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SHOOTING TIMES

DECEMBER 2025 // JANUARY 2026



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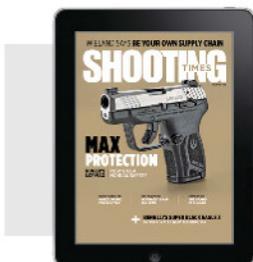
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Wieland's Stevens Model 45

I JUST READ TERRY WIELAND'S "GUNSMOKE" COLUMN ABOUT HIS Stevens Model 45. I enjoyed it very much. I love articles about old firearms, so I always enjoy his writings. He said he might like a smaller cartridge than the .357 Maximum that he had the extra barrel chambered for. I think a pistol I have might be a good choice for another barrel. It's chambered for a wildcat called the .270 Max. It's the .357 Maximum necked down to 0.277 inch. I have used it for years in IHMSA Big Bore U.S. That is standing out to 200 meters. It's a very accurate cartridge. Unfortunately, at 72, I'm not able to shoot it competitively anymore and plan on selling it. I believe it is a well-known-enough wildcat that a chamber reamer should be available. Mr. Wieland already has brass to make it from. My reloading dies are by RCBS and Lee, so hopefully they are still available. If he gets one, I'll be happy to share reloading data for it. Keep up the good work.

Rich Baird
Fayetteville, OH

It's About Time

Kudos to Joseph von Benedikt for finally showcasing in a positive (and long overdue) light Winchester's unfairly maligned Post-'64 Model 70 rifle in the September 2025 issue. He profiled a fine-looking specimen chambered in .257 Roberts. I too have a Post-'64 Model 70, although mine is chambered in .308 Winchester. It's always been terrifically accurate, smooth, and reliable.

No gun writers ever criticized Remington, Ruger, or Sako for their push-feed designs—only Winchester.

My push-feed Model 70 shoots every bit as accurately as my Remington 700 in the same caliber, but it cycles much more smoothly. And

it's more accurate than my Mauser-built Argentine Model 1909 that was converted to .30-06, even though that latter design employs the much-vaunted controlled-feed action.

I never quite understood the lynch mob mentality of all the gun writers who, over the decades, leaned in so heavily like packs of wolves against Winchester's design change, which was only intended to streamline production and bring to market a more economically competitive rifle, albeit with the same standard of top-notch performance. They never nitpicked against Ruger for using castings instead of forgings in its fine revolver line. And they never grumbled against CCI-Speer for using aluminum in place of brass in its capable Blazer line of ammunition. Gun manufacturers have to streamline to stay competitive.

Sure, I get it that some of those writers, like many of us readers, long for the good old days, when Ford's workhorse F-150 pickup truck was made entirely out of steel, or when every single riflestock was crafted nearly exclusively from finely grained walnut. But purchasers tend to be cheapskates and vote with their wallets for aluminum—and even plastic. Look at the Glock!

Mr. von Benedikt's article was a breath of fresh air. I wish it hadn't taken so long for you to finally give credit to such a praiseworthy rifle.

Harvey Maizels
Owings Mills, MD

Correction

In Brad Miller's recent article on Hornady's Backcountry Defense handgun ammunition, the shooting results chart incorrectly listed the .44 Magnum bullet weight as 165 grains. The error occurred during the editing process, and it should have been 240 grains. We apologize for the error.

The editors

This and That

I liked Joseph von Benedikt's "The Shooter" column on the Mossberg Model 185. My dad bought one about 1950. The author is right, it's not a bird gun. Dad used it to hunt

deer with slugs when the seasons reopened in our area. The season was shotguns for the first two days, then rifles the rest of the season. He didn't have a centerfire rifle until the 1960s (he bought a No. 1 Mark 3 Enfield for \$9.88 from the Alden's catalog). Times were tight.

On other matters, I don't believe the .38 S&W ever had a heel-type bullet. And your "rimfire" issue (June 2025) made me renew my subscription, so keep up the good work.

Robert Hovell
Galesville, WI

The .38 S&W's Bullet

In his article "Smith & Wesson's New Model 10 Classic is Timeless" in the August 2025 issue, author Joseph von Benedikt says that the .38 S&W employed heeled bullets. That is incorrect. The .38 S&W, introduced in 1876, was designed from the start to use an inside-lubricated, groove-diameter bullet whose straight sides and lubricating grooves were completely contained inside the cartridge case.

Marshall Williams
Via email

Sterlingworth Fox Side-By-side

In the July 2025 issue on page 38, Layne Simpson is holding a Sterlingworth Fox 12-gauge shotgun. In 1951 (I'm now 84) my father gave me a 16-gauge, 30-inch, Full choke in both barrels Sterlingworth Fox as a Christmas present. The serial number is 350791. Layne wrote that the drop in its stock is not excessive and fits him quite well. It fits me well, too! It's so light that I can hold it by the pistol grip with ease when walking afield. I'd sure like to know when my gun was made and if it is a rare combination.

W. Smith
Via email



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A Suggestion for Wieland

Will Terry Wieland shoot .357 Maximum loads or even .357 Magnum loads in that sweet little Stevens single shot he showed in a recent “Gunsmoke” column? He should consider the .32 Miller if he adds another barrel.

That was a great column!

Terry Morgan
Andover, NY

Loves the Interarms Mark X Mauser Continental Carbine

I really enjoyed Steve Gash’s article on the 7x57 Mauser in the October 2025 issue. It is one of my favorite cartridges. I also lived in Colorado and had a vintage Interarms Mark X Mauser Continental Mannlicher carbine. I sold it and regret to this day that I did. I also used to shoot a lot of cast bullets from it. One of the best was the Lyman 150-grain Loverin. It was capable of producing sub-one-inch groups at 100 yards. At present I only have one 7x57 Mauser rifle that is built on a Greek Mannlicher action; it wears a Shilen barrel. I also have a 7mm-08 Sako Mannlicher carbine that I dearly like.

Thanks for the article, *Shooting Times*. After reading it I searched the internet for another one of those Interarms Mark X Mausers.

Joe Starmetal
Via email

Grand Old Days

Reading Layne Simpson’s article titled “The Grand Old .45-70” in the November 2025 issue reminded me of my own grand old days. I used the same volume of Pyrodex as for the recommended blackpowder charge. For many years I hunted with a muzzleloading 12-bore shotgun and did some informal shooting

with a .45-caliber muzzleloading rifle. Pyrodex shoots cleaner and is so much easier to clean than blackpowder. Accuracy was very good using Pyrodex in the rifle, producing two- to three-inch groups at 100 yards. The shotgun shot very well too, breaking 24 out of 25 in trap. That was back in the 1960s through the 1980s.

Harold Lotman
Via email

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Burris Fifth Generation Fullfield Riflescopes

TO MARK THE HISTORIC 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BURRIS FULLFIELD RIFLESCOPES, the company has unveiled the completely redesigned fifth generation of Fullfield scopes and is offering six new models.

The new Fullfield scopes are built lighter, shorter, and stronger, and they are designed for unmatched maneuverability in the field. They are precision-crafted with fully multi-coated lenses for exceptional clarity and maximum light transmission. They feature one-inch or 30mm main tubes, an improved proprietary 4X zoom system, high-performance glass, and the registered Burris Knob Synergy, which according to the company makes it easy to upgrade the elevation knob to more advanced, feature-rich systems, including custom ballistic knobs. The fifth-generation Fullfield scopes are offered in 2-8X 35mm (1-inch diameter main tube, 13.5 to 14.1 ounces, 9.75 inches long), 2.5-10X 42mm (1-inch-diameter main tube, 14.7 to 15.4 ounces, 10.5 inches long), 3-12X 42mm (1-inch-diameter main tube, 14.7 to 15.3 ounces, 11.1 inches long), 3-12X 56mm (30mm-diameter main tube, 19.7 to 20.2 ounces, 11.2 inches long), 4-16X 50mm (1-inch-diameter main tube, 17.7 to 18.2 ounces, 12.3 inches long), and 6-24X 50mm (30mm-diameter main tube, 18.9 ounces, 14.4 inches long) configurations. Plex, Heavy Plex, 3P#4, Ballistic E3, Wind Ret, and Wind Ret-Illuminated rear focal plane reticles are offered depending on the model.

MSRP: \$192 to \$600 depending on the configuration
burrisoptics.com



Wilson Combat Glock-Mag-Compatible AR-9

Wilson Combat's 9mm AR-9 blowback-operated tactical carbine is offered with a Glock-magazine-compatible receiver; a carbon-steel, button-rifled, 16-inch, match-grade barrel (fluted or nonfluted) with 1:10 twist, threaded muzzle, and Q-Comp; and an Armor-Tuff finish. It comes with a six-position adjustable buttstock. The carbine features a billet flat-top upper and machined aluminum lower, a proprietary bolt carrier group with heavy-duty claw extractor and plunger, a full-length Picatinny top rail, the Starburst Gunfighter grip, and Wilson's TTU trigger with a 4-pound pull. Finishes offered include Black and Silver Combat-Tuff (shown), White Kodiak Camo, Kandi Ash Pink, Kandi Ash Red, and Kandi Ash Gold. The AR-9 weighs 7 pounds, 1.2 ounces.

**MSRP: \$2,158 (base price nonfluted),
\$2,261 (base price fluted), \$2,519 (as shown)**
wilsoncombat.com



CZ P-10 C Ported

CZ-USA has just unveiled the CZ P-10 C Ported 9mm striker-fired polymer-frame semiautomatic pistol. Designed for everyday carry, the new model features a factory-compensated, optic-ready slide; a heavier cold-hammer-forged 4.02-inch barrel; high-contrast NOCTURNE sights; and interchangeable backstraps. The magazine capacity is 15 rounds. The overall length is 7.36 inches. The height is 5.2 inches. And the weight is 26.1 ounces. The trigger pull is factory rated at 5.5 pounds. The CZ P-10 C Ported pistol has a trigger safety lever and an internal firing pin block.

MSRP: \$549
czfirearms.com

Taurus Raging Judge 513

Taurus has just reintroduced the Raging Judge 513 double-action/single-action defensive revolver on a limited basis. The company says the .45-caliber Raging Judge 513 is purpose-built for those who demand flexibility and stopping power in a durable, heavy-duty revolver.

The stainless-steel Raging Judge 513 fires .45 Colt ammunition, .454 Casull ammunition, and 3-inch .410 Bore shotshells, and it features a six-round cylinder, a 3.0-inch barrel, a fixed rear sight, a fiber-optic front sight, and a rubber grip with a cushioned insert. The bore has a 1:12.14-inch RH twist rate, and the revolver weighs 61 ounces and is 10.2 inches long.

MSRP: \$1,337.99

taurususa.com

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SHOOTER'S UPDATE

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ASK THE EXPERTS



Fueled Prodigy Info?

Q. SOMETIME IN THE LAST SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS *SHOOTING TIMES* ran an article on a joint venture between Ed Brown Products and Springfield Armory called the Fueled Prodigy. I can't find my copy of that magazine, and I'm interested in the gun, so would you please reproduce the specifications and the shooting results charts? I promise to keep the information this time.

Max Casey
Via email

A. We're happy to reproduce that information for you, Mr. Casey. I'll remind you that the Fueled Prodigy is the first joint venture between the Springfield and the Ed Brown companies, and our writer who reviewed the pistol (Joseph von Benedikt) said it looks, feels, handles, and shoots like a full custom 1911 pistol, and it's his favorite of all the various double-stack 1911-type handguns he's tested over the years. By the way, his article ran in the May 2025 issue of *Shooting Times*.

Joel J. Hutchcroft

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Winchester Super Clean 90-gr. Lead-Free FMJ	1386	85	19	2.54
Hornady Critical Duty 124-gr. FTX +P	1128	162	64	1.94
Black Hills 147-gr. JHP +P	1293	50	14	1.57
Browning 147-gr. FMJ	978	48	17	3.04
SIG SAUER 147-gr. JHP	1026	36	14	2.28
Winchester Defender 147-gr. Bonded JHP	971	51	11	2.11

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of 15 rounds measured at the gun's muzzle with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph.

Boddington's Aoudad?

