

2025 NEW HOLSTER GUIDE

GUNS&AMMO HANDGUNS

COOL CANIK

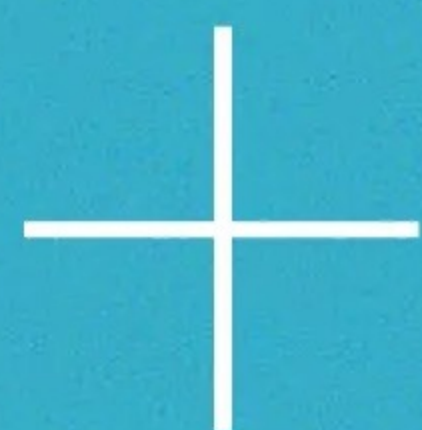
**THE NEW METE MC9
PRIME HAS WHAT
IT TAKES**



**S&W'S
.32 H&R
A HANDY NEW
CCW REVOLVER**

MORE REVIEWS

- **STOEGER STR-9 THINLINE**
- **KIMBER CDS9 CLASSIC**
- **CZ SHADOW 2 CARRY**
- **TAURUS 850**



**ED BROWN'S NEW
OPTICS EVO 9MMS**

**CMP BRINGS BACK
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FEATURES

22 PRIMED AND READY

By RICHARD NANCE

The Mete MC9 Prime from Canik is an affordable 9mm that puts high-end features in a defensive gun.

28 PICK YOUR POISON

By J. SCOTT RUPP

Ed Brown has two new optic-ready EVOs that stand out as shining examples of effective and reliable 9mm 1911s.

38 A .32 FOR YOU

By J. SCOTT RUPP

Smith & Wesson goes back to the future with a lightweight snubbie chambered to .32 H&R Magnum, creating a terrific carry wheelgun.

46 A MODERN CLASSIC

By KEITH WOOD

Kimber's new CDS9 Classic (OR) demonstrates that a double-stack single-action semiauto can be a solid CCW pistol.

54 OUT OF THE SHADOWS

By BRAD FITZPATRICK

The well-regarded Shadow 2 from CZ gets a carry makeover that makes this DA/SA a gun a lot of shooters will love.

62 2025 NEW HOLSTER GUIDE

By BRAD FITZPATRICK

Inside the waistband, outside the waistband, field holsters and more—rigs worth checking out for your carry needs.



22



28



38



46



54

2025 HOLSTER GUIDE

62

DEPARTMENTS

6 FRONT FOCUS

8 SPEEDLOADS

- CMP 1911 sales are back!
- H&R Model 900
- Leupold DPP 6 m.o.a.

16 EN GARDE

RICHARD NANCE

Important tips for proper trigger-finger placement.

18 ESSENTIALS

BRAD FITZPATRICK

Federal and Hornady ammo loaded for the biggest threats.

72 BACK PAGE BEAUTIES

STAN TRZONIEC

Walther Meister Manufaktur Gold Ribbon PPK/S

FIRING LINE REPORTS

66 STOEGER STR-9 THINLINE

By FRANK MELLONI

70 TAURUS 850

By J. SCOTT RUPP



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Competition Can Help

Reading Richard Nance's excellent article on movement in a defensive gunfight ("Move It!" June/July) made me wonder how many of your readers will devote the time necessary to develop and practice these skills. Many ranges do not allow drawing from concealment or shooting on the move or have the facilities to practice shooting from cover. Perhaps Mr. Nance should have added that shooting competitions like IDPA or Galactic Pistol Alliance would be the perfect way to learn these skills in a safe and supervised environment.

It's not about "winning" but about developing the full range of defensive shooting skills. IDPA and GPA utilize guns and holsters one actually carries every day. Most matches cost around \$20 and utilize about 120 to 150 rounds of ammunition. If you want to get better at these skills, these competitions are an inexpensive and fun way to do so.

ERNE GARLAND, FLORIDA

Stake Out

I read with interest Bob Campbell's article on the 1964 National Match 1911 ("Old School," August/September). What piqued my interest was the statement concerning staked front sights on 1911s. Having twice experienced the sudden departure of a staked front sight from my 1911, I had my gunsmith mill a dovetail and install the appropriate sight. Since then, no more departures. Why do makers still stake front sights in place? Is it just a cheaper production cost?

BOB POTTS, FLORIDA

Mr. Potts: Staking is the original Browning method. Some manufacturers use it when creating a retro mil-spec gun. The rest who still do it likely do choose the method because, like you said, it's cost-effective. For the most part, staking works fine, but as you and others can attest, it's not as failsafe as a dovetail.—Scott



New Handguns TV Season Underway!

The popular "Handguns" television show, now in its 12th season, is currently airing on Sportsman Channel. We're on Thursday nights at 10:30 Eastern, plus other airings throughout the week, so check your local listings. Here's what's coming up.

Aug. 14—Great New Revolvers	Sept. 4—Against the Odds
Aug. 21—Best New Carry Guns	Sept. 11—Mythbusting
Aug. 28—Common Carry Mistakes	Sept. 18—6 Training Tips
	Sept. 25—All About IDPA

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.

Industry Intel Report

BROWNELLS, one of the country's leading gun supply retailers, announced in June that Frank R. Brownell III had passed away at the age of 85. The only son of Brownells founder Bob, Frank guided the company for nearly 40 years, joining the firm in 1965 and becoming president in 1983, CEO in 2007 and chairman of the board in 2012. He is survived by sons Bob, Pete and Matt, and their families.



LEHIGH DEFENSE, sister company of Wilson Combat, has acquired Performance Engineering. Performance is a gun-components manufacturer well known for its 1911 and AR-15 parts. Manufacturing and operations have been integrated into Lehigh's Texas facility, and Lehigh plans to reintroduce some previously discontinued Performance components as well as expand product offerings.

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1911 OPTICS READY



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SWEET, SWEET SURPLUS

THE CMP IS BACK IN THE 1911 SALES GAME.

By Jeff John

MOST SHOOTERS AROUND THE COUNTRY who have heard of the Civilian Marksmanship Program—formerly the Director of Civilian Marksmanship or DCM and the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice—probably knew of CMP’s sales program for M1 Garand rifles. But fewer may be aware that CMP also sells M1911A1 pistols. Sales began in 2018, were halted in 2021, and have resumed this year.

More than 2.5 million M1911s were purchased by Uncle Sam from Colt and a wide variety of secondary manufacturers during wartime. Production of U.S. M1911s ended in 1945, and war-used pistols were rebuilt and refinished by government arsenals after each conflict so they’d be ready for the next one.

CMP has received 10,000 M1911A1 pistols long in storage from the Dept. of the Army. Of these, 98 per-

cent are “mix-masters”—meaning slides, frames and other parts are mixed; almost all may have commercial parts. Upon receiving a batch, the CMP sorts them by condition into five grades, and prices them at fair market value as defined by CMP’s enabling legislation.

For general sale, the best one, Service Grade, costs \$1,300. According to the CMP, this grade of pistol “may exhibit minor pitting and wear on exterior surfaces and friction surfaces. Grips are complete with no cracks. Pistol is in issuable condition. Pistols may contain commercial parts.”

Field Grade guns (\$1,200) are listed as those that may have “minor rust, pitting, and wear on exterior surfaces and friction surfaces. Grips are complete with no cracks. Pistol is in issuable condition.”

Range Grade pistols (\$1,150) are

shooters, not collectibles, because they’ve all been modified in some way, and they may have commercial parts. As such, no two Range Grade guns are alike, and modifications could include many popular late 20th century modifications. This grade is currently sold out.

The lowest grade is Rack Grade (\$1,100). These guns will have rust, pitting and wear, and the grips may not be whole or have cracks. You’ll have to do some work to restore it to as-issued condition, but it will be functional.

CMP also has auction pistols, and you can visit the organization’s auction web page for information on those. And last but certainly not least, CMP offers brand new Turkish-built Tisas 1911s for \$459.

All CMP 1911 sales are online now at TheCMP.org, and there are a few hoops to jump through. After filling

out the online form you have to provide the following:

- Proof of U.S. citizenship—birth certificate, passport, proof of naturalization or an official government document that shows U.S. birth or states that you're a citizen. Driver's licenses are no longer accepted for this particular requirement.
- Proof of age. If not covered by the documents above, a driver's license is acceptable.
- Proof of membership in a CMP-affiliated club. There are many in every state, and CMP offers a finder on its website. If the club doesn't issue membership cards, there's a certification form you can fill out. There are also special affiliates that can qualify you as well. See CMP's website for those details.
- Proof of participation in a marksmanship activity. There are many ways to satisfy this requirement. Again, see the CMP website.
- A copy of your current driver's license.

Your 1911 must be sent to a current FFL dealer for local completion in 49 states. Only Massachusetts disallows sales of these pistols currently, and the CMP can't ship to U.S. territories. The FBI will perform an initial NICS background check to clear the shipment of your gun, and you'll still have to fill out a Form 4473 in person at your chosen FFL once the gun arrives.

Orders are filled in order received. Once your number comes up, CMP will contact you to select the pistol's grade and arrange payment. You can only select from the grades available at that time. If you decline the selection available, you'll have to apply again. You'll have five days to submit payment and a copy of your local FFL once notified.

Back in 2020, I managed to get



▲ John's CMP Rack Grade gun was made by Remington Rand and was a World War II Lend-Lease pistol. It bears marks from two different arsenals, and the safety had been swapped out at some point.

into the last round of the original CMP M1911 sales. I was hoping for a higher grade, but only Rack Grades were available when my number was called. I bit, since the price was substantially less than the going rate for similar GI 1911s online. If it needed parts, they would be readily available.

When it comes to the actual gun, it's all luck of the draw, and I lucked out. CMP sent a 1943-made Remington Rand with slide, frame and most of its unique parts intact.

The finish is quite thin, giving the pistol some flavor. More recently it was given a new barrel and magazine identified by its long, contemporary part numbers. As per the CMP classification, the pistol does exhibit pitting here and there, as well as the nicks and dings associated with a well-used war weapon. Happily, it required nothing more than the clean-and-oil I give all new guns.

Remington Rand was a maker of typewriters and business machines; it wasn't affiliated with Remington Arms. The hammer,

trigger and mainspring housing are still Remington Rand, and putting on the magnifiers, I could see what appear to be twin Lend-Lease marks struck out on the right side of the frame. That means this pistol went to Britain.

It also went to Rock Island Arsenal, and has its faint crossed-cannons mark. The left side of the frame bears the mark "FJA" for Army inspector Col. Frank J. Atwood and "AA" for Augusta Arsenal, so it saw attention at two arsenals tasked with rebuilding war arms.

I've shot a few boxes through it, and accuracy is fine, with 25-yard groups in the three- to four-inch range. The trigger pull is reasonably crisp and breaks at 5.75 pounds. I find the small safety tab fumble free in operation, and it had been changed during one of the rebuilds.

This is a "shoot on Sunday" fun gun, and over 250 or more rounds it has proven utterly reliable. More potential treasures await at CMP for those who are interested.

OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB CAMPBELL

HARRINGTON & RICHARDSON 900

NOT LONG AGO I SPOTTED A REVOLVER

that just looked a little off compared to the dozens of Harrington & Richardson revolvers I've seen over the years. The Model 900 looks like a swing-out-cylinder revolver, but it also resembles the Harrington & Richardson with a removable base pin. The truth is it is neither.

The Model 900 was produced from 1964 to 1976, and at the time of introduction Harrington & Richardson offered two basic revolver lines. The less expensive one was a double-action/single-action nine-shot .22 rimfire that had to be loaded and unloaded by removing the cylinder base pin and pulling the cylinder—unloading accomplished by knocking spent cartridge cases out one at a time with the cylinder pin.

The more expensive double-action revolvers with swing-out cylinder operated much the same as any other swing-out-cylinder revolver, except there was no cylinder release. Pulling the ejector rod forward released the cylinder for loading and unloading.

The Model 900 was an attempt to simplify production of the more expensive type of revolver while providing a more attractive option than the base-pin gun.

It features an easily removable cylinder, but there is no crane. The cylinder is removed by pulling forward on the combination base pin/ejector rod and pushing the cylinder from right to left out of the frame.

The ejector rod is pressed to the rear to eject spent cases. I found that for the most part even high velocity 40-grain .22 Long Rifle spent cases are easily ejected. For some brands, and especially with a



▲ The Model 900 had a combination base pin/ejector rod to simplify loading and reduce production costs. ▼ However, it retained the cutout in the right-side cylinder shield to permit single loading or unloading.

dirty chamber, a little more effort is needed to dislodge the empties.

To reinstall the cylinder, the base pin/ejector rod unit is pulled slightly forward. The cylinder cannot be placed in the frame unless the hammer is on the safety notch.

As I mentioned, this unique design was intended to cut manufacturing costs, but it is interesting that the frame retained the cartridge loading cutout common to the less-expensive revolver.

While not the handiest system, this opening in the right-hand recoil shield allowed cartridges to be loaded without removing the cylinder. And if you had a long pin or rod, spent cases could be ejected without the hassle of removing the base pin. The opening was tight enough that loaded cartridges would not fall through the opening with the muzzle elevated, per my testing.

The Model 900 was offered with 2.5-, four- and six-inch barrels; the 2.5-inch gun shown here was more scarce. Some people have men-



tioned a chrome-plated version. Many Harrington & Richardson revolvers featured large grips and a long barrel, but this one has the shortest barrel and a small grip.

The trigger trips an external sear that is exposed just behind the trigger. The double-action trigger is fairly smooth, and the single-action trigger is crisp and breaks at less than four pounds.

The Model 900 did not prove to be popular and is far less common than the base-pin models or the swing-out-cylinder revolvers. Prices for the 900 vary depending on condition, and the one pictured here was purchased for \$150.

MORE BANG



LESS BRAG

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LEUPOLD DPP 6 M.O.A.



DOTS IN THE THREE M.O.A. CLASS HAVE

been more or less standard on reflex sights for a while, but as red dots are now commonplace on defensive pistols, it only makes sense we're starting to see some bigger dots. Case in point: Leupold recently came out with a six m.o.a. dot version of its well-respected DeltaPoint Pro (\$450, LEUPOLD.COM).

It's available in black or flat dark earth, and it's a robust sight thanks to its aluminum body. The Diamond-Coat aspheric lens resists scratches and provides good clarity.

The sight has eight brightness settings. Cycle through them by pressing the power button. The dot flashes when either limit is reached, and it then reverses illumination intensity on subsequent presses.

The sight is powered by a 2032 battery, with the battery compartment behind the lens. My older DeltaPoint Pro has a sliding latch that I found hard to work. This new one has small latch button you press with something like the tip of a pen, popping open the lid. It's a big improvement.

