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1) Paid/requested outside/county mail subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541	83,456	81,950
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1) Outside-county as stated on PS Form 3541	51	50
2) In-county as stated on PS Form 3541	0	0
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f) Total Distribution	87,676	85,709
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The acquisition, ownership, possession and use of firearms are heavily regulated. Some models may not be legally available in your state or locale. Whatever your purpose for lawfully acquiring a firearm – know the law, get trained and shoot safely.





Thoughts on Carry

Reading Jack Hennessy's article on competing with your carry gun (Speedloads, August/September) made me think of my own practices. I do compete in IDPA and GPA with a full-size SIG Sauer P320-XFive Legion or a Spectre Comp model, but I carry a P320 compact model set up the same way—the same red dot and Gas Pedal but slightly heavier tuned trigger. Shooting 600-plus rounds a month with my competition models has made me used to safely managing a light trigger, so why would I carry the same model with a heavier, stock trigger or none of the modifications on my competition guns? Other than weight and capacity, my carry gun has the exact same features I shoot all the time.

It's not necessary to compete with the exact model of gun one carries to be just as skilled with a smaller, lighter version of the same model. Equipping the gun with similar modifications is the key, as well as being as skilled as time, money and motivation will allow.

ERNE GARLAND, FLORIDA

Not So Sweet Surplus

I just nearly puked after reading Jeff John's "Sweet, Sweet Surplus" (Speedloads, October/November)! Johns bought a beat M1911A from CMP and tried to make it an economic triumph. Why? I am a retired federal lawman, a veteran and a longtime reader of *Handguns* until now. Why does CMP charge \$1,100 for a beat M1911A!? CMP has old M1911 pistols that were long ago paid for at \$55 per gun by taxpayers. Why is old stuff charged prices for new M1911 pistols?

RON BENJAMIN, PENNSYLVANIA

Hi Mr. Benjamin: I assigned the article to Jeff because I wanted to let readers know about the CMP surplus pistol sales program, which I felt was less known than its rifle sales program and, as mentioned in the piece, recently restarted. As far as prices, value is in the eye of the beholder.—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.

Oct. 16—Mentoring New Shooters	Nov. 13—"Out There" Handguns
Oct. 23—Classic Guns	Nov. 20—Daily Carry Tips
Oct. 30—The Toughest Shot	Nov. 27—Mentoring New Shooters
Nov. 6—Top Defensive Skills	Dec. 4—Classic Guns

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

Julie Golob has joined **SPRINGFIELD**

ARMORY as a pro shooter and brand ambassador. A former member of the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, Golob is a world champion shooter competing in Bianchi Cup, Steel Challenge, USPSA, IDPA and IPSC. In addition, she's the first and only seven-division USPSA women's national champion. As a writer who has authored a shooting-sports primer as well as a children's book on gun safety, Golob will be contributing to Springfield's *The Armory Life* publication in addition to her shooting and brand ambassador responsibilities.



KELTEC held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at its Rock Springs, Wyoming, facility. The company has been producing its PR57 pistol there and said Rock Springs will be where "the next generation of firearms takes shape."

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RED-DOT DILEMMAS

DO DOT AND WINDOW SIZES REALLY MATTER THAT MUCH?

By Jack Hennessy

WITH THE EXPLOSION IN POPULARITY of red-dot sights, beginners and veterans alike are faced with a lot of decisions, not the least of which are how big a window and what size dot are going to suit them best—and how bright should the dot be?

Windows on red-dot sights run the gamut from the large Vortex XL down to Leupold's DeltaPoint Micro. And when it comes to dot size, some shooters believe the bigger the better, almost as if a hint of northern lights will always guide them to their dot—think Ruger's 15 m.o.a. ReadyDot—while others prefer the tried-and-true three m.o.a. dot.

But when does size matter and why? Simply put, a larger window means a greater chance of finding the dot upon drawing even if a shooter's grip isn't perfect or if the pistol's sights aren't perfectly aligned with the shooter's eye. A

bigger dot, even if not centered, will present a blur—a hint of light—in the side or corner of the window, which makes it easier for a shooter to adjust grip in order to center the dot.

But there's another factor some shooters may not consider. Travis Tomasie, an IPSC world champion and USPSA national champion as well as an instructor, encourages those he coaches to experiment with the brightness of their dot in different lighting conditions.

"A larger dot allows the shooter to use a lower brightness setting while still being easy and quick to visually acquire," Tomasie said. "It should be noted that correctly adjusting the brightness of the dot is one of the most commonly overlooked aspects of using an optic. It can clearly be too dim, but it can also be too bright to achieve optimal performance."

According to Tomasie, the ideal technique is to keep both eyes open while maintaining target focus.

"When the dot is set too bright it can distract from the target, making it difficult to precisely determine the gun's position at the moment the gun fires," he said. "Using a larger dot allows you to dial down the brightness until it appears semi-transparent, enabling better visibility of the target through the dot and improving overall target focus."

Tomasie notes that despite the common belief that a smaller dot is more accurate, you can achieve the same level of practical accuracy with a bigger dot—but with it dialed down so it's semi-transparent, as he noted above. "The dot becomes less intrusive and allows for a clearer view of the target, aiding precision without sacrificing speed," he said.

A larger dot also tends to main-

tain its circular quality better when turned down, and that can be especially important for shooters with astigmatism.

However, there's a case to be made for smaller dots—and smaller windows as well. For example, Trijicon designed its Trijicon Rugged Miniature Reflex or RMR by prioritizing durable materials and construction over glass size so it can better withstand hard use.

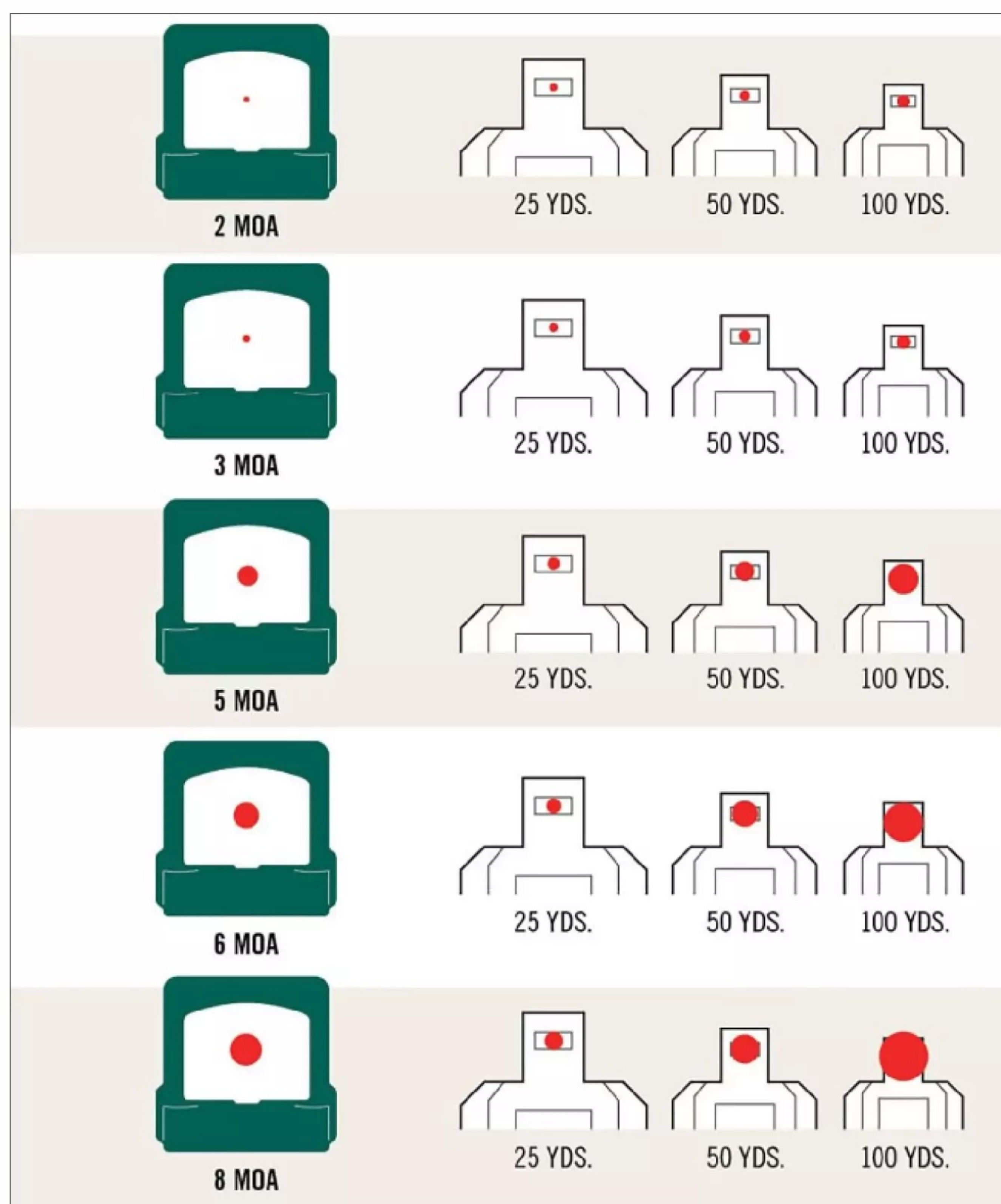
Similarly, while Leupold's Delta-Point Pro is built larger overall—with a correspondingly bigger window—it has an outer steel sheath that protects against significant impacts. Other sight manufacturers take this approach, and if ruggedness matters to you, it's something to consider.

Those who carry concealed may argue a smaller pistol optic is easier to conceal and less likely to snag when drawing from concealment. Conversely, a counter argument is that a concealed handgun's first and primary purpose is to protect, not hide, and a sight's primary duty is to help the shooter be confident in making hits.

Shooters who opt for smaller dots may state they prefer a more precise dot for making longer shots. An eight m.o.a. dot may cover the head A Zone of an IPSC target at 25 yards but will extend outside the head at 100 yards.

However, most shooters agree a 100-yard pistol shot is less than advisable. Still, when we are responsible for every bullet that leaves our gun, it's important to remember Elisjsha Dicken stopped an active shooter from 40 yards within 15 seconds at an Indiana mall in July 2022. (Also worth noting, he was using irons.)

FBI stats claim the average shooting distance in a defense situ-



▲ At closer distances, even a four-fold increase in dot size doesn't make much difference, but at longer ranges—most would say beyond practical handgun distances—size has a great effect.

ation is at three yards and is over within three seconds. Some handgun instructors and experts will advise that someone who carries should be proficient up to seven yards. In the competition world, targets rarely exceed 25 yards, but the sizes of the targets can vary.

All to say: The decision of dot or window size is likely a product of whether a person plans for the most likely scenario or skews more toward Murphy's Law, which states, "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong."

While there are arguments to be made for either side, technique and training are probably more critical than the size question—or even whether to go with the red dot or stick with irons.

"I bet more people have been crushed by trying to find a red dot, trying to acquire a front sight, than just trusting in your foundation, the stance, the grip, the head positioning, the trigger prep and reset, and driving out and making it in one smooth pull," said former Navy SEAL D.J. Shipley.

OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB CAMPBELL

ROSSI PRINCESS

FEW GUNS ARE ACTUALLY CUTE—PER-

haps a Baby Browning or the Taurus PT22 qualifies—but the Rossi Princess is a cute gun. Manufactured long before Taurus purchased Rossi, it was popular in its day.

The seven-shot .22 Rossi Princess was sometimes referred to as a Rossi Ladysmith, as it is clearly a clone of the Smith & Wesson Ladysmith. The Rossi was manufactured from 1965-69, but its importation was largely curtailed by the Gun Control Act of 1968 thanks to its two-inch barrel.

The Princess is indeed a small revolver at six inches long and 3.75 inches tall, and it weighs only 11 ounces. It features a bright nickel finish that on my sample has worn well. Blued Princesses exist but seem rare, as are barrel lengths of three and four inches.

The left side of the barrel is engraved “Amadeo Rossi & CIA.” The right side is stamped “.22 L R.” A stylized emblem is found on the side plate. The three-screw side plate makes for a dated design even for 1965. On the left side of the frame is small roundel with “CAL” and “22” inside. It appears hand cut with a scribe and not nearly as nicely engraved as other markings.

The grips are marbled plastic with a silver-colored Rossi emblem. The lower right receiver is marked “Firearms Int’l Corp, Washington DC,” a large company that imported many affordable handguns.