Q. In the April 2025 issue of your magazine, Craig Boddington wrote a good article on why he chose the 7mm PRC cartridge for hunting everything from elk to African plains game. He mentioned hunting several game species that he had taken with his 7mm PRC rifles, including a bull elk, a couple of whitetails, and an aoudad ram. The article showed photos of the elk and a whitetail, but I'd sure like to see the aoudad. How about showing readers a photograph of it in this installment of your "Ask the Experts" department?

Thomas Patton
Via email

A. You bet, Mr. Patton. Here's a photograph of the free-range aoudad Craig took with an Exile Arms 7mm PRC rifle he borrowed from his hunting guide on a West Texas hunt in September of 2024. The shot was a bit over 500 yards, and Craig said the rifle/cartridge combo dropped the old ram handily.

Joel J. Hutchcroft



FUELED PRODIGY COMP 4.25

MANUFACTURER	Ed Brown Products edbrown.com
TYPE	Recoil-operated autoloader
CALIBER	9mm Luger
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	17 and 20 rounds
BARREL	4.25 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	7.8 in.
WIDTH	1.42 in.
HEIGHT	5.5 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	32.5 oz.
GRIPS	Polymer
FINISH	Black Gen4
SIGHTS	Black U-notch rear, tritium front, slide cut for optic
TRIGGER	4.0-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Ambidextrous thumb safety, beavertail grip safety
MSRP	\$2,695



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SHOOTER'S GALLERY

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Springfield Armory U.S. Model 1899 Krag-Jorgensen Carbine

The Springfield Armory U.S. Model 1899 Krag-Jorgensen Carbine was perhaps the most unique action ever adopted by the U.S. Army. **BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT**

The most distinctive feature of Krag-Jorgensen rifles is the massive side loading gate in the right of the action. Cartridges feed around and up into position through the internal rotary magazine.

ADOPTED AMID SIGNIFICANT ANGST BY AMERICAN designers, this Norwegian-engineered rifle was the first standard-issue repeating rifle authorized for the U.S. Army. It was a five-round, repeating bolt-action rifle with a unique rotary magazine fed through a massive side loading gate.

When this rifle was new, it came with a new cartridge—the .30-40 Krag, a.k.a. .30 Army, which drove a 220-grain cupro-nickel jacketed roundnose bullet at about 2,000 fps. In their attempt to move U.S. Army rifle performance into the next era, both rifle and cartridge fell short. The action wasn't super strong. That 220-grain RN projectile was slow and didn't shoot flat. The .30-40 Krag cartridge case had a large rim—a holdover from lever-action and single-shot designs that would soon prove to be obsolete and problematic.

Colloquially known as the "Krag," the Model 1892–99 family was one of the shortest-lived military long

arms in U.S. history. Unique and capable though it was, the Krag was quickly judged inferior compared to fast-loading Mauser-based rifles chambered in flat-shooting cartridges, which it was pitted against during the Spanish-American War.

The first iteration of the Krag was the 1892. Refinements introduced in 1896, 1898, and 1899 were more or less just blended into manufacturing, so much so that the model is often designated the Model 1892–99.

In all, about half a million Model 1892–99 Krag-Jorgensen rifles and carbines were manufactured in the Springfield Armory between 1894 and 1904.

Mechanicals

Most unique about the Krag-Jorgensen design is the side-loading mechanism. It features a massive gate topped by a large wing designed to facilitate opening. When thumbed outward and downward, the

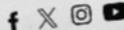


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gate opens and exposes a large loading bay. Drop cartridges in, tilting the rifle left so they roll inside and make room for more. The internal rotary magazine holds five rounds.

One characteristic of the Krag-Jorgensen design that appealed to the U.S. Army was the fact that the action can be topped off at any time, with the bolt closed in battery on a fresh cartridge and ready to fire. Simply thumb the loading gate open and add more ammo.

In late 1899 the U.S. upped the pressure of standard .30-40 Krag ammo from 40,000 psi to 45,000 psi, which gained 200 fps in velocity with the 220-grain roundnose bullets. However, the higher-pressure ammo stressed Krag rifles. Locking lugs began to crack. Around 3.5 million rounds of the high-pressure ammo had to be recalled, broken down, and recycled.

It became clear to the U.S. Army that patches wouldn't fix the Krag's deficiencies; a new rifle and cartridge were needed. The 1903 Springfield rifle and .30-06 Gov't cartridge were developed to fill that need and proved to be one of the great fighting combinations of the era.

Provenance

Little is known about the Model 1899 Krag Carbine shown here. My son William determined that it was made in 1902, according to the serial number. He pointed out that the fore-end isn't standard for an 1899 Carbine, as the barrel band is secured by a pin rather than a spring latch.

The carbine came to us through a series of two gifts and a trade. One chap had no use for it and gifted it to a young man. The young man couldn't find ammo locally and gave it to a neighbor. The neighbor had no practical need for it and traded it to me for a 9mm handgun. It filled a gap in our modest collection of U.S. military rifles.

Rangetime

I was able to easily source two factory loads: Hornady's 180-grain InterLock and Remington's 180-grain Core-Lokt. With targets posted at the 100-yard berm, I sandbagged the 1899 Carbine and took a few measuring shots to figure out where to set the ramp-adjustable rear sight.

Groups with both types of ammunition are minute-of-deer at 100 yards, averaging just north of four inches. Velocity is modest, as expected. Remington's load shot nearly 100 fps faster than the Hornady ammo, clocking 2,326 fps out of the 22-inch barrel.

Even though it's nearly a century and a quarter old, the Krag still feeds, functions, and fires beautifully. The side-loading rotary magazine isn't finicky about how rounds are placed into it. Feeding is smooth, and ejection is smart. Even the trigger is quite usable. It's just a tad spongy but releases at a nice, light 2 pounds, 12 ounces.

Overall, the carbine is in pretty good shape. It handles well, and it loads and fires nicely. As the fighting arms of that era tend to do, it shoulders cleanly, points naturally, and balances reasonably for a short, sturdy carbine.

Hundreds of thousands of Krag rifles were sold on the surplus market nearly a century ago, and many early sportsmen grew up hunting with them. Compared to modern hunting rifles they're outdated, obsolete, and only marginally effective because of accuracy and range limitations, but they are oh so cool! There's nothing quite like thumbing open the gargantuan side loading gate, dropping a handful of rimmed, tapered .30-caliber cartridges in, and running the bolt home. ST

U.S. MODEL 1899 KRAG-JORGENSEN ACCURACY & VELOCITY

AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	100-YD. ACC. (IN.)
.30-40 Krag, 22-in. Barrel				
Hornady 180-gr. InterLock RN	2241	41	13	4.33
Remington 180-gr. Core-Lokt	2326	77	21	4.18

Notes: Accuracy is the average of three, three-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of nine rounds measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle. Ambient temperature: 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Elevation: 5,100 feet.

U.S. MODEL 1899 KRAG CARBINE

MANUFACTURER	Springfield Armory
TYPE	Bolt-action repeater
CALIBER	.30-40 Krag
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	5 rounds
BARREL	22 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	41.25 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	7.75 lbs.
STOCK	Walnut
LENGTH OF PULL	13.4 in.
FINISH	Blued steel, oil finished wood
SIGHTS	Ramp elevator rear with flip-up ladder, blade on barrel stud front
TRIGGER	2.75-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Two position

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WEIGHT: 29.5 oz

REAR SIGHT: Adjustable

CARTRIDGE: 9mm Luger

BARREL LENGTH: 4.6"

CAPACITY: 18+1 rounds

MAGAZINE: (2) 18 Round Magazines and (1) + 3 Extension

FRAME MATERIAL: Synthetic

HEIGHT: 5.87"

FRONT SIGHT: HiViz® fiber optic front sight

FINISH COLOR: TTI SMOKE

OVERALL LENGTH: 7.85"

WIDTH: 1.41"

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Correlation Data									
	Slope (m)	Y-intercept (b)	Correlation						
Vel.	44.96	481.90	0.988						
Pres.	2182.39	-63671.40	0.956						
Statistical Summary							Pressure Checks		
Charge Wt.	V _{bar}	V _{high}	V _{low}	P _{bar}	P _{bar+2e}	P _{bar+5e}	MAP	MPLM	MPSM
52.0	2817	2829	2796	50198	50692	51433	OK	OK	OK
54.0	2913	2922	2896	53890	54445	55278	OK	OK	OK
56.0	3000	3013	2985	57962	59041	60658	OK	OK	OK
58.0	3088	3100	3080	63390	64468	66085	OK	OK	OK

Ballistics by the Numbers

Here's a look at how advanced statistical methods ensure that your factory-loaded ammo is safe. **BY ALLAN JONES**

AT ITS CORE, BALLISTICS IS A NUMBERS game. Testing generates numbers that are meaningless without tools that, in the case of ammo, create safety-forward testing and evaluation protocols. This requires statistical analysis. Previously, I've written about the importance of proper sample size in accuracy testing. That's statistics at its most basic. Now I will look at how advanced statistical methods ensure your ammo is safely within spec.

Ammunition is a consumable product that requires destructive testing. If a company loads 100 cases of ammo and tests every cartridge, there is nothing left to ship. That's a bad business plan. We need tools that allow a small but representative test sample to confidently predict if the entire production run is in spec. Statistics hands us proven sampling and analysis tools for this.

This column is not intended as a math text. My knowledge of statistics is from work experience and sharing by some amazing statisticians. I offer it for readers who like to know more.

The crime lab's ground-breaking study of terminal ballistics was my baptism in statistics. My colleague and friend, the late Dr. Vincent J.M. Di Maio, brought the basic test concept from the U.S. Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), where they evaluated military small arms ammo. It fell to me to adapt it

to police handgun ammo without AFIP's slow and pricey recording methods. Dr. Di Maio insisted my design include numerical tools that determine if small performance differences between different loadings held statistical significance.

Statistical concepts in industrial pressure testing include mean, sample size, standard deviation, standard error, and confidence level.

Mean is statisticians' name for average. Add up related individual data points and divide by sample size to get the mean.

By the basic nature of groups, there will always be individual data points higher and lower than the mean. Those outliers can tell us if overlap of data points in two sets is significant. To assess significance, we need standard deviation.

Standard deviation (SD) can determine which outliers are significant and which are not. Example: Two different ammo samples both post a mean pressure of 58,500 psi, but one has an SD of 10 and the other has an SD of 50. The latter would be rejected as prone to produce badly high or low individual shots. I'll not burden you with the various formulae because today you can find websites that will figure the stat stuff for you. Spreadsheet software has them built in as well.

Standard error of the mean (SEM) is a measure of precision in a sample, and it's based on the SD and

This actual four-level pressure test summary of a cartridge rated at MAP = 65,000 psi shows good results. The spreadsheet was programmed to show OVER in red if any values in the three right-hand cells went out of bounds. Bar is shorthand for mean.

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the sample size. Remember my repeated nagging about adequate sample size in effective accuracy testing? The larger the sample size, the better the confidence interval that expresses how closely the behavior of the sample reflects the behavior of a larger group.

SAAMI used those tools to create a simple yet powerful set of three control numbers for commercial loading of each standard cartridge: Maximum Average Pressure (MAP); Maximum Probable Lot Mean (MPLM); and Maximum Probable Sample Mean (MPSM). For the .30-06 cartridge, the three assigned numbers in psi are MAP = 60,000; MPLM = 61,500; MPSM = 63,800.

MAP is the recommended maximum pressure for a commercial loading observed in testing at the time of assembly. MPLM is set two standard errors over MAP to ensure a 975 percent probability that an ammo lot loaded to MAP does not exceed MPLM. MPSM is set five standard errors over MAP. Per SAAMI, MPSM is "...the maximum expected average pressure that may be observed in the testing of product subsequent to its manufacture and is not intended for use as a loading control point."

The CCI-Speer quality manager said an example of "subsequent to its manufacture" was ammo that has been loaded, shipped from the factory, then returned. The effects of transport and time should not cause a retest to show a higher mean pressure than the MPSM. In load data development I used MPSM for flagging charge weights that may produce possible high individual shots.

SAAMI's gunmaker members have the same numbers to use for design criteria. This is a superb and highly tuned system to keep you safe.