The DeltaPoint Pro has Motion Sensor Technology that shuts off the sight after it's been motionless for five minutes and then automatically turns it on when it senses movement.



▲ The new sight retains all the features that make the DeltaPoint Pro a go-to choice, and a lot of defensive shooters will find the larger six m.o.a. dot faster and easier to use.

One thing I love about the DeltaPoint Pro is that the windage and elevation adjustments aren't teeny, tiny screws requiring a special tool. They're large and can be turned with a coin.

Now, about the new dot. A six m.o.a. dot is of course twice as large as a three m.o.a. dot, and at least for me it's a ton faster in drills—without sacrificing anything in the accuracy department because it covers only 1.5 inches at 25 yards and less than an inch at 15. Not only is the bigger dot much easier to see, with smaller dots I find myself trying to be too precise, slowing me down.

This new six m.o.a. dot option makes a great sight even more effective, and I think a lot of shooters will agree.—*J. Scott Rupp*

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GUNS & GEAR | BY J. SCOTT RUPP



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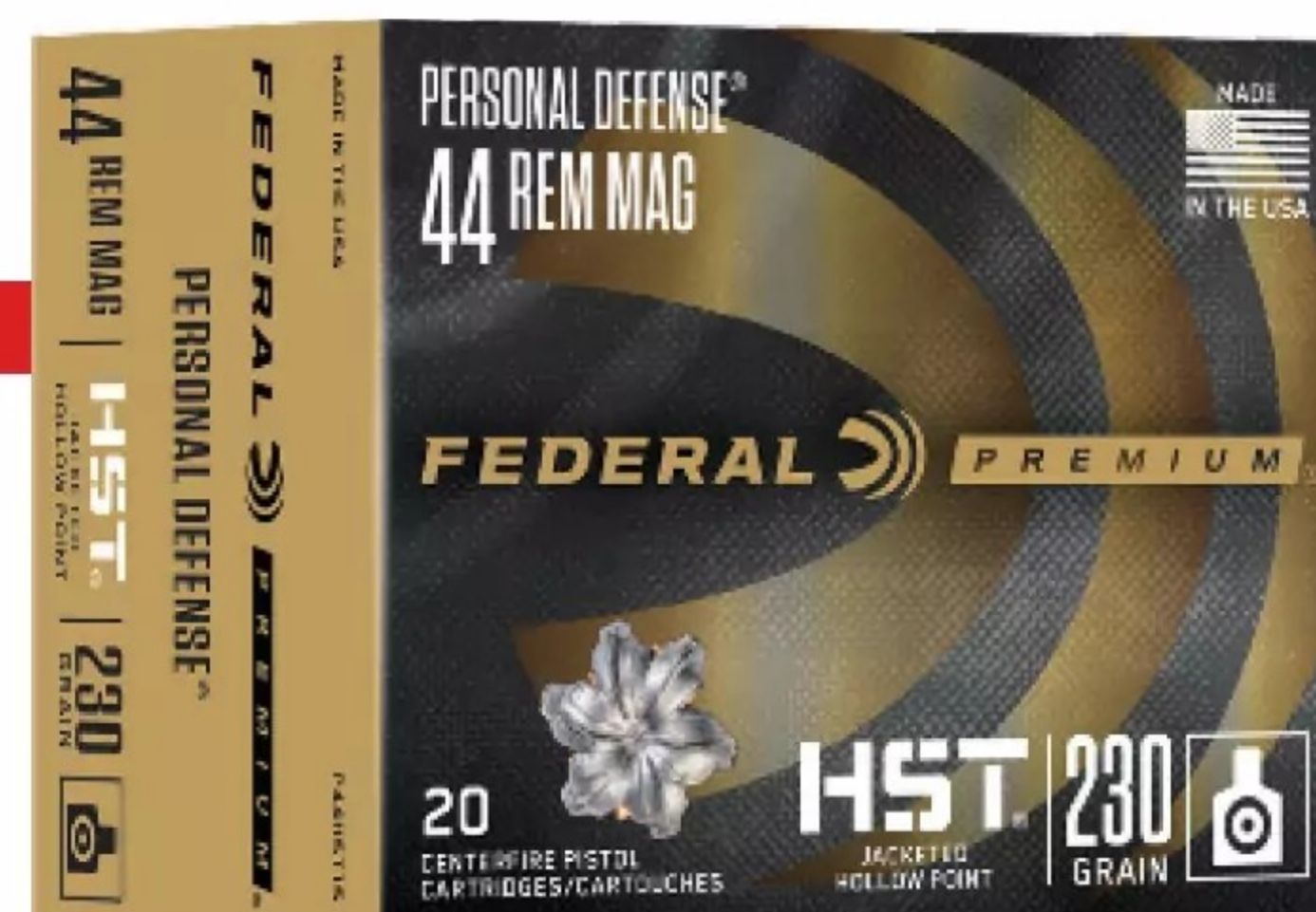
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{ \$495, KELTECWEAPONS.COM }

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{ \$56 per 20-round box, FEDERALPREMIUM.COM }



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{ \$899, SILENCERCENTRAL.COM }

> DIRTY BIRD QUICK-DRAW SPLATTER TARGETS

Put some fun into your training with new targets from Birchwood Casey. They're made of heavy duty tagboard, and shots are easy to spot because hits produce a high-contrast splatter. Measuring 12x18 inches, they're available in Gunslinger Silhouette, Gunslinger Skyline (shown), Lucky Shot Bottles, Lucky Shot Bowling Pins, Quickdraw, Trophy Room and Aces High versions.

{ \$10 per six-pack, BIRCHWOODCASEY.COM }

> XS SIGHTS R3D 2.0 NIGHT SIGHTS FOR SPRINGFIELD ECHELON

Upgrade the stock sights on your Springfield Echelon with the next-gen R3D 2.0, which features bigger and brighter rear tritium dots than its predecessor, and those dots are surrounded by PVC rings for an edge that's better defined. The front is available as a green dot that's also paired with tritium for great day/night use. The R3D 2.0 also features EasyPress, which eliminates filing and reduces the necessary installation force by up to 50 percent.

{ \$138, XSIGHTS.COM }



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

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



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A TRIGGERING CONCEPT

THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFELY PLACING YOUR FINGER ON A HANDGUN.

“KEEP YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER

until your sights are on the target.” The late Col. Jeff Cooper’s third rule of firearms safety is intended to prevent your gun from discharging until you’ve made a conscious decision to fire. While the rule is simple and, on its face, easy to understand, there are some nuances to when your finger should be on the trigger.

There’s a concept called “indexing,” which is placing your trigger finger outside of the trigger guard until you’re ready to fire. Indexing comes into play whenever you are handling a gun—whether you’re picking one up, having one handed to you or are in the act of drawing.

Properly indexing your trigger finger during the draw is especially important. As you draw, your index finger should be straight and on the outside of the holster. As the gun is lifted from the holster, your finger should index along the side of the pistol.

There is some debate about where and how this should occur. I prefer a high index, where my finger is positioned high on the frame or even on the slide on a semiauto.

I’m not a fan of indexing on the frame with my finger bent so that only the tip is in contact with the pistol. To me, this positions your finger closer to the trigger, and since your finger is flexed, it can be easier for it to slip off the frame and into the trigger guard. Placing your finger across the trigger guard is also ill-advised because it’s too likely your finger will find its way inside the guard.

The scenario you’re facing also has big effect on correct finger



Alfredo Rico photo

▲ Indexing, or placing the trigger finger outside of the trigger guard, is a key aspect to safely and effectively firing a handgun.

placement. For one thing, drawing your gun does not automatically mean that firing it is warranted. If you’re drawing but have not yet determined that you’re dealing with an imminent deadly threat, your finger should be indexed as previously described.

A quick refresher on draw technique is in order here. The gun should come straight up to the chest, where the support hand joins the grip, and then be driven straight toward the target. Once your second hand joins the grip, your muzzle should be oriented to the target.

At this point, if you know you’re going to shoot, there’s no need to wait until your arms are fully extended to find the trigger. Instead, place your finger on the trigger as you drive the gun toward the target. If you had to, you could fire before your arms are fully extended.

This is when another of Cooper’s

concepts—that of the surprise trigger break—can seem to contradict his third rule of firearm safety.

Surprise trigger break refers to applying rearward pressure on the trigger gradually to keep the muzzle from moving as the shot is fired. That’s important because even the slightest muzzle movement when firing could result in a miss.

The “surprise” refers to not anticipating when the shot will break, which often leads to a miss. It doesn’t mean you should be surprised you fired the pistol. Firing your pistol should always be a conscious decision.

After firing, your trigger should be reset with your finger still in contact. Don’t immediately remove your finger from the trigger after firing. If you do and then realize you need to fire again, the tendency is to “slap” the trigger rather than “press” it to the rear. Slapping the trigger

is a good way to miss your target. Keep your finger in contact with the trigger until you are sure you won't need to fire another shot right away.

Gunsite Academy, which Cooper founded, teaches to keep your finger on the trigger as you follow an assailant to the ground so you can deliver more rounds if warranted.

An assailant who's been shot and has fallen to the ground may still be able to shoot you. When you're confident that's no longer the case, you should again index your finger along the side of the pistol as you scan for additional threats.

Following an assailant to the ground after shooting him—or simulating doing so on the range—is fine, but having your finger on the trigger when your pistol is in the Low Ready position is not. With the latter, your

sights aren't on target, meaning your finger must be off the trigger.

In a recent pistol course I taught, a student had his finger on the trigger while using the Low Ready position, with the muzzle pointed between him and the target. However, he was not looking at the target but rather at me. Such inattentiveness can have costly, perhaps even deadly consequences.

Finger placement is crucial during holstering the gun because this is when you are most likely to fire the pistol unintentionally. For some reason, people seem to be in a hurry to holster, and in their haste a finger can find its way onto the trigger.

Be especially mindful if you wear your pistol behind the hip in an inside-the-waistband holster. In this position it's harder to see the gun.

Also, the mouth of the holster—particularly one made of leather that doesn't have a properly reinforced mouth—can collapse, and the shooter then has to adjust his or her grip to force the gun into the holster.

For safety's sake, slow down. Take your time, take a breath, and if you need to, take a glance at your holster. If you're worried about taking your eyes off the battle space, don't be. After all, holstering shouldn't even be a consideration until you've confirmed your world is safe.

If there's one thing many handgunners, especially beginners, have trouble with it's following Cooper's third rule. Next time you're at the range, focus on your trigger-finger management. It'll make you a safer and more effective defensive shooter. 

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BEARING DOWN

LOADS FROM HORNADY AND FEDERAL THAT CAN HANDLE BIG THREATS.

GRIZZLY BEAR NUMBERS HAVE STEADILY

increased in the northern Rockies over the last two decades, and with that abundance comes more attacks on humans. Grizzlies aren't the only dangerous predators on the prowl, though, as black bear and mountain lion attacks are on the rise as well. And while they're hardly predators, if you get sideways with a cow moose protecting her calf, you might wish you'd encountered a bear instead.

It makes sense, then, to protect yourself from attack in the backcountry. For years hunters and hikers have argued which cartridge is best for predator defense. However, the argument about which cartridge is best overlooks an important aspect of defense against large predators: bullet performance.

Ammo manufacturers already knew this, and with an increasing number of outdoors types seeking firearm protection, two of the majors—Hornady and Federal—produce loads to satisfy the demand.

Federal released its Solid Core ammunition a few years ago, and this year Hornady unveiled its Backcountry Defense ammo line. The purpose of both loads is simply to stop large, dangerous animals in their tracks. How these bullets accomplish their stated mission differs slightly.

For years, hard-cast lead bullets have been the go-to option for predator defense simply because they penetrated deep and straight. But their all-lead construction creates problems—namely barrel leading and the target-obscuring clouds of smoke they can produce. Federal's solution came in the form of its



J. Scott Rupp photo

A Hornady Backcountry Defense and Federal Solid Core both feature non-expanding bullets for deep penetration. Federal's offering is in semiauto cartridges while Hornady's line includes both semiauto and revolver rounds.

Syntech polymer bullet coating that reduces friction and barrel fouling and eliminates the smoky haze.

Solid Core bullets feature a high antimony hard lead core wrapped in a blue Syntech shell. The bullet has a flatnose profile that's designed for deep penetration, and the heavy bullet produces impressive energy levels.

Listed energy for the 200-grain 10mm Auto Solid Core load is 1,200 fps from a five-inch barrel. That translates to 639 ft.-lbs. of punch at the muzzle and 580 ft.-lbs. at a distance of 25 yards.

Clearly, Federal is aiming Solid Core at semiauto handgun owners. In addition to the 10mm Auto, Solid Core is available in 9mm +P (147-grain, 1,120 fps), .40 S&W (200-grain, 1,000 fps) and .45 ACP +P (230-grain, 1,000 fps). The 10mm and .45 ACP figures were obtained from

a five-inch barrel while both the 9mm and .40 S&W were tested with a four-inch barrel.

Federal uses nickel cases, and premium primers and propellants are very reliable. Solid Core is priced \$40 to \$47, so it'll cost you just over \$2 per round.

Hornady's Backcountry Defense also sets out to accomplish deep, straight, devastating penetration, but it employs an entirely different bullet design than the Federal. At first glance I thought the bullet was a jacketed hollowpoint, but Hornady's Seth Swerczek quickly set me straight.

He told me Backcountry Defense uses the company's new Dangerous Game Handgun bullet. During manufacturing, the copper jacket is drawn far enough forward that it can be tucked back into the hard lead core. Hornady calls this the

Protected Point, and in cross section the copper nose visibly curls up inside the lead core. This prevents the bullet from deflecting when it hits heavy bone.

It's also available in 9mm +P (138 grain) and 10mm Auto (200 grain), but not .40 S&W or .45 ACP. If you want to carry either of those calibers then Solid Core is your only option. However, Hornady's Backcountry Defense is available in popular revolver cartridges including .357 Magnum, .44 Remington Magnum, .454 Casull, .460 S&W Magnum and .500 S&W Magnum. So if you're a wheelgun fan, Backcountry Defense is your load.

Hornady's ammunition is the cheaper of the two. I found their 9mm Backcountry Defense load for \$35 per 20, and the 10mm load is similarly priced—for a per-round cost around \$1.57. Even the big revolver rounds are under \$50 per box, except for the .500 S&W. That one's going to cost you around \$90 per box of 20, or \$4.50 per round.

For evaluation purposes we (or rather *Handguns* editor Scott Rupp) tested Solid Core and Backcountry Defense ammunition from a SIG P320-XTen Comp pistol with a 3.8-inch barrel and a Ruger GP100 Match Champion revolver, which sports a 4.2-inch barrel.

