid aluminum trigger. I don’t know for certain if the trigger action itself is original, but old 1911 hands and my own experience suggest that the National Match pistols left Springfield Armory with light triggers in the three- to 3.5-pound range—well suited to taking on the 50-yard bullseye at Camp Perry’s National Matches. The pull on this one breaks clean and craps at 3.15 pounds.

The pistol does not pass a safety check. If you drop the slide on an empty chamber, the hammer falls to half cock. This was also common with National Match 1911s of the era—not Colt factory guns but Army gunsmith guns. If a safety cartridge or dummy round is loaded from the magazine and the slide allowed to go forward, the hammer does not fall.

According to my best sources and



consultation with learned individuals, Springfield Armory built 800 of these guns in 1964. While it seems 195 of them were sold to competitors through the Directorate of Civilian Marksmanship (today known as the Civilian Marksmanship Program), the figure is probably higher.

Prices on these old guns were not the simplest to nail down. Although quite rare on an individual year-by-year production basis, they don’t bring the prices of GI guns in good condition.

The pistol illustrated will fetch \$1,500 to \$1,850 according to my best searches. This is a credible collectible handgun that is an interesting piece of shooting history.

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QUICK SHOT | BY J. SCOTT RUPP

TAURUS 22 TUC

ONE OF THE MORE INTRIGUING GUNS TO come down the pike in a while is the new Taurus 22 TUC. It's a double-action-only .22 semiautomatic tip-up with a 2.5-inch stainless steel barrel. With its diminutive dimensions—five-inch overall length, 4.35-inch height, one-inch width and 10-ounce weight—it's easily concealed and could serve dual roles as a primary or backup carry gun.

Available in black or stainless, the pistol is notable not only for its design but also its unexpectedly hand-filling grip. Thanks to the finger hook on the nine-round magazine, I can get all three fingers on the gun. The frontstrap has a subtle finger groove, the sides of the grip are textured, and the back of the grip has a generous beavertail.

Controls could not be simpler. There's a button mag release in the normal location and a vertical lever that operates the tip-up. Sights are a simple affair: notch rear and blade front with an orange painted square. Not that you'll be racking the stainless steel slide much, but it sports aggressive, angular cuts for a sure grip if you do.

Here's how the 22 TUC works. With the barrel closed, insert a loaded magazine into the well. Push forward on the lever, tipping up the barrel. Place a round into the chamber and close the barrel. Take care not to muzzle your hand when you do this. Don't close your hand around the barrel but rather push down the barrel with your thumb, your fingers supporting the frame beneath the trigger guard.

The DAO pull is long and revolver-like, but pull weight is seven pounds even and quite manageable.



- ▲ The new Taurus 22 TUC is a super-small, easily concealable .22 semiauto.
- ▼ It's a tip-up design that's easy to load and fun to shoot.



TAURUS 22 TUC

TYPE: double-action-only semiauto rimfire
CALIBER: .22 Long Rifle
CAPACITY: 9-round magazine supplied
BARREL: 2.5 in. stainless
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 5.0/4.35/1.0 in.
WEIGHT: 10 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: black stainless steel slide (as tested), polymer frame
TRIGGER: DAO, 7 lb. pull (measured)
SIGHTS: fixed gutter rear, orange blade front
PRICE: \$334
MANUFACTURER: Taurus, TAURUSUSA.COM

The 22 TUC is a blast to shoot. It's not going to win any bullseye matches, but from practical distances it's no problem to put rounds into a vital-zone size target. The grip really comes into play here. While it's "only" a .22, a gun this small and light does have some recoil, and with a cartridge that's going to require multiple rounds on target to be effective, you'll definitely appreciate the control the grip provides.

I've fired close to 100 rounds

through the gun, and it has functioned without fail.

In the product description on its website, Taurus trots out the maxim that the first rule of gunfighting is to have a gun, and despite the misgivings many have regarding the efficacy of the .22 LR as a defensive round, having the 22 TUC on you is better than the centerfire gun you don't. It's reliable, easy to operate and shoot, and offers great concealment.

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GUNS & GEAR | BY J. SCOTT RUPP



< TISAS USA 45 RAIDER SPECIAL FEATURE

This Government 1911 .45 sports a hammer-forged frame with a Picatinny rail for lights and lasers. The five-inch barrel is hard-chrome stainless steel, as are the bushing and recoil spring. Sights include a Novak front and a rear set in a Glock dovetail, and the slide is cut on the 507K/RMSc footprint. The gun has a skeletonized hammer and a titanium firing pin. Comes with two eight-round magazines.

{ \$750, TisasUSA.com }

> TAURUS 58

The new 58 is a double-action/single-action semiauto chambered to .380 ACP with a 15-round capacity. The gun has a four-inch stainless steel barrel, and weight is just shy of 30 ounces thanks to its aluminum frame. It's available in black or stainless finish. The front sight is fixed while the rear sight is drift-adjustable, and the thumb safety/decocker is ambidextrous.

{ \$605, TaurusUSA.com }



< SAFARILAND BALLAST

The new Ballast is a duty-rated retention holster with a minimalist footprint that leaves more room for gear on a law enforcement officer's belt. The holster features a crush-resistant design and is structurally sound from 160 to -50 degrees. It has an open muzzle design, and it's red-dot compatible—plus it incorporates a removable lid to protect an optic. Retention comes courtesy of an internal ALS lever-lock spring with an improved texturing for sure operation. Cantable 15 degrees forward or back. Glock fitments only.

{ \$190–\$217, Safariland.com }

> BURRIS FASTFIRE E

The E is for enclosed, a closed-emitter addition to the FastFire family. Built with a monolithic machined aluminum housing that shields the emitter, the sight is waterproof, shockproof and fogproof. An aspherical lens in the large 22x17mm window provides a clear view and minimizes glare, and the 3.5 m.o.a. dot is available in red or green. The FastFire E is adjustable for windage and elevation, and it offers 100 m.o.a. of adjustment. Powered by a CR2032 lithium battery, it promises a 60,000-hour battery life. Footprint is the Aimpoint Acro.

{ \$420, BurrisOptics.com }



> STREAMLIGHT TLR-1 HP-X

This new weapon light has a special optic that projects an intense long-range beam—out to 550 meters, perfect for outdoor defensive uses like lighting up an alleyway or dark path. With the USB-rechargeable battery the light generates 1,300 lumens and 77,000 candela; output is slightly less with CR123A cells. The light comes with standard and extended switches for easy customization. Modes include momentary, constant-on and strobe. Batteries load via a hinged face cap so you don't have to remove the light from the gun or place your hand in front of the muzzle. Available with either battery type. The USB version comes with a Y charging cable.

{ \$359 (USB), \$335 (CR123A); Streamlight.com }





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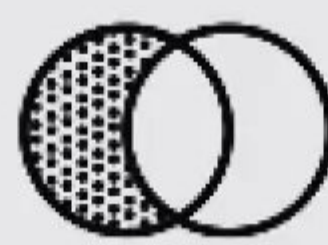
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STRIKING BACK

IF YOUR GUN GOES DOWN, IT CAN STILL BE AN EFFECTIVE WEAPON.

TO THE NEW DEFENSIVE HANDGUNNER,

the idea of striking an attacker with their gun may seem odd. Why would you let an attacker get close enough to strike with your gun? Why not just shoot him from several yards away? The simple answer is that it may not be up to you. Don't forget: The bad guy has a say in the fight, too.

Inattention or distraction may enable an attacker to close in undetected. If he presents an imminent deadly threat, shooting him would be appropriate. But what if you pressed the trigger and heard only a click instead of the anticipated bang? Fortunately, in close quarters, a malfunctioned or empty handgun makes a great bludgeon.

Some worry that striking an attacker with their gun may damage it. Not only is that unlikely, it's also a well-calculated risk, given the alternative. And remember, if your gun was operational, you'd shoot the attacker instead of striking him with your gun.

A properly executed muzzle strike will at least temporarily diminish an attacker's ability to harm you, while creating an opportunity to disengage. With a little distance between you and the attacker, you can try to clear the malfunction or reload as necessary, then assess the situation from a position where you have more distance—and therefore more time.

Here are some things to keep in mind when delivering a muzzle strike. First off, it's called a muzzle strike for a reason. The rules of firearm safety are universally applicable. Just because your gun is



Alfredo Rico photo

▲ Striking with the muzzle of a pistol concentrates the force of the blow better than a fist does, and the likelihood of damaging your hand is less.

seemingly non-operational at the moment doesn't mean you can get careless and allow the muzzle to point at yourself or anything else you're unwilling to destroy. To ensure the muzzle is pointed at the bad guy, that's the portion of your gun you need to strike him with. Target areas are the head and upper chest, with the former being preferred for obvious reasons.

Your gun's muzzle, being much smaller and harder than your fist, is far better at concentrating the force of the blow than your fist. And it's far less injurious to you. Since the small metacarpal bones in your hand are likely to break in a head-on collision with an attacker's head, punching to the head is ill-advised.

The last thing you need during an armed encounter in close quarters is to injure your hand, which would make it difficult if not impossible to fire your gun should the need

arise. And the more skilled you are at punching, the harder the impact and the more likely you are to injure your hand.

As a case in point, former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson—one of the most powerful punchers in the history of the sport—once fractured his hand in a street fight. As a result, his upcoming bout had to be postponed. In the bare-knuckle boxing era, many fights were stopped due to a boxer's hand being injured. Gloves were originally implemented in boxing primarily to protect the fighter's hands, not his opponent's head.

Like a punch, for a muzzle strike to be effective you need to strike with your full body weight behind it. Merely swinging your fist at an opponent is ineffective, regardless of how strong you may be. A smaller fighter like the legendary Jack Dempsey can generate tremendous

power by exploding their entire body weight into the blow That's what you should do when delivering a muzzle strike.

Here's how. From a wide, deep shooting stance, lunge forward with the leg opposite of the hand holding the gun. Your muzzle should contact the attacker as your foot lands on the ground. Timing is critical. If the muzzle impact occurs before or after your foot falls, the strike won't have the full force of your body behind it.

As you drive the muzzle to the target, you'll find it much more natural to rotate the gun inboard about 45 degrees. This motion more closely represents a punch and aids in follow-through, allowing you to drive through the target.

As with delivering an effective

punch, a muzzle strike should be retracted after impact. If you don't pull the gun back, the strike will tend to be more of a push. It will be less effective, and the bad guy may grab your gun.

Your other hand should be up to protect your head in case the attacker strikes back. That's why boxers index their non-punching hand on the side of their face.

Unlike a punch, a muzzle strike can also be delivered with both hands on the gun. The advantage of delivering a two-handed muzzle strike is that you maintain your shooting grip for maximum control of the gun. The mechanics are similar, as you still need to time the impact with your foot fall.

The downside to delivering a two-handed muzzle strike is that you

can't protect your head with your non-punching hand.