The Princess uses a rebounding hammer similar to the Iver Johnson design for safety. The Rossi features coil springs rather than the Ladysmith’s leaf spring.

The revolver is primarily con-



A A seven-shot .22 revolver manufactured from 1965-69, Rossi’s Princess closely resembles Smith & Wesson’s Ladysmith.

structed of Zamak, a non-ferrous alloy, although the barrel, cylinder and hard use points are steel. The cylinder flutes are etched in a fashion popular in Brazilian revolvers.

The ejector rod is held in place by a spring-loaded plunger. The plunger is pulled forward to release the rod and swing out the cylinder. The ejector rod has plenty of length and leverage to extract spent cases.

The receiver features a raised boss at the rear of the topstrap that houses the rear sight. The front is a rather sharp serrated ramp.

I found the revolver at \$150. It is in decent shape, but some would say only a very nice example in the original box is collectible at all. Most are in the \$250 range, although I found a boxed example appearing unfired for \$500.

The intent of the Rossi wasn’t to offer a collectible but a revolver to be carried, presumably by female shooters. I think many women were gifted a Princess by well-meaning fathers and spouses.

The double-action trigger on

this one is atrocious, and pulling a 12-pound trigger against an 11-ounce revolver isn’t good for accuracy. At five yards I was able to put most shots in the X ring, but after firing 14 rounds the gun locked up tight. The trigger was frozen.

I thought maybe I could repair it, but old-model Rossis are a challenge. There are blind holes and tiny spring plungers in the side plate that confound the most experienced gunsmith. There was nothing amiss, so I cleaned the action, and tried again. I had the great luck of firing another 14 rounds. Then the gun locked up again. Oh well.

The Rossi Princess is an interesting little revolver from a time when small handguns were regarded as fashion accessories. People purchased it because it was cheap while higher quality than some other imports. Even at twice the price of a Rohm .22, it was that of a Smith & Wesson revolver, and the Ladysmith was long out of print. It is a noteworthy revolver that may rightly be called cute or perhaps quaint.

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QUICK SHOT | BY J. SCOTT RUPP

RUGER MK IV 22/45 LITE

BILL RUGER STARTED HIS COMPANY with a semiauto .22 pistol that was a huge hit, and more than 75 years later the firm is continuing to innovate with its rimfire semiautos. The Mark IV 22/45 Lite is a great example.

Instead of the Nambu/Luger-inspired frame design found on the standard Mk IV, the 22/45 models mimic the 1911's grip angle. That makes it a great trainer not just for 1911 fans but also an all-around plinking, competition or hunting gun for anyone—because the 1911's grip rules. Just note that standard 1911 grip panels will not fit the 22/45.

As a Mk IV 22/45 Lite, it's built with an aluminum receiver and an aluminum shroud that surrounds the tensioned steel barrel. The shroud has lightening cuts that not only reduce weight but, in the case of this model, show off the gold-colored barrel that's threaded 1/2x28 for suppressors or brakes.

There's a nice long section of Pic rail for adding a red dot. The fully adjustable rear sight and blade front are easily visible over the top of the rail if you don't mount an optic.

The Mk IV is incredibly easy to disassemble, a major departure from previous versions—and I know because I own a Mk III. With the Mk IV, just unload the gun, place it on



A The gun features an optics rail as well as fully adjustable iron sights. The grip angle mimics a 1911's. **V** The gold, threaded barrel (l.) shows through lightening cuts in the aluminum shroud. The controls (r.) include an ambi thumb safety and a takedown button at the back of the frame.



Safe and press the takedown button at the rear to separate receiver from frame.

While it's a mere 25 ounces—half a pound lighter than a comparable standard 22/45—it's still well balanced and a real joy to shoot with a suppressor. Bench accuracy was great, and in practical shooting it

was easy to hit with, suppressed or unsuppressed. I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a better all-around .22 semiauto.

ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER MK IV 22/45 LITE

.22 Long Rifle	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Remington Standard V LRN	38	849	32	1.2
Remington Standard V LRN*	38	869	35	1.4
SK Semiauto Rifle LRN	40	773	38	1.4
Magtech LRN	40	785	34	2.0

Notes: (*With Banish 22 suppressor). Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with an Aimpoint H2 red dot. Velocities are averages of 15 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. Abbreviation: LRN, lead roundnose

RUGER
MK IV 22/45 LITE

TYPE: semiauto rimfire
CALIBER: .22 Long Rifle
CAPACITY: two 10-round mags supplied
BARREL: 4.4 in., threaded 1/2x28
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.4/5.5/1.2 in.
WEIGHT: 25 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: anodized aluminum receiver; polymer frame and grip panels
TRIGGER: 3 lb., 1 oz. (measured)
SIGHTS: fully adjustable rear, blade front
SAFETIES: ambi thumb, mag disconnect
PRICE: \$739
MANUFACTURER: Ruger, RUGER.COM

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COVERT OPERATION

COVERTX IS FIOCCHI'S FIRST DEFENSIVE BULLET, AND IT'S EXCELLENT.

FIOCCHI HAS BEEN MANUFACTURING AM-munition for almost 150 years, but it wasn't until 2025 that the company released its first defensive handgun bullet. This groundbreaking projectile will only be available in Fiocchi's new CovertX line of handgun ammunition.

The success or failure of a personal defense bullet boils down to construction. A well-designed bullet penetrates effectively but does not overpenetrate, expands reliably and is effectively "barrier blind" so it will perform well on FBI protocol tests. But building a bullet that does all this and is accurate, affordable and easy to manufacture at scale is no mean feat.

Fiocchi began with a premium copper jacket and added a lead core—a pretty common recipe for a jacketed hollowpoint bullet design. However, there are some notable differences between CovertX bullets and other defensive bullets.

The Fiocchi bullet is not bonded, but bonding is not always necessary for premium performance. However, premium construction and reliable expansion and penetration are important. To accomplish this, Fiocchi designed its bullet with a lead core with pre-cut serrations and wrapped it in a thick copper jacket.

The jacket holds together as the bullet impacts the target, and the pre-cut lead core is designed to expand reliably at impact velocities. In addition to the pre-cut lead core, CovertX bullets also feature skiving in the nose to further regulate expansion and create the classic mushroom profile.

I spoke with Fiocchi product



J. Scott Rupp photo

▲ CovertX is available in a variety of different chamberings from .380 ACP to .45 ACP, including revolver chamberings like .38 Special and .357 Magnum. Bullet designs and powder charges are tailored to specific cartridges.

manager Travis Franklin about the bullet's design, and he pointed out that across the range of loads—which includes .380 ACP, 9mm, .38 Special, .357 Magnum and .45 ACP offerings—each bullet profile was designed for optimum performance for that cartridge at standard impact velocities.

The .45 ACP load travels at just 875 fps while the .357 Magnum has a muzzle velocity of 1,425 fps, yet both these rounds are expected to perform well when compared side by side. Franklin told me this requires attention to jacket thickness, lead core geometry and bullet profile. Hence the new CovertX bullet is not really one bullet but rather five unique bullets that share similar design and manufacturing processes.

Bullet design is critical to the performance of a personal defense load, but it isn't the only consideration. Reliability is essential, and to ensure reliable feeding Fiocchi

Fiocchi CovertX			
Cartridge	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)
.380 ACP	95	1,015	217
9mm Luger	124	1,115	342
.38 Special +P	125	1,100	336
.357 Magnum	125	1,425	564
.45 ACP	230	875	391

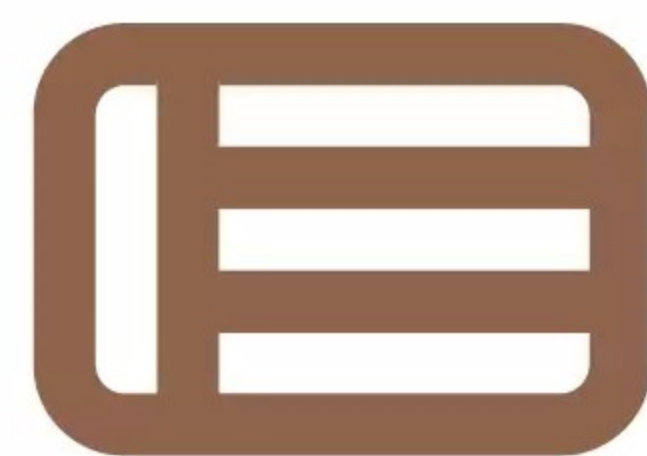
nickel plates all its cases for consistent performance. Nickel plating lowers the friction coefficient, the drag between metal surfaces that can cause a malfunction—especially in a dirty gun.

Franklin said the company also spent time evaluating propellants and charges to find just the right powder loads to provide consistent performance.

The results speak for themselves. I tested three semiauto defense pistols with CovertX ammunition, and the results are listed in the table below. The barrel lengths →

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← in my test were between 4.9 and five inches, and all the velocities I got exceeded factory specs. In a separate test you'll read about in a second, a 3.4-inch barrel turned in a muzzle velocity average below the 1,115 fps spec for the 9mm.

Extreme velocity spreads for 10 shots ranged from 32 to 42 fps, and all three loads tested had a standard deviation for 10 shots that ranged from 11 to 12. That's good evidence that loading and manufacturing consistency is superb, which translates to consistent, reliable, predictable performance at the range and in real-life situations.

There were no malfunctions during testing with any of three test pistols. The bullet profile and nickel-plated cases cycled fluidly through a variety of pistols. Fouling levels were nothing out of the ordinary, and accuracy good. For example, I managed groups of 2.4 inches for five shots at 25 yards with a Girsan .380 ACP test pistol.

Recoil seems on par with other defensive ammo, although the .380 ACP load proved to be pretty snappy, and in fact it was the fastest of the five different .380 loads I was testing as part of a gun review. It ran about 100 fps or so faster than other comparable loads, and while that did increase recoil, the speed also gives it an edge in terms of kinetic energy.

In a separate evaluation, *Handguns* editor Scott Rupp fired both 9mm and .357 Magnum CovertX loads through the same types of synthetic gel blocks that Fiocchi used for testing the CovertX. The 9mm load, which averaged 1,047 fps out of a Taurus GX2 with 3.4-inch barrel, penetrated 14.5 inches on average. The .357 Magnum load, fired from a Taurus 650 with three-inch barrel and hitting 1,176 fps, averaged 12.5 inches of penetration.

The mushrooms were, in a word,



J. Scott Rupp photo

▲ Both the 9mm (l.) and .357 Magnum showed terrific terminal performance in synthetic gel blocks, with excellent penetration and mushroom expansion.

BALLISTICS TEST FIOCCHI COVERTX					
Cartridge	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Test BBI Length (in.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Extreme Spread (fps)
.380 ACP	95	5.0	1,042	12	42
9mm Luger	124	4.9	1,170	11	32
.45 ACP	230	5.0	903	12	39

Notes: Notes: Velocity data derived from 10 shots, recorded on a Garmin Xero

gorgeous—with only one petal on one .357 bullet out of place. With the 9mm, the petals folded back to right at the base of the bullet. With the .357, which is moving considerably faster, the petals were pushed back to the point they wrapped around the bullet base. The 9mm measured 0.60 inch across the mushroom—66 percent expansion—while the .357 expanded to 0.65 inch, an 82 percent increase in frontal diameter.

CovertX ammunition is loaded with bullets that are comparable in weight to other defensive loads. The .380 fires a 95-grain projectile and the 9mm uses a 124-grain bullet. Both the .38 Special and .357 Magnum fire 125-grain bullets, and the big .45 ACP uses a 230-grain bullet.

Covert X is competitively priced compared to other self-defense rounds. At MidwayUSA the price for

20 9mm Covert X rounds equates to 95 cents round, very slightly lower than Hornady Critical Defense (97 cents) and a fair bit lower than Federal 124-grain HST+P (\$1.45) and Remington Golden Saber (\$1.50)—although Federal Punch comes in at 10 cents per round less than CovertX.

CovertX may be Fiocchi's freshman effort in bullet design, but this company has been loading ammunition long enough that it is hardly new to the game, and that's obvious when you closely examine its new bullet. It's clear that the company didn't jump to market with this projectile. Instead, its makers spent time in the lab testing, designing and redesigning their bullet until they finally settled on a finished product. And that finished product is truly excellent.



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BALANCING ACT

THREE DRILLS THAT HELP YOU TRAIN FOR SPEED AND ACCURACY.