Hornady lists its 10mm Auto Backcountry Defense load at 1,160 fps from a four-inch barrel while Federal lists its 10mm Solid Core at 1,200 fps from a five-inch barrel. Both the Hornady and Federal bullets weigh 200 grains. With the variation in barrel length the two cartridges should produce almost identical results. But did they?

Not quite, but close. Backcountry Defense managed 1,082 fps from the SIG's relatively short barrel, 78 fps slower than advertised for a 10mm with a four-inch pipe. The Solid



J. Scott Rupp photo

▲ Solid Core (l.) has a hard-lead core with a Syntech coating while Hornady Defense's hard-lead core has a copper jacket that's locked in at the nose. They're designed to penetrate, not expand, as these fired bullets show.

Hornady Backcountry

Cartridge	Weight	Velocity	Energy
9mm Luger +P	138	1,150	405
.357 Magnum	165	1,500	824
10mm Auto	200	1,160	598
.44 Magnum	240	1,620	1,398
.454 Casull	300	1,820	2,206
.460 S&W Mag.	300	1,950	2,533
.500 S&W Mag.	500	1,410	2,207

Notes: Bullet weight in grains. Muzzle velocity (fps) and energy figures (ft.-lbs.) are from manufacturer data. Federal's are derived from a five-inch barrel, Hornady's from a four-inch barrel.

Federal Solid Core

Cartridge	Weight	Velocity	Energy
9mm Luger +P	147	1,120	409
.40 S&W	200	1,000	444
10mm Auto	200	1,200	639
.45 ACP +P	240	1,000	533

Core produced a 1,082 fps average from the same gun, about 118 fps slower than advertised from a five-inch barrel.

Out of the Ruger, Backcountry did 1,113 fps while the Solid Core clocked 1,089. This is interesting from the perspective that the Hornady round picked up about 20 fps from the half-inch-longer barrel while the Federal gained only nine.

What about penetration? Rupp fired both loads into synthetic gel blocks from 10 feet with the SIG 10mm. Hornady's Backcountry Defense had an average penetration of 32 inches, and penetration was pencil straight. By contrast, Federal's load averaged 37 inches of penetration. Rupp did report that a couple of the Solid Core test bullets veered off and exited the side of the block.

Realistically, these bullets offer very similar performance despite

their different designs. Syntech's polymer jacket is designed to reduce barrel fouling compared to copper jacketed bullets.

In terms of accuracy, I've shot both on paper, and they were on par with other defense bullets. The real test of accuracy with either of these loads will be whether you can hit a fast-moving, toothy predator that's headed directly for your soft body at warp speed.

Which of these two loads is better is a moot point, really. In truth both of them are excellent, and both are, in my opinion, good alternatives to hard-cast lead. Neither will fill the air with lead smoke, and neither is going to lead up your barrel.

I'm glad we have two different options when selecting ammo that can stop an attack from big threats in the wilderness—where help is definitely not coming.

AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

HANDGUNS TV AND MORE ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE MOTV APP.



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.

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

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PRIMED AND READY

BY RICHARD NANCE



Michael Anschuetz photo

CANIK'S METE MC9 PRIME HAS GREAT NEW FEATURES THAT MAKE IT AN EXCELLENT DEFENSIVE PISTOL.

In 2023, Canik launched the Mete MC9, its first micro-compact. The 9mm Mete MC9 had an impressive capacity for its size—12+1 with a flush-fit magazine and 15+1 with an extended magazine. The Mete MC9's popularity spawned two larger →

PRIMED AND READY

← Mete variants, the MC9L and MC9LS, each with a 17+1 capacity.

While it seems Canik and other manufacturers once strove to make the smallest pistols possible, the recent trend has been to make incrementally bigger pistols that are easier to shoot and hold more rounds, yet still remain concealable. This is where Canik's latest offering, the Mete MC9 Prime, really shines. It's essentially the same size as the MC9LS but has a slew of new upgraded features.

The first pistol manufactured by Canik USA, the Mete MC9 Prime measures 6.73 inches long and 5.43 inches high, with a 3.62-inch barrel. The Prime is considerably longer and taller than the micro-compact MC9, but it's only fractionally wider—1.16 inches versus 1.12 inches—and just a couple ounces heavier.

Two of the Prime's most significant upgrades are its compensated slide and ported barrel, which facilitate faster, more accurate fol-

low-up shots. Porting is becoming more and more popular on small 9mm pistols, which can be surprisingly snappy to shoot. The Prime's ports at 11, 12 and one o'clock divert gases upward, helping to mitigate muzzle rise. The result is a flat-shooting pistol that's easy to keep on target, even during rapid fire.

The sides of the Prime's nitride-coated steel slide are notched near the muzzle, and while the top of the slide is flat, the sides are beveled. The slide is also flared for easier racking.

The Prime's slide has new slide serrations as well. These deep, wide serrations are located both front and rear, which gives you options for conducting a press check or racking the slide. The front serrations extend to the top of the slide, providing additional purchase. A lightening cut behind the front sight reveals the word "Prime" engraved in the barrel.

In addition to being ported, the Prime's redesigned barrel is fluted on four sides to reduce weight. The exterior of the barrel's chamber even has cuts that match the slide serrations. While this doesn't serve a practical purpose, it looks cool.

The Prime's slide is cut for optics with the popular Shield RMSc footprint. The steel Fision three-dot tritium sights are visible through the windows of most direct-mount optics, giving you a viable aiming option in any lighting conditions should the optic fail.

Of course, the blacked-out serrated rear sight and bright orange ring front sight provide a viable standalone aiming method for those who choose not to run an optic. The sights are a big step up from the white three-dot sights on previous Mete MC9 models. The optic sight lid blends with the contours of the slide when an optic is not being used.

The Prime's loaded-chamber indicator atop the slide provides visual and tactile confirmation of the



A The double-undercut trigger guard and full-length stippling provide great control, and the newly redesigned slide stop and magazine release are easy to operate.



A The diamond-cut, flat-face aluminum trigger is new on the Prime. It breaks cleanly at 90 degrees and has a short reset.

status of the chamber. If it's raised, there is a round in the chamber. If it's flush, presumably there is no round in the chamber—although a mechanical device is no substitute for actually checking it.

The Prime's striker protrudes from the serrated rear of the slide plate when the pistol is cocked. Red paint makes the striker more visible, while the striker itself provides a tactile indication of whether the pistol is cocked. While the Prime doesn't have a manual safety, it incorporates a trigger-blade safety intended to prevent the pistol from firing unless the trigger is pressed to the rear.

The new trigger is another of the Prime's distinctive characteristics. The aluminum, diamond cut, flat-face trigger is gold colored, providing a nice contrast with the otherwise black pistol. The trigger

is smooth for a striker-fired pistol, breaking cleanly at 90 degrees, with virtually no overtravel and a very short reset. The pull on my test gun measured four pounds, five ounces.

The ambidextrous slide stop on the Prime is larger than on previous guns in the family, large enough that it can easily be used as a slide release, which is an efficient method for loading from slide lock. The slide stop on the right side of the pistol is a great addition—not just for lefties, but for right-handed shooters who find themselves having to operate the pistol with only their non-dominant hand due to injury.

The oval magazine release button has new vertical serrations that provide a solid purchase for your thumb. Southpaws will appreciate that the magazine release is reversible. This and the ambidextrous slide stop make the Prime a particularly good choice for left-handed shooters.

The Prime's aggressive stippling covers more of the grip than on other Mete MC9 models. Stippled areas on either side of the frame provide a physical index for the thumb of your non-shooting hand and for your trigger finger when it's not on the trigger.

These indexes help ensure you

are establishing a consistent grip and that your finger remains outside of the trigger guard until your sights are on target and you've made a conscious decision to fire. There's even new stippling on the front of the trigger guard for those who prefer to wrap the index finger of their non-shooting hand around it for additional leverage.

The trigger guard has been enlarged over previous Mete MC9 models and leaves room for a gloved finger. The trigger guard is undercut both at the grip juncture and on the bottom, and this double undercut provides a physical index for the middle finger of your shooting hand and the index finger of your non-shooting hand, respectively. The Prime's three-slot Picatinny accessory rail enables you to mount a light or light/laser combo.

Scalloped areas on the grip just behind the trigger guard make it easy to reach the magazine release, without making the release so accessible it could be pressed accidentally.

Three interchangeable backstraps enable you to tailor the grip to best fit your hand, and unlike previous MC9s, they extend the entire length of the grip. Each backstrap has a palm swell that, when combined with the beavertail, contributes to a solid grip. Swapping backstraps is easy, and Canik supplies a punch for the job.

The removable aluminum low-profile magazine well funnels magazines into the pistol for easy loading. But unlike bigger magazine wells, which can make a pistol print through your cover garment, the Prime's magazine well accomplishes the task without being unduly large.

If you're not a fan, you can simply remove it with the supplied Canik tool, which has a Torx key (T10) head and is shaped like a miniature Canik pistol. This handy tool also works to remove or install optics and the optic sight lid.

I don't like the big, competi-



CANIK USA METE MC9 PRIME

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto centerfire

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 17+1, 2 mags supplied

BARREL: 3.62 in., ported, fluted

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.73/5.43/1.16 in.

WEIGHT: 23.38 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: steel slide, polymer frame w/interchangeable backstraps

SIGHTS: Night Fision tritium

TRIGGER: flat face, 4 lb., 5 oz. pull (measured)

SAFETY: trigger blade

PRICE: \$650 (as tested)

MANUFACTURER: Canik, CANIKUSA.COM

Yamil Sued photo



▲ The Prime's compensated slide and ported barrel help reduce muzzle flip, making it one of the flattest-shooting pistols in its class.

PRIMED AND READY

tion-oriented magazine wells because they aren't practical for concealed carry. But I like the Prime's. In addition to making the pistol easier to load, it helps lock your hand to the grip like the pommel of a sword.

To disassemble the gun, after removing the mag and ensuring the pistol is unloaded, with the pistol pointed in a safe direction, press the trigger. Then depress the take-down levers and remove the slide. Inside you'll find the captive recoil assembly, which uses two springs to help mitigate felt recoil.

The Prime is a good-looking, modern pistol that feels good in the hand, but looking good and even feeling good are attributes that only go so far. A pistol intended for carry and defense must perform. It needs to be easy to conceal, easy to shoot well, reliable and accurate. The Prime checked all these boxes.

For testing, I mounted a Viridian RFX11 directly to the slide before I headed to the range, and accuracy results are shown in the accompanying table. Considering the Prime is a carry pistol with a barrel length of less than four inches, I think these

are impressive results. The gun ran reliably, with no malfunctions.

After shooting from the bench, I moved to about 10 yards to shoot the Prime offhand. The grip design and texturing, along with porting in the barrel and slide, helped reduce muzzle flip. In fact, I think this design allows the Prime to shoot flatter than most striker-fired polymer-frame pistols in its size and weight class.

However, while I did notice a reduction in felt recoil with the Prime, it wasn't as significant as I thought it would be. Of course, the better your grip, the less you need a compensated pistol to mitigate recoil, and I like to think I have a good grip.

Whether it was my grip, the Prime's ergonomics or both, the Prime felt like an extension of my hand. It pointed naturally, shot accurately and recovered predictably from recoil. The Prime's ergonomics, short trigger reset and com-

ACCURACY RESULTS CANIK METE MC9 PRIME				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	115	1,081	14	1.3
Black Hills JHP	124	1,091	20	1.7
Hornady American Gunner XTP	124	1,186	6	1.7

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with a Viridian RFX11 green dot from a Caldwell Handy Rest NXT at 15 yards. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



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pensated slide and ported barrel make it a flat-shooting, fast-running pistol. Overall, it strikes the perfect balance of concealment and shootability.

Speaking of concealment, like I said, the Prime is longer and taller than the micro-compact MC9. However, length has very little to do with concealment, although height can be an issue, as a longer grip tends to print through a cover garment more than a shorter grip. Of course, the Prime's longer grip facilitates a higher-capacity magazine and provides more room to acquire a full firing grip.

In terms of width, while wider than the MC9, it's still a thin pistol. That means it not only carries flatter, it's also easier for most people to shoot.

The Prime ships in a lockable hard travel case with a gun lock, a cleaning kit, two 17-round metal magazines and a speedloader. It



Yamit Sued photo

▲ The slide is cut for RMSc-footprint optics, but the Night Fision sights make great standalones for those who prefer irons.

even comes with a Kydex G-Code holster. You get all this for a suggested retail price of \$650. You can also purchase the Prime with a McCanik MO4 red dot installed for \$200 more.

Either way, the Mete MC9 Prime represents the best of what Canik has to offer. It's an affordable, feature-rich option for the defensive handgunner. 

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PICK YOUR POISON

BY J. SCOTT RUPP



TWO NEW EVO OPTICS MODELS FROM ED BROWN ARE THE PINNACLE OF SMALL 1911 DESIGN.

Sadly, the man himself is gone: The legendary Ed Brown passed away last year. But his company soldiers on, continuing a tradition of producing the finest 1911s and other platforms you're likely ever to put your hands on.

Ed Brown Products' line of 1911s has never rested on its laurels, always evolving to meet the needs and the tastes of its customers. This evolution is at the heart of the EVO series introduced in 2018, and two of the newest models fully embrace today's pistol optics trend. The new EVO-KC9-G4-Holo and EVO-E9-LW come with a Holosun SCS 320, although the guns can be ordered simply optic-ready if you prefer a different type of sight.

One of the first things that stands out on these new EVOs is there's no rear sight. There is a front sight, though—a black blade that's removable via a screw, as opposed to being set in a dovetail.

Since the lack of a rear sight is not something you see every day, I reached out to Travis Brown, who has been running Ed Brown Products since his late father retired several years ago.

Travis explained that because the EVO series is designed around the 9mm round, they wanted to make it as small and light as possible while still retaining the 1911 platform's characteristics.

"To that end, nothing extraneous is added," he said, referring to the lack of a rear sight. "We've also noticed in practice that the smaller window in the smaller optics, combined with the front sight, means you can still be accurate enough in the rare situation should your optic fail. Also, given the smaller window in the 'micro' optics, we felt it was better not to further obstruct the view with a rear sight."

These two EVO models share a lot of other common characteristics. For starters they're 9mms with full-size grips and four-inch barrels, splitting the difference →

PICK YOUR POISON

← between traditional Commander and Officer's 1911 barrel lengths. Why four inches? Travis said the design goal was to go as short as possible without sacrificing reliability in the 9mm chambering, and they determined this length to be the sweet spot.

The stainless steel barrels are bull styles, no bushings, and they're fluted and sport recessed crowns. If you've examined many 9mm 1911 barrels, you'll have noticed that almost without exception they are

ramped. Ed Brown's 9mm barrels are that exception.