Keep in mind that while an effective muzzle strike may drop an attacker in his tracks, the strike is only a means to an end. Your ultimate goal is to create enough space and time to get your gun up and running, whether that means clearing a malfunction or reloading.

From a legal standpoint, striking someone in the face with the muzzle of your gun would be considered a high level of force. While a muzzle strike may not be as likely as a bullet to result in death, it is very likely to cause significant or substantial injury. Therefore, it's incumbent upon you to understand the laws of self-defense in your area and to ensure your response to an attack is lawful.



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COMING CLEAN

OTIS OFFERS UP THE ULTIMATE PISTOL CLEANING KIT.

LIKE MOST SHOOTERS, I HAVE A POT-

pourri of pistol cleaning kits and cleaning accessories scattered on the shelf in my gun room. However, the introduction of Otis's Elite Pistol Kit eliminates the need for multiple cleaning kits by offering everything you need to properly clean handguns from .22 to .45 caliber in one convenient, simple-to-transport zippered case.

Inside that case you'll find a complete set of cleaning tools for every firearm—including a Professional Cleaning Kit in a nylon zippered case. The compact Professional Cleaning Kit offers everything you need for on-the-go cleaning of handguns from .22 to .45 caliber including two- and three-inch gun cleaning patches, directions and two pull-through Memory-Flex cables (eight and 12 inches) with threaded ends to accommodate a variety of cleaning tools.

Those tools include brass scrapers, four bronze brushes and slotted tips. There's also a half-ounce bottle of Shooter's Choice FP-10 Lubricant Elite CLP, a nylon brush and a chamber flag. The Professional Cleaning Kit is held in place within the Elite Pistol Kit case via a nylon strap with a heavy-duty metal snap.

There are a variety of scraper tools that allow you to perform a thorough clean, and these include a bent and straight pick, scraper rod, pin punch, nylon brush, female brass rod and an obstruction remover. It's rare to find such a well-rounded collection of scrapers, and it's even better news that they are located within the easy-to-carry Professional Cleaning Kit. If you're at the range and want to do a thorough



A The Otis Elite Pistol Kit contains everything you need to clean handguns from .22 to .45 caliber. **V** Included is a compact Professional Cleaning Kit (l.), plus four handy Ripcord pull-throughs (r.) in four calibers.



cleaning you'll have everything you need inside the smaller Professional kit—even if you didn't bring along the entire Elite kit.

Two additional half-ounce bottles of Shooter's Choice FP-10 Lubricant Elite CLP are located in loops within the Elite Pistol Kit, and so are bronze and nylon bore brushes and cotton mops ranging in diameter from .22 to .45 inch.

Each brush or mop comes in an individual locking plastic case that is labeled with the brush diameter (.22, 9mm, 10mm and .45). To avoid confusion, each clear plastic case

lists calibers that work with each mop or brush diameter. For example, the 9mm brushes are also labeled .380 and .357. That may seem unnecessary to experienced shooters, but new gun owners can have a hard time with diameters.

Not all bore brushes and mops are created equal, and the ones in the Otis kit are very high quality, and the company says its brushes have twice the fill of the average brush. While I didn't actually count bronze bristles on the .45 brush, I will say the Otis brushes are full and offer plenty of bristles. Cotton mops are simi- →

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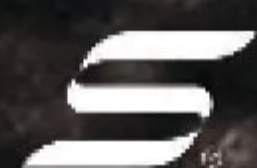


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HANDGUNS | ESSENTIALS

← larly full and absorb a substantial amount of liquid while maintaining a consistent diameter for thorough land-to-groove cleaning.

Each Otis Elite Pistol Kit comes with 100 two-inch and 50 three-inch patches in resealable bags that can be stored in mesh pockets within the kit.

The team at Otis has developed a clever system that allows you to make the best use of each patch while thoroughly cleaning the bore. Each patch contains three pre-cut slots. Those cuts serve a purpose, and if you rotate the patch and use both surfaces you can swab your barrel up to six times depending on the level of fouling inside the bore.

There's also a proper method for attaching each patch to the slotted brass cleaning tip depending upon

the caliber. While I won't go through the entire process—it's explained in the instructions and in a video on the Otis website—I will say that its method allows you to get the most from each patch.

The Elite kit contains four Otis Ripcords for .22, 9mm, 10mm and .45. The Ripcord is perhaps the simplest and most effective one-pass cleaning system available today because it combines several cleaning steps into a single motion. The helical core ensures consistent contact down the length of the bore, and the braided Nomex surface scrubs the lands and grooves clean with a single breech-to-muzzle pull. Nomex also withstands temperatures up to 700 degrees, so you can clean a hot barrel without fear of damaging the Ripcord. It's also threaded so you



▲ Brushes and mops are neatly contained within well-labeled, clear plastic locking cases.

can attach a bore brush for even more thorough cleaning.

The Elite also comes with Otis's 8-in-1 pistol tool, which features a magnetized quarter-inch bit driver. The driver accepts the included pin punch, No. 0 Phillips bit, Glock front sight adjuster and 5/32-inch flat-head bit. The bits are housed within the tool, and integrated into →



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← the body of the tool are an 8/32 threaded insert, punch hammer and a T-handle slot for cables.

The Elite kit contains a Glock magazine disassembly tool, a looped pistol rod with patch cutout and 8/32 threaded head and three double-ended all-purpose brushes. The included microfiber cloth is safe to use on optics. There's also a heavy-duty 11x17-inch cleaning mat.

That's an impressive list of cleaning tools to fit into a single zippered nylon case that measures 15 inches long and just over nine inches tall. The case also features a zippered external pocket, hook-and-loop attachment strip and carry handles. The entire kit weighs three pounds.

I've evaluated several pistol cleaning kits, but the Otis Elite is one of the best. It offers almost

every tool you'll need for cleaning and light gunsmithing on handguns in the most popular calibers, and it's light and easy to transport. It's also very nice to have the right tool for every job at your fingertips.

All the components in the kit are robust and well-designed, making it simple to get a thorough clean. I also like that Otis included three small Shooter's Choice CLP solution bottles. Some cleaning solvents aren't very effective, but CLP is one of the best, and I have relied on it for some time.

The separate Professional Cleaning Kit is a big benefit because at 4x3 inches it's easy to toss in a range bag. The strap system also attaches to the exterior of a backpack.

My only complaint about the Elite is that not everything is secured

inside the case, and sometimes when you open it items have shifted. The primary zipper on the Elite kit works fine, but I wish it were more heavy-duty. It stood up well to testing, but it remains to be seen how well it holds up over years of use.

Overall, though, the Elite kit earns high marks. It covers all the primary cleaning needs, and if there are other items you want to bring—spare springs, wrenches, etc.—you can stash them in the exterior zippered pouch or in smaller external pouches attached to the hook and loop.

The Elite Pistol Kit isn't cheap, but I'll bet if you total up the price of all the cleaning rods, patches, brushes and other assorted items scattered around your gun room you'll realize that a \$170 all-in-one system is something of a bargain. 🔴



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

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

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

other handgun-related topics.

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

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

I think *Handguns* readers will really appreciate MOTV's short-form HD videos covering a wide variety of self-defense topics. These videos are perfect for sharing with family mem-

bers to reinforce the finer points of keeping yourself safe. Like the show episodes, the videos are true HD quality for the ultimate viewing experience.

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

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

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OUT NOW

RETURN OF A LEGEND

BY KEITH WOOD





WALTHER ARMS RETURNS THE PP TO THE FOLD, A HANDSOME AND EFFECTIVE DEFENSIVE SEMIAUTO.

I'm going to write about the Walther PP without mentioning James Bond. Well, fine, but I'm not going to mention him again. The point is that, thanks to popular culture, many Americans are familiar with the Walther PPK. Fewer among us are aware that the PPK is the little brother of the PP, one of the most successful handguns in history.

The Walther PP *Polizeipistole* (Police Pistol), the brainchild of Carl Walther's son Fritz, was the first successful double-action semiautomatic handgun. Sure, other designs pre-dated the 1929 PP, but none of them came close to the level of popularity this pistol reached.

Many of the features we commonly associate with double-action handguns—particularly the manual safety that doubles as a decocker—were first seen on the PP. This was a handgun that forever changed history, and even today we see its DNA in cutting-edge handguns.

Millions of PPs were produced over the decades, with various markings and nuances that make collectors salivate. Some PPs were built with aluminum frames, and rare nickel-finished versions exist. The PP was the mainstay of worldwide law enforcement for much of the 20th century and can still be spotted in the holsters of police and security personnel across the globe.

Thanks to their sleek looks, excellent finishes and compact dimensions, Walther PPs were favorites among Nazi Party bigwigs during the pre-war and wartime eras. PPs were popular war trophies during World War II as well, and a pile →

RETURN OF A LEGEND

← of them made their way to the U.S. in the duffel bags of returning soldiers.

Walther produced the PP from 1929 until the 1990s, and several other makers—Smith & Wesson and Manurhin among them—produced the more compact PPK variant under license throughout the decades. As larger and more powerful handguns became popular with law enforcement, the PP's star faded. Walther discontinued German production of the PP some time ago.

In 2024, Fort Smith, Arkansas-based Walther USA decided that the original PP design was too good to die and has resumed manufacturing the handgun. Walther Arms is

producing the PP right here in the U.S., and what made it great nearly 100 years ago will likely make it relevant once again.

The first PPs were chambered in 7.65x17—also known as .32 ACP—although other chamberings were offered over the years. Current production PPs are available in both .32 ACP and .380 ACP. My test sample was chambered in .380 ACP.

Unlike some of the throwback handgun designs on the market that pay tribute to vintage guns aesthetically, for the most part the new PP is a faithful reproduction of the original, albeit with modern materials and manufacturing techniques. The Arkansas-made PPs are con-

structed from stainless steel, and while many stainless steel PPKs were produced over the decades, I'm not aware of any PPs that were so manufactured.

The frame is smooth, with no checkering or other textures you might expect these days. The tang has been extended slightly, which protects the web of the hand from hammer bite. The grips are checkered polymer with the Walther scroll logo.

The Walther PP is, to me, one of the most attractive handguns ever designed. The combination of flats and sweeping curves gives it an almost Art Deco look.

The fit and finish on my Walther PP sample were excellent. The majority of the pistol was brushed stainless steel, while the top and forward edges of the slide were satin bead blasted. The slide-to-frame and overall parts fit were consistently very good. I spent many hours fondling my dad's 1960s-vintage PPK/S as a kid, admiring every detail, and the Arkansas-built PP is befitting of the Walther name.

Like early single-action Walther handguns, the PP is a simple blowback design. The barrel is fixed to the frame, and the recoil spring rides outside of the barrel. In addition to its traditional duty of sending bullets downrange, the bar-



A The slide-mounted manual safety also functions as a decocker. The magazine release is a button located higher on the frame than most semiautos.



A The top of the stainless steel slide is flat, with a wavy pattern. The pistol is available in .380 ACP or .32 ACP.