Do factories load right to MAP? Based on where I worked and my hobnobbing with industry friends, I'll say that would be rare. The more likely scenario is that all loading specs for ammo include a velocity goal. The setup crew will have a selection of non-canister propellants from which to choose, most pre-qualified for the cartridge you are about to load. That's handy.

The load line manager, with input from Quality Assurance's setup and subsequent in-process testing, will choose the propellant that achieves that velocity goal and all other attributes (low extreme variation of pressure and velocity, clean burning, functions in semiautomatics, etc.) at the lowest uniform pressure.

I mention "uniform" because our test protocol for gathering data for the Speer manual showed measured, not estimated, start-charge pressures. Some propellants in larger cases may show higher shot-to-shot variation in the lower pressure regimes. In that case, we would adjust a recommended start-load charge to avoid those regimes. QA would tell load line managers if that happened.

We kept pressures for max loads a tiny bit under MAP, generally 96 percent. That was my call as a handloader, not some lawyer's. This margin creates a buffer in case the handloader opts to substitute a component without using the published start load. Breathe easy—we left no real performance on the table in doing this. I have reams of data for incremental charge weight increases versus velocity changes at near-MAP pressures. That data tells me that any velocity gain by playing creep up to get closer to MAP is tiny, often less than 20 to 25 fps. I'm pretty sure no elk will ever notice.

INTRODUCING THE NEW COMPACT

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Handloads for a Suppressed .300 Blackout Pistol

Lane resisted obtaining a suppressor until he purchased a Ruger AR-556 pistol chambered for this handy .30-caliber round. Naturally, he just had to build some handloads for it. **BY LANE PEARCE**

I RECENTLY WRAPPED UP SEVERAL DAYS OF T&E at the range with a suppressed Ruger AR-556 pistol topped with a Burris red-dot optic. I have to admit, it was an experience like I'd never had before. Two friends were ready and willing to help me with the firing of a couple hundred rounds of test loads. Of course, like the children's farming fable, I did all the reloading while they enjoyed doing almost all the shooting.

Until recently, I'd never thought about acquiring a suppressor. Then Ruger offered an AR-556 pistol with an arm brace. It was introduced chambered for 5.56 NATO/.223 Remington, and then it was offered in .300 Blackout (BLK). This version delivers heavier bullets at supersonic velocities and even heavier ones subsonically with less flash and much less noise than the .223.

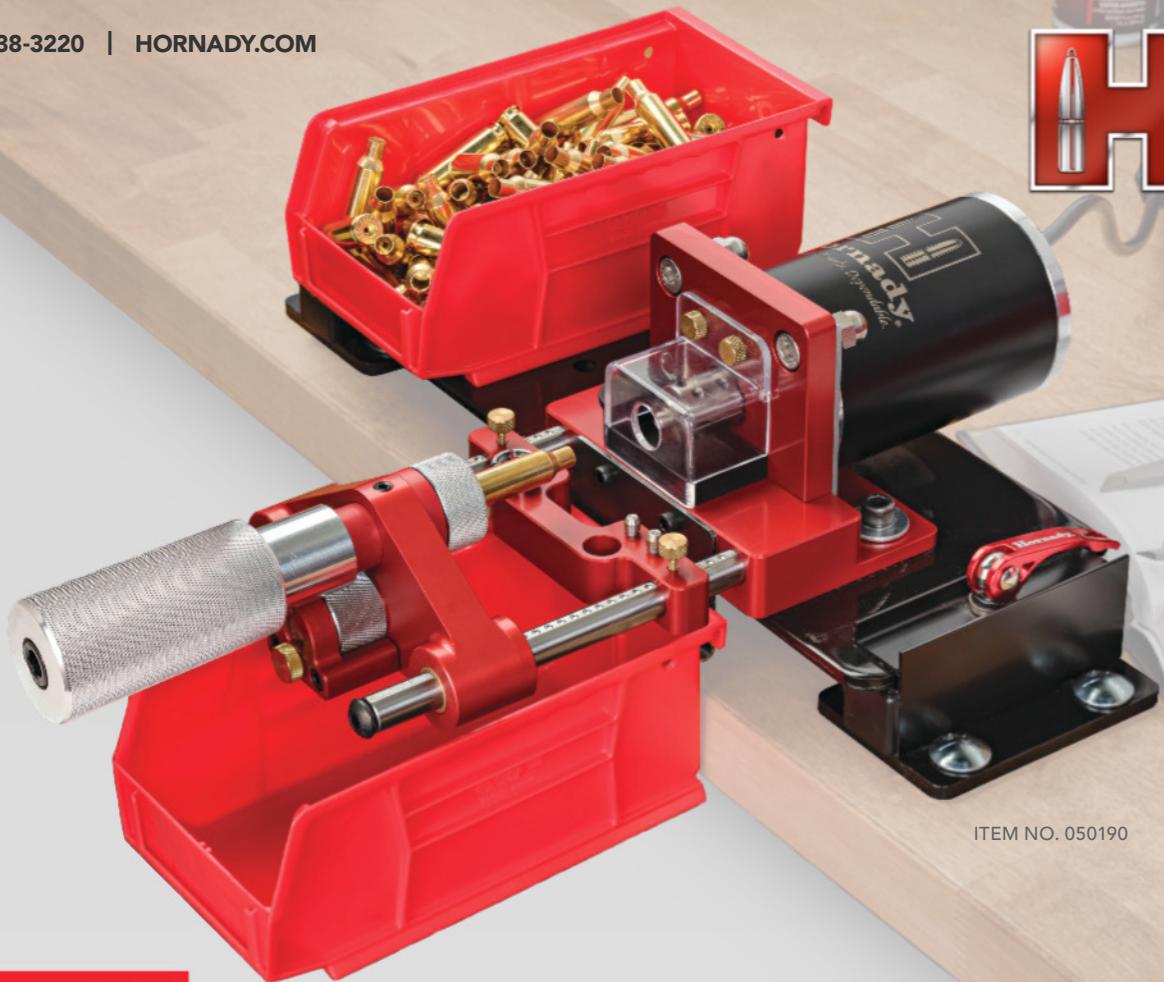
In a pistol, the larger-caliber round seemed to me the more potent option since both pistols weigh several pounds and produce relatively low recoil. The arm brace easily controls the minimal recoil. After I'd had the pistol for nearly a year and fired all types of factory ammo and handloads, I decided it might be

interesting to install a suppressor to see if the advantage was worth the cost. Suppressors aren't cheap! The process of obtaining one was greatly simplified by Silencer Central (SC). Their scheme is almost fully automated and only requires you to prepare hard copy fingerprint cards. They provide the cards—in duplicate, of course—and a fingerprint kit. That's the only step that involves the USPS snail mail. Everything else is done on your laptop with SC or directly with the BATF.

I don't mean to sound like a commercial; I'm simply relating my experience. From start to finish, it took about a month before the suppressor arrived at my door, requiring my signature. FedEx routed the package from SC's central Alabama FFL back through Memphis before returning it to north Alabama. Then their delivery truck had a flat tire, delaying the arrival time by several more hours.

The Ruger pistol's barrel is threaded 5/8-24, so an adapter is required to accommodate the Banish 9K suppressor's 1/2-28 threaded port. When everything arrived, I took the pistol and accessories to my local suppressor expert for installation.

Lane says slow-burn-rate pistol propellants or fast-burn-rate rifle powders work best for heavy-bullet, subsonic .300 BLK handloads.



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I'd already prepared a half-dozen handloads with Speer 190-grain JHP bullets with muzzle velocities between 1,000 and 1,100 fps. As the accompanying chart shows, slow-burn-rate pistol propellants or fast-burn-rate rifle powders work best. Later, I added loads with the Berger 185-grain VLD, the Hornady 190-grain Sub-X, and the Berry's 200-grain plated FMJ bullets.

Reloading the .300 BLK follows the same scheme as similar short, bottleneck rifle cartridges. I use a spray lube and shake up cases in a plastic bowl to ensure the lube is spread around. After sizing, I wipe the lube off by rubbing a small batch in an old bath towel. If I'm loading a larger quantity, I tumble them in corn-cob media for a short while—and then remove any media that collects in the primer pockets.

After trimming, if needed, I prime with a hand tool, unless the reworked military cases still have uncooperative primer pockets. I've found that swaging is a hit-or-miss proposition, so now I always recut the pockets or apply a generous chamfer with a tapered deburring tool. If a hand-priming tool isn't adequate, I set up my RCBS press-mounted priming device and seat each primer one at a time. It's slower, but it delivers consistently repetitive results. I had a carton of CCI #41 mil-spec Small Rifle primers on hand, so

that's what I used. However, any similar Small Rifle primer can be substituted.

Fortunately, there are several excellent propellant and bullet options. Hodgdon's most recent *Annual Manual* even has a section on subsonic load data for the .300 BLK. Plus, Hornady provides load recipes in their latest reloading manual. These are prime sources for lab-tested and reliable information.

Heavy-for-caliber bullets are the best choice for subsonic loads. Just be sure you keep velocities in the 1,000 to 1,100 fps range. Too little powder can lead to a dangerous bullet-in-barrel situation. Too much powder launches the bullets to velocities greater than subsonic, which defeats the intended purpose of relatively quieter shooting. Which leads to this observation.

A suppressor can partially attenuate the noisy propellant muzzle blast; however, bullets exiting the suppressor at supersonic speeds will create a shock wave that causes a noisier "boom." I adjusted the powder charge weights up or down as indicated to achieve the results with the 10.5-inch-barreled suppressed pistol. You'll note that I did not include accuracy data. But take my word for it, every five-shot group, and almost every 10-shot group, ran under 2.0 inches at 50 yards, which is certainly a practical minute-of-anatomy performance. **ST**

SUPPRESSED .300 BLK VELOCITY & ENERGY

BULLET	POWDER		CASE	PRIMER	COL (IN.)	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	ENERGY (FT-LBS)
	(TYPE)	(GRS.)							
Ruger AR-556, 10.5-in. Barrel, Banish 9K Suppressor									
Berger 185-gr. VLD Target	Accurate 1680	10.6	MAT	CCI #41	2.245	1096	64	20	494
Berger 185-gr. VLD Target	CFE BLK	12.6	Mixed Mil-Surp.	CCI #41	2.245	1076	53	19	476
Berger 185-gr. VLD Target	Lil' Gun	8.8	MAT	CCI #41	2.245	1075	22	9	475
Hornady 190-gr. Sub-X	Accurate LT-30	11.8	Hornady	CCI #41	2.065	1074	58	21	487
Hornady 190-gr. Sub-X	CFE BLK	12.6	Fed.	CCI #41	2.065	1064	96	26	478
Speer 190-gr. FMJ Match	Accurate 1680	10.5	Fed.	CCI #41	2.200	1057	28	8	472
Speer 190-gr. FMJ Match	Accurate 1680	10.6	MAT	CCI #41	2.200	1045	42	16	461
Speer 190-gr. FMJ Match	Lil' Gun	8.8	MAT	CCI #41	2.200	1067	46	13	480
Berry's 200-gr. Plated FMJ	Accurate 1680	10.6	MAT	CCI #41	2.235	1050	47	11	490
Berry's 200-gr. Plated FMJ	Accurate 5744	10.9	Ammo Inc.	CCI #41	2.235	1045	31	11	485
Berry's 200-gr. Plated FMJ	Accurate LT-30	12.3	Fed.	CCI #41	2.235	1083	35	10	521
Berry's 200-gr. Plated FMJ	CFE BLK	12.5	Fed.	CCI #41	2.235	1041	27	12	481
Berry's 200-gr. Plated FMJ	IMR 4227	10.8	Mixed Mil-Surp.	CCI #41	2.235	1078	51	19	516
Berry's 200-gr. Plated FMJ	Lil' Gun	9.0	Ammo Inc.	CCI #41	2.235	1087	28	8	525
Hornady 190-gr. Sub-X	Factory load				2.069	1031	28	9	449
Federal 220-gr. FMJ	Factory load				2.184	1024	44	14	512

NOTES: Velocity is the average of 10 rounds measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph placed adjacent to the gun's muzzle. All load data should be used with caution. Always start with reduced loads first and make sure they are safe in each of your guns before proceeding to the high test loads listed. Since *Shooting Times* has no control over your choice of components, guns, or actual loadings, neither *Shooting Times* nor the various firearms and components manufacturers assumes any responsibility for the use of this data.