"A ramp is not needed for a 9mm," Travis said. "Ramps have little to do with feeding. They were originally designed to give a .38 Super case more support so it could be loaded hotter for competition, without blowing out the case. Ed Brown was one of the key people involved in the early design of the ramped barrel for competition purposes. As the .38 Super and the 9mm share the same slide/bolt-face

dimension, historically the ramp was 'accidentally' carried over to the 9mm."

As Travis explained it, once the ramps got started, most makers simply assumed that 9mm barrels had to be ramped. And so the practice continues to this day even though, as he said, it's not necessary—although if a 1911 frame is already cut for a ramped barrel, you have to stick with that design.

Internally there's a full-length guide rod, and initially I winced because I'm not usually a fan. Being essentially lazy, I don't want to have to keep track of a wrench or find the paper clip or other tool that's typically required for disassembling a 1911 with such a rod.

But Ed Brown's setup is a captured system, and it requires no tools; just field-strip it like you would a traditional short-rod gun. The company also sells this setup as a conversion kit (\$50) that includes its flat-wire spring and will work with any 1911 in the four- to five-inch class without any modifications.

The flat-wire spring, which you'll find on these EVOs and increasingly on other Ed Brown 1911s, packs more spring tension into a smaller space. Travis said this type of spring also lasts longer and is more consistent—enabling it to handle a wider variety of loads reliably.

As mentioned, the sight on these optic-installed guns is the Holosun SCS 320 green dot. The sight was chosen in part because its dimensions made it a good fit with the EVO's thinner slide profile, but also because the company liked its features.

SCS stands for solar charging sight, and it has a solar unit in the top of the sight in addition to an internal battery, so it can run more or less indefinitely. The system powers a two m.o.a. dot, a 32 m.o.a. circle or a circle/dot combo. You cycle through the options simply by holding down the power button, and the brightness is automatic. It's →



A Both guns come with a Holosun, although they can be ordered without, and in order to make them as light as possible there is no rear iron sight.



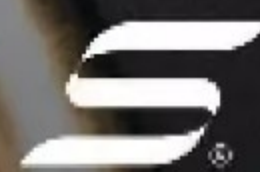
A The full-length guide rod is part of a captured system and requires no tools for disassembly. The seven-top slide is thinner and lighter than a typical slide, and it gives the gun a unique look.

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PICK YOUR POISON

← a direct mount on the EVO, so it sits low on the slide, which makes it quicker to acquire and is a big selling point for me.

The slides on both are black Gen 4-finished stainless steel, and they’re machined with a seven-top configuration that gives the guns a unique look. But more importantly, they’re only 0.86 inch wide, making them thinner and lighter than a typical 9mm 1911 slide.

There are six short, angled, flat-bottom serrations on the front of the slide. The five rear serrations are of similar design but longer.

Behind the ejection port you’ll find an external extractor, and this is what allowed Ed Brown to make the EVO’s slide so thin. It’s spring-loaded, so it can pop over a round in the chamber without damaging the extractor.

The trigger is an aluminum three-hole, and the pull weight on both guns averaged about 3.25 pounds. The pistols ship with a pair of nine-round magazines that have flat bases, and the company also supplies two sizes of black plastic base pads and the necessary installation screws.

Safeties are single-side only, although an ambidextrous safety is available for a \$100 upcharge. The magazine release is a standard button, and the grip safety has a three-groove memory bump—itself an Ed Brown innovation.

The grips are Ed Brown’s exclusive Labyrinth cocobolo. They boast an attractive light/dark latticework, and in addition to aesthetics they provide more traction than you get with smooth wood.

While that’s a lot of common char-

acteristics, the two pistols do have some significant differences. Let’s take the EVO-KC9-G4-Holo first.

It’s a steel-frame gun weighing 36 ounces with the 1.35-ounce Holosun aboard. This model sports the company’s Bobtail cut on the back of the frame. An Ed Brown invention, the Bobtail rounds off the sharp frame corner where clothing can catch and print—revealing that you’re carrying a gun—and I’ve always thought it also lends a cool, distinctive look to a 1911.

Another classy touch is the recessed slide stop, which is not found on the other gun. Travis said the difference is simply because the EVO-KC9-G4-Holo is intended as more of a carry gun, and a recessed slide stop is commonly thought of as a high-end concealed-carry feature.

The mainspring housing and frontstrap are treated to Ed Brown’s Snakeskin serrations. Not only do they look like snakeskin, they work in much the same manner. If you run your fingers in one direction, you’ll find the serrations relatively smooth, but run them in the opposite direction and you’ll feel them grab.

This translates to good control, as that same grab comes into play when the pistol wants to twist upward in your hand during recoil. I think the texture is also less likely to grab the fabric of a covering garment.

In contrast to the EVO-KC9-G4-Holo, the EVO-E9-LW is built on a lightweight aluminum frame, reducing weight by six ounces to 30 ounces with the Holosun. There’s no Bobtail cut on the frame, but it does incorporate a low-profile Chen magazine well—one that is so well blended it’s easy to miss at first glance.

Instead of Snakeskin serrations, this gun features 25 l.p.i. checkering on the flat mainspring and frontstrap. I’m a big fan of 25 l.p.i. because it splits the difference between the fairly aggressive 20 l.p.i. that can abrade your hands and the finer 30 l.p.i., which, while comfortable, doesn’t always furnish as →



A The Chen mag well on the E9-LW blends perfectly with the aluminum frame, and the 25 l.p.i. checkering on the mainspring housing and frontstrap provides a solid grip.

ACCURACY RESULTS ED BROWN EVO-KC9-G4-HOLO				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Black Hills HoneyBadger +P	100	1,129	19	1.4
Lehigh Defense ME +P	115	1,090	12	1.0
Hornady Critical Defense	115	1,086	13	1.2
CCI Blazer JHP	115	1,105	10	1.6
Federal Punch	124	1,085	8	1.0

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with a Holosun SCS 320 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.

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— H., Arvada, CO



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← much traction as I'm looking for—especially on a small, light gun.

The EVO-E9-LW also incorporates a tactical thumb safety. It's about 0.1 inch longer and wider than the standard safety on the other pistol.

Because these guns are so similar, I didn't figure it would be all that helpful to readers to bench-test them both, so I chose the steel-frame EVO for accuracy testing at 25 yards. Results are found in the accompanying chart.

Accuracy was terrific with all five loads. I experienced two failures to chamber with the Lehigh Defense load, but these occurred early on in the test, and there were no further failures. Neither pistol had a malfunction during practical shooting.

For that I chose the Wilson 5x5 drill, a great all-around exercise to evaluate handling and defensive accuracy. It's a timed drill fired at 10 yards from the holster on an IDPA target with the following stages: five

rounds to the body; five to the body strong-hand only; five to the body, slide-lock reload, five more to the body; and four to the body and one to the head.

For each run I used Fiocchi Defense Dynamics 124-grain hollow-points and the two m.o.a. dot reticle on the Holosun. With the EVO-KC9-G4-Holo I left the plain base plates on both magazines because that's how I would carry it. I added the supplied base pads—the shorter pad on the one in the gun and the longer one on the reload mag—to the EVO-E9-LW.

In terms of time, the biggest difference was in reloading, with the EVO-E9-LW's Chen mag well and the extended base pads speeding things along. But also, mags dropped free easily from this gun while the magazine well fit was tighter on the KC9, and occasionally I had to physically rip magazines from the gun instead of just letting them fall out.

ED BROWN PRODUCTS EVO-KC9-G4-HOLO EVO-E9-LW

TYPE: 1911

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 9+1, 2 mags supplied

BARREL: 4 in. stainless fluted bull

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.5/6.0/0.86

WEIGHT: 36 oz. (KC9), 30 oz. (E9)

CONSTRUCTION: G4-finished stainless steel slide; stainless steel Bobtail frame (KC9), aluminum frame w/Chen mag well (E9)

GRIPS: Labyrinth cocobolo

TRIGGER: 3 lb., 5 oz. (KC9), 3 lb., 3 oz. (E9)

SIGHTS: Holosun SCS 320 (as tested), black blade front

SAFETIES: grip, thumb (KC9); grip, tactical thumb (E9)

PRICE: \$2,995 (KC9), \$3,945 (E9); as tested

MANUFACTURER: Ed Brown, EdBrown.com

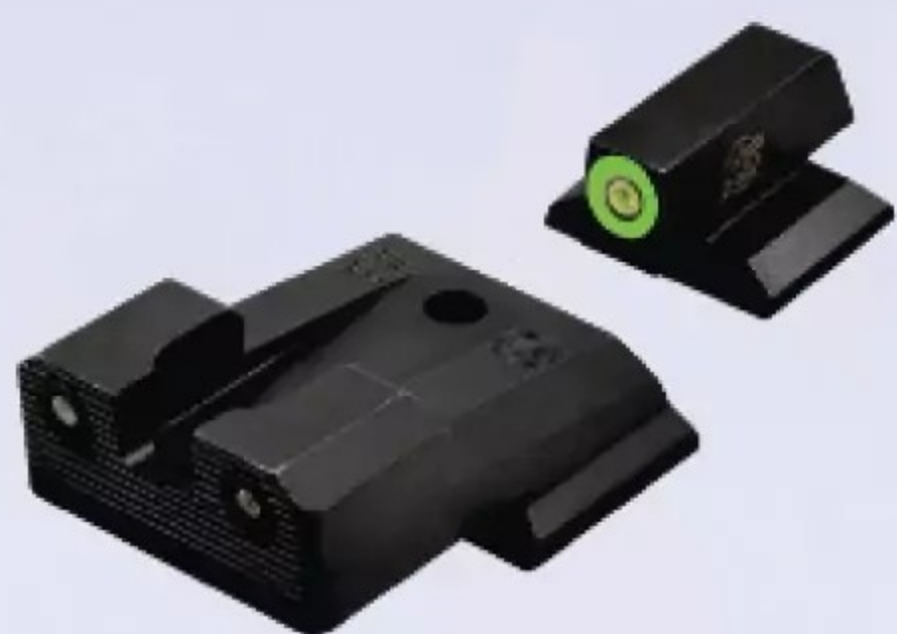
Actually, I was fairly slow in reloading both pistols. For my hand size and thumb length, I need either a relief cut in the left grip panel or an extended mag release—or both—to avoid having to rotate the gun →



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← slightly in my grip to access the release. That slows you down.

To evaluate handling outside of reloads, I stripped those times out of the 5x5 results. I was still nearly a second faster on average with the E9-LW. That surprised me, as I expected I'd be faster and more accurate with the heavier KC9.

When I later learned from Travis that the E9-LW is considered more of a range gun, it made more sense. One contributing factor was the tactical thumb safety on the E9-LW. My thumb rode it better than the standard safety on the KC9. That and the 25 l.p.i. checkering provided a bit more control.

The bottom line is both guns performed up to the level you would expect from Ed Brown Products. Yes, these guns live in rarefied air. The EVO-KC9-G4-Holo as tested sells for \$2,995 and the EVO-E9-LW as tested for \$3,945—the price difference stemming from the Chen

mag well and aluminum frame on the latter pistol.

While I know we'll get at least one letter complaining about high-priced guns and our coverage of same, I think it's important to recognize handguns that are the pinnacle of the gunmaker's art. And there's a practical side to these EVOs as well.

Travis brought up an interesting point in our interview—namely that the trend of chasing capacity comes at the expense of sensibly sized guns and the undeniable reliability of single-stack magazines.

“If you think you need more than 10 rounds, better to carry a second loaded magazine and have the ability to distribute that weight somewhere else—not to mention you'd have a backup mag on hand,” he said. “For those reasons we feel the EVO guns have yet to gain the recognition they truly deserve, even though they have been our most popular series.”



A The KC9 features Ed Brown's Bobtail steel frame and the Snake-skin texture on the mainspring housing and frontstrap.

After shooting the EVOs a lot, I get why they're popular. If you want the very best carry and/or range 9mm 1911 out there—and you're all aboard the optics train—these two models will not disappoint. 



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A .32 FOR YOU



**IT'S BACK TO THE FUTURE
WITH A NEW SMITH & WESSON
SNUBBIE IN .32 H&R MAGNUM.**

BY J. SCOTT RUPP

The search for the ideal combination of power and capacity in an easy-carrying gun never ends. On the revolver side, some people thought the .327 Federal Magnum, introduced in 2007, might be just the ticket. A longer, more powerful version of the older .32 H&R Magnum, it was designed to rival the .357 Magnum in power but be more shootable in small-frame revolvers while providing an extra round in the cylinder over similar-size .357/.38 guns.

Problem was, more than a few shooters found the .327 a little too “blasty” when fired out of said revolvers. But what if instead of reinventing the wheel, you simply used, you know, the wheel? That’s what Smith & Wesson has done with several new revolvers chambered to the .32 H&R Magnum. They’re not the first Smiths so chambered, but they have modern features that make them eminently suitable for concealed-carry defensive use.

The lineup comprises five aluminum-frame models—two 632s and three 432s—and they are all Lipsey’s exclusives, meaning this firearms distributor is the sole source for your local gunshop or favorite online retailer to obtain one for you.

The one I got my hands on is the 632 Ultimate Carry Ti. It’s a double-action-only J frame with a 1.88-inch stainless steel barrel. Thanks to its six-shot titanium cylinder (the Ti part) and the aluminum alloy frame, it weighs a scant 13 ounces.

Like all the new .32 H&R guns, the 632 UC Ti features upgraded internals as part of the company’s Endurance Package. Smith & Wesson’s director of product innovation, Grant Dubuc, explained that the upgrade includes titanium studs for the hammer, trigger, cylinder stop and rebound slide, along with a titanium center-pin bushing.

He said these features—which are typically found only in the company’s scandium guns—help →

A .32 FOR YOU

← reduce wear and extend the revolver's life under repeated firing.

The frame has a good-looking silver finish, which is complemented nicely by the gray cylinder, black cylinder release and black grips. The S&W logo graces the left side of the frame, and the aesthetics aren't marred by the presence of an internal lock hole above the cylinder release; all the new .32 H&Rs are "no lock" guns, which will make many Smith & Wesson fans happy.

The barrel has flats machined on both sides—with "Smith & Wesson" engraved on the left flat and ".32 H&R Mag." on the right—and is relieved on both sides of the front sight. The ejector shroud extends to the end of the barrel, and it's cut at a slight angle for easy holstering.

Similarly, the front edge of the 632's cylinder is beveled, so it will slide smoothly into a belt or pocket holster. The charge holes are chamfered as well for sure, easy loading.