WALTHER ARMS PP

TYPE: double-action/single-action semiauto

CALIBER: .32 ACP, .380 ACP (tested)

CAPACITY: 7+1

BARREL: 3.9 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.9/4.3/0.97 in.

WEIGHT: 24 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: stainless steel slide and frame

GRIPS: polymer panels

SIGHTS: integral fixed; red dot front and rear

SAFETIES: manual thumb/decocker

TRIGGER: 12.4 lb. (DA), 5.25 lb. (SA)

PRICE: \$1,149

MANUFACTURER: Walther Arms;

WALTHERARMS.COM

rel doubles as a recoil spring guide. Only the 20-pound recoil spring's tension keeps the slide in battery.

The PP uses an external ring-style hammer that can be manually cocked to place the handgun in single-action mode. There is a slide-mounted external extractor and a frame-mounted ejector. The magazine catch is located on the left side of the frame, a bit higher than we are accustomed to seeing these days.

The slide has vertical cocking serrations at the rear of each flat. The top of the slide is attractively milled with a wavy, serrated pattern that is similar, though not identical, to vintage PPs.

The sights are integral to the slide so they can't be replaced, but they'll never fall off or come loose either. There is a small front ramp with a red dot painted on the blade and a rear square notch with a dab of red at the bottom of the U. The sights are tiny by today's standards, but they allowed for a surprising level of precision when I was bench testing this handgun.

The PP features a slide-mounted manual safety. The safety lever doubles as a decocker which, to the best of my knowledge, was a historical first.

A clever loaded-chamber indicator uses a steel pin that extends from the breech face to the rear of the slide. If the pin is extended, which can be both seen and felt, there is a round in the chamber. There is even a cutout milled into the serrated hammer spur to ensure it is visible regardless of the hammer's condition.

Nearly 100 years after the PP's introduction, DA/SA handgun manufacturers are still trying to lessen the gap between the heavy initial double-action trigger pull and lighter subsequent single-action pulls. That gap was significant in 1929 and, even on today's PP, it remains so.

The double-action pull is smooth but heavy, breaking at more than 12

pounds. It takes real discipline to make a precise shot in double-action mode. The single-action pull is far more civilized, breaking after some take-up at 5.25 pounds.

The PP fires from a seven-round detachable box magazine, and two magazines ship with the gun. One magazine fits flush with the bottom of the frame and is ideal for concealment. The other magazine uses a polymer base pad that serves as a grip extension. With this magazine in place, I was able to get a full-fist-sized grip on the PP.

There is no manual slide stop, but the slide locks back on an empty chamber and remains locked back when the magazine is removed. This is something we expect these days, but it wasn't universal a century ago. Pulling back slightly on the slide and releasing it on a loaded magazine, or with the magazine removed, puts the slide back into battery.

Disassembling the PP is simple once you're familiar with the protocol. With the pistol unloaded, pull the trigger guard downward while the slide is retracted. Once the slide is fully to the rear, lift the back of the slide upward until it clears the frame. The slide can then move forward and off the barrel. The recoil spring can be removed, but the barrel is semi-permanently attached to the frame. Reassemble the pistol by reversing this procedure.

As I mentioned, my dad had a PPK/S. It was gorgeously finished but refused to feed, so my view of these handguns has always been tainted by that experience. I fired three types of ammunition through

the new PP, including two defensive loads with hollowpoint bullets. Reliability was 100 percent.

Accuracy was good, which



A The sights feature a red dot on the U-notch rear paired with a red dot on the front. They are machined as part of the slide and are rock solid, if a bit small.

ACCURACY RESULTS WALTHER ARMS PP				
.380 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Norma MHP	85	1,061	31	2.6
Hornady American Gunner XTP JHP	90	893	34	1.4
American Eagle FMJ	95	974	28	2.0

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired at 15 yards from a Target Shooting, Inc. Model 1500 rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots using a Garmin Xero C1 chronograph. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

RETURN OF A LEGEND

← was not surprising given the fixed barrel; there are simply fewer variables to making such a handgun shoot well. Given the weight of the pistol, recoil was very manageable. There isn't much real estate on the frame, so I had to be careful not to let my support hand thumb ride on the slide.

Although the PP is accurate, it is not designed to be a target pistol. At its core, the PP is a defensive handgun. While civilian concealed carry was probably not front of mind for Fritz Walther when he designed the PP, it is ideal for that purpose.

With this in mind, my range time with the PP focused on shooting steel targets up close and fast. I didn't break out the shot timer, but I found I could repeatedly empty the magazine into a six-inch steel target at 10 yards as quickly as I could get a flash of the front sight. I would have no qualms about carrying this handgun for self-defense.

While the 24-ounce all-steel

PP isn't light, its thin, flat profile makes it comfortable and easy to conceal. Though it's probably too big and heavy for pocket carry, it is ideal for concealment inside the waistband. The heavy double-action trigger pull would make it an attractive option for those who like the comfort of appendix carry but have safety concerns. For deeper concealment, the more compact PPK is the answer.

There aren't many products from 1929 that are still appropriate for daily use. I don't know of anyone who commutes to work in a Ford Model A, rotary phones are out of favor and I'm not writing this article on an Underwood typewriter. That said, I wouldn't feel overly disadvantaged if carrying a Walther Arms PP for self-defense. That fact is a great testament to the original design and present-day manufacturing expertise of Walther Arms.

While researching this piece, I found several recent examples of

people knocking various aspects of the PP and the PPK. Sure, one can find fault with any gun—particularly one that was designed nearly 100 years ago and has been tweaked only slightly over the decades.

The heavy double-action trigger aside, I think the PP is a fine handgun that still has a lot to offer. It is also a well-built pistol that its owner will value long after the latest fad gun is swept aside by the next trend. To use an overused term, the PP is a classic.

I'm happy to see Walther Arms paying tribute to its roots by building an honest-to-goodness PP handgun. It is well-made, attractive, accurate and reliable. You can't mount an optic to it, it doesn't have a compensator and you can't customize the frame with a wood-burning kit. What you can do, though, is slip this handgun into a holster and carry it comfortably, knowing that you have a functional slice of firearms history at your side. 🔴



A The PP ships in an attractive and useful hard case with cutouts for both the pistol and a second magazine that incorporates a polymer extension for a better grip.

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WORTH THE WAIT

BY RICHARD NANCE | PHOTOS BY YAMIL SUED

**HK TOOK ITS TIME IN DEVELOPING THE CC9
MICRO-COMPACT 9MM. THEY GOT IT RIGHT.**



It's hard to compete in the crowded micro-compact 9mm pistol market. It helps when you're Heckler & Koch, aka HK. The new CC9 is the smallest double-stack pistol the company has developed. It's also the first HK pistol designed and manufactured in the U.S. specifically for the U.S. concealed-carry market. Only the German-made barrel is imported.

With the CC9, it's clear HK wasn't just dabbling in the micro-compact 9mm space but rather aiming to es-

tablish itself as a major player in the category. Years in development, the CC9 was extensively tested—freezing and heating the gun, and drop testing it. In addition, designers ran it through high-speed photography to ensure all the moving parts functioned exactly like they should in order to provide proper cycling and barrel lockup.

Highly concealable, the CC9 fills the bill for everyday carry, but it wasn't merely built for EDC; it was built for “that day” when your life or

other innocent lives hang in the balance. On that day, performance is all that matters.

With decades of manufacturing firearms for military and law enforcement behind it, HK has a proven track record for reliability and accuracy. HK put as much time and effort into bringing the CC9 to market as with any of its police and military firearms. The only corners HK cut with the CC9 were to ensure a sleek, snag-free contour.

Dimensionally, the CC9 is similar to other pistols in its class, including the Glock 43, SIG Sauer P365 and Springfield Hellcat. It measures 6.03 inches long, 4.92 inches tall and just 0.99 inch wide. It weighs 18.4 ounces with an empty magazine.

The 3.32-inch cold-hammer-forged, cannon-grade steel barrel features polygonal rifling, which can increase velocity slightly and reduce wear. The shallower grooves produce less bullet deformation and make the barrel easier to clean than traditional rifling. The barrel is +P rated.

The CC9 runs on either a flush-fit 10-round magazine or an extended 12-round magazine, the same as the original SIG P365 and one fewer than the original Hellcat—but four more than the Glock 43. Notches on each side of the magazines correspond to the notched magazine well so there's something to grab hold of should you need to strip the magazine from the pistol to clear a malfunction.

The 10-round magazine makes the CC9 easier to conceal beneath a cover garment. The 12-rounder gives you a couple of extra rounds and provides room for your little finger to achieve a full firing grip. The front of the 12-round magazine base pad is textured to provide traction for your little finger. Combined, these features help mitigate felt recoil.

Recoil can be an issue with polymer-frame micro-compact 9mm pistols. The smaller and lighter →

WORTH THE WAIT

← a pistol is, the more difficult it tends to be to shoot. HK's CC9 carries like a micro-compact but shoots like a bigger pistol. This has a lot to do with the gun's ergonomic grip.

The CC9's grip features an undercut trigger guard and a beavertail. Combined, they contribute to a high hold that's close to the bore—and the closer your grip is to the bore, the better you'll be able to manage

recoil. Shallow finger grooves help lock the grip into your hand. Texturing in the grooves, on the sides of the grip and along the backstrap keeps the CC9 from slipping due to sweat or rain.

Unlike most other micro-compact pistols, the CC9 gives you the option of the standard or large backstrap. Not only does this change the way the pistol feels in your hand, but

it also changes the length of pull. Choose the one that makes it easier to contact the trigger face with the pad of your index finger, which in turn makes it easier to press the trigger straight to the rear—a huge aid to accuracy.

Both the magazine and the slide stop are ambidextrous, another advantage the HK has over the competition. It's set up for success whether you're a right- or left-handed shooter, holding the pistol in your dominant or non-dominant hand. Such is a hallmark of a true fighting pistol.

The low-profile/anti-snag slide stop and takedown lever are recessed to avoid accidental activation, yet they are easy to manipulate. Horizontal serrations provide traction for your thumb. The magazine release is more prominent than the other controls. It boasts vertical rather than horizontal serrations to prevent slippage.

Swirled textured areas above the front of the trigger guard on either side of the frame serve as index points for your non-dominant thumb and your trigger finger when not shooting. These help ensure a consistent grip and provide a place to register your trigger finger. Placing your trigger finger on the textured area is smart. Then, instead of thinking to not place your trigger finger →



▲ The CC9's slide stop and magazine release are ambidextrous, and the slide stop and takedown lever are recessed so they won't snag.



▲ Unlike most pistols in its class, the CC9 ships with interchangeable backstraps—standard and large—and the texturing and finger grooves provide a solid grip.

HK USA CC9

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto centerfire

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: one 10-round and one 12-round mag supplied

BARREL: 3.32 in., cold hammer forged, cannon-grade steel

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.03/4.92/0.99 in.