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TACTICAL PUMP GUN

EVOLUTION

MOSSBERG'S NEW 590R TACTICAL SLIDE-ACTION SHOTGUN, IN THE AUTHOR'S WORDS, OFFERS UNPRECEDENTED FEATURES.

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

AN OLD ADAGE SAYS THERE'S NOTHING NEW UNDER the sun. But Mossberg's new 590R pump-action shotgun defies that, bringing to market a fighting-type shotgun with unprecedented features.

Most notably—and suggested by the “R” in the model's name—the 590R has a rotating AR-15-type safety. It's ambidextrous and is easily accessed by either the thumb or trigger finger while maintaining the firing-hand grip. For tactical work with a pistol-grip shotgun, that's a huge improvement over a traditional tang-mounted safety, which requires the operator to release the firing-hand grip to function the safety. (It's worth noting that Mossberg also introduced a new box magazine-fed version, the Model 590RM, for those who want extremely high capacity.)

Another significant departure from the standard is an all-new buttstock/receiver interface on the 590R that places the stock directly in line with the bore. This changes recoil dynamics to be a straight-back push with little to no muzzle rise. The benefit? Maintained target acquisition and faster follow-up shots.

A less obvious change is the use of a two-stage trigger with a straight trigger shoe. Visually it'll catch the eye of savvy observers, as it's a polished bright part with a racy profile. In use, my guess is it will impress all comers. It has a brief, smooth take-up section in the first stage, followed by a distinct wall and a crisp break for the second stage. Pull weight is stout, at 6 pounds, 6 ounces, but it feels like much less thanks to the pre-pressure built during the first stage. For a shotgun primarily designed for combat, it's just right.

Also new is the location of the action release. It's a discreet but enhanced lever-shaped button that resides just above the left side of the grip and aft of the trigger, making it accessible to the shooting-hand thumb. This is crucial to many users, from law enforcement and military personnel to homeowners defending the castle. Why? It enables the operator to open the locked-and-loaded action without breaking the shooting-hand grip.

Those are the highlights of the new and innovative features of the 590R, but the entire gun is loaded with upgrades and purpose-driven parts.

The pistol grip is Magpul's proven MOE+, which has a tacky rubbery feel that provides an excellent nonslip grip, even when wet. A trapdoor in the bottom of



TACTICAL PUMP GUN EVOLUTION



Mossberg's new 590R incorporates several evolved features, including a rotating ambidextrous AR-type safety. Joseph thinks the shotgun is an ideal home- and personal-defense gun.

the grip shields a cavity in which the user can store small tools, spare batteries, or the like.

Atop the action is a well-profiled section of optic rail, factory-mounted by Mossberg. It's perfect for attaching a red-dot optic. Presumably, Mossberg's R&D suggested that users of this type of shotgun will install a red-dot optic or similar optic because the barrel doesn't even have a bead sight up front. Which is fine—it's not really a wingshooting kind of scattergun. The company lists the 590R as coming with removable Magpul MBUS 3 adjustable sights, but none were included with our review sample gun.

What the gun does have affixed to its barrel is a metal heat shield. Perforated to enable air flow around the barrel and assist in fast cooling, the heat shield has a very modern look, function, and feel. And yes, feel is important. As Mossberg's Jeremy Stafford suggested, the heat shield protects shooters' hands during rigorous training. Most of us will never be in sustained combat with our Mossberg 590R, thank goodness, so

MODEL 590R

MANUFACTURER	Mossberg mossberg.com
TYPE	Pump-action repeater
GAUGE	12 (3.0-in. chamber)
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	6 rounds
BARREL	18.5 in., Cylinder Bore
OVERALL LENGTH	36.4 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	7.1 lbs.
STOCK	Composite, five-position; Magpul MOE grip; composite forearm; metal heat shield
LENGTH OF PULL	12 to 15.25 in.
FINISH	Matte black phosphate
SIGHTS	Magpul MBUS 3
TRIGGER	6.38-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Rotary AR-15 type
MSRP	\$1,085

we're unlikely to heat up the barrel while fighting. But the best way to come out the other side of any life-threatening conflict is to become very proficient with our personal-defense tools—and that can mean training until the barrel is scorching hot.

The muzzle end of the barrel has exterior threads—although you'd never know it while examining the seamless transition to the flared brake/breaching device screwed onto it. There's an oversize collar that secures the front end of the magazine tube to the barrel. And it serves a particular

purpose—there's an M-LOK slot in each side, enabling the owner to mount a light or whatnot.

Below the barrel is a full-length magazine tube that contains six 2.75-inch shotshells. Rack one into the chamber, top off the mag tube, and you have seven rounds on board.

Operating the slide is easy and sure, thanks to the design and shape of the forearm, or pump handle, if you prefer. It has a corrugated surface reminiscent of the old "corn cob" pumps I love on early vintage Winchester Model 12 shotguns. It's relatively compact, has a slip-preventing raised lip on the front and rear edges, and is made of durable composite. In the world of modern "plastic" shotgun furniture, it's my favorite of all the slide-action pumps I've used.

As those familiar with Mossberg's 590-series slide-action guns know, the slide drives the action via dual operating rods. I've never had a slide-rod break, but those who run shotguns until they wear out tell me that dual rods are better than single rods, and that makes good sense. Also important is the fact

The five-position buttstock on the 590R is directly in line behind the bore, minimizing muzzle jump. Plus, the soft recoil pad takes the bite out of kick.



that 590-series guns are built with premium parts inside and out. As they are intended for professional use, no corners are cut, and the resulting shotguns provide both excellent performance and impressive longevity.

Earlier I mentioned that the buttstock on the 590R is affixed in line with the bore of the barrel. This is for multiple reasons. When mounting a collapsible multi-position AR-type stock on a traditional shotgun, having drop at the heel is problematic. As you extend or reduce the length of the stock, the height and orientation of how the gun points change. Also, when mounting a red-dot optic above the action, a traditional stock does not allow a cheekweld. By redesigning the stock-mounting interface so that it positions the stock straight behind the barrel, Mossberg eliminated both of those issues.

Plus, of course, there's the fact that with recoil driving straight rearward rather than also leaping upward, shooters maintain a better visual of their target and better orientation on that target. The result? Faster, more effective follow-up shots.

There's one downside of focusing all the recoil movement straight rearward, and that is that 100 percent of it must now be absorbed by the shoulder. To alleviate that and soften the feel of the 590R's kick, Mossberg installs a deep, squishy recoil pad that really takes the bite out.

Several QD sling-attachment points are located on the 590R. One is just aft of the muzzle, in the front of the magazine tube. Another is in the ideal position for a single-point sling on each side at the rear of the action. Three more are located in the collapsible buttstock.

Said stock is mounted on a high-impact composite molding that imitates the shape and pattern of an AR-15 lower receiver extension. It's created as all one piece with the grip mount and the interface into the rear of the action. It's subtle but is a vastly different system than the traditional pump-action stock mount.



The muzzle of the 18.5-inch barrel is fitted with a modest brake/breaching device. Note the M-LOK slots in the collar around the magazine tube; they allow the shooter to install a weapon light.

Field Performance

After unboxing and familiarizing myself with the new 590R, I mounted a Trijicon MRO atop the receiver. My daughter Audrey was home from school, and I enlisted her to throw some clays for me. The first test of any shotgun is how well you can hit moving targets, right?

When Audrey hurled clays from our mechanical thrower, I couldn't hit them. They went too far, too fast for the Cylinder-bore short barrel, plus the red-dot optic slowed down my target acquisition just a tad. By the time I triggered the 590R, the clay targets were so far out the shot pattern had pretty well dissipated.

So I asked Audrey to hand-throw a few. Those, I hit. In my hands, inside 15 yards or so the 590R turned clays into nothing but dust in the sky. Usually, there weren't even any pieces left to fall to earth. What fun!

Clearly the shotgun works fine on moving targets, as long as they're within appropriate range for its Cylinder-bore barrel.

Common sense suggests that shotguns such as the 590R will most often be used with either slugs or buckshot, so I set out to test that next. The first step was to get the Trijicon MRO red-dot sight zeroed perfectly. Because I didn't relish the idea of shooting slugs from a benchrest, I got out my Spartan standing-height quad sticks and used them to achieve a steady aim.

When standing, the recoil from stout slug loads was very tolerable.

The point of impact at 25 yards was about 1.5 inches low and right. A series of clicks to the Trijicon's adjustment dials made the small changes needed to marry point of impact with point of aim.

TACTICAL PUMP GUN EVOLUTION

Impressively, Winchester's PDX1 Defender shotshells loaded with segmented rifled slugs produced 1.5-inch groups at 25 yards. I confess that's much better than I expected. It's good enough that I wouldn't hesitate to use the 590R for deer hunting at reasonable distances. The short 18.5-inch barrel did curtail velocity a bit. It produced 1,484 fps rather than the 1,600 fps Winchester advertises with that load.

My first attempt to test buckshot patterns at 25 yards suggested getting closer. Few of the pellets impacted the 12x18-inch paper torso target I'd pinned up. Moving forward to 20 yards, I fired three different buckshot loads at the green torso outlines pegged up on a big white cardboard backing. All would have been effective on a violent threat, but one load grouped tighter than the other two. Each showed distinctly different characteristics.

Hornady's TAP 00 buckshot load (which has been replaced by Critical Defense 00 Buck) took top honors, putting eight out of nine of its .33-caliber, 53.8-grain lead balls onto the 12x18 target. If you crunch the numbers, that's 430 grains of lead being deposited into a violent threat at 20 yards. Wow!

Federal's FORCE X2 00 buckshot grouped similarly—just a tad bigger spread—but the pattern was centered to the right side of the target. Still, five of the nine pellets impacted the 12x18 target. That's 269 grains of lead impacting. If this were your go-to load, the Trijicon MRO could easily be adjusted to bring the pattern to center.

However, the Hornady buckshot and Winchester slugs printed to the same point of impact, rendering them better choices for a quickly swappable load. This pairing would be my standard, were I using the Mossberg 590R as my primary home- and personal-protection tool in zombie apocalyptic conditions.

Last, I tested Federal's 12-gauge No. 4 Buck personal-defense load. With its smaller 0.24-inch lead balls, this load contains a lot more projectiles in each hull—34 to be precise. Each one weighs 20.6 grains. This load impacted well-centered but dispersed dramatically, fully peppering the 30-inch width of my white cardboard target backing. One No. 4 ball hit low, but 33 of the 34 landed in the backing. And even with the big pattern, 14 of the 34 landed on the 12x18-inch target. That payload calculates out to 288 grains of lead on the 12x18 target. If I anticipated using the 590R up close, inside a bedroom or hallway or whatnot, in the very stressful situation of defending one's self and family against a violent threat, Federal's No. 4 buckshot load would be a prime choice.

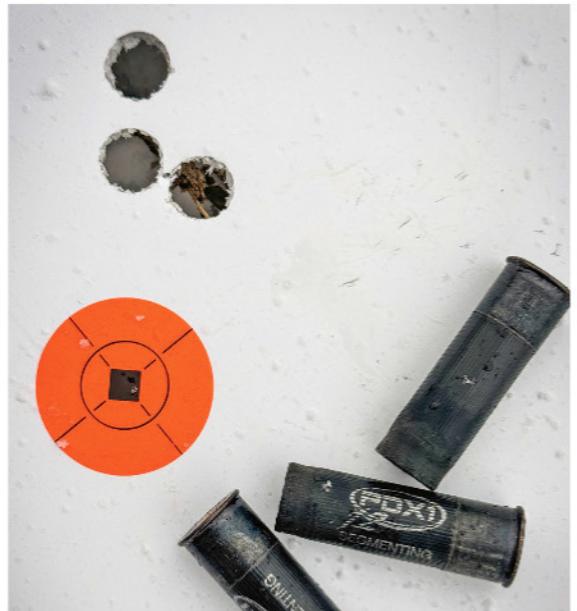
Optimistically, I tried a handful of Fiocchi's mini 12-gauge shells in the 590R. To my disappointment but not to my surprise, the mini shells frequently did a backflip on the lifter and—of

SHOOTING A MODEL 590R

	VEL. (FPS)	20-YD. PELLETS ON TORSO TARGET (12X18 IN.)	25-YD. ACC. (IN.)
Federal FORCE X2 00 Buck	----	5/9	----
Federal PD No. 4 Buck	----	14/34	----
Hornady TAP 00 Buck	----	8/9	----
Winchester PDX1 Segmented Rifled Slug	1484	----	1.53

NOTES: The slug accuracy figure is for one, three-shot group fired from standing-height shooting sticks. The slug velocity is the average of three rounds measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph.