AT THE HEART OF DEFENSIVE HANDGUN-ning is the balancing of speed and accuracy. If you've been shooting for a while, you've probably heard the saying, "You can't miss fast enough to win a gunfight." While true, that sentiment doesn't account for the fact that it's also possible to shoot too slowly to win a gunfight.

It's important to know how fast you're capable of hitting your target. That will depend on such factors as the size of the target and the immediacy of the threat. Skill level plays a pivotal role as well, but unlike target size and immediacy of the threat, it's something you have a say in.

Having learned to shoot in the police academy, I was taught to maximize my chances of hitting the target, and that meant slowing down. "Every bullet that leaves the barrel of your gun has a lawyer attached to it," was the maxim.

Not only might an errant round land you in legal trouble, but even worse, it might injure or kill an innocent bystander. While there are too many variables to guarantee a hit, as a defensive handgunner, it's your duty to do everything in your power to hit only what you're aiming at.

As the good guy or gal, we don't get to "spray and pray" for a hit like a criminal with no regard for human life. What the bad guy lacks in marksmanship, he often makes up for in volume of fire, burning through a magazine as quickly as he can squeeze the trigger, while aiming in his target's general vicinity.

Ideally, during a lethal force encounter, you would shoot as fast as



▲ Bad guys can spray and pray, but law-abiding citizens need to ensure that every round is accounted for—shooting only as fast as they can hit the target.

you can hit, but no faster. But how do you know how fast you can hit? By practicing. A good starting point is the popular Bill Drill, developed by Bill Wilson, the renowned shooter and gunsmith who founded Wilson Combat.

The Bill Drill begins with your hands raised in the surrender position. On the beep, draw and fire six rounds into the A zone of an IPSC target or 0 zone of an IDPA positioned seven yards away. Two seconds with all A or 0 zone hits is the goal, albeit a lofty one for most shooters.

The Bill Drill is a great way to start developing the balance of speed and accuracy needed to prevail in an armed encounter. It provides tangible results. You either got all your hits or you didn't. You either made the time standard or you didn't.

If you hit the center zone with all six shots but didn't make the time standard, speed up. If you missed, slow down. As a bonus, the Bill Drill requires a fast draw, which could come in handy in a self-defense scenario.

As good as the Bill Drill is, it doesn't account for the target being at different distances and therefore, the target appearing larger up close or smaller from farther away—or partially shielded behind cover or, worse yet, a hostage.

The Viking Tactics Half and Half Drill is a great way to get a feel for how fast you can hit the target based on how far it is from you. The drill, developed by Kyle Lamb, is a 30-round drill, shot from three positions. The drill requires all A zone hits on an IPSC target.

The drill starts at the 20-yard line, where you fire 10 rounds from

a ready position in 12 seconds. Then, as the distance is cut in half, so is your time. From 10 yards, you have only six seconds, and from five yards, you have just three seconds to register 10 hits.

The drill is doable, but it's certainly not as easy as Kyle himself makes it look. At distance, it requires concentration and patience, because the tendency is to shoot too fast. Conversely, up close you must shoot fast to make the time standard. This necessitates a good grip to control recoil and, just as importantly, trigger control.

This leads me to another of my favorite drills. While not as dynamic as the Bill or Half and Half, my friend Dave Spaulding's Reset in Recovery Drill is equally beneficial. It's not a timed drill, but it can

improve your speed and accuracy. The purpose is to ensure your gun is ready to fire the next shot as soon as you're back on target after firing the last one.

The target isn't all that important, but an A zone would be a reasonable size, given the drill is shot from five yards. Even round count is flexible, but you'll need to fire at least two rounds to reset the trigger and fire again.

The drill has a three-phase progression. The first involves firing one-handed and not fighting recoil. Allowing the muzzle to rise gives you time to reset the trigger before it settles back on target.

The next phase is also one-handed, but while fighting recoil with a good grip and tensed arm. This requires you to reset the trigger

faster, since muzzle rise is mitigated by your technique. By now, you should be getting used to the timing required.

Finally, add your second hand to the grip. This significantly aids in recoil control, meaning you'll have to reset the trigger more quickly. At this point, recoil is forcing the pistol back in more of a piston-like fashion, as opposed to the muzzle flipping upward. Here you learn to control the gun while shooting fast.

In a gunfight, missing your target could have tragic consequences. Missing doesn't stop the threat and potentially endangers others. Then again, taking too much time to ensure a hit could lead to you being shot. Practicing these drills will help you get a sense of how fast you can shoot and still hit your target. 🎯

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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.

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SHORT AND SWEET



Michael Anschuetz photo

**ROST MARTIN'S RM1S COMP IS A
FLAT-SHOOTING SUBCOMPACT
DESIGNED FOR EVERYDAY
CONCEALED CARRY.**

BY RICHARD NANCE

Rost Martin quickly established itself as a legitimate contender in the packed polymer-frame, striker-fired 9mm pistol market. That's no easy feat, but its inaugural pistol, the RM1C, was no ordinary semiauto either. As a friend pointed out after pick- ➔

SHORT AND SWEET

← ing it up, it feels like a Glock 19 that's been customized for improved ergonomics.

Although considered a compact, the RM1C isn't small by today's standards, and many people are opting for smaller pistols that are easier to conceal and more comfortable to carry, while still maintaining a respectable magazine capacity. The new Rost Martin RM1S is designed to stand out in this extremely competitive space. With a 3.6-inch bar-

rel, it's smaller—about a half-inch shorter and more than an ounce lighter—than the RM1C but still delivers 12+1 and 15+1 capacity.

The downside to smaller pistols is that they tend to be harder to shoot, and that's given rise to compensated barrels. Rost Martin wasted no time in coming out with a compensated version of the RM1S, the RM1S Comp, which I had the chance to test.

"We had so many requests for

a comped subcompact pistol that we moved the RM1S Comp up in the production line," said Chris Toomer, who along with his wife, Stefany, co-owns Rost Martin.

The RM1S Comp is an ergonomically designed, feature-rich pistol that's economically priced at less than \$500. It's available in any color you want—as long as it's black. The polymer grip's beavertail and undercut trigger guard facilitate a high hold, which mitigates muzzle rise and felt recoil. Three interchangeable backstraps allow you to tailor the grip to your hand for optimal comfort and control.

The RM1S Comp features Rost Martin's Responsive Grip Texture, which has a deeper cut than the original RM1C models. Deeper serrations equate to better traction. Texturing appears on either side as well as on the frontstrap and the backstrap.

Textured index points above the trigger guard provide a tactile reference for your support-side thumb and your trigger finger, when not shooting. There are even shallow serrations on the front portion of the trigger guard for those who prefer to wrap the index finger of their non-shooting hand around it for better control.



▲ The undercut trigger guard and beavertail aid in control, and the ambidextrous slide stop and magazine release are easy to reach.



▲ The RM1S Comp's slide and barrel are ported to mitigate recoil, making it remarkably flat-shooting for a subcompact pistol.

ROST MARTIN RM1S COMP

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto centerfire

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 12-, 15-round mags supplied

BARREL: 3.6 in. hammer forged, ported, crowned

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 6.72/4.4/1.1 in.

WEIGHT: 20.6 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: nitrocarburized steel slide, polymer frame w/interchangeable backstraps

SIGHTS: black serrated rear, serrated white dot front

TRIGGER: 5 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETY: trigger blade

PRICE: \$489

MANUFACTURER: Rost Martin,
ROSTMARTIN.COM

Scalloped areas on either side of the pistol, aft of the trigger guard, provide comfort and consistent placement for the thumb of your shooting hand and your trigger finger. In a departure from the RM1C series, these areas on the RM1S Comp are textured.

The squared trigger guard is oversize and easily accommodates a gloved finger. The flat-face trigger has a blade-style safety that must be pressed rearward to fire the pistol. I'm a fan. Safeties requiring manual manipulation can be problematic, but when you press the trigger the RM1S Comp's safety is automatically disengaged.

At the rear of each backstrap is a slot to attach a lanyard. Most people will never use a lanyard, but it might come in handy in the backcountry. The slot doesn't interfere with your grip, so there's no downside to it.

The RMS1 Comp has a serrated, fully ambidextrous slide stop and magazine release. This is a big deal on a defensive pistol, even if you're not left-handed. If you've ever tried to clear a double feed with just your left hand, you know what I mean. Locking the slide to the rear by pushing up on the slide stop with your left index finger is not fun.

The slide stop is big enough to use as a slide release for efficient loading, but it's not so big as to be cumbersome and it won't dig into your hand. The oblong magazine release provides plenty of surface area for your thumb, but it was rather stiff on my test gun.

The mag well is slightly flared to help funnel the metal Mec-Gar magazines into the pistol. Rost Martin got this just right. The flare provides a bit of a ledge for your pinky finger to help reduce muzzle flip, but it's not so pronounced that it causes the grip to print through a cover garment the way big, competition-oriented mag wells do.

The magazines feature numbered witness holes so you can easily tell how full they are. Finger cutouts

give you something to grab hold of should you need to strip a magazine from the pistol, although the RM1S Comp's metal-bodied magazines are less likely to hang up in the mag well than polymer mags.

The RM1S Comp's extended magazine has a sleeve that fills the gap between the base plate and the mag well. Shooters with average-size hands will be able to achieve a full firing grip with the extended magazine inserted. The RM1S Comp's two-slot accessory rail will accom-

modate a variety of popular subcompact pistol lights.

The RM1S Comp's slide is constructed of nitrocarburized steel. It's optics ready, with a metal Trijicon RMR optics plate included. Docter/Noblex, Shield RMS/SMS and Leupold DeltaPoint Pro optics plates can be purchased separately from Rost Martin. If you prefer iron sights, the RM1S Comp sports a black serrated U-notch rear sight and a serrated front sight with a white dot.



▲ The flat-face trigger has a blade-style safety, and it broke cleanly at five pounds, with a nice short reset.



▲ The pistol features interchangeable backstraps, and the frame has a well-designed, slightly flared magazine well. The mags have cutouts for stripping if necessary.

SHORT AND SWEET

← The top of the slide features anti-glare serrations. Slide serrations front and rear provide ample grip for manual cycling or peeking into the chamber. There’s also a square witness hole that serves as a loaded-chamber indicator. When the RM1S Comp is cocked, the red-painted rear of the striker protrudes from a hole in the slide plate.

Like other Rost Martin models, the RM1S Comp can be disassembled without pressing the trigger, a smart safety feature. First remove the magazine and ensure the pistol is unloaded. Then, while pressing down on both sides of the takedown lever, pull the slide rearward slightly. At this point, the slide twists off the frame, as opposed to sliding off

as with most striker-fired pistols. Now the recoil spring and barrel can be removed.

For accuracy testing, I mounted a Rival Arms red dot, which has the same footprint as the Trijicon RMR. The best group was just under an inch with Black Hills 125-grain HoneyBadger. Several groups printed less than 1.5 inches, with the overall average group measuring just over that.

I’ve fired several comped pistols similar in size to the RM1S Comp where the compensators didn’t seem to make a difference—as if those companies added a comp as a selling point and weren’t overly concerned about whether or not it does its job. The Rost Martin’s comp did its job.

“Using high-speed cameras, we filmed the RM1S Comp being fired and noticed a decrease in muzzle rise. Why would you not give yourself every advantage on a pistol your life could depend on?” Toomer explained.

The recoil reduction from the comp was even more noticeable while firing the RM1S Comp off-hand. It shoots flatter than most pistols of its size and chambering, which means faster and more accurate follow-up shots. That’s an important feature since it can take multiple hits to stop the threat.

Toomer said Rost Martin is always tinkering with the triggers on its pistols to make them as smooth and clean-breaking as possible, and the RM1S Comp’s trigger is better than you’ll find on most striker-fired pistols. As advertised, the trigger broke right at five pounds. There was some take-up, followed by a crisp break at the wall. A plastic nub behind the trigger serves as an overtravel stop at about 90 degrees. Reset was short and easily discernible.

Like other Rost Martin pistols I’ve fired, the RM1S Comp was comfortable to shoot. According to Toomer, Rost Martin strives to make pistols that are economically priced and “punch above their weight.” Based on my evaluation of the RM1S Comp, the company achieved that goal.

Having a pistol that’s accurate and controllable is important, but it’s still got to run reliably, which the RM1S Comp did. The pistol did not malfunction during testing.