The sights are a cut above what you'll find on a lot of snubbies. Instead of the typical topstrap gutter groove, this gun has an actual rear sight set in a dovetail. It has a generous U-notch and is adjustable for windage by loosening the set screw and drifting the sight. Or at least that's the idea. The one on my sample was really tight, and I didn't want to force it and potentially mar the finish on a borrowed gun.

The front is from XS Sights, and it's that company's excellent revolver Standard Dot. It features a large, bright green ring that's quick to pick up in daylight, and inside the ring is a tritium vial that makes the green ring glow brightly in low light and no light.

The 632 UC Ti's black synthetic boot grips don't wrap fully around the short, square-butt frame. They have two finger grooves and are textured for good purchase. While the short grip is going to leave your little finger hanging, the configuration does make it easier to conceal the gun.

Those are the pertinent details on the gun, and many of you are probably interested in the cartridge as well. If you're already well-versed in the .32 H&R's background, feel free to skip ahead.

The .32 H&R Magnum, a joint effort between Federal and →



A With the 632, you get six rounds of the capable .32 H&R cartridge instead of the five you'd get with a .38 or .357 of similar size—and it's very controllable even though it weighs only 13 ounces.



A The barrel is a two-piece and is 1.9 inches long, with flats cut on both sides. The gray titanium cylinder nicely complements the silver finish.

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 632 UC TI

TYPE: double-action-only centerfire revolver

CALIBER: .32 H&R Magnum

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 1.88 in. stainless steel

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.31/4.3/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 13 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: silver-finished aluminum alloy frame, gray titanium cylinder

GRIPS: textured synthetic boot

TRIGGER: DAO; 7 lb., 2 oz. pull (measured)

SIGHTS: drift-adjustable U-notch rear, XS day/night front

PRICE: \$825

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson,

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← the now-defunct gunmaker Harrington & Richardson, was introduced in 1984. It was created by lengthening the .32 S&W Long cartridge, and revolvers chambered to the H&R round can also safely fire both the .32 S&W Long and its

.32 S&W Short predecessor—just like .327 Federal Magnum guns can safely fire its .32 H&R parent. The .32 H&R represented a huge jump in power from either of the old S&W .32s, as well as the .32 ACP semiauto cartridge. SAAMI maxi-

mum average pressure for the H&R is 23,000 psi. That’s far above any of the older .32s, but well below the .327 Federal Magnum’s 45,000 psi—which is why it’s far less “blasty” and why at least some folks were stuffing H&R cartridges into their .327 Federal-chambered guns.

Ignoring the big-shouldered boutique .32 H&R loads like those from Buffalo Bore, current ammunition typically employs bullets in the 80- to 95-grain range, with 85 being the most common.

In terms of defensive use, I think the most practical ballistic comparison is against the .38 Special. While the Special operates at a much lower pressure, 17,000 psi, it’s loaded with heavier bullets. Going by book specs—and using Hornady’s Critical Defense for an apples-to-apples comparison based on loading strategy—the .32 H&R lags the .38 Special in muzzle energy by just a tad.

However, my range work tells a different story. It just so happened I was testing a two-inch .38 Special at about the same time as I was working with the 632 UC Ti. Out of the short barrels on these particular guns, the energy levels with their respective Critical Defense loads diverged significantly. The math works out to 154 ft.-lbs. of energy for the 80-grain .32 H&R versus 203 ft.-lbs. for the 110-grain .38 Special.

You could easily go down the ballistics rabbit hole and find various loads to disprove or bolster the case, but the .32 H&R Magnum isn’t quite the equal of the .38 in terms of energy. However, in similar-size revolvers you’re gaining a valuable extra round with the .32 H&R—a capacity boost that could really matter in a defensive situation.

Further, shooting the .38 isn’t always a picnic. While it is manageable out of a typical all-steel snub-bie, once you get to a gun as light as the 13-ounce 632 UC Ti, the .38 can move into “ouch” territory.

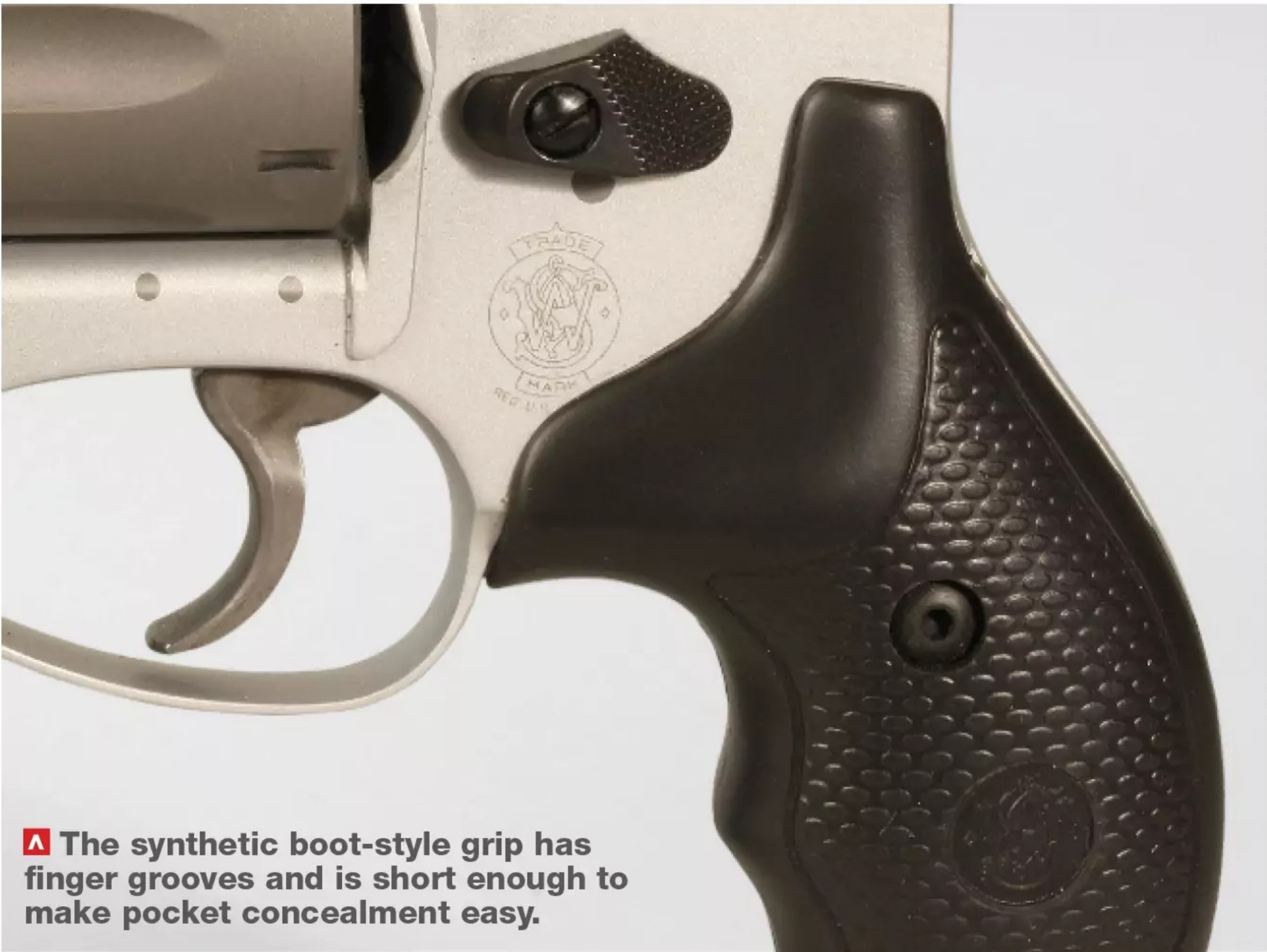
Conversely, I found the 632 to be quite controllable. While the →

BALLISTIC COMPARISON SELECTED CARTRIDGES			
Cartridge/load	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)
.32 ACP Critical Defense	60	1,000	133
.32 H&R Critical Defense	80	1,150	235
.38 Special Critical Defense	110	1,010	249
.327 Federal Mag. Critical Defense	80	1,475	386

Notes: Ranked in order of muzzle energy. Ballistics are book specs. Hornady Critical Defense chosen for best comparison based on loading approach.



▲ (L.-r.): .32 ACP, .32 H&R Magnum, .327 Federal Magnum, .38 Special. The H&R round was the basis for the .327 Federal, and while less powerful it’s also more shootable than super-light snubbies in .327 or .38.



▲ The synthetic boot-style grip has finger grooves and is short enough to make pocket concealment easy.

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A .32 FOR YOU

← accompanying 15-yard bench-testing results aren't exactly world-beating, I was satisfied. Shooting double-action-only snubbies from the bench isn't easy in the first place, and it's even harder when you don't have much gun weight to help stabilize the revolver as you pull through the long trigger travel, trying not to disturb the sights.

The 632 UC Ti shot both the Hornady and Federal loads pretty close to point of aim at 15 yards. The Remington Wheelgun was a couple inches low. There were zero misfires.

The 632 UC Ti shines in practical shooting at typical defensive distances, as in about seven yards. There's recoil, sure, but even with a 13-ounce gun you can get back on target quickly for follow-up shots.

The revolver's trigger—which is great, with a smooth seven-pound, 10-ounce pull and minimal stacking—is a big help in keeping hits in the A zone. The sights are outstand-

ing, quick to acquire and easy to see in any lighting condition.

The gun carries like a dream. It's small enough that I can easily conceal it even in the front pocket of normal-fit jeans with the addition of a shirt long enough to cover the little bit of butt that protrudes. The gun disappears entirely in cargo-style pants. In both cases, you barely notice the weight. Heck, the gun is only two ounces heavier than my phone with its protective case.

The one thing I did notice in terms of pocket carry is that unlike snubbies with gutter-style rear sights, the 632 UC Ti's rear sight can catch on the lip of a pocket holster. I found the trick is to rock the gun slightly backward before drawing.

That won't be an issue if you choose to carry it in a belt holster, whether inside or outside the waistband, where it rides really comfortably. I'm not into appendix carry, but I asked *Handguns* self-defense editor and TV co-host Rich Nance

about that because he's a huge fan of appendix. He said it's a great method for carrying a snubbie. A gun as small and light as the 632 should be about perfect.

That's certainly what Smith & Wesson is thinking, and the pairing of the .32 H&R with this lightweight revolver wasn't done on a whim.

"We chose .32 H&R Magnum for the 632 Ultimate Carry revolvers to deliver a lower-recoil, more controllable option ideal for compact carry and fast follow-up shots," Grant Dubuc explained. "This caliber strikes a balance between performance and shootability, making it well-suited for the lightweight titanium cylinder platform."

While I'm a sucker for offbeat calibers, I did wonder what kind of reception a .32 H&R Magnum revolver might get among the modern shooting public. Interestingly, not too long ago I was having a beer with a friend of a friend. A serious shooter, he turned out to be a huge fan of the .32 H&R, which surprised me because he probably wasn't even born when the cartridge was introduced.

While that's a lone example of the potential customer base for a new .32 H&R carry revolver, you don't have to search too hard on internet gun forums to realize how many gun people appreciate such a combination. There will be some collector interest, too, since Smith & Wesson has offered only a few .32 H&R revolvers in the past, and some of those fetch pretty dear prices.

I think what Dubuc said about the 632 UC Ti is right on the money. It's a small, ultralight revolver perfect for concealed carry, but at the same time it's a gun that's quite shootable while offering a decent level of power and good capacity. And with more loads coming on line—at press time Federal had just introduced a new 85-grain Hydra-Shok Deep, for example—its defensive capabilities will only get better. This one will be fun to watch.



▲ Unlike a lot of snubbies, the 632 UC Ti has real sights: a drift-adjustable U-notch rear and an XS Sights tritium/green-ring front, which is visible in any lighting condition.

ACCURACY RESULTS SMITH & WESSON MODEL 632 UC TI				
.32 H&R Magnum	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense XTP	80	932	20	2.3
Federal Personal Defense JHP	85	951	15	2.2
Remington Wheelgun SWC	95	853	11	2.8

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

kurz *adj. Deutsch. 1a. A comparatively short length.*
1b. **Kompakt.**



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A MODERN CLASSIC

BY KEITH WOOD



KIMBER'S CDS9 CLASSIC IS A SINGLE-ACTION SEMIAUTO CARRY GUN WITH SOME SERIOUS CAPACITY.

To say that double-stack single-action 9mm handguns are popular right now would be a giant understatement. Nearly every major maker, Kimber included, has come out with its own flavor of the 2011 handgun. While there are some great pistols in this category, few could be considered genuinely concealable.

If there's an open niche in the defensive handgun market, this is it. And Kimber's CDS9 Classic is a subcompact single-action, double-stack 9mm that is truly suitable for concealed carry.

CDS9 is the acronym for Covert Double Stack 9mm. Let me begin by making it clear that the CDS9 Classic is not a 2011 clone. It shares no parts and few features with the double-stack 1911, but it fills a similar niche.

Does this gun fit in the 1911/2011 category at all? Well, sort of. Yes, it's a hammer-fired single-action, but the similarities mostly end there. It's honestly no more 1911 or 2011 than it is Browning Hi Power. Similar capabilities, sure, but it gets there by a different route.

Kimber offers a CDS9 Classic and an optic-ready CDS9 Classic (OR); I tested the latter. Although the guns are similar, there are some slight differences that I'll point out.

The CDS9 Classic (OR) uses an aluminum alloy frame that is blackened via Kimber's KimPro II finish, while non-optic-ready versions are gray instead of black. The frame itself is short and stubby but is designed around extended magazine base pads that effectively become part of the grip. Not only do these mags allow for a full three-finger grip, they drastically increase the handgun's capacity.

The frame is high-cut to keep the pistol low in the hand, and an extended beavertail at the rear protects the hand from the hammer and slide. The nylon mainspring housing at the back of the frame →

A MODERN CLASSIC

← is textured for a firm grip, and the raised stippling matches that found on the two grip panels.

The frame's dust cover is slick. Unlike the original CDS9, the Classic has no accessory rail. There are four integral frame rails to support the slide, two longer sections forward of the magazine well and two short rails to the rear. The frame-mounted ejector sits inside of the rear rail sections.

The trigger system is a bit of a

hybrid design. The flat-face trigger lever articulates or hinges from the top end like most modern handguns. Internally, though, things operate differently. Behind the trigger pad is a metal trigger bow that surrounds the inside of the magazine well and engages the ignition parts at the rear of the frame, in the style of the 1911.

There is a single-side magazine release with an elongated checkered button that is reversible for

left-handed use. There is also an ambidextrous manual thumb safety.