Winchester's PDX1 rifled slugs produced a 1.53-inch group at 25 yards. That's excellent accuracy for a tactical shotgun and shows that the 590R can easily double as a deer-hunting tool.



course—then failed to chamber. The gun would have held a huge number of mini shells, but it's not designed for them. For those really wanting increased capacity, it would be interesting to test the gun with Nobel Sport's old 2.25-inch MiniBuck shotshells stoked with six 00 buckshot, which should be just long enough to run flawlessly. Unfortunately, I had none on hand.

Throughout testing, the Mossberg 590R ran flawlessly, except for with the mini shells, and as I said, that's no fault of the gun. Operation is intuitive, smooth, and ergonomic. The two-stage trigger is very useful, combining a clean, crisp feel with a pull weight that's adequate to minimize premature discharges under stress. Thanks to the high, in-line comb of the stock, the 590R helps align the shooter's eye with the red-dot optic. This in turn helps the gun point naturally. Plus, the adjustable stock helps configure the gun to fit just about any shooter properly. In all, it's a very quick-handling, potent shotgun.

Should you consider a Mossberg 590R shotgun? If you're in the market for a serious tactical-type self- and home-defense shotgun, then yes, absolutely. It's well-built and wonderfully configured for that.

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SMITH & WESSON'S .44 MAGNUM

MOUNTAIN GUN

IS BACK

S&W'S NEW MODEL 629 MOUNTAIN GUN CAN BE RELIED ON
FOR DEFENSE IN THE WILD AND AT HOME, TOO.

BY BRAD MILLER PHD

SMITH & WESSON HAS PERIODICALLY OFFERED unique versions of its revolvers they call Mountain Guns. As the name implies, these handguns are intended to pack in the mountains and are generally conceived as defensive firearms for threatening bears and any other troublesome four-legged creatures that might come your way.

The idea for the Mountain Gun started in the 1980s after Tommy Campbell and Ross Seyfried shared their thoughts on what features from past revolvers they considered comprised the perfect revolver. Both men were top shooters, and Tommy was an S&W employee, so there was a lot of experience to draw on.

According to *Standard Catalog of Smith & Wesson*, the first time Smith & Wesson offered a .44 Magnum Mountain Gun was in 1993. That was a limited production, and it was reintroduced in 1999. Several of the features have changed with the new Mountain Gun that is the subject of this review. Let's get right to them.

The New Mountain Gun

This new Mountain Gun is being offered by Lipsey's in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This is the same company that is behind the recently introduced S&W Ultimate Carry J-Frame revolvers in .38 Special +P and .32 H&R Magnum.

For these Mountain Guns, the focus is on ease of carry and practical features. Lipsey's went with wood grips with a palmswell and a cutout for speedloaders. They also used a 0.125-inch-wide Patridge-style front sight and a 0.140-inch-wide rear sight for a crisp, clear sight picture. The front sight blade is striated and has a brass bead at the top. The rear sight is fully adjustable with a black blade and a 0.083-inch-deep square cut. S&W is well known for its red ramp front sights, but here it is replaced with a brass bead that can be more readily visible in various lighting conditions.

The hallmark characteristic of the Mountain Gun is the tapered barrel that's reminiscent of vintage S&W revolvers. Many current S&W wheelguns have thick barrels that aren't tapered. A

SMITH & WESSON'S .44 MAGNUM MOUNTAIN GUN IS BACK



Lipsey's has resurrected the S&W Model 629 .44 Magnum Mountain Gun with some notable modifications.

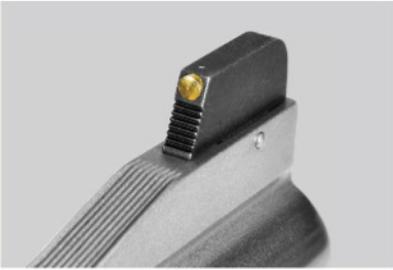
MODEL 629 MOUNTAIN GUN	
MANUFACTURER	Smith & Wesson smith-wesson.com
TYPE	Double/single-action revolver
CALIBER	.44 Magnum/.44 Special
CYLINDER CAPACITY	6 rounds
BARREL	4.13 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	9.63 in.
WIDTH	1.71 in.
HEIGHT	5.88 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	39 oz.
GRIPS	Tyler Gun Works Bear Hug smooth walnut
FINISH	Polished stainless steel
SIGHTS	Fully adjustable rear; Patridge-style post with brass bead front
TRIGGER	3.7-lb. SA pull, 11.5-lb. DA pull (as tested)
MSRP	\$1,199

tapered barrel saves a little weight and that makes them easier to pack. In the case of the Model 629 Mountain Gun reviewed here, the 4.13-inch-barreled Lipsey's version weighs 39.0 ounces. The standard Model 629 with the same barrel length weighs 42.8 ounces. That's a 3.8-ounce difference. Even S&W's 3.0-inch-barreled Model 629 with the standard thick barrel profile (40.2 ounces) weighs more than the Model 629 Mountain Gun. Every little bit helps. The tapered thin barrel width at the muzzle is 0.60 inch compared to a width of 0.77 inch for the thicker barrel.

Smith & Wesson lists the following features for the Model 629 Mountain Gun: a Patridge-style front sight with a brass bead, Tyler Gun Works high-grade walnut Bear Hug grips,

beveled cylinder front edge, chamfered charge holes, round butt, no internal lock.

One standout feature is the lack of the internal lock. Few things about S&W revolvers are complained about more on public forums than the internal lock. Countless people claim they will never buy an S&W with the internal lock—ever. I have S&Ws with the internal lock and have had no issues with them, but to be honest, I prefer the gun not have it. The concern is that the lock will self-engage under recoil when you most need it to save your life. Buyers won't have to worry about it with this gun. Some folks also complain about the aesthetics of S&W guns with locks. We love to complain, eh?



The new Mountain Gun features a fully adjustable rear sight and a brass bead Patridge-style front sight.



The defining characteristic of the Mountain Gun is its tapered barrel. Compared to the muzzle of a standard Model 629 (right), the Mountain Gun's muzzle (left) is much thinner.

A beveled cylinder front edge makes it a little easier to holster, and the chamfered (beveled) charge holes make it easier to load ammo. A close look at the chamfering showed that on this specific gun, the chamfering is barely there. It's hard to see without magnification. As S&W has done with other guns they offer with chamfered charge holes, they chamfer the edge of the cylinder but not the edge of the ejector star (ratchet).

The point of chamfering the charge holes is to prevent the case mouth from snagging on the edge of the charge hole so the rounds will easily enter the chamber. Revolver ammo gets crimped, but how much crimp it gets varies. If the crimp is heavy



Traditionalists will appreciate that the new Mountain Gun does not have the internal safety found on previous S&W revolvers.

enough, the case mouths will not hang up even on unchamfered chambers.

I tested the effectiveness of this gun's minimal chamfering with 12 different factory loads. Of those, four loads did not hang up on the chamfered edge. All these had lead bullets with tight crimps. Eight loads did hang up, showing that the bevel was not wide enough. They were all loaded with jacketed bullets.

Timing was good on all chambers in single action and double action. When I first pulled the gun from its box and checked the trigger pull, the trigger was sometimes a little hesitant to return. It was new and needed to be used a bit for the parts to get used to one another. It smoothed out to normal in short order.

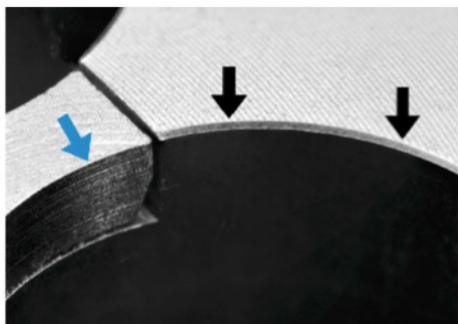
The single-action trigger pull measured an average of 3.7 pounds on my Timney trigger pull gauge after 15 measures. It had a nice, crisp, and clean break. At first the double-action pull averaged 12.4 pounds, but after the range trip and lots of dry-firing, the double-action trigger pull weight came down a little, averaging 11.5 pounds. S&W's web page says this gun has a 10-pound trigger pull. I have other S&Ws with an advertised 10-pound trigger pull, including Performance Center guns, and my experience is that getting a 10-pound pull is hit or miss. Some are, some aren't.

The Mountain Gun's hammer spur measured 0.405 inch wide and is checkered. The trigger measured 0.325 inch wide and is smooth. The barrel-cylinder gap measured 0.006 inch. Endshake was 0.003 inch.

SMITH & WESSON'S .44 MAGNUM MOUNTAIN GUN IS BACK



A nice touch on the Mountain Gun is the beveled front of the cylinder (highlighted in gold). Brad says it makes holstering smoother.



The Mountain Gun also has chamfered charge holes, indicated here by the black arrows. Note the ejector star is not chamfered, indicated by the blue arrow.

I found the grips to be well fit. An exception was that they were a little proud on the right side of the backstrap. It's a minor thing, but it produced a slight edge on the upper portion of the grip where I get skin peeled off my thumb knuckle with heavy recoil. It's easy enough to fix, but it would be nice if that task was not left to the end user.

The barrel slugged at 0.4303 inch, and all the chamber throats measured 0.4295 inch. SAAMI specs for .44 barrel groove diameter is 0.429 + 0.004 inch, giving a possible range of 0.429 to 0.433 inch. This gun's groove diameter is within that range.

Bullet diameter for the .44 is often considered to be 0.429 inch for jacketed bullets, and the usual range is from 0.429 to 0.430 inch. Lead bullets are generally 0.001 inch larger.

In this gun, bullets over 0.4295 inch will get squeezed down to fit through the chamber throats and will be undersize for the barrel unless there is some spring-back and/or obturation. But the size difference is only 0.0008 inch, even if they don't upsize. Undersize bullets are not necessarily accuracy compromised, as I found in my "Undersize Bullet Accuracy" article published in the June 2024 issue of this magazine.



The Model 629 Mountain Gun shot well with several .44 Magnum and .44 Special factory loads. This 18-shot group was produced at 25 yards with the gun mounted in a Ransom Rest. It was fired with HSM's 305-grain Bear Load, and the group measures 2.22 inches.

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



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SMITH & WESSON'S .44 MAGNUM MOUNTAIN GUN IS BACK



Brad says there's a lot to like about the new Smith & Wesson Model 629 Mountain Gun. He thinks it's a very desirable double-action revolver.

Great for Defense

I fired .44 Magnum and .44 Special ammunition in the new Model 629 Mountain Gun for accuracy. Average 18-shot group size with five Magnum loads was 3.10 inches. The best Magnum group was with HSM's 305-grain lead Bear Load at 2.22 inches, which is a good endorsement for the gun as a bear-defense tool! Average group size with three .44 Special loads was 3.99 inches, and the best group here was 2.23 inches with Federal's Punch 180-grain JHP, also a defense-oriented round. Clearly, accuracy was more than sufficient for defense against any threats.

There's a lot to like about the Mountain Gun. The reduced weight is the most obvious, and the classic tapered barrel has

aesthetic appeal for many buyers. The only disadvantage of the lighter-profile barrel is a bit more recoil and muzzle rise. A quick look at the numbers shows the Mountain Gun will produce about 10 percent more recoil than the Model 629 with a thick barrel. That's not a deal breaker—just something to know beforehand. And did I mention it has no lock?