With a suggested retail price of just \$489, the RM1S Comp is not only considerably less expensive than comparable striker-fired pistols, but it also has a better trigger than many, and enhanced ergonomics. So if you’re looking for a feature-rich 9mm carry gun, the RM1S Comp is worth considering. It’s easy to conceal, easy to shoot and reliable. The fact that it will save you money compared to a similarly configured pistol is a nice bonus.



▲ The slide is cut for optics and ships with an RMR adapter plate. The rear sight is a serrated U-notch, and the slide plate and the top of the slide are grooved to reduce glare.

ACCURACY RESULTS ROST MARTIN RMIS COMP				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,090	3	1.7
Federal Syntech Training/Match	124	999	11	1.6
Black Hills HoneyBadger	125	952	26	1.7

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with a Rival Arms red dot from a Caldwell Handy Rest NXT at 15 yards. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph.

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PEDAL TO THE METAL

**THE ED BROWN FUELED
SERIES ADDS A SOUPED-UP
SPRINGFIELD PRODIGY
DOUBLE-STACK 1911.**

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



Collaborations are currently quite popular in the firearms industry. Ruger teamed up with Magpul to introduce the RXM pistol while Glock and Aimpoint paired up for the COA red-dot optic and the A-Cut system. The new Fueled Prodigy 4.25 from Ed Brown is another collaboration, one that takes Springfield's Prodigy 4.25-inch double-stack 9mm 1911 and adds a number of significant upgrades normally available only on Ed Brown custom 1911s. The resulting pistol is reli-

able, accurate and easy to shoot, and it might be the most versatile duty/defense 9mm 1911 available today.

This is not the first time Ed Brown has collaborated with a major manufacturer to develop a Fueled-series pistol. In 2019 Ed Brown offered the Fueled M&P, which I reviewed for

Handguns, and while that union resulted in one of the best striker-fired defense and duty pistols available today, the Prodigy collaboration is more in keeping with Ed Brown's history of customizing 1911s.

Springfield builds quality 1911s, and it can turn them out at a →

PEDAL TO THE METAL

← volume no custom company can match. The Ed Brown team adds selected premium components to upgrade the factory pistol to near custom gun quality and reliability—without the high cost of a true ground-up custom pistol. The automotive industry has been doing this successfully for years—consider Roush’s history of customizing Ford cars and trucks—and it’s high time similar upgrades were available to gun owners.

The new Fueled Prodigy 4.25, which sells for about \$2,400, begins life as a standard Springfield 1911 DS Prodigy, which is a very good gun from the get-go. The Springfield pistol features a 4.25-inch forged stainless steel bull barrel with a 1:16 twist and forged steel frame, and its polymer grip accommodates double-stack magazines; 17- and 20-round mags are included.

The Springfield Prodigy also features the Agency Optic System (AOS) to accommodate mounting plates for various popular footprints. Handgun manufacturers have addressed the issue of interfacing multiple optic footprints with their firearm slides in a variety of ways, and I particularly like the AOS mounting system because of the tight fit and its sturdy metal components.

The rugged AOS design makes it simple to mount a red dot. But if you prefer to run iron sights you won’t be disappointed with Springfield’s black, serrated, drift-adjustable U-notch rear sight and the fiber-optic front sight.

Springfield created an impressive blueprint with the stock Prodigy pistol, making certain that the barrel design, feed ramp and springs all worked fluidly with a 4.25-inch 9mm 1911—which is not as simple as

it might sound. But no factory gun is perfect, and Ed Brown designers addressed the areas where they believed the Prodigy could be improved.

That starts with the addition of Ed Brown’s machined memory groove beavertail grip safety. This safety features an upswept design created in 3D CAD to reduce as much metal as possible for the deepest hold on the pistol and improved recoil management. The memory grooves on the elevated bump on the base of the grip safety help shooters maintain a consistent hold on the pistol from shot to shot.

This design also allows shooters with slim hands to depress the grip safety consistently. It’s frustrating when your 1911 won’t fire because you haven’t deactivated the grip safety. That’s one reason why many new 9mm 1911s have deleted the safety altogether.

But the Ed Brown design greatly reduces the risk of a failure to fire due to grip safety deactivation issues. The Ed Brown beavertail also adds a cool aesthetic to the pistol.



▲ Stock parts like the hammer, sear and disconnecter are replaced with EDM-machined Ed Brown components made of premium steel. The slide stop and magazine release are factory.

ACCURACY RESULTS ED BROWN FUELED PRODIGY 4.25				
9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,108	11	1.7
Hornady American Gunner XTP	115	1,110	13	2.0
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	115	1,131	19	2.6
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,103	13	2.0
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep JHP	135	981	10	2.2

Notes: Accuracy results are average of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are ten-shot averages recorded on a Caldwell VelociRadar at the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



▲ The Fueled Prodigy gets Ed Brown’s machined memory groove beavertail grip safety, as well as the company’s Tactical safety.

The Fueled Prodigy 4.25 also incorporates Ed Brown's ambidextrous Tactical safety, which is machined from bar stock. Its double-angle design allows for natural thumb placement and keeps the shooter's thumb from contacting the slide and potentially causing a malfunction.

The safety lever measures 0.167 inch wide, which makes it wider than the company's Carry safety, which is 0.154 inch wide—and, yes, you do notice the difference. The Tactical safety is crisp and reliable, and the design is perfect for the popular thumbs-up shooting grip.

The hammer, sear and disconnect from the base Springfield pistol are all swapped out for Ed Brown components that are electrical discharge machined from premium-quality steel. The Fueled Prodigy also receives the Reliability Package, which includes replacing the factory extractor for an Ed Brown extractor machined from bar stock. The service also includes barrel throating, polishing the feed ramp and, of course, test firing.

The top of the slide is flattened and serrated. Many shooters believe this not only cuts glare but also pushes your focus toward the front sight. But even if you're going to run a red dot on this pistol, the flat/serrated slide top is a cool styling touch.

The stock Springfield barrel is crowned, but not enough for the liking of the team at Ed Brown, so they recrown it. They also dehorn the gun, softening up some of the sharp edges for more comfortable carry. As on the slide top, the dehorning also gives the gun a true custom pistol look that real 1911 fans will appreciate.

The gun's steel subframe features a single slot rail on the dust cover that allows for mounting lights. I prefer lights on my carry guns, and a lot of

folks like to mount lights on home-defense pistols as well.

Rounding out this impressive list of upgrades is an Ed Brown black Gen4 finish, a thermoset polymer coating offering exceptional wear resistance. It's far better than oxide bluing, and to my mind it's a significant upgrade over the Cerakote black finish on the stock Springfield Prodigy 4.25.

Cerakote is durable and rugged, but it can wear, fade and chip. Its durability depends largely upon the →



▲ Ed Brown recrowns the muzzle on the Springfield's forged stainless steel barrel. The slide is treated with Ed Brown's excellent Gen4 finish.



▲ The Fueled Prodigy 4.25 retains Springfield's AOS red-dot mounting system. Both the slide cover plate and dot adapter plate incorporate integral black rear sights.

ED BROWN PRODUCTS FUELED PRODIGY 4.25

TYPE: double-stack 1911

CALIBER: 9mm

CAPACITY: 17- and 20-round mags supplied

BARREL: 4.25 in. forged stainless steel
match bull w/custom crown

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.8/5.5/1.4 in.

WEIGHT: 33 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Gen4-finished forged
steel slide, black polymer grip module w/
Adaptive Grip Texture

TRIGGER: 4 lb. pull. (measured)

SIGHTS: black U-notch rear, green fiber-optic
front; slide cut for Agency Optic System

PRICE: \$2,395

MANUFACTURER: Ed Brown Products,
EdBrown.com

PEDAL TO THE METAL

← application process, and while Springfield does a good job with this finish—I've never seen any issues with the Cerakote on a Springfield gun—if you're playing the very long game I do believe the Gen4 coating gets the nod. Plus it sports a subtle bead-blasted look I like.

The Fueled Prodigy comes in a Springfield zippered case that includes two metal magazines: a flush-fit 17-rounder and an extended 20-round mag. Included with the gun was an AOS plate with a QR code and designation A13B. This particular plate fits Burris FastFire 2 and 4, Vortex Venom and Springfield Hex Dragonfly footprints.

I happened to have a Viridian RFX25 green dot that shares that same pattern. I mounted it on the pistol, tossed the magazines in the ammo crate and headed for the range.

My first impression was that the Ed Brown Fueled Prodigy 4.25 is

Origin Story

In 1968, Ed Brown opened the doors of Brown's Gun Shop in Perry, Missouri. At the time, Brown's full-time job was as a tool and die maker, a CAD/CAM designer and CNC machine programmer—not a bad vocation for someone with a future in the custom gun business.

By the 1980s Ed Brown was a fixture at competitive pistol matches and became one of the top 16 combat shooters in the world. But Brown had a problem. Competing in shooting sports at a high level required a world-class 1911 pistol with premium components, and he couldn't find what he wanted in a factory gun.

Brown solved that problem by simply making his own parts. In 1988 he quit his day job and began manufacturing firearm parts and gunsmithing full time. By 1991 demand for his 1911 components was so great that Brown stepped away from his role as a gunsmith to focus on manufacturing.

In 1998 Brown's sons Travis and Wade joined the growing company, and the first Ed Brown pistols were launched. Brown retired from the business in 2010, turning the company over to his sons. He passed away last year at the age of 77.—BF

almost certainly the smoothest of the new 9mm double-stack 1911s. It feels like a custom semiauto working undercover as a factory gun, and it's a joy to shoot fast. The double-stack grip design is excellent—kudos to Springfield and its Adaptive Grip Texture that stays planted in the hand without biting. The grip design and generous undercut combine with the Ed Brown beavertail to keep your

hand high and deep on the gun, as advertised. As a result, recoil is quite manageable.

The trigger is exceptional; it's crisper and more manageable than factory 1911 triggers. Break weight was a consistent four pounds, which might account for the number of five-shot groups that dipped under the two-inch mark.

The Fueled Prodigy 4.25 is →

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← fun to shoot both on and off the bench, and it shoots extremely well, as you can see from the accuracy chart. It's closer to full custom gun territory than to a factory firearm. One five-shot 25-yard group with Hornady's Critical Defense ammunition measured an impressive 1.4 inches.

I'm a fan of the Ed Brown memory groove grip safety, and I never failed to depress it while testing. The safety is also a very good design, and although the angle may not look dramatically different from other safety profiles, it does an admirable job of keeping your thumb comfortable and out of the way—and it does so intuitively, requiring no adjustment on your part.

Total price for the package is \$2,395. Since the standard Springfield sells for \$1,499 and you're getting the aforementioned upgrades, installed by some of the finest 1911'smiths in the country, that hardly seems unreasonable. It's certainly



▲ The Ed Brown Fueled Prodigy 4.25 comes with both 17- and 20-round magazines, giving you considerably more ammo on tap than you get with most compact 9mms.

less than you'll pay for a ground-up custom 1911 pistol from Ed Brown or another reputable custom builder.

This gun could serve as your everyday carry gun, although it's pushing the upper size and weight limits for most shooters. With its capacity

and reliability it would also serve well in a home-defense role. And it's hard to beat as a range pistol. Call the Fueled Prodigy 4.25 custom light, semi-custom or whatever you'd like. I call it a hot-rodded 1911 carry pistol that's an exceptional value. 🎯

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THE HEX FROM JACOB GREY IS A SHARP-LOOKING, EXPERTLY MACHINED 2011 GREAT FOR RANGE OR CARRY.

BY KEITH WOOD

Concealable double-stack 1911s are arguably the hottest handguns out there these days. It seems everyone is making their own flavor of pistol in the 2011 style, with prices and quality ranging widely. One player in that market is Jacob Grey, a company built on the foundation of its founder's machining →

HEX SIGN

← prowess. The Jacob Grey Hex is a premium-priced handgun that is concealable yet highly capable.

Jacob Grey, the company's namesake, has been running CNC machining equipment since he

was a nine-year-old kid and has spent most of his life in the trade of making things out of metal. In 2012 he founded Jacob Grey Precision Machining, a company serving the highly technical aerospace and

defense industries. He'd long been a firearms enthusiast, and eventually Grey turned his machining expertise toward firearms. A second company was born.

Jacob Grey Firearms produces both AR rifles as well as 2011-style double-stack handguns. The Hex is one of three handguns in the company's catalog. The name stems from the hexagon shape, which is a repeating theme in the gun's construction.