WEIGHT: 18.4 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: DLC-finished cannon-grade alloy steel slide, polymer frame

SIGHTS: black serrated rear, tritium front; cut for optics on Shield RMSc/Holosun K footprint

TRIGGER: 4.5 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETY: trigger blade, firing pin

PRICE: \$699

MANUFACTURER: Heckler & Koch,
HK-USA.COM



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WORTH THE WAIT

← inside the trigger guard or on the trigger, you can focus on placing it where it belongs: on the textured area.

The curved trigger features a blade safety, and the trigger face is wide and grooved. There's considerable take-up to get to the wall,

where slightly more pressure will break the shot. HK lists the CC9's trigger pull weight at five pounds. According to my Lyman digital trigger pull gauge, the trigger pull measured about 4.5 pounds. Reset was easily discernible.

The CC9's two-slot accessory rail



▲ If you prefer to stick with the iron sights, the slide cover plate blends with the contour of the CC9's slide.



▲ The CC9's front sight features a green luminescent ring surrounding a tritium insert, making it highly visible in all lighting conditions.

ACCURACY RESULTS HK USA CC9				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Black Hills EXP JHP	115	1,196	19	1.4
Hornady Critical Defense	115	1,141	6	1.5
Fiocchi FMJ	115	1,084	17	2.1

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups from a bag rest at 15 yards using a Shield RMSx red dot. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

is the perfect anchor point for a compact light. Front and rear serrations afford you options for racking the slide or conducting a chamber check. The serrations are slanted slightly forward, with the front serrations being wider than the rear.

The CC9's external extractor doubles as a loaded-chamber indicator. It protrudes from the pistol, revealing a red line when loaded—providing a tactile and visual indicator of the status of the chamber.

The sights on the CC9 are viable, but they're not tall enough to co-witness with most red-dot sights. If you plan to use a red dot and want a backup sighting system, changing to suppressor-height sights may be in order.

The slide is cut for direct mounting of red dots on the Shield RMSc/Holosun K footprint. Directly mounted optics are more secure and less obtrusive than those mounted with a plate.

The CC9 has no manual safety to contend with, which is my preference for a defensive pistol because, under duress, failing to deactivate a manual safety is just one more thing that could go wrong. The CC9's trigger blade safety and slide-mounted firing pin safety are designed to prevent an accidental discharge if the CC9 is dropped or struck.

Disassembly is a cinch. The magazine must be removed from the pistol before the takedown lever can be rotated downward for disassembly, so unload the pistol, lock back the slide and rotate the takedown lever. The slide can then be removed from the frame. There's no need to press the trigger to remove the slide, which is a nice safety feature.

The chassis is the serialized component of the CC9. At press time, HK indicated it was planning to offer additional grip modules for the CC9 at some point—potentially offering owners the possibility of further tailoring the pistol to their needs.

For accuracy testing, I rested the CC9 on a bench at 15 yards with →



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WORTH THE WAIT

← a Shield RMSx red dot. Average group size ranged from 1.4 inches to 2.1 inches with the three 115-grain loads. That's plenty accurate for a micro-compact 9mm pistol—or really any pistol.

Of course, a micro-compact pistol is designed for concealed carry. In the real world, attacks tend to occur closer than 15 yards, so I ran the CC9

hard at distances between seven and 10 yards. The results were impressive. The pistol recovered well from recoil and made it easy to deliver multiple rapid-fire rounds on target. Best of all, throughout the testing, the CC9 ran 100 percent reliably.

Despite this being my first time shooting the CC9, it felt just right in my hands. The ergonomic grip

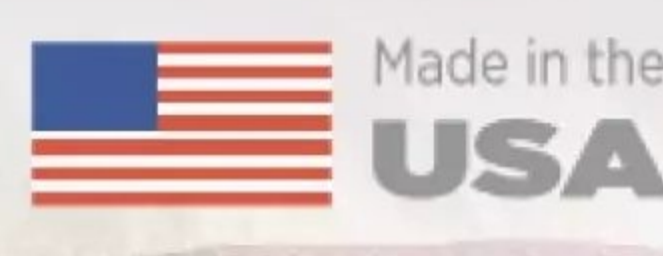
design nudges your hand high, with the web against the beavertail and your middle finger below the trigger guard. With the 12-round magazine, I could easily achieve a full firing grip, which made the CC9's recoil easy to manage. Having 12+1 rounds of 9mm in such a compact, shootable package is easy to get used to.

The CC9 wasn't an afterthought, nor does it represent HK testing the waters in a sea of micro-compact 9mm pistols. On the contrary, the CC9 was not rushed to market to keep pace with the competition. Instead, it was painstakingly tested to ensure the finished product was a pistol you could bet your life on and one worthy of the HK name.

With a suggested retail price of \$699, the CC9 isn't the cheapest pistol in its class, but it may be the best. HK fans are sure to love the CC9, but more than that, the CC9 will likely bring HK to the forefront of the U.S. concealed-carry market.



A Installing a red dot like the Shield RMSx is a direct-mount affair, which keeps the sight lower—although the stock iron sights will not co-witness.



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PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

WILSON COMBAT'S DIVISION 77 PROJECT I IS A 1911 LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN.

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



the original design has been heavily modified and updated.

“The Division 77 guns are similar to BMW’s M-Series cars or Mercedes-Benz AMGs,” says Cameron Ankele, chief operating officer at Wilson Combat. The Division 77 pistols are his pet project, and since both he and Bill Wilson are avid auto racers, it’s no surprise that Ankele uses the analogy to specialized car divisions that allow auto makers to push the envelope of high performance.

These special firearms offer Wilson Combat a proving ground to test their newest design features on a relatively small scale, and it’s almost certain these features will show up on other Wilson Combat guns in the future. For now, though, the Division 77 pistols are available only in limited quantities. The Project 1 gun I tested is one of only 500 that will be built.

One of the most significant features on the Project 1 is a precision-cut compensator that directs gases upward to help manage muzzle rise and recoil. Compensators aren’t unusual today, but Wilson Combat didn’t just machine holes to vent gases, claim these made the gun more manageable to shoot and consider the job done.

Instead, the company used high-tech diagnostic equipment to evaluate the Division 77 pistol’s response to firing a round. Wilson engineers used Dynamic Recoil Analysis System (DRAS) equipment that collects 2,000 data points every 350 milliseconds to examine what happens when the shooter touches off a round.

Ankele called the results “very eye opening.” One of his goals was to examine the Accu-Comp that Bill Wilson developed in the 1970s and improve upon its recoil-reduction properties. The Accu-Comp was popular with competitive shooters because it did a good job mitigating muzzle rise and recoil. But Wilson designed the Accu-Comp →

As a gun writer I can’t count how many times I’ve described new 1911 pistols as “modern.” What that really means is that this century-old design has added features like optic-cut slides and double-stack magazines, making it competitive against the field of newer pistols. But the Wilson Combat Division 77 Project 1 is something entirely different. It doesn’t keep pace with

modern guns. It’s a 9mm 1911 with an eye toward the future of firearms design.

Bill Wilson has always been an innovator in the field of 1911s, but the Division 77 guns—so named for the year he began making 1911s—prove that Wilson Combat is not constrained to traditional John Browning features. In fact, while this gun does remain a 1911 at heart, almost every detail found on

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

← without the aid of DRAS digital sensors. By testing and retesting compensator designs, Ankele was able to reduce the recoil of the Division 77 Project 1 9mm substantially.

“The geometry has to be perfect,” he said.

After the Wilson Combat team settled on a design for the Division 77 gun’s ports, they compared it with Wilson’s double-stack EDC X9 1911 and found the Division 77’s recoil reduction was substantially better. According to Ankele, the new compensator cuts recoil by as much as 42 percent, a figure the company has verified during its extensive data collection.

Ankele and the Division 77 team also closely examined how shooters mount optics on a pistol and

developed an improved system for the Division 77 guns.

Removing most optics plates is straightforward, generally requiring nothing more than loosening a pair of screws. Installing an optic on the Division 77 gun is slightly more involved but doesn’t require advanced gunsmithing skills or specialized tools.

To mount an optic, remove the cover plate’s two primary screws, depress the firing pin with a punch and pull up on the cover plate. As you do, the firing pin stop will also come free; bear in mind that the firing pin will be under pressure.

Project 1 pistols use an interchangeable pin system for red dot mounting. Pins come in color-coded packaging, and the company says that by rearranging the pins you

can mount around 90 percent of the optics on the market.

It’s certainly a much simpler system than ordering plates. The system also allows for a more durable rear sight plate that doesn’t have to be re-zeroed after mounting.

The front sight is easily removable as well. So at this point you may be wondering why Wilson engineers set up the slide cover plate in such a way that when it’s removed for an optic there’s no rear sight on the gun and also opted for a removable front sight. Both fly in the face of the popular concept of co-witnessing irons with a red dot.

The answer is simple, and somewhat surprising. The team’s philosophy is, basically, pick a side. If you want to shoot irons, shoot irons. If you want to shoot a red dot, do away with iron sights and commit to the optic. Red dots are so dependable these days, the reasoning goes, that iron sights are superfluous on a pistol with an optic.

While the sight system and the compensator are revolutionary, the advancements on the Division 77 Project 1 gun don’t stop there. The pistol features carry cuts and ball end mill cuts, and the slide machining is unique to the Project 1 Division 77 pistol. Traditionally the 1911 features a slide with →



▲ While it’s a 1911 in almost all respects, the Project 1 lacks a grip safety. The slide features a unique profile and three aggressive cuts at the rear.



▲ The secret sauce to making this an incredibly fast, flat-shooting pistol lies in the arrangement of the ports in the copper PVD-coated bull barrel.

WILSON COMBAT DIVISION 77 PROJECT 1

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 18; 3 mags supplied

BARREL: 5 in. stainless, compensated, fluted bull, copper PVD finish

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.7/5.5/1.4 in.

WEIGHT: 33.8 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Black Armor-Tuff finished stainless tri-top slide, aluminum X-frame

GRIPS: G10 Trak Starburst panels

TRIGGER: 4.0 lb. pull (measured)

SIGHTS: Wilson Combat Battlesight rear, removable fiber-optic front; Project 1 pin cut for optics

PRICE: \$3,995 (as tested)

MANUFACTURER: Wilson Combat,

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← a slab-sided profile that is the same width fore and aft. The Project 1 gun measures just 0.94 inch across the slide near the muzzle. The rear of the slide measures 1.1 inches wide—still quite narrow for a 1911 but noticeably wider than at the muzzle.

This allows for the incorporation of three aggressive forward-angled slide serrations at the rear and provides a wide enough platform so optics can be easily secured on the gun. The wide, deep serrations offer complete control over the slide.

If you want to run a press check you'll find that the forward serrations and slide cuts offer plenty of

grip there as well. And it doesn't take much force to manipulate the slide, which is hand-fitted to the frame and therefore moves incredibly smoothly.