The current run of Mountain Guns also includes a .357 Magnum L-Frame Model 686 Plus. It has a 4.13-inch barrel and a seven-round cylinder capacity. With an MSRP of \$1,199, it retails for the same price as the .44 Magnum Mountain Gun. It weighs 35.0 ounces and doesn't have an internal lock. Both of these Mountain Guns are very desirable.

ST

S&W MODEL 629 MOUNTAIN GUN ACCURACY & VELOCITY

AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	ENERGY (FT-LBS)	25-YD. ACC. (IN.)
.44 Magnum, 4.13-in. Barrel					
Remington 180-gr. JSP	1516	110	30	918	3.70
Federal 240-gr. JHP	1314	38	12	920	2.95
SIG SAUER 240-gr. JHP	1290	33	9	887	2.58
Federal HammerDown 270-gr. JSP	1200	68	19	863	4.06
HSM Bear Load 305-gr. Lead WFNGC	1108	78	21	831	2.22
.44 Special, 4.13-in. Barrel					
Federal Punch 180-gr. JHP	902	55	16	325	2.23
Fiocchi 200-gr. SJHP	910	36	11	368	4.49
Winchester 240-gr LFP	706	79	19	266	5.25
NOTES: Accuracy is for a single 18-shot group fired with the gun mounted in a Ransom Rest. Velocity is the average of 18 rounds measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph.					

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HARVEST

BY BARNES

THIS NEW LINE OF FACTORY-LOADED AMMUNITION BRINGS LEAD-CORE HUNTING BULLETS TO BARNES AMMO.

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

BARNES AND SIERRA HAVE TEAMED UP and brought to market a line of ammunition loaded with cutting-edge cup-and-lead-core bullets. That's right, Barnes is loading lead bullets in factory ammunition. Specifically, Sierra's Tipped GameKing projectile. In my questionably humble opinion, it's the best cup-and-core bullet currently being made.

I'll lay out the why behind that enthusiastic statement in a moment. First, in case you're breaking out the tar and feathers and swearing that Barnes has blasphemed itself by "going lead," it's worth noting that the aptly named Barnes Original bullet is a lead-core line of projectiles optimized for use in traditional cartridges like .348 Winchester and .45-70 Gov't.

Plus, of course, Barnes makes the excellent lead-core Match Burner line of projectiles. Although known for inventing and producing the best all-copper bullet on the market, Barnes has actually been making lead-core bullets longer than all-copper bullets. However, Barnes isn't actually making the bullets it's loading in the Harvest collection. That honor goes to sister company Sierra Bullets. Why? Because Sierra is so darned good at making high-end cup-and-core bullets. You know, the sort that are affordable to blue-collar whitetail hunters yet offer up-town terminal performance and Sierra's legendary accuracy.





BARNES
HARVEST COLLECTION HUNTING AMMUNITION
SIERRA
TIPPED GAMEKING
6.5 CREEDMOOR 140GR
32400

BARNES
HARVEST COLLECTION HUNTING AMMUNITION
SIERRA
TIPPED GAMEKING
6.5 PRC 145GR
32401

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HARVEST COLLECTION HUNTING AMMUNITION
SIERRA
TIPPED GAMEKING
308 WIN 165GR
32404

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SIERRA
TIPPED GAMEKING
30-06 SPRG 180GR
32403

BARNES
HARVEST COLLECTION HUNTING AMMUNITION
SIERRA
TIPPED GAMEKING
7MM REM MAG 150GR
32402



The new Barnes Harvest line of factory-loaded ammunition features Tipped GameKing bullets made by sister company Sierra and optimized for each specific caliber.



Let's dig into the nitty gritty of this new Harvest ammo line. For starters, it's assembled using premium primers and premium brass cartridge cases. This is not a small thing. As my old accuracy mentor always told me, the Three Bs of Accuracy are barrel, bullets, and brass. It goes without saying that you must have an accurate rifle barrel and load it with consistent, accurate bullets to achieve great precision...but as he said, brass quality also is essential.

I've used Barnes factory ammo that legitimately and consistently produces sub-half-MOA accuracy. Even when tested via three consecutive five-shot groups fired through a lightweight (but super-accurate) hunting rifle. That tells me all I need to know about the quality of brass that Barnes uses.

The quality of your rifle's barrel is entirely up to you. There's nothing Barnes can do to ensure that entity of the Three B's of Accuracy is up to snuff. However, in choosing to load Sierra's Tipped GameKing (TGK) projectile in the Harvest ammo line, Barnes made the most of that other "B" and optimized accuracy potential. In the lead-core hunting bullet realm, few others are as consistently precise.

Bullet Design and Terminal Performance

Because the TGK is the biggest departure from the Barnes MOA here, let's dig deeper. In essence, the TGK is a copper-jacketed, lead-core bullet with a boattail and a polymer tip. Nothing unusual about that.

What is unusual is that the TGK tends to be a tougher bullet than its competitors. Cup-and-lead-core bullets mushroom massively on impact, which enables them to kill swiftly on deer-size game but can compromise penetration on bigger-bodied

game, such as elk, moose, bison, and large bears. If large bones are impacted, massive fragmentation and sometimes complete disintegration can occur, leading to penetration failures. Jacket-core separations are common (and undesirable) when cup-and-core bullets hit heavy muscle and bone. When separation occurs early, the unprotected soft lead core is usually shredded to bits and fails to penetrate deeply.

Bonding the core to the jacket (by soldering or electro-bonding, etc.) cures this malady, but that is expensive and adds a step that—when imperfectly done—can degrade accuracy. To provide a bullet that is both super accurate and affordable, most makers stick with non-bonded cup-and-core designs.

To prevent jacket-core separation many bullet companies employ a mechanical locking device. Although the mechanical lock works well at moderate impact velocities—for example the sort of speeds generated by the .308 Winchester—it usually won't survive high-speed impacts like those produced by magnum cartridges.

Examples of this type are Remington's Core-Lokt and Hornady's InterLock. Sierra does not use a mechanical lock, and the TGK is not bonded like more expensive hunting bullets. So how does the company prevent bullet disintegration on impact?

One method is to use a thick jacket that resists easy deformation. Most companies draw the nose portion of the bullet's jacket quite thin, to allow mushrooming to initiate and reliably occur. Jackets thicken in a reverse taper toward the shoulder of the bullet to arrest further development of the mushroom. This is a challenging process to achieve consistently, and the thicker the jacket becomes, the more difficult the process is. Many—even most—bullet companies don't push that envelope

hard, preferring to stick with the easy-accuracy characteristic of thin copper jackets.

Sierra does not take the easy road and is a master of producing relatively thick bullet jackets consistently. Whatever process the company uses, it results in superbly precise bullets.

The final step to preventing bullet blowup in a cup-and-core design is to harden the lead core with some sort of alloy. Again, when done improperly, this can lead to less-accurate projectiles. Sierra does nothing improperly, and the Tipped GameKing has become legendary for its accuracy.

Although not mechanically locked together, TKG bullets tend to hold together better than competing designs in my experience. I believe this is due to the TKG's combination of thick jacket and hardened core. TKGs aren't as tough as bonded-core bullets, and aren't nearly as tough as monometal bullets, but they're tough enough for most game.

I've seen this emphasized in heavy-for-caliber versions, such as the 175-grain 0.277-inch-diameter TKG that's become so popular in the 6.8 Western cartridge. I've observed that bullet drive completely through the muscled shoulders of a big zebra stallion before coming to rest against the offside hide. I've seen it kill elk with full pass-throughs. In my opinion, it's a prime example of how a perfectly engineered cup-and-core bullet should perform.



Barnes is known for producing all-copper bullets like the TTSX (left), but the TKG bullet features a lead-core and a polymer tip (right).

Ballistics

How about ballistics? Are the Sierra Tipped GameKing bullets loaded in the new Barnes Harvest collection aerodynamic enough to satisfy modern precision hunters? The answer is yes, within reason. Most iterations have ballistic coefficients competitive with similar-weight modern hunting bullets from Nosler, Hornady, Swift, and so forth.

That said, Sierra has not attempted to push the BC envelope to the max. The company's advertised BC numbers are not inflated or even optimistic. They're accurate, practical, and realistic. You'll find that when you plug the BC of a TKG into your ballistic app, little truing is needed at the range.



In Joseph's experience the Sierra Tipped GameKing is the toughest of the cup-and-core bullets on the market. Here, he's shown with his cousin, both packing out Sitka blacktail deer after a long day on Kodiak Island. An arctic fox hangs from Joseph's pack.



Barnes Harvest ammunition is loaded with premium brass cases, premium primers, and premium propellants that are optimized for accuracy, consistency, and velocity.

If my eyes do not fool me, Sierra's heavy-for-caliber TGKs have a hybrid tangent/secant ogive, which refers to the shape of the bullet's nose. Ballistic testing has shown that while secant ogives tend to have better in-flight aerodynamics, tangent ogives are more forgiving in how they engrave into the rifling lead when the cartridge fires and propels the bullet down the barrel. By incorporating a brief section of tangent profile right at the projectile's shoulder, where it contacts the rifling, Sierra maintains accuracy. By configuring the rest of the bullet's nose profile with a secant profile, the company optimizes ballistic coefficient.

One characteristic that advanced shooters may question is the nature of the composite in the Tipped GameKing's nose. Folks, it's standard polymer, not a super-composite that's resistant to heat and air erosion while in flight. And that's okay, particularly in a hunting bullet that's meant to be used inside 600 yards. Degraded BC caused by tip erosion is a gradual process and usually only manifests in very high-BC bullets launched at magnum velocities, and even then, only way downrange.

That said, I confess I'd like to see Sierra change to a heat-erosion-resistant composite, such as that used in Hornady's HeatShield tips, Federal's SlipStream tips, and some of the more advanced Barnes LRX tips. For now, Sierra makes tips of Delrin polymer. On the plus side, Delrin polymer takes on a rubbery consistency on impact and is one of the best materials available for initiating bullet expansion.

Offerings

Barnes launched the Harvest line with nine different offerings. Seven are popular, time-proven cartridges, including the .223 Remington, .243 Winchester, .270 Winchester, .308 Winchester, .30-06 Springfield, 7mm Remington Magnum, and .300 Winchester Magnum. The other two are newer but are already household names: the 6.5 Creedmoor and the 6.5 PRC.

All but one are loaded with bullets of traditional-for-caliber weight. The single exception is the 6.5 PRC, which features a 145-grain TGK bullet. It has an admirable BC of .597 and is rated to exit the muzzle at 2,910 fps. Barrel length isn't listed, but presumably that's out of a 24-inch tube.