The CDS9 Classic has no grip safety but uses a firing pin safety mechanism that is similar to that found on the Colt Series 80 1911. When the trigger is pressed to the rear, a lever extends upward from the frame. This lever pushes upward on a spring-loaded plunger located next to the disconnecter rail on the bottom of the slide.

The lever pushes the plunger clear so it does not block the travel of the firing pin. This is different from the Swartz safety found on Kimber 1911s, which is released when the grip safety is engaged. There are slide stops on both sides of the frame.

One of the traditional hallmarks of a single-action handgun is a good trigger pull, and the CDS9 Classic didn't miss the boat here. My test sample's trigger broke cleanly and consistently at exactly five pounds.

For a subcompact defensive handgun, I would say this trigger pull weight was close to ideal. Add in the fact that the gun can be carried cocked and locked, and you have a system that sets the shooter up for success when it comes to getting fast hits on target.



▲ While there's no grip safety, there is a thumb safety, so the pistol can be carried cocked and locked. The single-action trigger is a hybrid that shares traits with 1911 and hinged styles.



▲ Ten- and 15-round magazines with extended base pads were included with the test gun. Production versions will ship with a 13- and a 15-round magazine in non-restrictive states.

KIMBER CDS9 CLASSIC (OR)

TYPE: single-action semiautomatic

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 10- and 15-round mags supplied (as tested; 13 and 15 for production guns)

BARREL: 3.03 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.2/5.0/1.1 in.

WEIGHT: 20.8 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: KimPro II-finished steel slide, aluminum frame

GRIPS: textured nylon

SIGHTS: black steel rear, TAG Precision fiber-optic front; slide cut for optics on RMSc footprint

TRIGGER: hinged single action, 5 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETIES: ambidextrous manual thumb, firing pin

PRICE: \$864

MANUFACTURER: Kimber, KIMBERAMERICA.COM

For those who grew up in a world of striker-fired handguns, a manual safety might feel like an anachronism. While I take no issue with carrying a handgun with a long trigger pull in condition zero (chamber loaded, no safety) that's not something I'm going to combine with a short and relatively light single-action pull such as the one found on the CDS9. Appendix carry? Give me a manual safety every time.

The CDS9 Classic is built with a stainless steel slide. The (OR) version I tested sported a two-tone finish. On the two-tone (OR) models, the flats of the slide are polished while the remainder of the surfaces are coated with the satin black KimPro II finish. On the non-(OR) Classic, the gray slide matches the frame. There are vertical cocking serrations at the front and rear of the slide, and the gun employs an external extractor.

The serrated FiberLok front sight used on the (OR) version is made by TAG Precision and features interchangeable fiber optics. My pistol shipped with a red fiber-optic insert installed, with green, red, orange and black inserts included. To change out the inserts, remove the hex screw at the muzzle end of the sight.

The sight blade itself is made from steel and is black nitride finished, and as such it should stand up to hard use. The non-(OR) CDS9 classic is fitted with TruGlo tritium sights.

As the name makes obvious, the CDS9 Classic (OR) is made optic-ready. A cover plate comes installed on the slide, and the serrated black rear sight is integral to that plate. When the plate is removed, you can direct-mount an optic that uses the RMsC footprint. I did not install an optic, instead relying on the high-quality sights for testing.

The CDS9 Classic line features a stainless steel 3.03-inch barrel with an integral feed ramp. There is no barrel bushing. The barrel locks



A The front sight system is made by TAG Precision. Kimber ships a kit with the gun that includes multiple interchangeable fiber-optic insert options and associated tools.

into the slide via a machined flat section forward of the chamber, and the barrel hood fits into a breech face mortise at the rear. There is a slot in the barrel hood that serves as a visual loaded-chamber indicator.

Two magazines were included with the test sample, both with stamped steel bodies and blue polymer followers. The dual-column mags taper to a single cartridge width at the top. Both magazines are fitted with large polymer base pads that, when installed, become part of the grip.

The shorter magazine holds 10 rounds while the other holds 15 thanks to a slightly extended base. I'm told that production guns will actually ship with a 13- and a 15-round magazine, but the 10-round magazine is available for restrictive states.

The recoil system is a dual-spring

setup. A smaller recoil spring guide rod rides inside a larger cylindrical guide. A captive coil spring sits between the two recoil spring guides. A larger flat recoil spring fits around the fatter guide and can be removed for cleaning.

There is an L-shaped tab at the back of the recoil assembly that locks into the lower lug of the barrel. It must be installed in the correct position, but the slide will not fit on the frame if it's done incorrectly so there's no danger of making a mistake during reassembly. This recoil system is rated for 10,000 rounds, according to Kimber.

Disassembly of the CDS9 Classic (OR) is slightly out of the ordinary, so it is worth a mention. After making sure the pistol is unloaded, retract the slide until the half-moon notch aligns with the tab on the left slide stop. With the slide held in →

A MODERN CLASSIC

← this position, use a small object such as a punch or even a pen to press on the center of the right slide-stop pin. When everything is aligned correctly, this will force the left slide stop out of position. The stop can then be removed, which allows the slide to come off the frame. At that point, the recoil system and barrel can be removed.

I tested the CDS9 Classic with four factory loads ranging from 115 to 147 grains. Accuracy was excellent across the board. Both 115-grain loads shot right at the point of aim at 15 yards, while the 135- and 147-grain rounds impacted roughly two inches high at that distance.

One might expect snappy recoil from such a compact handgun, but perhaps thanks to the full-size grip, that was not the case. Reliability was 100 percent with the CCI Blaser and Hornady ammunition. But I did experience one malfunction with



▲ Disassembling the CDS9 series requires a small tool such as a punch or pen. The dual-spring recoil system is rated for 10,000 rounds.

the Fiocchi 147-grain load when the slide failed to go fully into battery while feeding the cartridge from

the magazine. I bumped the slide and got back to shooting.

The final load I tried was Wil- →



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A MODERN CLASSIC

son Combat’s Signature Training load with Berry’s 135-grain hollow-base flatnose bullets. The flatnose profile was totally incompatible with the feed ramp of the CDS9 Classic and would not chamber reliably—hence it is not included in the accompanying accuracy chart. With the barrel removed, the cartridges would drop right in, so it was not a matter of a tight chamber or headspacing, just an issue of bullet shape. As with any handgun, it is best to find the ammo that works and stick with it.

I’ve spent some time with Kimber’s engineering team in their state-of-the-art facility in Troy, Alabama, so I’ve seen the lengths they go to when developing a new handgun. Many high-tech machines, from ultra-high-speed cameras to automated coordinate measuring devices are used to ensure that standards of quality control are met. There is a great deal of capa-

ACCURACY RESULTS | KIMBER CDS9 CLASSIC (OR)

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
CCI Blaser FMJ	115	1,081	10	1.0
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,075	11	1.3
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	147	955	9	1.4

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

bility squeezed into this small handgun, evidence of long hours spent by those design engineers.

Thanks to the proliferation of 1911- and 2011-style handguns these days, an entirely new generation of enthusiasts have discovered the shootability of single-action handguns. Not everyone is going to commit to carrying a handgun as large as a 1911 or 2011, though, which often leads to an individual using a single-action on the range while carrying a compact striker-fired handgun for self-defense.

I often find myself in this very

position. One solution would be a handgun such as the CDS9 Classic (OR) that combines the shootability of a single-action with the safety of being able to carry cocked and locked, and the high capacity and concealability of a modern striker-fired handgun. For many of us, this truly is the best of both worlds.

Rather than creating another sub-compact pistol built on the 1911’s operating system, Kimber developed a handgun that maintains key attributes of that design but in a package engineered from the ground up to function at this size.

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OUT OF THE SHADOWS

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



THE NEW SHADOW 2 CARRY SHOWS THAT THE DA/SA CAN INDEED SHINE IN A CCW ROLE.

In an era when striker-fired polymer-frame pistols are exceedingly popular, the CZ Shadow 2 Carry might seem like something of a dinosaur.

It features a metal frame and double-action/single-action operation. Its decocker mechanism might befuddle a new shooter who has owned only striker-fired pistols. But spend a bit of time behind the trigger of this gun and you'll understand why the CZ 75 family of pistols never really went out of style.

The new Shadow 2 Carry is the distillation of 50 years of design evolution, building on the foundation established by the CZ 75. If you're not familiar with that background, you can read about it in the accompanying sidebar. Otherwise, let's dive right into this standout new pistol.

While its double-action/single-action design seems out of sorts with popular modern carry gun design, it's important to remember that the Shadow 2 Carry is based on one of the world's best competition pistols—the Shadow 2, which has won scads of major matches—but with features that make it more suitable for everyday carry.

Let's begin with the four-inch barrel. CZ is known for building guns that are extremely accurate, and that's thanks in part to the precise cold-hammer-forging method that the company has perfected over decades. CZ even backs its barrels with a lifetime warranty guaranteeing function and accuracy.

The steel slide is precision machined and, since it rides inside the frame rails, the bore axis is very low. The front and rear portions of the slide are serrated, but because of the slide's configuration the serrations are relatively short compared to slab-sided guns like the 1911 or many polymer-frame pistols.

The front portion of the slide is angled, and the top of the →

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

← receiver features serrations to cut glare. The front and rear sights feature green photoluminescent dots, and the rear sight sports a U-shaped notch. Both the front and rear sights are set in dovetails.

Of course, as with almost every modern carry gun the slide is cut for optics. In this case it's the Shield RMSc footprint, and sights with that footprint mount directly to the slide without the need for plates. This means they sit low enough that most will co-witness with the iron sights. I mounted a Burris FastFire C on the test pistol,

and there was no interference with the iron sight picture. So unless you have an optic with an extraordinarily high deck height, the sights will co-witness without issue.

The frame is perhaps my favorite part of this gun. It's machined from forged 7075-T6 aluminum, and the design offers exceptional control. Team CZ's Eric Grauffel, whose résumé includes nine IPSC world championships and more than 250 IPSC president medals, says the Shadow 2 Carry "feels so good in hand that you'll want to go straight to the shooting range."

That's not hyperbole. CZ didn't become the manufacturer of world-beating competition pistols without learning a few things about ergonomics, and it shows. The lower portion of the backstrap is rather upright, but about an inch below the beavertail it angles sharply forward. That lower portion is checkered, while the slanted upper part is smooth and rounded. This naturally locks the hand in place and provides a straight line from the top of the hand to the trigger, promoting proper trigger engagement and a smooth pull.

There's aggressive beveling from the undercut trigger guard up the frame and over the trigger, which makes the gun rest comfortably in the hand. The rather high frame rails offer plenty of space for a thumbs-forward grip. Couple that with a prominent beavertail and checkered frontstrap, and your hand feels locked in place.

You might not notice subtle touches at first glance—like the relief on the lower portion of the frame where the finger enters the trigger guard—but it's clear that this gun was engineered with input from top shooters.

The Shadow 2 Carry also has exceptional balance. Polymer-frame guns can feel top-heavy →



A Controls such as the slide lock/release are not shrinking violets like you find on some carry guns. They're sized for sure operation.



A Not only is the DA/SA trigger excellent, but the Shadow 2 Carry features little details like a relief cut on the frame where the fingers enter the trigger guard.

CZ SHADOW 2 CARRY

TYPE: DA/SA semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 15; two mags supplied

BARREL: 5-inch compensated fluted bull, bronze PVD finish

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.5/5.25/1.55 in.

WEIGHT: 30.5 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: black nitride steel slide, aluminum frame

GRIPS: Duralumin black checkered

TRIGGER: DA/SA; DA pull, 9 lb., 2 oz.; SA pull, 4 lb., 4 oz. (measured, as received)

SIGHTS: U-notch metal photoluminescent rear, metal photoluminescent front; slide cut for optics on RMSc footprint

PRICE: \$1,449

MANUFACTURER: CZ, CZ-USA.COM

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OUT OF THE SHADOWS

← and settle well under recoil. The CZ practically becomes an extension of your hand while you pull the trigger. The frame also features a three-slot rail on the dust cover, and this adds just the right amount of muzzle weight to help keep the gun planted.

The black grip panels are made from Duralumin, an aluminum-copper alloy, and they offer a stylish checkering pattern. The grips fit

close to the frame and provide plenty of purchase but do not bite into the hand like more aggressive grips can.

Controls include an ambidextrous decocker and a slide stop. The decocker features ears that allow for better control. It requires a full downward press, which produces an audible click, and then must be released to drop the hammer to the hammer's safety notch.

The Shadow 2 Carry's firing pin block prevents the firing pin from moving until the trigger is pulled. The hammer itself features a flat-top profile and is skeletonized.

The slide stop is large enough that it is easy to control and operate. There's an oval reversible magazine release as well.

The aluminum frame makes the Shadow 2 Carry heavier than most polymer-frame pistols, but not by much. Unloaded weight is listed at 30.7 ounces. For comparison, CZ's polymer-frame P-09 Nocturne C, which also has a four-inch barrel, weighs 26.1 ounces unloaded, and Springfield's Echelon 4.0C weighs 24 ounces. The few extra ounces of weight are put to good use. This gun is one of the most comfortable 9mm pistols I've shot.

Accuracy was outstanding, and the Shadow 2 Carry is certainly in the running for the most accurate production 9mm carry gun I've ever fired. The first group of the day measured 1.4 inches, and almost half the groups were under two inches when firing single action from a rest at 25 yards.

Equally impressive was the consistency with which the CZ churned out good groups. With most loads, all their five-shot groups measured right around two inches.

The gun performed even better in various live-fire exercises. I shot 15 rounds at the center portion of a torso target offhand from seven yards in double-action mode, and the entire 15-shot group measured 2.65 inches wide, with several shots stacked together. Next I fired five head shots, and except for one instance of self-sabotage (poor trigger press), all the shots were clustered under 1.5 inches.

For shooters who've cut their teeth on striker-fired guns with triggers that break at five or six pounds, there will be a bit of a learning curve switching to the Shadow 2 Carry, but its trigger is excellent for a DA/SA. →

SHADOW ORIGIN STORY

In 1975, CZ released its CZ 75 double-action/single-action pistol, a ground-up design developed by brothers Frantisek and Josef Koucky. It featured short-recoil operation and used a linkless cam system similar to Brownie's Hi Power/GP-35. One of the primary features of the CZ 75 and its offspring is that the slide rides inside the frame rails. The increased contact between the rails and the slide is purported to reduce play and improve accuracy potential.

The CZ 75 was a worldwide success and spawned too many clones to number. Although he was a 1911 fan, Jeff Cooper appreciated the robust and accurate design of the CZ 75 and at one time called it the best 9mm service pistol available. The ill-fated Bren Ten pistol—which was intended to introduce the 10mm Auto cartridge to the

world, and on which Cooper collaborated—was based on the CZ 75.