The Hex begins with a frame assembly CNC machined from 7075 aluminum billets. No injection-molded components are used. There are two primary frame sections: the serialized part that houses most of the fire-control parts and contains the frame rails; and a separate grip module.

The frame module components are hard-coat anodized in three available colors: battle brown, duty green or midnight black. My test sample came in battle brown. It's worth noting that this is a Jacob Grey proprietary frame design and is not compatible with other 2011-style frames or grips.

The most recognizable feature of the frame assembly is the hexagon pattern machined into the grip. This machining creates a honeycomb configuration of large hexagons, with



A The Hex features typical 1911/2011 controls, except that the grip safety is pinned and effectively inert. The trigger pad and bow are machined from a single piece of aluminum.



A One of the most notable features is the hexagonal pattern machined into the grip, which gives the Hex its name and is repeated on the trigger.

JACOB GREY FIREARMS HEX

TYPE: 2011

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 17+1

BARREL: 4.25 in. ported, 416R stainless bull; black nitride finish (as tested)

WEIGHT: 30 oz.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.75/6.0/1.4 in.

CONSTRUCTION: steel slide, aluminum frame

GRIPS: machined aluminum grip module

TRIGGER: 3 lb. pull (measured)

SIGHTS: XS Sights fiber-optic front, black steel rear; optic ready w/adapters for RMR, DeltaPoint Pro, RMSc, Acro footprints

SAFETIES: ambidextrous manual thumb, pinned grip

PRICE: \$3,499

MANUFACTURER: Jacob Grey Firearms, JACOBGREYFIREARMS.COM

smaller hexagons contained within each. Not only does this look good, it also provides an excellent grip without being overly abrasive. The hex pattern covers most of the grip's surface but not all of it. The frontstrap is serrated vertically, and the main-spring housing and grip safety bump are checkered 30 lines per inch.

The grip module is machine textured, and it's also carefully contoured. The grip is cut high behind the trigger guard, and a smooth thumb notch is machined into the grip to allow easy access to the magazine release. The bottom of the grip flares outward, creating a funnel shape for the magazine well. The trigger guard is squared at the front with a slight sweep underneath.

The serialized section of the frame contains four integral frame rail sections. The full-length dust cover runs flush with the front edge of the slide and has its own saddle cut, which mirrors that of the slide, forming sort of an ellipse. An accessory rail with three cross slots creates a mounting surface for a light or other accessory.

The controls on the Hex will be familiar to 1911/2011 users. The flat-face Controlled Radius Trigger is unique in that the entire unit, both the pad and the bow, is machined from a single piece of aluminum. Three hexagonal holes are machined into the trigger pad.

The Hex features an ambidextrous thumb safety with levers that are extended for length but slim enough for a carry gun. The beavertail grip safety is pinned in place, so it is effectively inert. In other words, if you've ever taken a high grip on a 1911/2011 and failed to engage the grip safety, the Hex has you covered.

The magazine release is easy to reach and vertically serrated. Jacob Grey uses a machined Delta-style hammer, and the slide stop is machined in-house from a steel billet. Nearly all these parts are compatible with accessory parts designed for 1911/2011 handguns, so you can replace them if you want.

The Hex uses some metal-injection-molded parts, including the ejector, sear and disconnect. What's interesting about this particular ejector, though, is its shape.

If a 1911 ejector is going to fail, it will most likely be at the corner where the forward nose section extends from the main body. This right angle forms a failure point that can crack and eventually break. The Hex eliminates the right angle, using a radian instead. Previously, I only recall encountering that ejector style on custom 1911s.

The slide is machined from 416 stainless steel and is built around a Commander-length 4.25-inch ported barrel. Deep cuts machined into the slide create uniquely patterned front and rear cocking surfaces.

The slide top is machined to create a series of five flats, and three longitudinal lines are machined on the 12 o'clock flat. Two elongated ports are cut into the corners of the slide at roughly 10 and 2 o'clock to correspond with the barrel ports. Regardless of frame color, slides on the Hex are DLC coated satin black.

The Hex uses a 1911-style internal extractor. On most traditional 1911s, the cartridge sits on the breech face, held in place by the extractor but

unsupported on the opposite side of the rim. This can sometimes cause the extractor to move a fired case prematurely. On the Hex, a ledge machined into the breech face supports the case on the non-extractor side. This helps hold the case in position until the ejector begins to nudge the case out of the slide.

The Hex has a no-bushing stainless steel bull barrel that tapers inward at the top end to allow the pistol to unlock and cycle properly. The barrel's two ports each measure 0.100 inch wide and 0.370 inch long, directing propellant gases upward to counteract muzzle rise.

The barrel maintains the



➤ Two longitudinal ports are cut into the barrel and the slide to divert propellant gases and reduce muzzle rise.



▲ The optic-ready Hex comes with four different adapter plates and associated hardware to accommodate most popular red-dot sight footprints.



HEX SIGN

← traditional three locking surfaces provided by the two top lugs and the front edge of the chamber section. The barrel hood is cut with a notch that serves as a visual loaded-chamber indicator. The barrel is ramped, which eliminates the need for the traditional feeding surface on the frame of a 1911. Barrels are available in black DLC or TiN coated rose gold.

For the Hex, Jacob Grey chose the simplicity of the Series 70 fire-control system. The lack of a firing pin safety allows for a better trigger pull, and fewer parts usually equals improved reliability. To make the Hex as drop-safe as possible without a firing pin safety mechanism, the gun uses a lightweight firing pin and appropriate weight firing pin spring.

Let's be honest. The reason someone would choose a 2011-style handgun over a striker-fired gun is its superior shootability, mostly thanks to the trigger. The trigger pull on my test gun did not disappoint, breaking consistently right at three pounds. There was no creep, and the reset was short and tactile. The trigger gets an A in my book.

Most folks will likely choose to mount an optic on the Hex, but it comes equipped with iron sights. The front sight is a suppressor-height steel blade by XS Sights, set into a horizontal dovetail. The front sight on my test gun was equipped with a dot, but somehow it took on an amber hue that obscured any illuminative properties. I can only assume the stain was from the gases emanating from the barrel ports.

The tall rear sight is mounted on the optic cover plate and on the various optic adapters. The black blade is

serrated, and the notch is square.

I've always been faster and more comfortable with irons but, as I approach 50, my eyesight is pushing me begrudgingly toward optics on handguns. The Hex comes with a full host of mounting solutions for popular optics. It includes fasteners and adapter plates for optics that fit the Trijicon RMR, Leupold DeltaPoint Pro, Shield RMsC and Aimpoint Acro footprints at no extra charge.

I had a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro on hand, so I selected the correct plate and mounting hardware from the reference card included with the Hex. With the optic mounted, the sights co-witnessed with the iron sights, which were visible at the extreme bottom of the optic's window.

The Hex uses a recoil system with a full-length guide rod with a 12-pound spring. The DLC-coated steel guide rod allows the recoil spring as- →



▲ The Hex's machined aluminum frame flares outward to form a magazine well funnel.

ACCURACY RESULTS | JACOB GREY HEX

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,083	8	2.3
Federal Syntech TSJ	124	1,124	9	1.7
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	147	980	10	1.9

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired with a Leupold DeltaPoint Pro at 25 yards from a Target Shooting Inc. Model 1500 rest. Velocities are 10-shot averages recorded on a Garmin Xero C1. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket



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← sembly to be removed without the use of tools. To do so, pull the recoil spring plug backward, compressing the coil spring. With the system compressed, press inward on a button on the recoil spring guide. This activates a tab that locks the system and allows it to be removed from the slide.

It's important to note that the spring/plug remain under tension when captured, and improperly handling the assembly in this condition can result in parts flying away at high speed. When in doubt, relieve the spring tension in a controlled manner—and it's never a bad idea to wear safety glasses when working with tensioned springs.

The Hex is equipped with two 10- or 17-round detachable box magazines. These milled stainless steel bodied magazines are produced by Check-Mate, a high-quality OEM and aftermarket manufacturer. The follower and base pad are both made of polymer, and the magazines can be

easily disassembled for cleaning and maintenance. These magazines are compatible with other 2011s on the market, and Check-Mate's website sells capacities from 17 to 26 rounds in various lengths that can be used with the Hex.

Overall, the fit and finish on the Hex was very good. Although slide-to-frame fit is not the end-all for handgun construction, it is nonetheless a good bellwether. The slide and frame on my Hex fit well, with very little discernible play between the two components. I've seen tightly fit guns where reliability suffered, but that wasn't the case here. Thanks to the different materials and finishes used on the parts, the slide cycled smoothly, with no propensity to gall.

It's easy to think that the 2011 market is overhyped, until you shoot a good one. The Hex was accurate, reliable, ergonomic and easy to control. The ports certainly make the gun louder from the shooter's perspec-

tive, but there's no doubt they cut down on muzzle rise.

The comfortable grip, great trigger and quality optic made hitting with the Hex almost effortless. Mechanical accuracy from the bench was good, with most five-shot groups measuring less than two inches at 25 yards.

I'm certain firearms manufacturers have a tough time making their products stand out from the crowd, especially in the current 2011 market. Clever marketing will get you only so far. It takes a great product as well.

Jacob Grey's Hex is a well-built handgun with some unique features, quality machining and aesthetics that certainly set it apart. The Hex is not inexpensive, but a heck of a lot of work goes into making this gun. Add in the quality magazines and full array of optic mounting solutions that are included, and the price starts to seem less obnoxious. Personally, I don't mind paying for the kind of quality this gun provides. 



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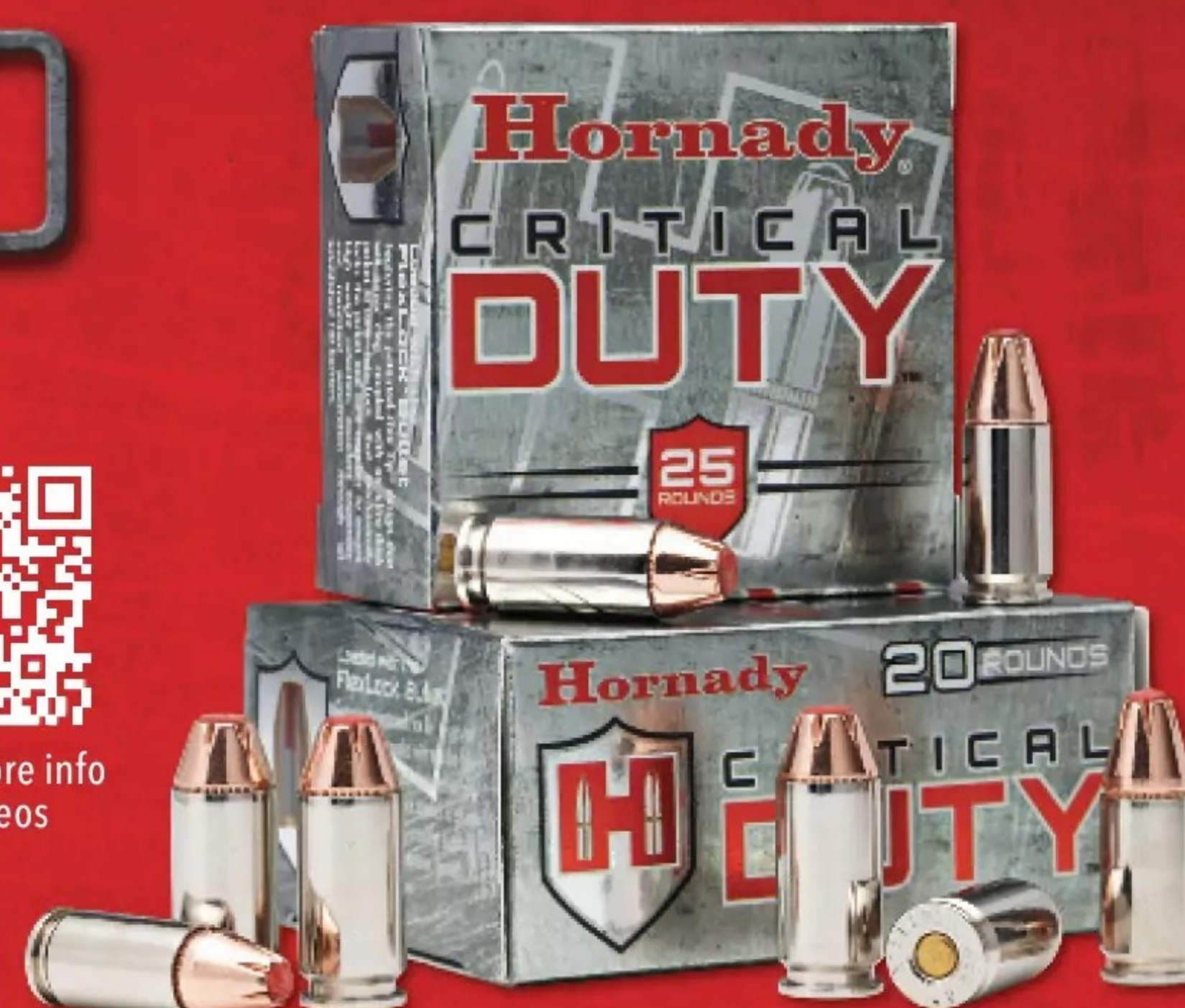
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A TIP OF THE HAT



GIRSAN'S MC 14T X SOLUTION IS A COOL NEW .380 TIP-UP SEMIAUTOMATIC.