The five-inch stainless steel fluted barrel has a copper PVD finish that's visible through a pair of slide lightening cuts that widen toward the muzzle. The top of the slide features 30-l.p.i. serrations to cut glare. There are glare-reducing 40-l.p.i. serrations at the rear of the slide as well, and there's a heavy machine chamfer on the bottom of the slide.

Division 77 Project 1 pistols fea-

ture a high-capacity compact aluminum X-frame with Wilson's Reliability Enhanced frame rails. The black G10 grip panels feature Trak texturing that is more aggressive than the microtexturing commonly found on today's carry guns. Trak texturing is also found on the front- and backstraps, and it does an effective job locking the gun in place, which is probably why competitive shooters and law enforcement professionals like it so well.

Although a 1911 at heart, the Division 77 Project 1 has no grip safety and no traditional barrel bushing. Instead, the Project 1 incorporates an RPG one-piece guide rod with a reverse plug.

Disassembly of the gun differs significantly from the classic 1911. With the Division 77 Project 1 you simply remove the transverse pin/slide stop by lining up the half-moon portion at the top of the pin with the corresponding cutout in the slide. From there the slide assembly can be removed and the guide rod and spring pulled free from the slide.

The RPG design allows you to remove the guide rod without having to disassemble it as you would a traditional two-piece guide rod. The reverse plug slides out, and the barrel slides forward for removal.

The pistol features Wilson's Bullet Proof hammer and ambidextrous thumb safety. The slide is treated with a rugged black Armor-Tuff finish while the small parts and the barrel have the copper PVD finish I mentioned earlier.

Three 18-round magazines are included with each gun, and they all sport aluminum Project 1 base pads. An integral magazine well allows for positive reloads, and the flat-face trigger breaks right at four pounds with minimal take-up. The break is crisp and clean, just what you'd expect from a precision pistol.

It's rare that I intentionally test pistols with iron sights, but I wanted to evaluate the Division 77 Project 1 gun with the included Battle- →



A The front of the slide is relieved and serrated. Once field-stripped, the gun's unique RPG design allows you to remove the two-piece guide rod without disassembling it.



A The integral cover plate and rear sight are attached to the firing pin stop—a design that prevents changes in zero when the sight is removed and replaced. Underneath lies Wilson's pin system for mounting red dots.

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← sights, for two reasons. First, these iron sights are zeroed at 25 yards, and I wanted to see if the point of impact was indeed dead-on at that range. Second, Wilson Combat promises a reliable return to zero when the sights are removed and replaced.

No surprise, but the gun performed exactly as advertised. The first shot was within an inch of the bullseye at 25 yards, and when I removed the sight and returned it to position there was no discernible point of impact shift.

Shooting the Division 77 Project 1 gun from a bench is more like shooting a target rifle than a pistol. The trigger is consistent; accuracy is, not surprisingly, great. Every group I shot with the first two loads was between 1.4 and 1.7 inches at 25 yards.

Things went downhill for a bit when the screws that hold the irons in the dovetail on the cover plate worked loose, which was my fault for not checking them. I tightened them

ACCURACY RESULTS | WILSON COMBAT DIVISION 77 PROJECT 1

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady American Gunner XTP	115	1,121	14	1.6
Wilson Combat Signature Match HAP	125	1,051	14	1.5
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep	135	1,058	11	1.7
Speer Gold Dot G2	147	994	17	1.9
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	147	963	21	2.2

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with iron sights at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are 10-shot averages recorded on a Caldwell VelociRadar. Abbreviation: HAP, Hornady Action Pistol; FMJ, full metal jacket

and was right back to hitting 1.5-inch groups.

On a recent episode of “Handguns” TV, we showcased hostage shots and 25-yard head shots, and since the Division 77 gun was shooting so well I thought I’d just combine these two challenging drills for this review. How about hostage shots at 25 yards offhand? No problem for the Wilson Combat Project 1. I’m not sure how well I’d do at that drill with any other pistol.

That’s very good accuracy and probably as well as my eyes will do

with irons, but believe it or not accuracy wasn’t the most impressive feature on this pistol. All the fiddling and data collection Ankele and his team conducted in the lab has resulted in a pistol that shoots as flat as any 9mm out there.

If you really want to feel good about your ability to shoot quickly and accurately, pick up a Division 77 Project 1. Every gun with a compensator—and that’s about half of the carry guns on the market now—promises reductions in recoil and muzzle rise. The Division 77 delivers on →

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← those promises in a way that no other gun can match.

Like a Mercedes AMG 63 GT going through the slalom, this gun begs to be pushed to the limits—always remaining stable and planted in the hand while encouraging the shooter to push the limits of accuracy and speed a bit more. In short, the Project 1 is fun to shoot.

With its lightweight frame, the Division 77 pistol weighs in at just under 34 ounces unloaded, and with a full 18-round magazine it tips the scales at 41.5 ounces. That's lighter than a standard 1911 Government pistol, but the grip design and weight make this gun easy to handle. It's beautifully balanced.

The attention to detail is simply outstanding, and the hand-tuned frame-to-slide fit leaves no doubt this is a premium pistol. It also carries a premium price tag. The first 100 Project 1 guns with accompanying metal boxes and challenge coins will



▲ The Trak texturing is far more aggressive than modern microtexturing, and it keeps the gun planted in your hand without being abrasive.

set you back a cool \$4,295. The other 400 guns will cost \$3,995.

Once the first 500 are sold Wilson Combat will be on to Project 2, Project 3 and Project 4, for a total of 2,000 guns.

I'd imagine that collectors and 1911 fans will snatch them up. The Division 77 Project 1 gun isn't just

for the well-heeled 1911 guy, though. No matter what type of semiauto you favor, you'll find it impossible not to like these pistols.

They offer us a glimpse into the future of pistol design, 1911 and otherwise. It will be exciting to see what future Division 77 guns arrive on the scene. 

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LOOK, MA— NO LOCK!

S&W'S NEW MODEL 10 CLASSIC DROPS THE INTERNAL LOCK—TO THE APPLAUSE OF WHEELGUN FANS EVERYWHERE.

BY J. SCOTT RUPP

Whether you're a revolver enthusiast or Smith & Wesson collector, the introduction of two S&W no-lock classics is cause for celebration. The oft-maligned internal revolver lock arrived on S&W guns in 2001 and has been with us ever since, except on some J frames and a few other models. With the newly introduced Model 10 Classic and Model 19 Classic, the lock-access hole in the left side of the frame above the cylinder release is gone.

If you want to know more about the lock, feel free to read the accompanying sidebar, but let's dive right into the Model 10 Classic No Internal Lock, its official name. And it is classic in every way—one of the most iconic revolvers the company has ever made, with more than 6 million produced. Therefore it's worth briefly reaching back into the history of this six-shot K-frame .38 Special.

The Model 10 traces its lineage to the .38 Military & Police 1st Model, one of the so-called Hand Ejector revolvers that dates to 1899. The .38 Military & Police introduced the world to the .38 S&W Special car-

tridge that would go on to become the preeminent law enforcement round for much of the 20th century—as well as a prime self-defense, target and plinking choice for everyone else.

According to the third edition of *The Standard Catalog of Smith & Wesson* by Jim Supica and Richard Nahas (2006), that basic design later became the .38 Military & Police Victory Model (1942) and then the post-World War II .38 Military & Police (1945), which the authors dubbed the “pre-Model 10.”

The postwar .38 M&P was a square-butt gun built on the K frame that featured a new short hammer throw. Its successor, the Model 10, was introduced as such in 1957 and incorporated a new sliding hammer-block safety.

In addition to various barrel lengths ranging from two to six inches, the Model 10 has been produced in blue and nickel finishes, and in round- and square-butt configurations.

There was a short run of prototypes in .357 Magnum, as well as a contract run of guns in .38 S&W—also known as .38 S&W Short or →



LOOK, MA—NO LOCK!

← .38/200 and not the same as .38 Special—that went to Canada.

The latest in this noble line, the Model 10 Classic, borrows a number of features from its predecessors. One of the most notable from an aesthetic point of view is the grips, which like those on the .38 M&P Victory are unchecked and unadorned with any sort of medallion.

The Model 10 Classic's grips are from Tyler Gun Works, whose motto is "Where pretty meets performance." The grips on the Model 10 certainly live up to that, at least in my opinion. They're dark with subtle but handsome figuring, and they're of the Magna style that was introduced in the 1930s—the top of the grip extending higher on the frame than traditional S&W grips.

"We wanted to use high-grade walnut for the grips to improve the

overall quality of the products we are providing to consumers," said S&W product manager Andrew Gore. "We were already working with TGW to provide grips for the mountain gun project [*Ed. note: special 629 and 686 models*] and decided we would also use them on the Model 10, as we knew the quality of wood they could provide."

The frontstrap and backstrap are smooth. Until 1981 the Smith & Wesson logo was engraved on the sideplate, but according to Supica and Nahas it was moved to the left side of the frame to facilitate sideplate engraving. The cylinder is fluted, and the gas ring—which at various times had been on either the cylinder or the yoke—is on the cylinder, where it has been located since the mid-1970s.

Early Model 10s had a checkered hammer and serrated trigger, but

the Model 10 Classic's trigger is the smooth combat style found on later models. The double-action trigger pull on my sample averaged eight pounds, six ounces with no discernible stacking. The single action was a crisp two pounds, 15 ounces. And in case you're wondering, the presence or absence of the internal lock has no effect on trigger pull.

The Model 10 Classic sports a four-inch barrel. It's a one-piece barrel as befits a classic revolver, and it's tapered—a style that disappeared from the Model 10 in the mid-1990s.

The Classic's front sight harkens back to the .38 M&P Victory guns, with a round blade instead of the modern Model 10's serrated, ramped design. The blade is CNC-machined during the barrel-making process. The rear sight is a gutter notch milled into the topstrap.

The left side of the barrel is stamped ".38 S&W SPL +P," so you know you're good to go if you're a fan of the stouter .38 loading. The right side is simply stamped "SMITH & WESSON."

There's a partial underlug to protect the knurled head of the ejector rod. The yoke cut is stamped with the serial number, which is also on the butt, as well as the model and variant number—an aspect of S&W revolvers that gets collectors all excited.

For the most part, every time →



▲ The big feature with the Model 10 Classic is what's missing: the internal lock. The gun has a superbly smooth double-action trigger pull.



▲ The four-inch barrel is tapered, a throwback to earlier Model 10s, and the round-blade front sight is reminiscent of postwar .38 M&P revolvers.

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 10 CLASSIC NO LOCK

TYPE: double-action/single-action revolver

CALIBER: .38 Special +P

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 4 in. tapered

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.87/5.85/1.45 in.

WEIGHT: 34.6 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: blued steel frame, cylinder

GRIPS: Tyler Gun Works walnut

TRIGGER: smooth combat; DA pull, 8 lb. 6 oz.; SA pull, 2 lb. 15 oz.