Bullet weights and advertised velocities for the Harvest lineup are as follows:

.223 Rem.:	69-grain bullet, BC: .370, 3,000 fps, 1,379 ft-lbs
.243 Win.:	90-grain bullet, BC: .390, 3,200 fps, 2,047 ft-lbs
6.5 CM:	140-grain bullet, BC: .563, 2,700 fps, 2,267 ft-lbs
6.5 PRC:	145-grain bullet, BC: .597, 2,910 fps, 2,727 ft-lbs
.270 Win.:	140-grain bullet, BC: .508, 2,960 fps, 2,724 ft-lbs
7mm Rem. Mag.:	150-grain bullet, BC: .545, 3,000 fps, 2,998 ft-lbs
.308 Win.:	165-grain bullet, BC: .517, 2,680 fps, 2,632 ft-lbs
.30-06:	180-grain bullet, BC: .545, 2,760 fps, 3,045 ft-lbs
.300 Win. Mag.:	180-grain bullet, BC: .547, 2,960 fps, 3,503 ft-lbs

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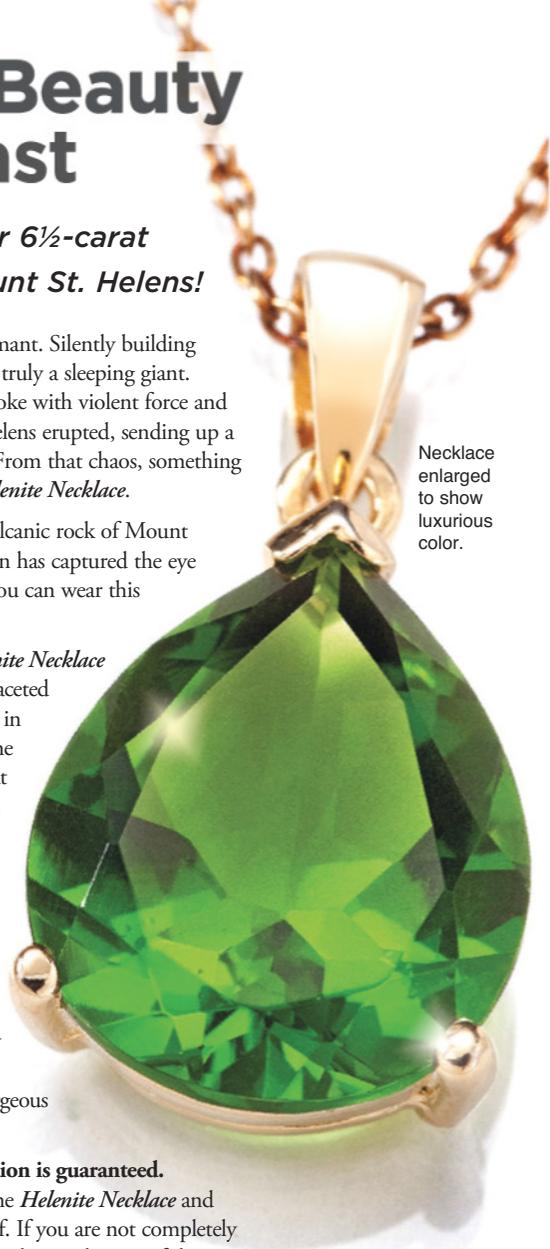
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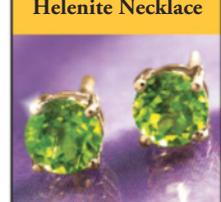
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HARVEST, BY BARNES

Sierra makes a 180-grain 7mm TGK with a G1 BC of .631, which is the highest BC in the line. The nose of that bullet is too long and sleek to fit in standard 7mm Rem. Mag. magazines, but my hope is that Barnes will soon add a 7mm PRC load featuring that TGK to the Harvest collection.

Range Tests

To prove out the new Barnes Harvest ammo, I selected a handful of favorite rifles I can count on to shoot well. Among them were a Sako Model 90 Peak in 6.5 Creedmoor, my son's custom 6.5 PRC Proof-barreled NRL Hunter competition rifle, an AllTerra Arms Mountain Shadow in 7mm Rem. Mag., a Remington Model 700P LTR in .308 Win., and a custom Model 70 built by Hill Country Rifles chambered in .30-06.

Benchresting the rifles, I fired a series of three consecutive three-shot groups with each one, aiming at targets on the 100-yard berm. Accuracy ranged from very acceptable to outright great. Three of the five tested averaged less than one MOA. Best of the lot was the 6.5 PRC load, which averaged 0.58-inch groups. Full results are listed in the accompanying chart.

Of the five I tested, only one met the advertised muzzle velocity. That was the 6.5 PRC offering topped with the 145-grain TGK. It is advertised to generate 2,910 fps. Out of my son's custom NRL Hunter rifle with a 22-inch Proof Research barrel, it actually clocked 2,983 fps. That speed combined with the 0.58-MOA accuracy and the bullet's BC of .597 makes for an awesome hunting load.

Barnes Harvest ammo loaded with the excellent Sierra Tipped GameKing bullet enables Barnes to play in a hunting-ammo demographic that it's never competed in. The ammo itself is quite good, in my opinion. I recommend trying it in your favorite rifle, as it just may shoot lights out, and the bullet is one of my favorites in terms of terminal performance.

Whether the move into lead-core hunting ammo is a savvy one for Barnes—a company always considered to be the tip of the spear in homogeneous all-copper bullets—remains to be seen. That, dear reader, is up to you and how enthusiastically you embrace the new Harvest collection. **ST**



The author tested five of the nine new Harvest loads for accuracy and velocity. As this 0.58-inch, three-shot, 6.5 PRC group illustrates, accuracy ranged from very acceptable to outright great.

BARNES HARVEST AMMO ACCURACY & VELOCITY

AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	100-YD. ACC. (IN.)
6.5 Creedmoor, 20-in. Barrel				
Barnes Harvest 140-gr. TGK	2581	42	11	0.83
6.5 PRC, 22-in. Barrel				
Barnes Harvest 145-gr. TGK	2983	35	12	0.58
7mm Rem. Mag., 22-in. Barrel				
Barnes Harvest 150-gr. TGK	2877	61	15	1.11
.308 Winchester, 20-in. Barrel				
Barnes Harvest 165-gr. TGK	2585	18	6	0.66
.30-06, 23-in. Barrel				
Barnes Harvest 180-gr. TGK	2685	73	23	1.37

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, three-shot groups fired from a bipod. Velocity is the average of nine rounds measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph. Ambient temperature: 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Elevation: 4,600 feet.



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BUILT FOR SPEED

BROWNING'S GREAT X-BOLT BOLT-ACTION RIFLE JUST GOT EVEN BETTER!

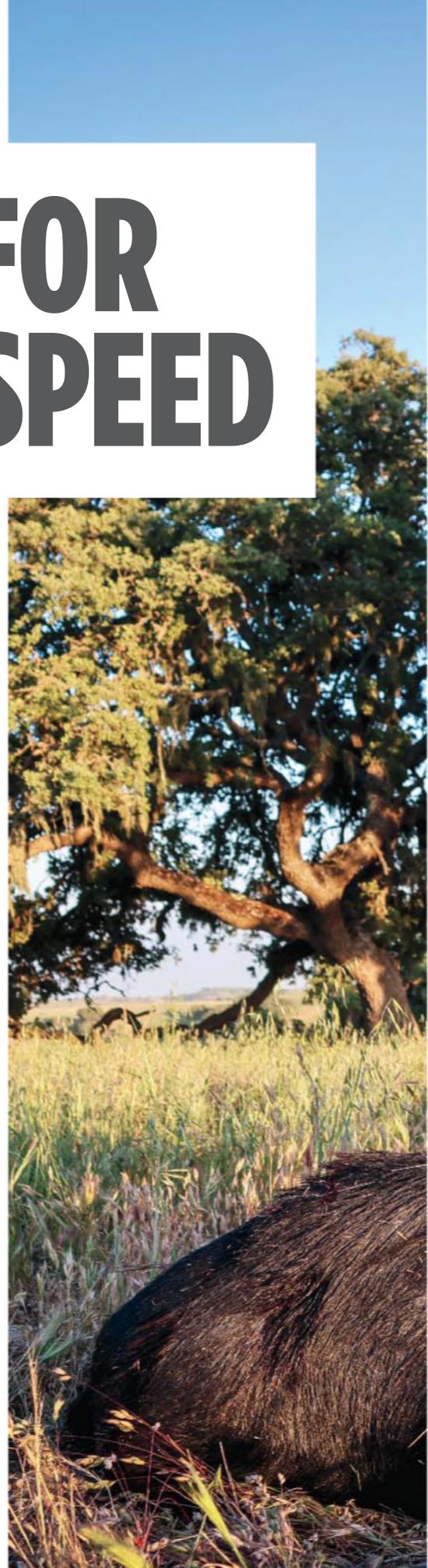
BY CRAIG BODDINGTON

WHETHER SHOTGUNS, HANDGUNS, OR RIFLES, THE Browning brand has long been associated with high quality. As such, Browning doesn't produce as many firearms as some manufacturers. Within that context, you must give them credit for incredible variety. And for a legacy of innovation that goes back to their founder and namesake, John Moses Browning himself, who was never shy about improving his designs.

With short uplift and three-lug bolt, the Browning A-Bolt burst onto the scene in 1984. Popular and successful, the A-Bolt was offered in dozens of variations and numerous chamberings in its quarter-century run. It was replaced in 2008 by the X-Bolt, which had some similarities and a lot of differences. It used the same bolt handle and three-lug lockup, the same two-position tang safety, and good barrels that shot straight. But it had a different bolt body, receiver, detachable rotary magazine, and bolt-unlock button at the root of the bolt handle, enabling unloading with the safety engaged. One could say that the X-Bolt was sleeker and more modern in stock styling, but like its predecessor, it was offered in many variations and chamberings.

The A-Bolt took its name from the shape of the receiver, surrounding a bolt with flats that in cross-section gave a triangular, or "A," shape. The X-Bolt takes its name from a seemingly small, important innovation. Since riflescopes came into common use, most scope bases, including nonintegral rails, are attached to the receiver by a maximum of four screws. With broader receiver rings, the X-Bolt is drilled and tapped for four screws each fore and aft, at least doubling the attachment strength. Look at the receiver from the top, and you may see each set of holes as a square, or "X."

In 2024 the X-Bolt was updated to X-Bolt 2. One might call it a second-generation X-Bolt, and the differences are more than cosmetic. Neither bolt nor receiver is exactly the same. The receiver is beefed up, increasing bolt guidance surface for a smoother bolt throw. And X-Bolt 2 incorporates the new, easily adjustable DLX trigger.





BUILT FOR SPEED



X-BOLT 2 SPEED

MANUFACTURER	Browning Arms browning.com
TYPE	Bolt-action repeater
CALIBER	.308 Winchester
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	4 rounds
BARREL	22 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in.
WEIGHT, EMPTY	6.63 lbs.
STOCK	Composite
LENGTH OF PULL	13 in.
FINISH	Smoked Bronze Cerakote barreled action, Ovix camo stock
SIGHTS	None, receiver drilled and tapped for scope mounts
TRIGGER	2.63-lb. pull (as tested)
SAFETY	Two position
MSRP	\$1,529.99

Remember I started by describing “variety” in Browning products? Although the X-Bolt 2 is just a couple years old, it is already offered in an astonishing 30-something variations, including nine new ones introduced in the last 12 months. These include two plainer Hunter models (one in walnut, one in synthetic), two LR (Long Range) versions with “tactical” stocks and adapted to extended magazines, SPR models with shorter barrels and belled muzzles for use with suppressors, Carbon Fiber models with carbon-fiber-wrapped barrels, a Micro with a shorter stock, and the X-Bolt 2 Speed, which is the subject of my report. The original X-Bolt Speed incorporated a camouflage synthetic stock, Cerakote metal, and fluted barrel. X-Bolt 2 Speed retains these features, plus it has the features of the new generation X-Bolt 2.

Designed for Versatility

Gun magazine writers don’t always (or often) choose their precise subjects. That’s the editor’s job. *Shooting Times* Editor-in-Chief Joel Hutchcroft asked if I would do an article on one of Browning’s new models. I said, “Yep, with pleasure.” I had written one of the first articles ever on the X-Bolt when it was new and have followed its progress. I got hold of Browning’s Rafe Nielsen, and he suggested an X-Bolt 2 Speed. Must be a mind-reader, because among the new models, Speed is the one I would have chosen myself.

I gave you a quick laundry list of new variations. There’s something for everyone. I have suppressors but can’t use them everywhere I go, so I prefer a full-length barrel. I also prefer sporter/classic to tactical, and I’m not a competitive long-ranger.

On hot days on the range, I like the slower heating and longer shot strings of carbon-fiber-reinforced barrels, but for most of my purposes I can spare the extra expense. I love walnut stocks, but I was intrigued by Browning’s new Vari-Tech adjustable stock. Taken altogether, Speed suits me fine. It’s a slim, trim rifle, stocked in composite with Browning’s versatile Ovix camouflage. The metal is finished in an attractive Smoked Bronze Cerakote. The fluted barrel is slender and tipped with a radial muzzle brake (a thread protector is supplied). At the opposite end is a good, thick Inflex recoil pad.

The X-Bolt 2 Speed is offered in 13 eclectic chamberings, and barrel length depends on the cartridge: .243 Winchester, 6.5 Creedmoor, .270 Winchester, .308 Winchester, and .30-06 have 22-inch barrels. 6.5 PRC, 6.8 Western, 7 PRC, and .280 Ackley Improved are 24 inches. 7mm Remington Magnum, 28 Nosler, .300 Winchester Magnum, and .300 PRC have 26-inch barrels. Weights vary depending on barrel length and caliber, but generally run from 6 pounds, 10 ounces to 7 pounds, 2 ounces. That makes the X-Bolt 2 Speed a light rifle, but not super-light. It’s a good compromise for carryability and shootability. My rifle is in .308 Win., so it has a 22-inch barrel. That’s versatile.