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

Girsan of Turkey has been producing some very desirable guns of late. Its Browning Hi-Power clones have earned high praise—certainly from me, since I recently bought one I'd tested. The company's 1911 pistols offer →

A TIP OF THE HAT

← high quality at a reasonable price as well. But of all Girsan's offerings, perhaps the most interesting is the MC 14 line of tip-up barrel pistols. And its newest version—the MC 14T X Solution in .380—offers features never before available on a tilt-barrel handgun.

Firearms enthusiasts will immediately recognize the profile of the MC 14 as similar to Beretta's popular tip-up pistols. While it wasn't the first tip-up, the first such gun to gain mainstream acceptance and market success was the Beretta 950 Jetfire from 1952.

It was a compact semiauto carry pistol that had a novel design in which the slide did not need to be

retracted to chamber a round. The current Beretta Cheetah, Bobcat and Tomcat models all share this trait, and of these, the new MC 14T X Solution most closely mirrors the Beretta Cheetah 86 tip-barrel .380.

The Cheetah was produced from 1991 to 2004. It commanded a high price—today used ones sell for around \$1,200—and you could argue that the \$569 Girsan MC 14T X Solution, which is imported stateside by EAA Corp., is better suited for personal defense than the 86.

The MC 14T X is a blowback-operated semiauto chambered in .380 ACP. It has an open-top slide

design reminiscent of the Beretta 92/M9 pistol, which for years was the official U.S. military sidearm. The Girsan borrows design cues from the M9 and will feel very familiar for anyone who went afield with that gun. The MC 14T X Solution pistol looks and feels very much like a 3/4-scale M9 but with the advantage of the tip-up barrel.

The MC 14T X is a double-action/single-action gun with an ambidextrous manual safety. It's a firing pin block safety, and the hammer cannot be cocked from a lowered position with the safety engaged; the hammer stops at the half-cock position. Nor can the hammer be lowered with the safety engaged. It can, however, be lowered with the barrel tipped up, which is the safest way to lower the hammer.

In addition to the ambi thumb safety, controls include a slide stop on the left side of the forged aluminum frame and a barrel release lever on the right side of the frame.

The barrel tip-up lever is machined so it widens at the base, and it's very easy to actuate. Doing so releases the C-shape lug on the bottom of the barrel, which allows the barrel and chamber to rotate upward on the transverse pin located on the frame just below the front sight.



▲ The threaded barrel tips up courtesy of a lever on the right side. While the slide is not cut for optics, a Picatinny rail makes it easy to mount a laser.



▲ The Girsan has an ambidextrous manual safety, an easy-to-operate slide stop and a magazine release. Fitzpatrick really liked the G-10-style grips.

GIRSAN MC 14T X SOLUTION

TYPE: DA/SA tip-up semiauto

CALIBER: .380 ACP

CAPACITY: 13

BARREL: 5 in., spiral fluted, 1:16 twist; threaded 1/2x28

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.0/5.0/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 26.1 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Tungsten Cerakote aluminum frame, black Cerakote steel slide

GRIPS: composite G-10-style

TRIGGER: DA pull, 9.5 lb.; SA pull, 5.5 lb. (measured)

SIGHTS: 3-dot, drift-adjustable rear

PRICE: \$569

MANUFACTURER: Girsan

IMPORTER: EAA, EAAcorp.com

Girsan added spiral fluting and a Cerakote Tungsten finish to the pistol's barrel, barrel lug, front sight and frame. The steel slide has a black Cerakote finish, and the controls are also black, giving the gun a cool two-tone look.

Other MC 14 models sport 4.5-inch steel barrels, but the X version features a 4.9-inch extended barrel with 1/2x28 threads and a thread protector. The 1:16 twist rate should stabilize popular .380 ACP self-defense and target bullets weighing between 85 and 102 grains.

I mentioned earlier that I purchased Girsan's Hi-Power clone, and while I liked the gun, I was disappointed by its cheap synthetic grips. The grips on the MC 14T X Solution are certainly much better. EAA and Girsan call the composite grips "G-10 style," which essentially means they mimic G-10.

That's certainly not a bad thing since G-10 grips are quite popular, and the angled lines on the grips provide a secure and comfortable hold. There's a gold "G" medallion in the center of the grip panels that doesn't look garish but rather adds a touch of color to the dark two-tone pistol. The frontstrap and backstrap feature vertical lines machined into the metal.

Sights include a dovetail rear sight with two white dots, and a white dot post front. The rear sight is relieved to cut down on glare. Unlike most modern semiautos, the MC 14T X Solution's slide is not cut to accept optics. However, you could mount a laser or light/laser combo on the included Picatinny rail as an alternate sighting system.

Two 13-round metal Mec-Gar magazines are included. One features a finger extension while the other comes with what EAA refers to as a "loading base plate tool." In profile this tool looks very much like a rounded magazine extension, but the base plate features a groove

that holds a single .380 case via the rim.

The tool allows you to store the firearm unloaded and then rapidly tip up the barrel and insert the single round, which slides off the base plate tool when the round is chambered and the magazine is pulled upward. It certainly beats scrambling to find a round in case you need to load the gun in a hurry.

The MC 14T X Solution boasts a lanyard loop on the base of the magazine well, an homage to service M9 pistols. The gun, magazines and a wire cleaning brush ship in a small hard plastic case. It's also backed with a limited lifetime warranty.

The MC 14T X Solution weighs 26.1 ounces unloaded. At least that's the weight I got on my digital scale, as opposed to the 1.4 pounds (22.4 ounces) listed on the EAA website. That's nearly 2.5 times as much as the Smith & Wesson Bodyguard 2.0. Additionally, this pistol measures eight inches long and 1.3 inches wide, making it larger than most subcompact 9mms. So if you're looking for the absolute lightest .380 pistol to carry in a fanny pack or pocket, this probably isn't the best choice.

What the gun does really well, though, is absorb recoil. Stubby, lightweight .380s can be snappy and even unpleasant, so they



A The Girsan features three-dot sights, and the rear is drift-adjustable. The short feed ramp did contribute to a couple malfunctions during testing.



A The loading base plate tool holds a single cartridge that can easily be inserted in the chamber. Then simply pull up on the magazine and insert it into the gun.

A TIP OF THE HAT

← aren't always the best choice for new or recoil-sensitive shooters. However, a .380 that weighs as much as the Girsan is a pussycat on the firing line. The gun is fun and easy to shoot fast, and if recoil mitigation is more important than maximum concealability, the MC 14T X Solution might work for you.

Operating the pistol will likely feel slightly awkward to experienced shooters accustomed to slapping a magazine in place, then racking or dropping the slide. It took time for me to get accustomed to the Girsan's order of operations, especially hitting the barrel tip-up lever on the right side of the frame.

You can pull the slide rearward to operate the Solution in the traditional manner, but it's not preferable. The slide is heavy, and its serrations don't offer a lot of purchase.

It's much simpler to chamber a round via the tip-up barrel, and

after a few hundred rounds the operation starts to feel completely natural. I think new gun owners will catch on to the operation of this pistol very quickly—perhaps even faster than those who've sent several thousand rounds down-range through other semiautos.

The double-action trigger pull is about 9.5 pounds, which is probably a bit better than average for DA/SA pistols. The single-action trigger pull is quite long, and required 5.5 pounds of force to fire the gun, which is a bit heavier than average.

My primary peeve with the Girsan is the trigger guard. The sloping design looks cool, but it reduces the space within the guard. It's a layout I could have lived without, but other shooters may not take issue with it.

The beefy, G-10-style grips won me over, though. Between the gun and its frame size, this pistol is large enough that even shooters with really big hands will find it comfortable, yet it won't overwhelm those with small hands. I do think the beavertail would be more →

ACCURACY RESULTS GIRSAN MC 14T X SOLUTION				
.380 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Speer Gold Dot HP	90	989	15	2.1
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	90	961	11	2.2
Hornady American Gunner XTP	90	968	15	2.6
Federal Hydra-Shok Deep JHP	99	852	11	2.7
Fiocchi CovertX JHP	95	1,042	12	2.5

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are 10-shot averages recorded on a Caldwell VelociRadar at the muzzle. Abbreviations: HP, hollowpoint; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint





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A TIP OF THE HAT

← comfortable if it were a bit longer, though.

Accuracy was pretty good, with some groups under two inches at 25 yards, and a single five-shot cluster of Speer Gold Dot bullets that measured 1.4 inches. The average, however, was closer to 2.5 inches.

The gun was also mostly reliable, malfunctioning just twice. Both times the problem was the same: A bullet nosed into the feed ramp and jammed the action open, which makes the gun appear empty. The culprit is a short feed ramp that probably deserves a good hand polishing before you shoot the gun. That was the only issue with reliability during testing.

Perhaps you've eyed the Girsan MC 14 family of pistols only with passing interest because you don't have compromised hand strength. That changes, however. If we live long enough and continue spending

time at the range, there's a good chance that most of us will, at some point, find it difficult to rack the slide of a pistol.

The MC 14T X Solution has you covered. The low recoil makes it a

great training pistol, and the prodigious 13+1 capacity makes it a suitable self-defense firearm. Whether you need the tip-up feature or not, this is a solid .380 ACP that's innovative and fun to shoot. 



A The MC14T X Solution liked Speer's 90-grain Gold Dot Personal Protection load, placing five shots into 1.4 inches at 25 yards.

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THE SANDS OF TIME

THE BERETTA 92XI SAO SABBIA IS A NEW 92 THAT EMBRACES WHAT IT ONCE REPLACED: THE SINGLE-ACTION SEMIAUTOMATIC.

BY KEITH WOOD



In 1985, the U.S. military made a decision that deeply divided the handgun world. The move to adopt the double-action/single-action Beretta 92 handgun to replace the mighty single-action 1911A1 as its official sidearm forced shooters to recognize the DA/SA semiautomatic handgun as a mainstream option for duty, defensive and sporting use. Some shooters never got over that.

The Beretta, which wasn't well-known to civilians at the time, became one of the most successful

handguns of all time thanks to its military endorsement. Virtually overnight, the Beretta effectively converted the single-action handgun market into one dominated by double actions. In an ironic twist, 40 years later Beretta has gone back to the system it replaced by introducing the competition-minded single-action Beretta 92XI SAO Sabbia.

For as long as double-action/single-action handguns have been on the market, shooters have complained about the transi-

tion between the long, heavy initial double-action trigger pull and shorter, lighter subsequent single-action pulls. Over the years, custom gunsmiths and firearms engineers have worked to address this reality with varying levels of success, but the simplest solution is to adopt a single-action ignition system. With the XI SAO series, which includes the Sabbia, that's exactly what Beretta did.

The SAO Sabbia is not the only single-action 92. The Beretta 92 XI series also includes a Tactical model and even two race-ready compensated versions that are single actions.

Sabbia is Italian for "sand," which describes the family's earth-tone finishes. The aluminum frame is anodized in a light bronze hue while the steel slide is covered in flat dark earth Cera-kote. The barrel and controls are treated with black DLC, which gives the gun a three-tone look.

The SAO Sabbia is built on Beretta's full-size Vertec aluminum frame. The Vertec, introduced several years into the 92's history, made some meaningful departures compared to the original. For starters, the Vertec frame has a straight backstrap in lieu of the traditional curved 92 frame.

The Vertec also has a flared magazine well. On the Sabbia it is further enhanced with the addition of a removable aluminum extended magazine well from Toni System, the Italian firearms accessory firm.

The Vertec frame also has an integrated Picatinny rail on the dust cover for mounting accessories.