SIGHTS: gutter notch rear, round-blade front

PRICE: \$979

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson,

SMITH-WESSON.COM



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← there are significant engineering changes to a particular model it gets a dash followed by the number of the variant. The Model 10 Classic is the “10-15” for Model 10, 15th variant. The big change between the 10-14—the other current-production Model 10—and the 10-15 is, of course, the deletion of the internal lock.

Another quick point about the lock. Some have argued that the reason S&W has stuck with the internal lock is because eliminating it could open the company to litigation by making a revolver “less safe.” The facts don’t support that.

Smith & Wesson revolvers include three safety features that are completely independent from the internal lock. A rebound slide and a hammer block prevent the hammer from striking the internal, floating firing pin unless the trigger is pulled; the gun will not fire if it is dropped or the hammer struck with force.

Additionally, a hammer stop keeps the cylinder from being opened while the hammer is back and vice versa; you can’t cock the hammer when the cylinder is open.

Thankfully I didn’t drop the revolv-

er during testing or when we used it on the set of “Handguns” TV, so these safety features were never tested.

What I did test were bench and defensive accuracy, and the Model 10 Classic passed with flying colors.

Accuracy results are shown in the accompanying chart. That’s as good as I can shoot rudimentary irons, especially at 25 yards. The averages

are solid, and the best single group of the day was right at an inch.

All the bench testing was done in single action. The real fun came in shooting double-action rapid fire at seven yards.

I own a few S&W revolvers, and the double-action pull on the Model 10 Classic is far and away better than any of them—including a 640 Pro, →



▲ The six-shot K-frame’s grips are of the Magna style, and like those on the “pre-Model 10” they’re unchecked and lack any sort of medallion.

What’s Up, Lock?

At the turn of this century, the company that owned Smith & Wesson at the time, the British firm Tomkins PLC, made a deal with the Clinton administration that, among other things, led to the company installing an internal lock on its revolvers. The move brought swift condemnation from many in the gun community.

The lock itself is a small hole in the left side of the revolver’s frame above the cylinder release into which the provided key fit. Turning the key in the indicated direction locked the hammer and prevented the trigger from being pulled. On exposed-hammer wheelguns, a small metal flag stamped “Locked” was raised next to the hammer when the lock was engaged.

It wasn’t really that gun owners had a problem with the overarching principle behind the internal lock: keeping unauthorized people from firing the gun. The primary objection was that Smith & Wesson’s ownership had caved to the anti-gunners. From an aesthetics perspective, revolver enthusiasts didn’t like the hole in the side of the frame or the “arrow and L” engraving above it that told users which way to rotate the key.

The lock was also blamed for malfunctions, cases in which the lock had allegedly engaged by itself during firing, rendering the gun tem-

porarily inoperative. My research indicates that in the isolated cases when this did actually occur, it was in super-light frames firing magnum rounds—think a scandium-frame .44 Magnum, for example. I think it’s more likely that because the lock was so despised, any hitches in a gun’s function were often falsely attributed to it.

I’ve owned a Model 629 for close to 20 years and have hundreds of rounds through it—both magnums and .44 Specials. The lock has never engaged on its own. And while I’m mostly a traditionalist, the lock doesn’t bug me from an aesthetics standpoint. I don’t even notice it anymore. But I get the objection, and I’m glad to see these no-lock Smith & Wessons and expect them to sell really well.—JSR



▲ Inserting the provided key into the hole and turning in the indicated direction blocks the hammer from moving.



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← which has a factory-tuned trigger. The Model 10 Classic's is smooth as silk, as if it had been in action for decades instead of weeks, and six-shot groups at combat distance ran between two and 2.5 inches. No wonder this gun was a primary law enforcement choice for such a long time.

Four-inch .38 Specials have a level of recoil that nearly anyone can handle. Of the ammunition I tried, the Blazer and the Black Hills were particularly soft-shooting and would make great plinking and training loads—especially for new shooters.

While some people might turn up their noses at the .38 as a defensive cartridge in an age when there are plenty of more powerful choices, it's not like the round has somehow suddenly become less effective. In fact, with today's ammunition it's even better than it ever was, and should you have a mind to buy this gun for more than its collector value, the Model 10 Classic will serve you just as well as it has legions of police, military and everyday folks for more than a century.

But I think the Model 10 Classic is definitely going to be sought after

by collectors. Fit and finish on my sample were good, with a few minor exceptions. The top of the muzzle directly ahead of the front sight showed some machining marks. Also, the left grip panel was slightly proud at the butt and the frontstrap, while the right panel was flush in those spots.

That's really neither here nor there. The lack of the lock and the historic features are what's going to drive sales, and you can snap one up for \$979. It is a little more expensive than the current standard Model 10, and you can chalk that up primarily to the grips. Tyler Gun Works custom wood grips for other Smith & Wessons go for around \$200. Gore notes that the tapered barrel and large ejector knob are also cost factors.

Regardless, this is a gun any S&W fan or revolver lover can appreciate. Whether you have an eye toward collecting or simply want to own a piece of wheelgun history you'll really appreciate on the range—and a gun that can still get the job done for defensive use—the Model 10 Classic is a winner.



▲ Like more modern Model 10s, the sideplate does not feature the S&W logo—a change made in 1981 to allow for custom sideplate engraving.

ACCURACY RESULTS | S&W MODEL 10 CLASSIC NO LOCK

	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
.38 Special				
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	110	939	23	1.5
Blazer Brass FMJ	125	859	19	2.1
Black Hills Cowboy Action CNL	158	687	11	1.7
Fiocchi Defense Dynamics JHP	158	861	16	1.9

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



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NIGHTHAWK'S FLAT-SHOOTING SINGLE STACK SAND HAWK SHOTS AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS.

BY RICHARD NANCE | PHOTOS BY YAMIL SUED





Since its formation in 2004, Nighthawk Custom has manufactured some of the finest 1911 pistols in the world. At Nighthawk Custom, “One gun, one gunsmith” is more than a slogan. It’s a commitment to quality.

Every component of a Nighthawk Custom 1911 is fully machined from bar-stock billet steel. Parts are made oversize to allow for hand fitting by a gunsmith using files and sanding sticks. All 46 parts are fitted to a particular Nighthawk Custom 1911 to create a highly functional work of art.

All Nighthawk Custom pistols are test fired before they leave the Berryville, Arkansas, facility. If the pistol doesn’t meet the company’s stringent standards, it doesn’t leave the shop. Pride in craftsmanship and accountability at Nighthawk Custom is exemplified by the gunsmith’s initials being stamped under the left grip panel.

One of Nighthawk Custom’s most popular pistols is the Sand Hawk, a double-stack 1911 with a Government-size frame and an integral compensator.

“The Sand Hawk is our first 1911 pistol that features our full-length dust cover and square trigger guard frame,” said Landon Stone, Nighthawk’s director of marketing.

These features—combined with the Sand Hawk’s flat dark earth Cerakote finish and black controls—strike a perfect balance between tactical and elegant. Never one to rest on its laurels, Nighthawk Custom recently introduced a single-stack variant of the Sand Hawk: the Single Stack Sand Hawk.

The new pistol is chambered in 9mm and runs on 10-round magazines, as opposed to 17-round magazines like the original Sand Hawk. As a result, the grip is slightly narrower, which aids in controlling the pistol—especially for shooters with smaller hands.

The Single Stack Sand Hawk is also available in .45 ACP at no →

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← extra charge or in 10mm for an additional \$100.

You might assume the Single Stack Sand Hawk would be lighter than the original Sand Hawk, but that's not the case. It's actually five ounces heavier, thanks to its 416R stainless steel frame, compared to the Sand Hawk's aluminum frame.

Weighing 43.3 ounces, the Single Stack Sand Hawk is quite heavy. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Heavy pistols tend to produce less felt recoil and muzzle rise, making them easier and faster to shoot.

"The Single Stack Sand Hawk is the flattest shooting pistol that

Nighthawk has ever built," Stone said. Of course, being flat shooting has a lot to do with the integral compensator as well.

I've reviewed a lot of pistols over the years, but few are even in the same league as the Single Stack Sand Hawk. When I first saw the pistol, I was impressed with its clean lines and smooth contours, as well as its heft and ergonomic design. It's like getting into the driver's seat of a luxury car. You immediately realize why it's more expensive than a run-of-the-mill model.

The Single Stack Sand Hawk's Government frame is topped with

a 416R stainless steel slide that houses a five-inch match-grade barrel constructed of the same material. The integral compensator blends perfectly with the contour of the pistol. A rack of the slide lets you know the tolerances are tight without compromising the buttery-smooth slide cycling.

The Single Stack Sand Hawk is completely dehorned for snag-free concealed carry. The edges are hand-beveled, and there wasn't a blemish to be seen or felt on the test gun.

The slide has wide serrations—two up front and five in the rear. The single-slot accessory rail extends from the front of the trigger guard to the end of the dust cover. The model I tested was equipped with a SureFire X300 Ultra light, which is a \$379 upgrade. This full-size light adds weight to the front of the pistol, which mitigates muzzle flip, while enabling you to illuminate a threat without compromising your shooting grip.

Nighthawk's Interchangeable Optic System (IOS) is a \$350 upgrade. The IOS is a unique, convenient mounting system that facilitates a low-profile optic mount via the dovetail cut in the slide. Plates →



▲ All the parts are produced oversize and then hand-fitted by the sole gunsmith who works on that gun, resulting in a level of performance unmatched by production 1911s.



▲ The pistol features an integral compensator and ported barrel that significantly reduce muzzle rise and felt recoil.

NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM SINGLE STACK SAND HAWK

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: 9mm Luger (tested), 10mm Auto (upcharge), .45 ACP

CAPACITY: 10+1

BARREL: 5 in., fluted and ported 416R match-grade stainless steel

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.47/5.61/1.35 in.

WEIGHT: 43.3 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: FDE Cerakote-finished 416R stainless steel slide and frame; G10 RailScales grip panels

SIGHTS: gold bead front, black Heine Ledge rear; IOS optics cut (as tested)

TRIGGER: solid flat-face aluminum, 3 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETY: grip, single-side thumb

PRICE: \$5,199; \$6,915 as tested

MANUFACTURER: Nighthawk Custom, NIGHTHAWKCUSTOM.COM

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← can be swapped in a matter of seconds with nothing more than an Allen wrench.

The IOS system gives you the option of switching optics or switching from an optic to iron sights or vice-versa without having to worry about re-zeroing. IOS plates are available for the following footprints: Trijicon RMR, Shield RMSc, Leupold DeltaPoint Pro, Aimpoint Acro, Vortex Viper, Holosun 509T and Docter/Noblex.

With the IOS system, the integral Heine Ledge black rear sight is



positioned in front of the optic window. The pistol's standard-height sights are visible through the lower portion of the window.