By the 1980s, pistol sport shooting had grown in popularity, and the CZ 75 was a popular choice for elite pistol shooters. This popularity led to the development of the CZ 75 SP-01, which was originally designed for special operations teams. The SP-01 featured a revised dust cover and rail that gave it a bit of forward weight and made a good-shooting gun even better.

The SP-01 Shadow followed, and it offered upgraded sights and no firing pin block. This too became one of the most popular guns in IPSC competitions worldwide. The Shadow 2 version followed in 2016 and continued CZ's legacy of producing popular competition pistols, and that led us to the current Shadow 2 Carry.—BF



▲ The U-notch rear sight features anti-glare serrations and photoluminescent dots. It will co-witness with most red-dot sights built on the RMSc footprint.



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OUT OF THE SHADOWS

← The company lists trigger pull weight at 10 pounds, two ounces in double action and three pounds, two ounces in single action. On my sample, the double action was slightly lighter than that, and the single action slightly heavier—nine pounds, two ounces and four pounds, three ounces, respectively.

After I put a couple hundred rounds through the gun, I reweighed the trigger, and while the double-action weight remained almost identical, the single-action pull was three pounds, 10 ounces. What that tells me is the trigger on this gun will break in over time and, with enough bullets down the pipe, it might reach the advertised single-action pull weight.

One of the practical benefits of the CZ's design is second-strike capability. Should you encounter a hard primer, the CZ's hammer-fired design allows you to simply pull the trigger again for another go at that



▲ The slide rides on rails located inside the frame for improved accuracy, and the accessory rail adds a bit of forward weight to help reduce muzzle rise.

same primer. That's not an option with most striker-fired guns.

I have often lamented the poor controls on most carry guns. Yes, there's some value in downsizing controls, and preventing hang-ups

during your draw stroke is the primary reason listed for this. But the Shadow 2 Carry is built to be run hard, and that means the controls are large enough that you can operate them easily.

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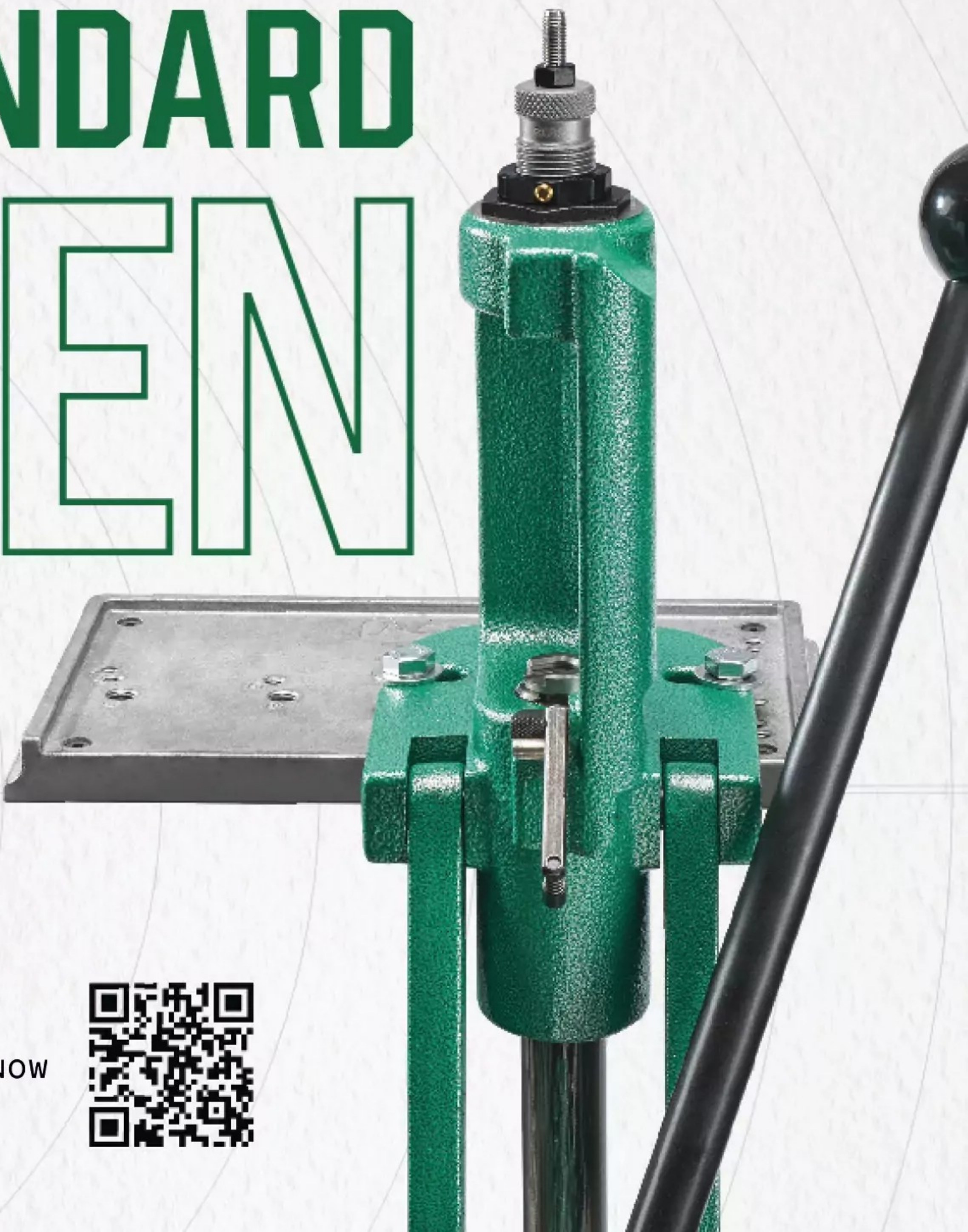
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The wide top portion of the slide stop measures almost a half-inch wide and nearly a quarter-inch across, making it infinitely useful as a slide release without extending so far that hang-ups might be an issue. The small angular cut on the front top portion of the slide stop further reduces the odds of it catching on clothing, more proof that CZ has indeed thought of everything.

I found that the decocker does require some effort to operate, but with a bit of practice I think even those owners who have diminished thumb strength will be able to master its manipulation.

There's no question the Shadow 2 Carry is a shooter. But how does it measure up in its intended role as a carry gun?

Its primary drawbacks are weight, size and price. The CZ measures 1.55 inches wide and 5.25 inches tall from the base plate of the 15-round magazine to the top of

ACCURACY RESULTS | CZ SHADOW 2 CARRY

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady American Gunner XTP	115	1,116	14	1.8
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,120	12	2.0
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,136	10	1.9
Fiocchi Covert X JHP	124	1,111	19	2.0
Speer Gold Dot G2 HP	147	959	9	2.3

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a Target Shooting Inc. Model 1500 rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots using a LabRadar chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

the iron sights. Overall length is 7.5 inches, so this is a relatively large pistol, especially if you compare it to the many micro-compact 9mms out there today.

And at just a hair over 30 ounces it's somewhat heavier than many polymer-frame guns with the same length barrels, but as I outlined earlier, not by a whole lot. However, the CZ's extra weight makes it balance extremely well. The mass, low bore axis and ergonomics make this gun simply outstanding.

There's also the consideration of cost. The CZ's suggested retail price is \$1,449, or about three times what you'll shell out for an entry-level striker-fired 9mm.

Okay, so it's on the large side and rather expensive. But, it's like having a world-class competition pistol on your hip each day, an everyday carry semiauto that feels like a race gun. It's not for everyone, but for those who don't mind the added weight and relatively high cost, this is indeed a world-class carry pistol. 

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2025 NEW HOLSTER GUIDE

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

A LOOK AT SOME OF THIS YEAR'S BEST NEW HOLSTER OPTIONS.

Choosing the right holster has a major impact on how often and how comfortably we carry. I talk to many gun owners who, despite owning a carry pistol, don't wear the gun every day simply because they haven't found the right holster. You must choose a holster that is comfortable, easy to access, secure and, if need be, concealable. Not every holster works for every lifestyle or body type, either. Part of the holster buying process is often trial and error. Here are some of the new holster designs for 2025 that you might want to consider.

INSIDE THE WAISTBAND

1 | BLACKPOINT TACTICAL F03

Designed by instructor and SEAL team member Bill Rapier, the F03 is intended to be worn just forward of the three o'clock or forward position on the hip instead of the 4:00 or 4:30 positions—providing the best combination of speed and security. The F03 lacks the traditional “wings” found on many IWB holsters and instead utilizes a front clip hard mounted to the holster's Kydex body and a modified rear wing that improves comfort, flexibility and concealment. Dual attachment points secure and stabilize the firearm, and the metal clips feature Cloth Grabber technology. There are multiple options, and ride height, cant and retention are adjustable. Optic compatible.

Price: Starting at \$105, [BLACKPOINTTACTICAL.COM](https://blackpointtactical.com)

2 | 1791 GUNLEATHER OPTIC-READY LIGHT-BEARING SMOOTH CONCEALMENT

A leather holster offering all the modern features shooters want, this one accommodates an array of popular carry pistols with optics and a variety of rail-mounted lights. The soft, rugged American cowhide leather exterior is comfortable to carry, and it's available in both right- and left-hand configurations. The high-rise backing prevents the gun from biting against your body, and the heavy-duty beveled steel belt clip accommodates belts up to 1.5 inches wide. If you love the look and feel of a leather holster but don't want to give up modern touches, this is a great option.

Price: \$50, [1791GUNLEATHER.COM](https://1791gunleather.com)

3 | CROSSBREED REIGN

A versatile and affordable Kydex IWB holster, the Reign's ambidextrous design makes it suitable for both right- and left-handed shooters. Both ride height and retention are adjustable, and it works with both suppressor-height sights and red dots. The mid-rise guard on both sides of the holster improves comfort, and metal belt clips ensure the holster will stay put when drawing. A variety of shell and hardware color options are offered, inexpensive upgrades to an already affordable holster.

Price: \$40, [CROSSBREEDHOLSTERS.COM](https://crossbreedholsters.com)

4 | FALCO A911 L TALONGUARD LIGHT-BEARING HYBRID

The Falco blends a Kydex inner shell with an Italian leather-wrapped exterior for security and comfort. It's highly customizable and compatible with no fewer than 80 different weapon lights. A built-in sweat guard protects against moisture, and the open bottom allows for the use of threaded barrels. A Falco stainless steel clip holds the holster securely in place on belts from 1.5 to two inches in width, and there's an optional concealment claw for appendix carry. Customization options include right- or left-handed configuration, a suppressor-height sight channel, red dot cut and leather color.

Price: Starting at \$129, [FALC HOLSTERS.COM](https://falcoholsters.com)



5 | CRUCIAL CONCEALMENT UNIVERSAL LIGHT

Each of these Kydex holsters fits a specific weapon light, and the included retention shim allows users to run those lights on different pistols. Crucial's Covert IWB clip works with a variety of belts and clothing styles, and because it funnels material into the clip when upward force is applied to the holster, it is more secure than other designs. The Kickstand keeps the rear portion of the gun tucked close to the body for better concealment. It's ambidextrous, with adjustable ride height and cant, and it's one of the few multi-fit holsters that secures the light and firearm properly and still remains comfortable enough for daily carry.

Price: \$70, CRUCIALCONCEALMENT.COM

6 | 1791 GUNLEATHER FAIR CHASE DEER HIDE SMOOTH CONCEALMENT

The Fair Chase Deer Hide is crafted from American whitetail deer hide. The dark brown leather finish looks great, and the holster's smooth design fits comfortably inside the waistband. The deer hide exterior is comfortable and protects the body from pinching or biting. It has a high back that rides close to the body for improved comfort, and it will accept a variety of lights and lasers. Fits most popular carry pistols.

Price: \$65, 1791GUNLEATHER.COM

OUTSIDE THE WAISTBAND

7 | C&G TRINITY

As part of the company's Gen6 family, the Trinity has been crafted with 3D scanning and CAD modeling that keeps tolerances to 0.003 inch. It's suitable for daily concealed carry, IDPA competitions or as a duty holster. The Speed Cut design allows for faster, smoother draws, and the mounting system accommodates Tek-Lok, DOT, QLS, paddle hanger, drop leg attachments and several others. Stiffening ribs ensure rigidity and durability, and the holster is cut to accommodate optics. Customization options include an upgrade to level II retention.

Price: \$100, CANDGHOLSTERS.COM

8 | SAFARILAND SOLIS

Designed for compact and subcompact pistols, The Solis's low-profile design makes it easy to conceal smaller guns. The shell is a two-piece design constructed from SafariSeven nylon blend, and it has an open-bottom design to allow debris and moisture to exit the holster. It's optic-compatible, and it will accommodate front-sight heights up to a half inch. It incorporates Safariland's Automatic Locking System so it functions like an open-top holster but offers the added security of an easy-to-operate locking system. Solis holsters are available to accommodate guns with or without lights.

Price: \$90–\$100, SAFARILAND.COM

9 | BLACKPOINT TACTICAL STANDARD OWB LIGHT-MOUNTED

While it's called "standard" this one is anything but. It's a curved Kydex rig that fits closer and more comfortably than typical OWB designs. Side-mounted belt attachment points help keep the holster close to the body and reduce the overall thickness of the holster. BlackPoint's metal hardware won't fail, and there's an optional sweat guard. Available with either a straight or 15-degree forward cant, and it can be converted to an IWB holster by moving the belt loops to the front. There are many light/firearm combinations available. Other options include front and back color, loop type and loop size.

Price: Starting at \$99, BLACKPOINTTACTICAL.COM

10 | VERSACARRY CRUSADER

The Crusader is a stylish open-top leather rig made from premium water buffalo hide, and its double-ply leather backing enhances comfort and blocks moisture from reaching the gun. It provides a forward cant, and it has sturdy leather belt loops. Two Crusader styles are offered: the Arc Angel model (shown) and the more traditional Classic. Each is custom molded to fit specific guns, and there are options for many popular semiauto pistols.

Price: \$95–\$100, VERSACARRY.COM

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2025 HOLSTER GUIDE

11 | SAFARILAND GRAVITY

The Gravity is constructed of Safariland's ultra-rugged SafariLaminate material with a Cordura exterior that prevents buttons and zippers from clanking. The passive trigger guard detent enhances security, and retention is user adjustable. Low-cut sides allow for a smooth and consistent draw, and the holster has a tall front sight channel and optic cut. The Gravity is compatible with all Safariland three-hole mounts and comes with a 568BL injection-molded paddle. The holster functions with belts up 1.75 inches wide. IDPA and USPSA approved.