The grip panels on the Vertec frame appear thinner than the originals, and the Sabbia features thin but aggressively textured Lok Grips panels made from G-10. Both the frontstrap and backstrap are machine checkered. The overall combination of these textured surfaces provides plenty of →

THE SANDS OF TIME

← grip when it comes to controlling the gun.

At first glance, the controls on the SAO Sabbia are similar to other Beretta 92s, but a deeper dive reveals some significant differences. The fundamental difference

is, of course, the fact that the SAO Sabbia is a single-action design. Beretta calls this the Xtreme-S single-action-only trigger. This pistol is designed to be carried in condition one—i.e., cocked and locked. Further, with the skeleton-

ized hammer to the rear and the frame-mounted safety engaged, you can take one look at this gun and know it's not a traditional Beretta 92.

Like a 1911 or a Browning Hi Power, the pistol can be fired only when the hammer is in the cocked position. It can be cocked by racking the slide or manually cocking the hammer. After the initial take-up on the first shot, each trigger pull is identical to the last. The trigger on my sample had a hitch of creep but was light at 3.4 pounds. Reset was short, measuring approximately 0.08 inch.

The trigger bow itself is nearly flat, with only a slight curve on the serrated face. Instead of a slide-mounted safety lever, the Sabbia uses a frame-mounted ambidextrous safety, just as the original Model 92 did.

Pushing the extended safety levers upward actuates it, which puts the gun into cocked-and-locked mode. The safety lever is long enough that it can be engaged and disengaged without shifting one's grip on the pistol. There is no decocker.

The ignition components, including the hammer and trigger, as well the slide stop, extended



▲ The Sabbia is designed to be carried cocked and locked, and as such it features extended safety levers. The flat Xtreme-S trigger has a light pull and a short reset.



▲ Two slots are machined into the slide to allow for an optic plate. The plate is recessed to allow the firing pin catch to operate.

BERETTA
92XI SAO SABBIA

TYPE: single-action semiauto
CALIBER: 9mm Luger
CAPACITY: 22+1 w/+4 extensions; 3 mags supplied
BARREL: 4.7 in., threaded 1/2x28
WEIGHT: 35.3 oz.
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.5/6.45/1.5 in.
CONSTRUCTION: flat dark earth Cerakote steel slide, light bronze anodized aluminum frame
GRIPS: Lok FDE/black G-10
TRIGGER: Xtreme-S single action; 3.4 lb. pull (measured)
SIGHTS: black steel rear, fiber-optic front; cut for optics adapter plates
SAFETIES: ambidextrous manual thumb
PRICE: \$1,329
MANUFACTURER: Beretta USA, BERETTA.COM

magazine release and takedown lever, are DLC coated for smooth operation.

The open-top slide is an identifying characteristic of the Beretta 92 series, and on that front the SAO Sabbia is no different. The lack of slide mass is good news, since less reciprocating weight equals less muzzle rise. The slide has both rear and forward vertical cocking serrations. There is an external extractor riding at the 2:30 position on the slide.

Like all Beretta 92s, the SAO Sabbia operates on the same basic premise as the Walther P38. Instead of using a Browning tilting barrel system, the Sabbia uses a simple locking block that drops down from its engagement with the slide and allows the barrel to travel a short distance to unlock. Some credit this system with creating less muzzle rise, and the limited barrel movement probably also contributes to the Beretta's reputation for mechanical accuracy.

The barrel on the SAO Sabbia is 4.7 inches long and threaded 1/2x28 at the muzzle. The threads are covered by a knurled steel thread protector, and an O-ring provides a tight seal between the thread shoulder and any muzzle device that's installed. The internal surfaces of the barrel are chrome-lined, and the exterior has a matte blue finish.

The recoil system on the SAO Sabbia is fairly standard. A polymer full-length recoil spring guide locks between the front of the slide and a recess cut into the barrel's locking block, and there is a flat recoil spring guide.

The SAO Sabbia uses an 18-round steel Mec-Gar magazine that comes fitted with an aluminum base pad made by Toni System. This base pad expands the magazine capacity to 22+1. The large base pad also makes the magazine easier to grab quickly off a belt pouch and ensures the extended magazine

well doesn't interfere with properly seating the magazine. Between the extended mag well and the tapered mags, reloads were very fast.

The Vertec models were the first 92 series Berettas I'm aware of to allow for interchangeable instead of integral front sights. Rather than being a forged element of the slide, the front sight is dovetailed in place. The SAO Sabbia uses a red fiber-optic front along with a serrated black rear. This sight setup is functional, durable and reliable.

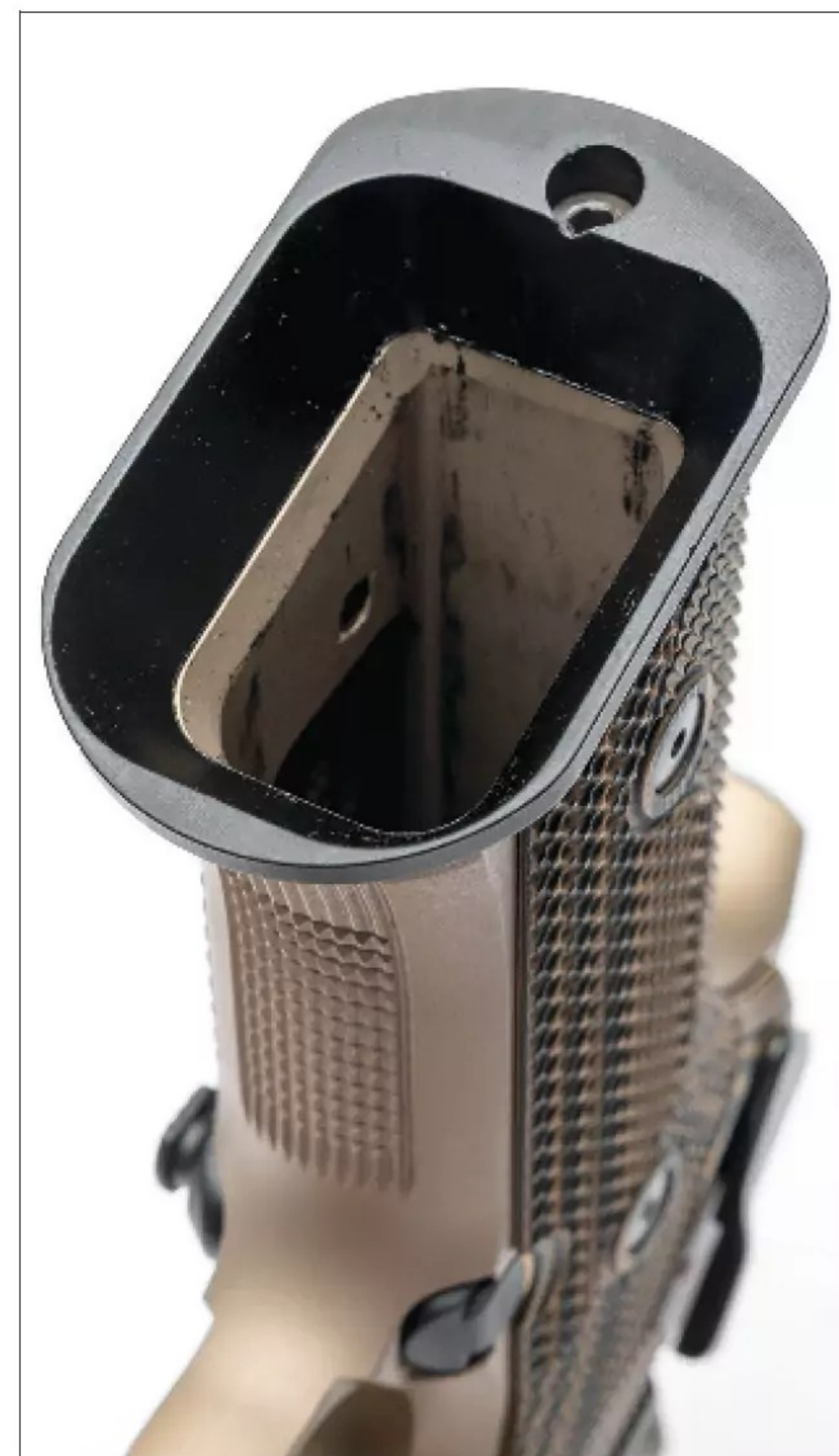
I have a feeling, though, that many shooters will not use the iron sights. Optics have become important—some say crucial—accessories on a modern handgun, especially in the competition context. But being an older platform, the Beretta 92 was not designed with optic mounting in mind.

The area where the optic mounts is just above the extractor mortise, so the cut cannot be too deep. Additionally, on the Beretta 92 the firing pin catch rises above the top of the slide during the firing cycle, so accommodations had to be made to allow the catch to move freely without impacting an optic or mount.

The approach to solving this problem was relatively simple:

Beretta machined two slots into the top of the slide just forward of the rear sight and drilled and tapped the bottom.

Beretta offers a variety of optic plates for the various formats on the market. I chose one for the Leupold DeltaPoint Pro and



A The SAO Sabbia is equipped with a removable extended magazine well manufactured in Italy by Toni System.



A The aluminum Vertec frame is machined with an integral Picatinny rail for mounting a light or other accessory.

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← mounted this sight easily to the slide. The flat dark earth finish on the Leupold red dot was nearly identical to the aluminum and steel surfaces on the pistol, which made it look like an original part of the handgun.

Two fasteners secure the plate to the slide and another two secure the sight to the plate. While not as low as some designs, the system is simple and secure. The plate is recessed internally to allow the firing pin catch to move freely, even with the optic in place.

Due to the height of the mounted optic, the sights were not usable with the optic installed. Higher sights wouldn't solve the problem, at least with the DeltaPoint Pro, because they would be impractically high. Today's red-dot optics are

super reliable, but mounting one to this handgun is a commitment to using it.

Breaking down the SAO Sabbia for maintenance is identical to other Beretta 92s. Remove the magazine, lock back the slide and ensure the chamber is empty. Press the disassembly latch release button on the right side of the frame and rotate the disassembly latch lever 90 degrees downward. Release the slide and remove it from the frame. Remove the recoil spring assembly and then the barrel from the slide. Reassemble in reverse order.

I was pretty excited to take the SAO Sabbia to the range. I've fired hundreds of single-action pistols over the years and plenty of Beretta 92s, so it was interesting to shoot a handgun that melded

ACCURACY RESULTS | BERETTA 92XI SAO SABBIA

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
American Eagle Range TSJ	124	1,157	10	2.7
Hornady Custom XTP JHP	147	959	11	2.4
Fiocchi Range Dynamics FMJ	147	1,002	9	3.1

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 Garmin Xero C1. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; TSJ, total synthetic jacket



▲ The excellent ergonomics, along with the Sabbia's good trigger, will appeal to competition shooters.

those properties. Like all Beretta 92s, the SAO Sabbia is a big and relatively heavy handgun, so it is extremely pleasant to shoot in its 9mm chambering.

When I tested the SAO Sabbia, I had just returned from a three-day 1911 course taught by legendary competitor Rob Leatham and master pistolsmith Jason Burton, so this was a very appropriate time to be using a single-action auto.

Thanks to the consistent trigger pull, the handling qualities of the gun and the optic, I was able to make hits quickly and repeatedly on steel targets set up from five to 15 yards. Most important, my first shot from the draw was faster and more accurate than it would have been with a double-action/single-action Model 92.

The ergonomics of the SAO Sabbia are excellent, and it has a good trigger, an easy-to-manipulate ambidextrous safety, an extended magazine release and a comfortable grip. These factors, combined with the Beretta 92's reputation for reliability and accuracy, are what have kept this legacy design in the game for so many years.

What we are seeing at this point is a handgun that has reached the performance peak of its life cycle. There's no question what the Sabbia was built for: It's a race gun, pure and simple. Sure, you could use it for self-defense, but most buyers will have competition in mind. Assuming that sanctioning bodies will allow the pistol to be used in the same divisions as traditional DA/SA handguns—such as USPSA's Production division—the SAO Sabbia will be an attractive choice.

Four decades after the Beretta 92 shook up the handgun world, the introduction of these single-action models, to include the SAO Sabbia, represents a major design shift on Beretta's part. This evolution should go a long way in maintaining the 92 series' relevance in the combat shooting sports.