Like the original, the Single Stack Sand Hawk sports a gold bead front sight, which not only adds a touch of class but also has a practical application because it draws your focus when you're using iron sights. If gold isn't your thing, you can upgrade to a tritium or fiber-optic front sight for \$50.

Controls on the Single Stack Sand Hawk are what you'd expect on a high-end 1911. There's an oversize thumb safety, which is easily manipulated on and off. You have the option of upgrading to an ambidextrous thumb safety for \$150. While many prefer to have a thumb safety on either side of the pistol, some right-handed shooters feel that a thumb safety on the right side of the pistol is more of a hindrance than a benefit.

The slide stop is big enough to use as a slide release. Some shooters prefer to rack the slide to chamber a round, but I prefer to hit the slide

◀ **The grip is thin enough for most shooters to wrap their hand around, and the RailScales grip and front-strap texturing lock the gun in place.**

release with my left thumb because I find it an efficient way to run a 1911.

A memory bump ensures the hand-blended grip safety is deactivated, even with a less-than-perfect grip. The beavertail and Ultra High Cut frontstrap facilitate a high hold on the pistol, which is conducive to controlling recoil. The beavertail also protects the web of your hand from getting bitten by the skeletonized hammer. The magazine release is easy to reach without being in the way when gripping the pistol.

The G10 RailScales grip panels have a miniature dot texture that, combined with the dimpled texturing on the frontstrap and main-spring housing, locks the pistol into your hand.

The 9mm Single Stack Sand Hawk ships with two 10-round magazines. The mag well funnels magazines into the pistol for efficient loading. The magazine base plates protrude from the bottom of the mag well so you have something to grab hold of should you need to strip the magazine from the gun. This is particularly useful when clearing a malfunction, which is problematic with flush-fit magazines.

Nighthawk Custom 1911s are known for their exceptional triggers. Rather than pivoting at a hinge like other triggers, the sliding 1911 trigger produces a smooth, clean trigger press.

Of course, some 1911 triggers are better than others. The trigger on my sample broke cleanly at three pounds. It's one of the better 1911 triggers I've ever tried, which is one reason the Single Stack Sand Hawk is such an accurate pistol.

Slow-fire accuracy is one thing, but in a self-defense situation, you can't assume a single round on target will stop the threat. That's when having a pistol that's easy to control in recoil really shines. A compensated pistol like the Single Stack Sand Hawk produces less muzzle rise, enabling you to deliver rapid hits on target. →



▲ **The optional IOS system includes an integral rear sight that's positioned in front of the optic. Plates are available for most popular footprints, like the Trijicon RMR shown here.**



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“There is a reason that compensators are so popular,” Stone explained. “All you have to do is shoot one and you’ll understand—especially on a fully machined, hand-crafted 1911.”

The model I tested had a Trijicon RMR IOS plate, which is a \$150 upgrade, and a tan RMR, an \$840 upgrade.

Per usual, I tested the Single Stack Sand Hawk for accuracy from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest at 25 yards. Range time was on a surprisingly cold Arizona day with wind and heavy rain, but even with numb hands, I found the Single Stack Sand Hawk to be an absolute pleasure to shoot.

The polished feed ramp, hand-polished ignition components and tuned and polished extractor ensure reliable operation. The lightweight aluminum Nighthawk Custom flat trigger made it easy to fire the

Single Stack Sand Hawk without disturbing the orientation of the muzzle.

The firing-pin stop is hand-fitted. Stone said this ensures that the firing-pin stop is installed almost perfectly and to the tightest tolerances.

“It looks right, feels right, and you won’t ever have any slop or issues out of it over the lifetime of the pistol,” he said.

The throated barrel on the Single Stack Sand Hawk helps feed cartridges into the chamber by way of an enlarged opening where the barrel meets the frame. This helps ensure the pistol can handle a wide array of ammunition without malfunctioning. This is an important feature if you plan to use a pistol for self-defense, as hollowpoints don’t always feed well in 1911s.

Five-shot groups were impressive, with bullets ranging in weight

from 100 to 124 grains. I was able to shoot two groups under one inch and several at or just over an inch. The overall average group size across all three loads was 1.2 inches. When it comes to accuracy, the adage “You get what you pay for” usually rings true.

Not only was the Single Stack Sand Hawk accurate, but it was also 100 percent reliable and incredibly soft shooting. Stone was right: The compensator made a big difference. When shooting offhand, I was able to deliver rapid-fire hits in part because there was so little muzzle rise, and the muzzle recovered predictably. The red dot was always on target when I was ready to fire the next round.

The Single Stack Sand Hawk is everything you’d expect a custom 1911 to be. From overall aesthetics to fit and finish to functionality, this pistol delivered.

With a base price of \$5,199, the Single Stack Sand Hawk isn’t cheap, but if you’ve shot a lot of pistols, you’ll appreciate the quality it exudes. Kitted out with the IOS, mounting plate, RMR and SureFire X300 Ultra light, the Single Stack Sand Hawk I tested carries a price tag of \$6,915.

In addition to the extras that came with my samples, Nighthawk offers a range of upgrades—including a fluted barrel hood, extra extractor, stainless finished slide, rear slide serrations only and custom block-letter engraving.

Like any luxury item, a custom 1911 like the Single Stack Sand Hawk isn’t within everyone’s budget, but those with the means and a hankering for the best pistol money can buy will surely be satisfied with one.

It’s something you could proudly pass along as an heirloom, but unlike a diamond-encrusted ring or a Rolex watch, the Single Stack Sand Hawk is capable of firing one-inch groups at 25 yards and could save your life or the life of a loved one. That’s priceless.



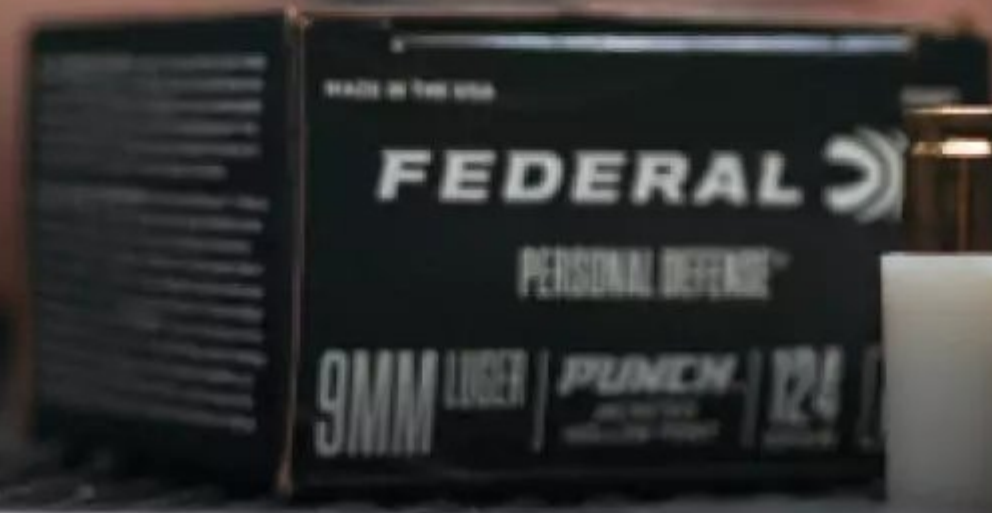
A The beveled mag well funnels magazines into the pistol for more efficient loading, and the provided base pads allow you to easily strip them if necessary.

ACCURACY RESULTS NIGHTHAWK SINGLE STACK SAND HAWK				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Black Hills Honey Badger + P	100	1,084	14	1.4
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,101	6	1.1
Black Hills JHP	125	1,097	15	1.2

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired at 25 yards with a Trijicon RMR red dot from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph. Abbreviation: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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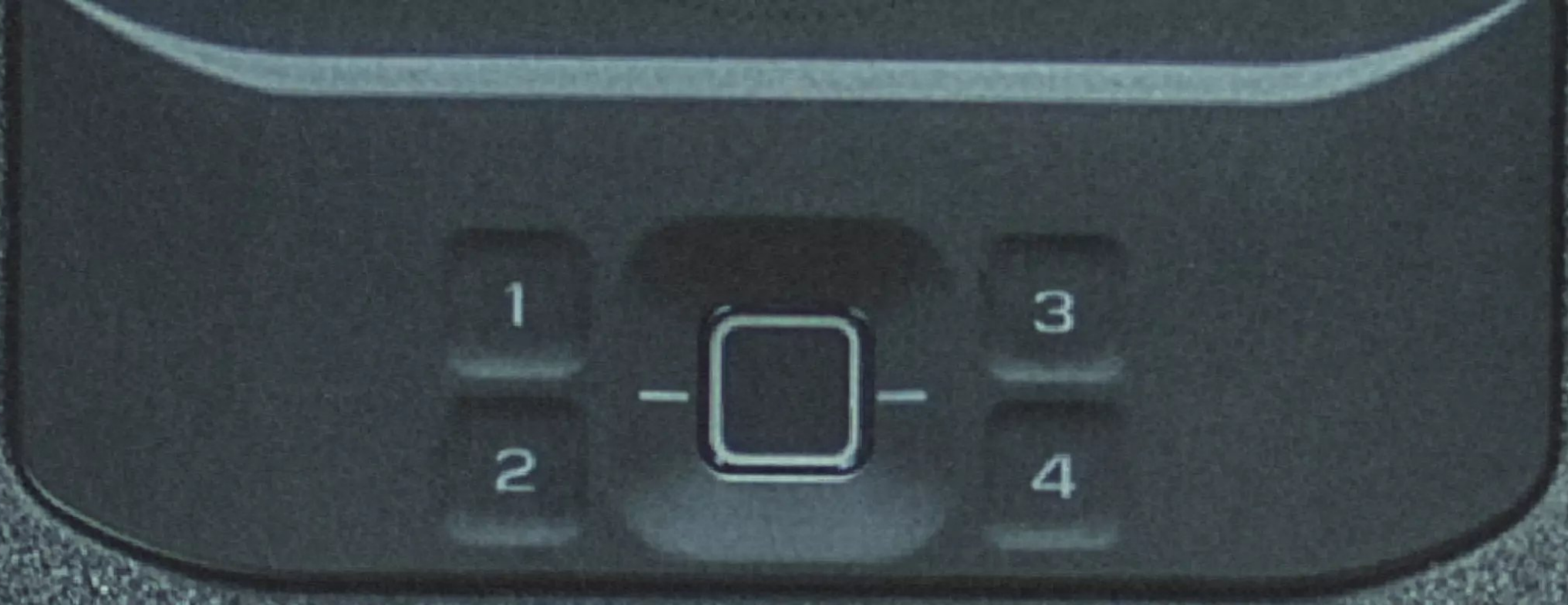
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WALTHER ARMS PDP F-SERIES PRO 3.5

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: three 18- or 10-round magazines w/extended aluminum base pads supplied

BARREL: 3.5 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.5/5.4/1.3

WEIGHT: 23.3 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: steel slide, polymer frame
SIGHTS: polymer white 3-dot, fully adjustable rear

TRIGGER: Dynamic Performance Trigger, 3 lb., 8 oz. pull (measured)

SAFETY: trigger

PRICE: \$929

MANUFACTURER: Walther Arms,
WALTHERARMS.COM

WALTHER PDP F-SERIES PRO 3.5

WALTHER CONTINUES TO BUILD OUT ITS

PDP line with a new F-Series pistol, the Pro 3.5. If you're not familiar with the F-Series, the "F" stands for female, as this gun's grip, trigger reach and slide are designed to be easier for women to shoot. But let me tell you, this is a gun that's going to be just the ticket for more than only women.