Price: \$65, SAFARILAND.COM

SHOULDER, FIELD HOLSTERS

12 | GALCO MASTERBILT MASTER AGENT

Part of Galco's Masterbilt line, the Master Agent shoulder holster is a lined, hand-molded premium steerhide holster that carries the firearm in a diagonal/muzzle-up position under the arm. At 2.5 inches wide, the harness is comfortable to wear even on hot days, and an off-side elasticized nylon strap with an alligator clip can be attached to the waistline of the pants. The hand-molded holster is black with an internal smooth leather liner.

Price: \$250, GALCOGUNLEATHER.COM

13 | GUNFIGHTERS INC. BINO LINK

This system allows hunters and hikers to attach their Kydex holster shell to any binocular harness thanks to its Tegriss adapter plate. It is adjustable for height and cant for positioning the gun, so it's easy to access and stays out of the way. It will accommodate pistols with optics plus it's open-ended for threaded barrels. Available as a complete system with link and holster shell (binocular harness not included), just the link or just the holster shell.

Price: \$159 (complete system), GUNFIGHTERSINC.COM

14 | VORTEX GLASSPAK PRO HOLSTER

Attaches to the bottom of Vortex's GlassPak Pro binocular harness courtesy of MOLLE attachment points. A ripcord allows you to easily access the gun, and a quick-adjust buckle makes it easy to size the holster for a secure fit. It accommodates optics, and it can be configured to allow access from the left or right side. The nylon shell is treated with a Durable Water Repellent coating, making this an ideal option for outdoor use. Weight is just 4.2 ounces.

Price: \$45, VORTEXOPTICS.COM

OTHER TYPES

15 | MISSION FIRST TACTICAL BELLY BAND

Mission First Tactical's new Belly Band has 3D Spacer mesh fabric with special channels and an open air weave that allow air and moisture to flow through, and the medical-grade hook-and-loop fasteners also prevent chafing. Self-laminating fastening ends can be cut with scissors for a perfect fit, and a hard laminate trigger shield protects the trigger. The Belly Band features various elastic and zippered pockets for accessories, making it a great choice for runners and others who want comfortable concealment under very light clothing.

Price: \$50, MISSIONFIRSTTACTICAL.COM

16 | PHLSTER ENIGMA

Rather than attaching the holster to a belt, the Enigma is a holster system you wear underneath your clothing, and therefore it doesn't require a belt. It uses a magnetic buckle design, and it rides close to the body so it will work with any clothing style. Two leg leash options can be fitted around the top of one thigh or around both legs like a climbing strap. It's extremely comfortable to wear, and it works with a wide variety of clothing and body types.

Price: \$154, PHLSTERHOLSTERS.COM



11



12



13



14



15



16

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STOEGER STR-9 THINLINE

MANY MANUFACTURERS MAKE CARRY

guns under the premise that they'll see only a limited round count, and therefore throw ergonomics and feature sets to the wind. But what if the reason folks don't shoot their carry piece is because it wasn't made with training and practice in mind?

Stoeger Industries was brave enough to consider this and, as a result, created a concealed-carry pistol that includes all the features of a full-size handgun and is built with actual range use in mind. Dubbed the STR-9 Thinline, it is the latest addition to the STR polymer-frame, striker-fired family.

At a shade over one inch thick, the Thinline lives up to its name, making

it minimally intrusive on the waistline. While this measurement is one that makes or breaks a pistol for CCW usage, the grip length is the more prominent design feature on this gun. With the flush-fit magazine inserted, there is 2.25 inches of meat to wrap your fingers around.

When swapped with the extended magazine, this is stretched to 2.75 inches. There's also an option with an extended base plate that lands roughly in between those two.

The grip is molded with three textures that are intelligently placed. A deep checkering is present on the backstrap, which meets the softest part of the hand. It's the least ag-

STOEGER STR-9 THINLINE

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 14-, 16-round mags supplied; 10-rounders available

BARREL: 3.3 in., nitride-finished, cold-hammer-forged alloy steel

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.8/4.8/1.1 in.

WEIGHT: 22.4 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: nitride-finished alloy steel slide w/compensator cut; black polymer frame

SIGHTS: drift-adjustable notch rear w/ tritium dots; tritium front; Shield RMS/RMSc optics cut

TRIGGER: 6.25 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETIES: trigger lever, striker drop

PRICE: \$529

MANUFACTURER: Stoeger,

STOEGERINDUSTRIES.COM



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← gressive, which makes a whole lot of sense to me. On the frontstrap is a tighter, multi-directional stippling that is a touch grittier, as is the area where your fingers are most likely to contact the frame.

Last, a skate-tape-like texture covers the side panels to integrate with what is undoubtedly the toughest skin on your paw. Two pads of the same texture are also located just above the trigger guard to serve as a tactile reference point for your trigger finger when you aren't actively firing.

While the Thinline is shaping up to compete with full-size pistols, it stays true to its self-defense roots with minimalist controls. A nearly flush magazine button is protected by a rearward ledge to ensure it isn't inadvertently released. Instead of adding bulk to make it ambidextrous, Stoeger simply built it to be reversible for those who need that.

The slide stop is gently recessed—again to stave off accidental activation while firing, or snagging on the draw. Aside from an internal striker block, the only safety on the Thinline is the trigger blade. This puts less between your draw and putting rounds on target.

The Thinline's slide is built to give the armed defender some of the same advantages as the recreational match shooter. It is cut with four compensation ports that mate with a recessed barrel to direct pressure upward, which, in turn, drives the muzzle downward under recoil for less muzzle rise and faster follow-ups.

The slide is cut for the RMSc optics footprint, and the sights are tritium night sights, with the rear drift-adjustable for windage.

I set up my gun for testing by toping it off with a Vortex Defender CCW optic. The Thinline will fit many holsters made for guns like the Springfield Hellcat Pro or SIG P365-XL, and I settled on a generic inside-the-waist-

ACCURACY RESULTS | STOEGER STR-9 THINLINE

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep JHP	135	1,011	25	1.6
Hornady Backcountry Defense	138	1,095	27	2.4
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	147	939	29	1.8

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with a Vortex Defender CCW optic at 15 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded 10 inches from the muzzle with a Garmin Xero chronograph. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



▲ The pistol doesn't incorporate a thumb safety, and the controls are set up so they won't snag on the draw and can't be activated accidentally.



▲ The slide is ported at the front, and the barrel is recessed to direct gases upward to keep muzzle rise to a minimum.

band rig to wear it around the house for a few days. I found it was indeed comfortable and, for the most part, unobtrusive. However, when I paired the extended mag with a tighter shirt, it did print a bit.

Accuracy results are shown in the accompanying table. The gun fed all three loads with impunity and printed acceptable groups across the board. I thought the trigger was pretty good, although there is a bit more creep than I would like to see for precision shots.

Stepping over to my steel field, I was able to make good use of the compensator. It kept the muzzle down and placed pairs of shots within mere inches of each other without the need to reacquire the sight. While I said the trigger is a bit sloppy on the break, it had one heck of a snappy reset.

I ended the day with some failure-to-stop drills, which gave me a chance to switch from speed to precision and gauge how well the gun recovered. As advertised, I found that it shot more like a full-size pistol than a compact. Finding the dot was effortless, on



▲ The grip features multiple texturing patterns, providing traction where it's needed most for the best control.

account of the gun's natural pointing ability, and in most cases when I picked it up, the iron sights were also aligned.

The Stoeger STR-9 Thinline digested all 350 rounds without missing a beat, so it's totally reliable. It's concealable as well, with the different magazines offering good flexibility. You can solve the printing problem with the extended mag by adding a wedge to a holster or changing your carry position. The other solution is to carry it with one of the 14-round mags, as even those offer enough real estate for my entire hand.



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TAURUS 850

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE BASICS, AND THAT'S exactly what the new Taurus 850 delivers: a five-shot, double-action-only snubnose .38 Special revolver. It's available in black or stainless and with a two- or three-inch barrel. Suggested retail price is only \$425, and you know you're going to be able to score it for less, probably under \$400, at your local gunshop.

This is an all-steel gun with, in the case of this sample, a corrosion-resistant matte-black finish. The test gun sported the shorter two-inch barrel, producing an overall length of about 7.7 inches and a weight of 22.75 ounces. The 850 is 1.3 inches wide at the cylinder, and height is 4.6 inches.

Sights are dead simple: a gutter milled into the topstrap paired with a

serrated black blade front. The front sight is pinned, which allows you to change it if you want to. And you might, which I'll get into later.

The ejector shroud runs the length of the barrel, which is a two-piece affair. The serial number is on the right side of the barrel and repeated on the frame under the cylinder, with "Taurus Int'l Mfg. Bainbridge, GA" behind that. The Taurus bull logo is on the right side behind the cylinder shield.

This particular sample has been used hard between my range testing and on the set of "Handguns" TV, and the finish shows scratches fairly easily. That doesn't bother me on an all-business gun like this. The cylinder is likewise marked from a slight mistiming, but not to an unusual level.

TAURUS USA 850

TYPE: double-action-only centerfire revolver

CALIBER: .38 Special

CAPACITY: 5

BARREL: 2 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.66/4.59/1.34 in.

WEIGHT: 22.75 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: black steel frame, cylinder

TRIGGER: DAO, 10 lb. pull (measured)

SIGHTS: gutter rear, serrated black blade front

PRICE: \$425

MANUFACTURER: Taurus USA, TAURUSUSA.COM

Since it's a double-action-only revolver, there's no hammer spur, removing a potential draw-snagging projection. With a gun that's so inexpensive you might be expecting a super-heavy, big-stacking trigger pull.

Nope. The 850's pull weight was right at 10 pounds on average, with minimal stacking. The finger lever is relatively wide—not quite target width but wide enough to provide extra leverage, which makes the pull seem easier.

Taurus knows how to make a grip, and the rubber wraparound on the 850 is a good one. The composition of the rubber helps soak up the recoil, and the two different texturing patterns anchor the gun well. The sides have relatively fine checkering while the backstrap is more aggressive, with rows of small rectangles. Two finger grooves grace the frontstrap, and there's a shelf for your thumb that's on both sides and therefore works for righties and lefties.

The 15-yard accuracy results are shown in the accompanying table, and they're solid for a double-action-only gun with rudimentary sights. However, remember earlier when I mentioned changing the front sight might be in the cards? That's because, at this distance, the 850's point of impact was low to the tune of four to five inches with the tested loads.

However, when working with the gun for the 3x5 index card drill I demonstrated on the TV show—which starts at three yards and works back—I experimented with various loads to find one that shot to point of aim. I found it in Hornady's American Gunner 125-grain load, so depending on your needs and expectations in terms of ammo, you might find the right load and not have to change the front sight.

Speaking of loads, I did have three light primer strikes—two with the Black Hills HoneyBadger and one with Hornady Critical Defense. With this type of malfunction you never know if it's the fault of the ammunition or the gun's mechanics.

But that's three light strikes out of probably 300 rounds I put through the 850, and it's also the beauty of a double-action revolver. A round

ACCURACY RESULTS | TAURUS 850

.38 Special	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense Lite	90	933	17	1.5
Black Hills HoneyBadger +P	100	987	19	2.5
Hornady Critical Defense	110	912	10	1.7
Fiocchi CovertX +P	125	982	27	1.9

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



A five-shot revolver, the 850 is rated for +P ammo and proved to be capable of good accuracy—thanks in part to the good double-action-only trigger.



The gutter-style rear sight won't snag on the draw, and the front sight is pinned. The wide trigger helps an already-decent pull.

doesn't fire for some reason? Just pull the trigger again.

Regarding the grip, while I really like the way it helps in control, the aggressive backstrap texture began to bother my keyboard-commando palm after about 30 to 40 shots—especially with +P loads. But most people aren't going to shoot that much with a gun like this in one sitting.

The 850 is rated for +P ammo, although Taurus does caution that extensive use of it could shorten service life. However, unlike the maxim preaching "Don't train just with .38s and then load .357s for defense" in .357 Magnum revolvers, I think practicing with .38s and carrying .38 +P is a sensible approach. Just be sure you know what, if any, point-of-aim disparity exists between the two.

Like I said, you can't beat the basics, and the snubnose revolver never goes out of style. For a defensive gun you might find this one a bit on the



The rubber grip is well designed, with finger grooves and a shelf on both sides for the shooting-hand thumb. The texture keeps the gun well anchored but can be abrasive.

heavy side for pocket carry, but as an inside-the-waistband gun the 850 would an excellent—and affordable—concealed-carry choice.



WALTHER MEISTER GOLD RIBBON PPK/S

JAMES BOND! WHILE ALL OF US KNOW OF this super spy, to gun enthusiasts it's his Walther PPK/S pistol that gets a lot of the attention. The PPK/S shown here is the limited-edition Gold Ribbon Meister grade gun.

Walther's Meister Manufaktur program produces hand-built pistols with newly developed coatings and finishes not used on any of its production guns. Past Meister efforts have focused on the Q5 Match Steel Frame model, and this is the first such PPK/S.

The Gold Ribbon is also the first gun in the Meister series to be built in the United States, and "Walther Arms Inc. Fort Smith, AR USA" is engraved below the gold-filled Walther ribbon on the right side.

I would say the engraving on the slide is 100 percent coverage—to include the safety/decocker on the left side—with a floral motif that continues up and over the slide to

the serrated rib on top. Behind the gold Walther ribbon on the left side it's engraved "Carl Walther Waffenfabrik Ulm/Do. Mod. PPK/S Cal. 9mm kurz/.380 ACP."

The Gold Ribbon is fitted with a set of custom made checkered walnut grip panels with nice figuring. These are adorned with the Walther ribbon on both sides, and stainless steel screws with gold-colored escutcheons. There's a slight thumb rest at the top of each grip panel on both sides, and the left panel is relieved around the magazine release, which is located high on the frame and behind the trigger guard.

The gun almost feels like it was made for me. At the rear of the grip frame, it is contoured from small to large at its base with somewhat of an arched design for comfort and to enable the thumb to reach the magazine release.

This is defensive gun, not a target

gun, and the double-action pull is close to 18 pounds—although the single-action pull breaks at around five pounds. There is a loaded-chamber indicator located just above the hammer. When the gun is loaded, this pin will protrude.

Sights on the gun consist of a non-adjustable rear with a square notch and a front sight machined into the top rib.

The Walther PPK/S Gold Ribbon ships inside a handsome leather-wrapped and stitched case with two luggage-type latches. The Walther logo graces the outside of the case, and the gun and a spare magazine are fitted in the softness of suede.

The gun's suggested retail price is \$2,499, and as you might expect, not every gunshop is going to carry the Gold Ribbon. Walther has a dealer locator on its website (WALTHERARMS.COM) that'll point you in the right direction.



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