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RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION 10MM

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years old this year, and it continues to serve as one of the best all-around and most robust revolvers on the market. It's available in standard, Super and Match Champion variants, and the newest Match Champion is chambered to the popular 10mm Auto cartridge. Because why should semiauto shooters have all the fun?

RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION

TYPE: double-action/single action centerfire revolver

CALIBER: .357 Magnum, 10mm Auto (tested)

CAPACITY: 6

BARREL: 4.2 in., half underlug

OAL/HEIGHT: 9.5/6.5 in.

WEIGHT: 37 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: brushed stainless steel barrel, frame, cylinder

GRIPS: Hogue stippled hardwood

TRIGGER: 9 lb., 8 oz. DA pull; 3 lb., 4 oz. SA pull (measured)

SIGHTS: white-outline fully adjustable notch rear, green fiber-optic front

PRICE: \$1,269

MANUFACTURER: Ruger, RUGER.COM

A six-shot revolver, it features a 4.2-inch barrel with a half underlug. Overall length is 9.5 inches, and weight is 37 ounces. Sights include a fully adjustable white-outline rear and a green fiber-optic front set in a dovetail. The fiber-optic rod is protected by a cage that provides ample protection at the top and sides as well as at either end.

The topstrap is flat, and forward of that the barrel is grooved to reduce glare. "Ruger GP100" is engraved on the right side of the barrel, with "10mm auto" underneath on the lug. "Match Champion" graces the barrel's left side. The muzzle has an 11-degree crown for accuracy and protection of the 1:16 RH rifling.

Barrel, frame and cylinder are stainless steel with a brushed finish, and the gun boasts eye-catching Hogue stippled hardwood grips that make an attractive match to the brushed stainless.

The GP100 is a double action/single action that uses coil springs—a Ruger innovation—and this Match Champion had a smooth double-action pull of 9.5 pounds with almost no stacking. Single-action pull averaged three pounds, five

ounces and had a nice, sharp break. The hammer spur is aggressively serrated, ensuring your thumb isn't going to slip when cocking it for single action.

The GP100 uses a super strong, triple-locking action. The front of the crane features a locking lever that engages with the frame, and the cylinder stops are offset so their notches correspond with the strongest section around the charge holes. The cylinder release is a push button instead of a slider, and it's grooved at the rear where your thumb applies pressure.

The Match Champion is easily loaded via three supplied stainless steel moon clips. You can load and unload the gun singly as you would with rimmed cartridges, but because the 10mm has a rebated rim, the ejector star has nothing to catch on, and spent cases usually have to be plucked out individually.

The 10mm has really caught on in recent years, and it makes perfect sense in a relatively large revolver like the Match Champion. In terms of energy, the cartridge sits above the .357 Magnum but well below the .44 Magnum.

One thing's for sure: You're never going to mistake the recoil of a 10mm for that of a full-power .44 Magnum. With the Match Champion 10mm you've got a revolver that's very manageable. The gun's half lug hits the sweet spot here. While a full-length underlug would've helped tame muzzle rise, it also would've made the gun heavier.

The only thing I didn't care for were the grips. I love the looks of the hardwood, and the stippling does provide good purchase, but this particular Hogue design is a little too beefy for my hands. I'd also prefer a rubber grip to absorb some of the recoil.

But that's one of the great things about the GP100. It's ripe for customization, and there's no shortage of after-market grips—as well as springs and sights—that allow you to modify the gun to make it perfect for you.

The grips are a one-piece peg style, and to remove them you simply turn out a screw at the bottom and pull them off. And while the double-action trigger pull on this Match Champion was great, the springs are easy to change. Even a ham-handed DIY'er like myself was able to swap out the stock springs on my own GP100 for a set that reduced the trigger pull considerably.

I probably wouldn't touch the sights, though. While the fiber-optic rod is on the large side for true precision work, it's fast to pick up and easy to shoot. The white-outline rear is perfect for both bright and relatively low-light conditions. But again, there are aftermarket options if these don't suit you.

The gun is plenty accurate, as you can see in the accompanying chart, although it didn't love every load. Thankfully, these days 10mm Auto availability is no problem, with all the majors as well as boutique makers cranking out a wide variety of loads for target/plinking, hunting and defense.

The Match Champion 10mm Auto is an ideal all-rounder because it can do those things well. I think it would excel

ACCURACY RESULTS RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION				
10mm Auto	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Fiocchi FMJ TC	180	1,144	10	1.9
Hornady Custom XTP	180	1,211	15	2.0
Hornady Backcountry Defense	200	1,113	16	2.0
Federal Solid Core	200	1,089	9	3.5

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups with iron sights at 25 yards. Velocities are averages of 15 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket; TC, truncated cone



▲ The cylinder holds six rounds of 10mm, and the three provided moon clips make loading and unloading a snap.



▲ The rear sight has a white outline and is fully adjustable, which is handy for today's wide variety of 10mm ammo. The front is a green fiber optic set in a dovetail.



▲ The Hogue hardwood grip has stippling on the side for control, although Rupp would prefer a different style, and it's easy to replace if you wish.

as a trail gun, and it's got the power and accuracy to be a good hunting revolver for game on the order of deer and hogs. Plus it's got a lot to recommend it as a

home-defense revolver—simple to operate with plenty of oomph and the easy loading/unloading provided by moon clips.



SMITH & WESSON PERFORMANCE CENTER BODYGUARD 2.0 CARRY COMP

IF THE ONLY THING SMITH & WESSON HAD changed with the new Performance Center Bodyguard 2.0 Carry Comp was the addition of a compensator, I wouldn't have been as impressed as I am with it. Yes, it jumps on the compensator bandwagon, but changes to the slide and the sights are almost just as big a deal.

This new Performance Center version of the Bodyguard 2.0 has an overall length of less than six inches, a weight of just under 12 ounces and a 0.9-inch width. Those dimensions make it a third of an inch longer than the standard Bodyguard 2.0, thanks to the 3.1-inch ported Carry Comp barrel; the standard 2.0's barrel is 2.75 inches. With its longer barrel, the Performance Center gun is two ounces heavier.

The gun features S&W's Power Port,

a single port at the top of the Armornite-finished stainless steel barrel, paired with a matching cut at the top of the Armornite-finished slide. The slide also sports diagonal lightening cuts on each side.

The slide serrations are finer, sharper and more aggressive than on the standard 2.0. When you trap the front of the slide for a press check, it stays trapped. And thanks to a prominent flare at the rear of the slide, which has matching serrations, you get excellent purchase for racking.

The flat top of the slide features a vaguely arrow-shaped pattern. I suppose you could argue it helps defeat glare, but I think it's mostly for aesthetics. There's nothing wrong with a little style.

The sights are another big step up. When I first worked with the standard

SMITH & WESSON PC BODYGUARD 2.0 CARRY COMP

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: .380 ACP

CAPACITY: 10-, 12-round mags supplied

BARREL: 3.1 in. Armornite-finished stainless, ported

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 5.85/4.0/0.88 in.

WEIGHT: 11.8 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Armornite-finished stainless steel slide, polymer frame

SIGHTS: square-notch rear, AmeriGlo Protector LumiGreen day/night front

SAFETY: trigger blade (as tested)

PRICE: \$549

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson, SMITH-WESSON.COM

2.0, I liked its orange/tritium front and U-notch rear. However, as I shot it under more and more lighting conditions, I found this wasn't always the best setup. With the Performance Center Carry →

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



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← Comp you get a serrated square-notch rear paired with an AmeriGlo Protector LumiGreen day/night front that incorporates a large bright green ring around a tritium vial. It's a lot easier to pick up than the standard's front sight.

With the 2.0, S&W changed the Bodyguard from a hammer-fired gun to a striker-fired one, and that resulted in a much improved trigger pull. The new Performance Center model has the same trigger, although the average pull weight on this particular sample was five pounds, two ounces—a little over a pound heavier than on my standard 2.0.

This particular model doesn't have a thumb safety, but versions with one are available. Both the slide lock lever and magazine release are nicely sized for carry and operation. The pistol ships with 10- and 12-round magazines.

I just love the Bodyguard 2.0's grip, which remains unchanged on the Performance Center model. It has a more pronounced beavertail and undercut behind the trigger guard for an excellent hold. The grip is nice and slim, with the same 18-degree angle that makes the company's M&P line so shootable for so many people. The stippling on the sides is relatively fine so it won't abrade your skin, but the texture on the frontstrap and backstrap is decently aggressive for good control.

And when it comes to control, the Performance Center Carry Comp excels. After bench accuracy testing was complete, I ran the gun side by side against my Bodyguard 2.0 in a series of Bill Drills, using the shorter 10-round magazine in both pistols. The Carry Comp model held a speed edge over my non-comped gun, as you would expect, but I was still surprised by how little muzzle rise there was. Combine that with the Ameriglo high-visibility sight, and you can really deliver rounds on target in a hurry.

The 2.0 Carry Comp was 100 percent reliable, save for one instance where the slide on the 12-round mag failed to lock back on the last shot during bench

ACCURACY RESULTS | S&W PC BODYGUARD 2.0 CARRY COMP

.380 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Federal Punch	85	889	16	1.9
Hornady Critical Defense	90	925	14	1.9
Fiocchi CovertX	95	927	16	2.1

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



▲ The gun retains the excellent grip layout and striker-fired trigger found on the original 2.0, but the slide serrations and the flare at the rear of the slide make it easier to rack.



▲ The Power Port compensated barrel makes the gun incredibly flat-shooting for such a small and light .380.



▲ The front sight and slide serrations on the Carry Comp (top) are a big improvement over the original 2.0, although the barrel is a bit longer due to the comp.

testing. It happened only once, and there were no other failures of any kind.

While the Carry Comp did fit into a leather IWB holster I have for my original 2.0, a teeny bit of the trigger guard was not covered because of the slightly longer barrel. But the Carry Comp didn't fit securely into my Kydex holster, although outfits like C&G Holsters are already offering fitments for this new model.

Is this Performance Center Carry Comp version worth the \$100 upcharge

over the standard 2.0? It's certainly easier to shoot because of the compensator and the sighting setup, and it's easier to operate thanks to the slide design. But there are no free lunches. The Carry Comp is also slightly longer and heavier, although at these minimal dimensions that's really just splitting hairs. As always, the choice comes down to what characteristics matter most to you, and this is an impressive micro .380 that makes an excellent carry gun. ●

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SMITH & WESSON MODEL 19 CLASSIC

EVERY SHOOTER I KNOW HAS HIS OR HER favorite handgun, but regardless of type, I've noted that more and more folks value the established and older designs. So they should be happy about the new Model 19 Classic from Smith & Wesson. Lacking an internal lock, this reintroduction brings the gun back to its roots.

As the story goes, in 1954 S&W president Mr. Carl Hellstrom asked well-respected handgunner Bill Jordan, who was employed with Border Patrol, what he thought would be the ideal law enforcement handgun. Jordan proposed a K frame with a four-inch barrel and ejector shroud.

He also suggested target grips and target sights and, best of all, a .357 Magnum chambering—a first for a gun as relatively small as the K frame. The resulting gun was stamped “Combat Magnum” on the right side of the barrel, and while that nomenclature has gone by the

board, this new Model 19 is hard to beat. With a handy four-inch barrel and finished in a bright blue, it is a handsome piece of armament.

This new gun has a straight, untapered barrel that is threaded into the barrel shroud and finished with a target crown. The fully adjustable rear sight is removable for the installation of a red dot and blends in perfectly with the topstrap. The front is a ramp-style sight with a red insert that when viewed through the rear notch—which lacks a white outline that would have been appreciated here—leaves just the right amount of light on both sides for quick acquisition. The topstrap and the slightly raised barrel rib are serrated to reduce glare.

The hammer is service width (remember those wide “target” hammers?). The trigger broke at 4.5 pounds in single action with just a hint of slack. The double-action pull

was 12 pounds with an acceptable amount of stacking and actually seemed lighter thanks to the service trigger and a redesigned lockwork.

The cylinder release goes back to the original design. The locking bolt has been moved from inside the ejector rod shroud, replaced by a ball detent on the inner frame, with the surrounding area finished smooth for a quality touch. The cylinder bolt is almost perfectly timed, as only a slight drag mark shows on the cylinder.

The wood grip panels are reminiscent of those checkered and wonderfully figured Goncalo Alves stocks. The new walnut panels are amply checkered, with handsome grain.

This more traditional Model 19 sans the internal lock will surely appeal to the more traditional shooter or collector. It's certainly the quality we expect from Smith & Wesson. The true Combat Magnum is back! 

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