For starters, the F-Series has a smaller grip circumference than the standard PDP. Small and medium interchangeable backstraps come with the gun, and they're easy to change by driving out a roll pin in the grip.

Trigger reach is something we don't talk about much and is rarely addressed by manufacturers, but the fact is it

matters. The trigger on the F-Series has been moved so the distance to it is shorter, promoting a correct finger position on the trigger for those with smaller hands.

The slide has the same aggressive SuperTerrain serrations as the standard PDP, but an all-new design and two-piece striker reduce the required racking force by 20 percent. That's significant because even people with limited hand strength can operate the pistol safely and effectively.

As the name suggests, the PDP F-Series Pro 3.5 has a 3.5-inch barrel; it's also available with a four-inch barrel. With the 3.5-inch barrel it is 6.5 inches long and weighs 23.3 ounces. Height

is 5.4 inches. These dimensions place it in the sweet spot for an all-around carry/home defense gun. Adding to this utility are a two-slot accessory rail on the polymer frame for lights and lasers and a slide that's cut for red dots. No optic adapter plates are supplied, but with purchase you're entitled to one free plate that Walther will ship to you. The company offers plates for all the popular red-dot footprints.

The polymer rear sight is a "sight within a sight," with the notch and its flanking white dots comprising a separate component that's protected within a polymer housing. The rear is adjustable for windage and elevation courtesy of two small screws. That's a great

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HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT

← feature because there are so many defensive 9mm loads out there today, and it's important to be able to adjust point of impact to the one you like best. A small tool is provided to make the adjustments.

While the rear is set within a dovetail, the front is a screw-in type. If you're not a fan of white three-dots, aftermarket night sights are available for the PDP.

Controls are well designed. I've always been a huge fan of Walther's extra-long slide-lock lever because the leverage it provides makes it ideal for using as a slide release. The reversible magazine release button is large and checkered, and a molded shelf below it prevents accidental activation.

Walther's PDP Pro models have extra features. For one, they incorporate the Dynamic Performance Trigger, which is a step up from the standard PDP trigger

ACCURACY RESULTS | WALTHER PDP F-SERIES PRO 3.5

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Black Hills Honey Badger FSC + P	100	1,223	21	1.9
Blazer Brass JHP	115	1,120	12	1.5
Lehigh Defense CF HP + P	115	1,111	11	2.1
Hornady Custom XTP	124	1,086	9	1.8

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 15 yards with iron sights from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest. Velocities are averages of 15 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. Abbreviation: FSC, fluted solid copper; HP, hollowpoint; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

and has an aluminum finger lever. That's saying a lot, since Walther's striker-fired triggers are already the envy of the semiauto world. The trigger on this sample certainly didn't disappoint, with a 3.5-pound, crisp-breaking pull and a nice, snappy reset.

The three included magazines—18-round standard or 10-round reduced—have extended aluminum base pads, and the aluminum magazine well

makes mag changes fast and smooth.

Bench testing brought no surprises. I conducted both bench testing and defensive shooting drills with iron sights, and the gun proved both accurate and 100 percent reliable.

I liked the extended aluminum magazine base pads. Having that extra length ensures you'll get a fresh mag fully seated when trying to reload at speed, and the added weight ensures the old



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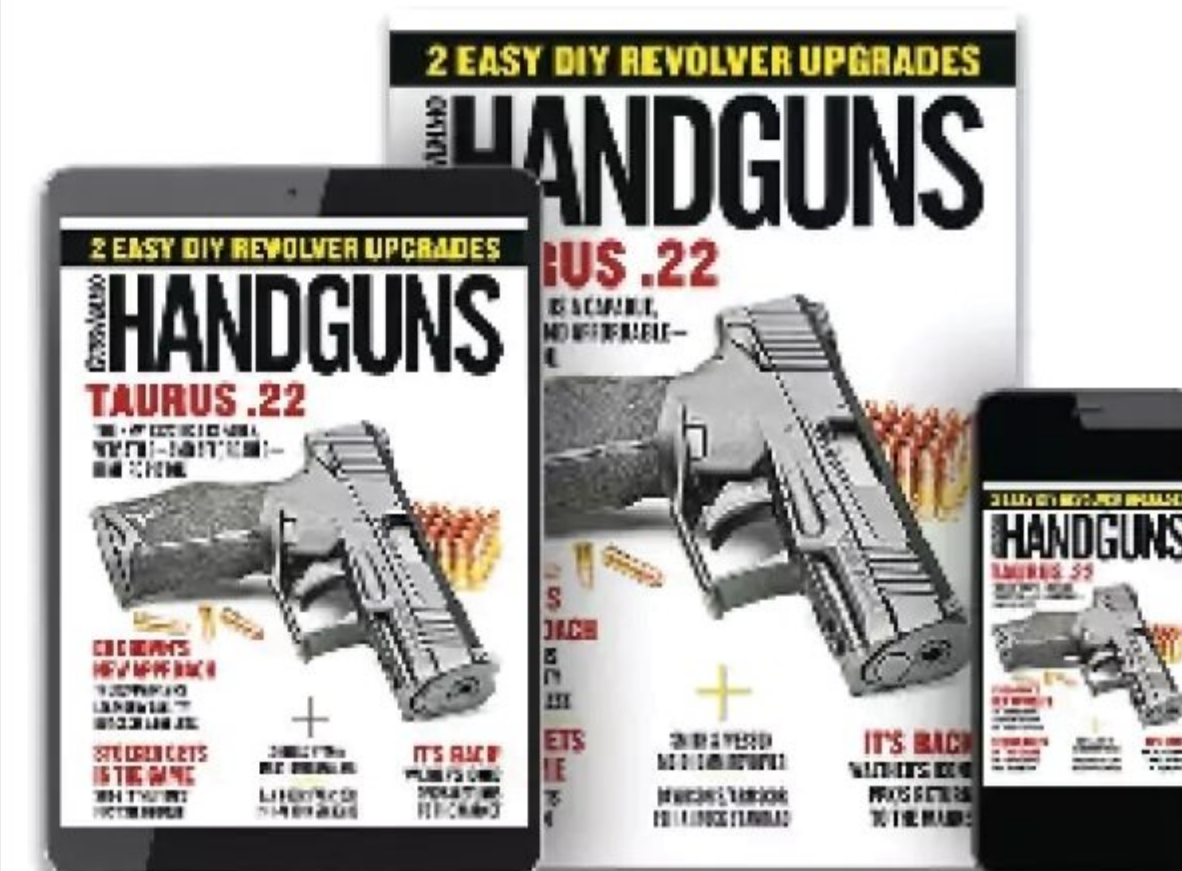
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▲ Major selling points include the upgraded Dynamic Performance Trigger, which on the F-Series Pro is relocated for a shorter reach. The slide is cut for optics.

mag is going to drop right out of the gun when you hit the release. On the flip side, though, I wondered if the extra weight didn't maybe push the gun's balance back a little far—producing more muzzle rise than I would've expected for a gun of its dimensions.

Overall, though, I thought the F-Series Pro 3.5 was excellent. When I said at the outset that I think it's suited for more than just women it's because I believe



▲ The polymer rear sight is fully adjustable, and the slide is cut for optics. The rear serrations continue onto the slide cover plate for sure purchase on the easy-racking slide.

a lot of men are shooting guns that are actually too big for them.

My hands are solidly in the medium-size camp, but I've found that downsizing backstraps on guns so equipped has improved my shooting. With the F-Series, the grip was great for me right out of the box, and I found the shorter reach on the F-Series trigger worked well for me, too.

The reduced slide-racking force is a



▲ The grip circumference on the F-Series is smaller, and the gun comes with small and medium backstraps. Pro model mags have extended aluminum base pads.

big deal. Several companies have developed pistols with slides that are easier to operate, but so often these efforts are limited to micro-compacts. With the F-Series Pro 3.5 you get that advantage in a U.S.-made compact gun that's going to be easier to shoot than a micro—with all the extra features this gun delivers. 🔴

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WILSON COMBAT CQB

THANKFULLY, I NEVER HAD ANY CLOSE encounters in my home with those intent on doing us harm, but I have done house-clearing stages in competition. I was shooting a 1911 at the time but nothing on the order of the Wilson Close Quarters Battle (CQB) pistol I have here on my desk. Wilson calls it a “standard package” of custom features designed for the “professional,” and it would be quite the handgun to have at your side when the chips are down.

Established in 1977, Bill Wilson’s firm was determined to manufacture the best in combat type firearms, starting with the 1911 platform. Its 1911 frames and parts are produced on CNC machinery for the utmost in precision, then built on order by a team of top gunsmiths.

The CQB is a full-size steel gun with an empty weight of 41 ounces. The pistol’s Battlesight rear assembly has a U-shape notch secured

with twin locking Allen screws and is drift-adjustable for windage. The front sight is a fiber optic set within a dovetail.

On this two-tone version, the top of the slide is matte black, with the polished sides sporting the Wilson logo and “CQB.” The slide has cocking serrations front and rear. The ejection port has been relieved and lowered for positive ejection. The five-inch match-grade barrel is crowned, and its bushing is hand-fitted.

The carbon steel frame is checkered on the frontstrap and sports a flat mainspring housing, and there’s aggressive checkering on the High-Cut frontstrap. The magazine well is contoured, and two eight-round magazines with bumpers are furnished.

Controls include Wilson’s Bullet Proof High-Ride beavertail grip safety with a memory bump, and it’s

mated perfectly with the skeletonized hammer when cocked by way of a slot on its upper surface.

The single-side thumb safety is Wilson’s Bullet Proof component, and the the mag release is slightly extended. The black G10 Starburst grips provide great traction and are recessed for easy access to the release. The three-hole trigger is serrated on its face. The specs indicate trigger pull weight is between 3.5 and 4.5 pounds, and my sample was 4.5 pounds.

This 1911 is built correctly from the start. All the edges are straight and clean, and the finish is up to the highest standards and worthy of the \$3,533 base price. In the hand, the gun has the feeling of being ready for action. The CQB carries a one-inch accuracy guarantee at 25 yards, and with its palm-filling grips and well-executed checkering, it’s the way to go if you want the best. 

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