The finished weight, of course, depends on what you hang on it. X-Bolt and X-Bolt 2 mounts are compatible. I thought the Smoked Bronze metal looked cool, so I went to the Browning website and ordered matching mounts in 30mm medium height. When they arrived, I installed a Leupold VX6 3-18X 44mm scope. For my purposes, that’s more scope than I need on a .308 rifle, but it made shooting groups easier, and it was my most likely candidate without switching a scope from another rifle.



Browning's X-Bolt 2 Speed is the second generation of X-Bolts and has many improved features, but it retains the X-pattern scope mounting setup that gives it its name.

With mounts and full-size scope, complete weight came up to almost 8.5 pounds. No longer a lightweight, but still a good weight to shoot and carry.

These days, big (even bigger) riflescopes are popular, not only adding weight and bulk, but also requiring higher mounting. This changes comb height to get a proper cheekweld. Often, I use a strap-on cheekpiece. It looks like hell, but it works. Stocks with adjustable combs are increasingly common and effective, but to my eye they often seem clunky, rarely associated with a streamlined sporter stock. Browning's new Vari-Tech stock is different. It's not the simplest to adjust, but it's the best-looking adjustable stock I've seen.

The stock comb is capped with an unobtrusive ambidextrous cheekpiece, adjustable to six different height positions, with the uppermost offering a full inch of additional comb height. To adjust it, you go in through a small hole at the top of the recoil pad, using a long (supplied) 2.5mm hex wrench. Find the matching screw and unscrew it a whole bunch of revolutions (20 to 25) to loosen the cheekpiece, then adjust to the desired position and retighten. (It's a good idea to do the unmanly thing and read the owner's manual.) My Leupold 3-18X scope doesn't qualify as a "big scope" these days, but I brought the cheekpiece up one notch for a perfect fit.

Unusually, the Vari-Tech pistol grip has interchangeable inserts, allowing a more vertical modern grip if desired. To exchange inserts, undo the action screws with a 4mm (5/32) hex wrench, remove the barreled action, and unscrew a Phillips-head bolt at the rear of the action inletting, then pop an insert into place and retighten. With the barreled action removed, I checked the bedding, and the barrel was fully free-floated, and the action is bedded to the recoil lug.

The length of pull is adjusted in a conventional manner. Just remove the recoil pad with a No. 2 Phillips screwdriver and add or remove supplied spacers as desired. At 5 feet, 9 inches, I'm

Joe Average, and most factory stocks with standard 13-inch length of pull fit me perfectly, as did this stock.

Browning's new DLX trigger is crisp, clean, and easily adjustable. Out of the box it was a bit heavy for my taste, so I went to the owner's manual and learned how to adjust it. I quickly set it more to my liking.

To access the trigger adjustment, you must either remove the bottom metal or take the barreled action out of the stock. The trigger-adjustment screw is just ahead of the trigger, and it is adjusted with a 2mm (5/64) hex wrench. Rotate it clockwise to increase trigger pull weight, counterclockwise to reduce. I reduced the pull weight just a bit, to a nice 2 pounds, 10 ounces, and I was ready to head for the range.

At the Range and in the Field

The X-Bolt 2's bolt is different from its predecessor. Like I said earlier, it has the same three-lug lockup with short 60-degree uplift, but the X-Bolt 2 bolt has spiral fluting and a different bolt-handle shape. I don't have enough experience with the X-Bolt to confirm the X-Bolt 2 is smoother, but I can say that this rifle, in short-action .308 Win., was smooth and positive. I'm not crazy about detachable magazines on bolt actions (just one more thing to lose), but I like the X-Bolt 2's lightweight, compact, polymer rotary magazine. It seats flush, and it locks and detaches positively. In standard cartridges, the capacity is a generous four rounds (three for magnums, belted or unbelted).

BUILT FOR SPEED



The X-Bolt 2 Speed's versatility is enhanced by the adjustable cheekpiece (accessed through the recoil pad), the interchangeable grip inserts, and the adjustable trigger.

I didn't have enough factory ammo for any test protocol, but I had a variety of propellants and bullets and plenty of brass, so I loaded up some handloads. Let me be honest: I didn't work up loads specifically for this rifle. I'd been doing some .308 loading with unleaded bullets for use on California hogs and with lead-core bullets for a couple of .308 rifles that live on my Kansas farm. They are just plain vanilla handloads, below maximum charges, with standard COL at just below 2.810 inches. Thus, they're loads that I can (and do) shoot in several different .308 rifles, with accuracy varying as it does.

My preference is to follow a test protocol of five, five-shot groups. It is more difficult to hold five-shot groups than three-shot groups, and the .308 Win. is not a pipsqueak cartridge. However, with a big scope, adequate gun weight, and a good muzzle brake and recoil pad, recoil is not a huge problem. I did the shooting for this article on the California Central Coast, when the temperature was 50 degrees, so I wouldn't have to wait ages between groups for the rifle's barrel to cool.

Even so, this rifle has a slender barrel, and as with many slim barrels, asking it to hold tight five-shot groups proved a big ask. I started with 41.5 grains of IMR 3031 with Hornady's 165-grain InterLock bullet (it's a favorite whitetail load). As the accompanying chart shows, this rifle didn't particularly like it. Two or three shots would group together, then the strings would spread badly. The rifle did better with the same powder charge behind the Barnes 165-grain TSX (my California hog load) and better still with IMR 4320 and Hornady's 168-grain SST. Unfortunately, I got through the whole 15-group (five, five-shot groups with each load) protocol without a single sub-MOA group.

When I was young it was an article of faith that we could load better ammo than we could buy. Lately, factory ammo has gotten so good that I'm no longer so sure. I had just enough Federal 168-grain Gold Medal Match and Hornady Precision Hunter 178-grain ELD-X factory loads for a couple groups with each. They did significantly better. So much for my handloads. (Note: I did not include the results in the chart because I didn't have enough ammo to shoot three, five-shot groups with it.)

I went home, I found a pound of Hodgdon Benchmark powder at a local gunshop, went back to the loading bench, and started over,

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BUILT FOR SPEED



Craig fired five-shot groups and three-shot groups for accuracy at 100 yards. As expected, the thin-barreled rifle produced much better accuracy with the three-shot strings.

minating the Benchmark powder with Berger’s 168-grain Target boattail hollowpoints. Back at the range with that handload, and starting over with three-shot groups with the other three loads, the rifle produced much better accuracy.

Firing three-shot strings, all loads produced sub-MOA groups. Three of the four averaged just a fraction over one MOA. The best three-shot average came with the Barnes TSX bullet—0.825 inch for five, three-shot groups. Some rifles love homogeneous-alloy bullets, some don’t, and others are neutral. You never know until you try.

And that’s just fine with me, because it was spring on the Central Coast, barley coming up. Pigs love barley, and in California all hunting must be done with unleaded projectiles. I had the rifle and the load, and I had a date for hunting hogs out at friend Tony Lombardo’s ranch north of town. Except, before it came up I needed to swap scopes (don’t ask why), so I switched it out for a VX5 3-15X 44mm. I had to rezero, so by the time the X-Bolt

2 Speed and I went hog hunting, I’d shot it a lot. I was extremely familiar with it by then, and it came up on target like an old friend.

When barley is ripening our hogs are seriously addicted. Even so, you never know. Sometimes we catch them at last light. Other times at first light, often not at all. This time, Tony driving the Jeep, Clint Wiebe in the back, and me riding shotgun, we spotted a small sounder feeding on a ridge in gorgeous afternoon sunlight.

We got around the wind, and Clint and I made a long uphill stalk and closed to about 150 yards. I got the rifle on sticks, steadied down, and the trigger broke like it should. I hammered a big sow on the right. I’d like to call it a good shot, but I can’t. As soon as I fired, Clint went into action and dropped a second hog with his .308 rifle, offhand, moving. Two nice hogs were down in beautiful afternoon light. We had lots of good pork, and we wouldn’t need to get up early to try again. That doesn’t happen very often!

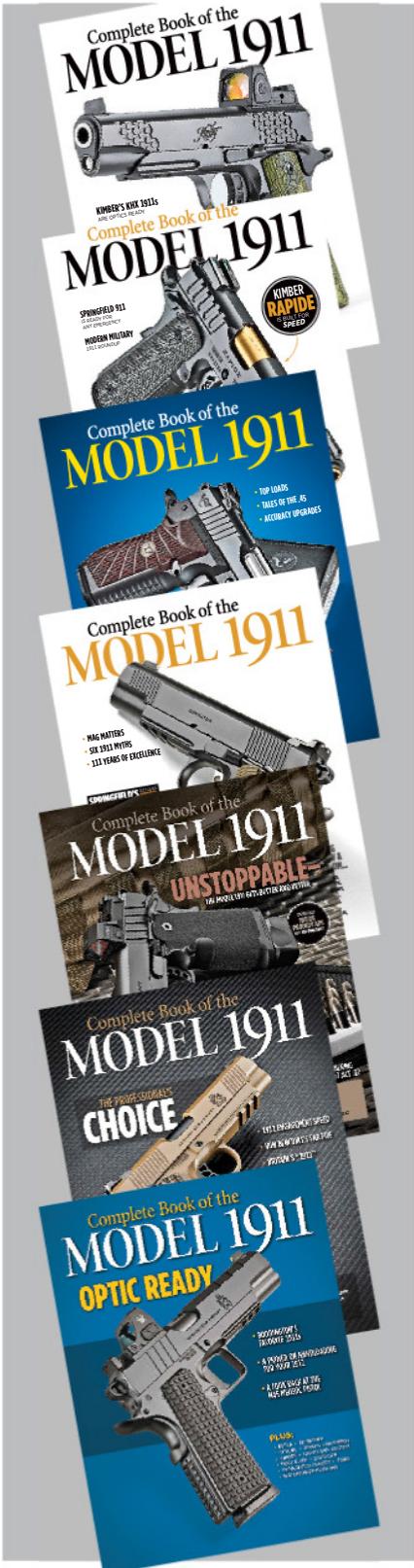
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BROWNING X-BOLT 2 SPEED ACCURACY & VELOCITY

BULLET	POWDER		CASE	PRIMER	COL (IN.)	VEL. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	ENERGY (FT-LBS)	100-YD. ACC. (IN.)	
	(TYPE)	(GRS.)							3-SHOT GROUPS	5-SHOT GROUPS
.308 Winchester, 22-in. Barrel										
Barnes 165-gr. TSX	IMR 3031	41.5	Barnes	WLR	2.809	2713	22	2696	0.83	2.14
Hornady 165-gr. InterLock	IMR 3031	41.5	Federal	WLR	2.809	2704	27	2678	1.13	2.61
Hornady 165-gr. SST	IMR 4320	42.0	Hornady	WLR	2.809	2659	7	2588	1.02	1.97
Berger 168-gr. HPBT	Benchmark	41.0	Hornady	WLR	2.809	2739	25	2748	1.03	1.71

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of five, three-shot groups or five, five-shot groups as indicated with the rifle fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of six rounds measured 10 feet from the gun’s muzzle.

All load data should be used with caution. Always start with reduced loads and make sure they are safe in each of your guns before proceeding to the test loads listed. Since *Shooting Times* has no control over your choice of components, guns, or actual loadings, neither *Shooting Times* nor the various firearms and components manufacturers assumes any responsibility for the use of this data.



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HYDRA-SHOK DEEP

JOSEPH SAYS THIS SELF-DEFENSE AMMO FROM FEDERAL IS SO GOOD IT SEEMS “ENCHANTED.”

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

FEDERAL'S HYDRA-SHOK DEEP AMMUNITION IS optimized for reliable expansion combined with deep penetration, making it an ideal choice for personal protection and duty use. New to the line are .45 Colt and .32 H&R Magnum offerings.

Readers and gun folks who've followed the performance of Federal's standard Hydra-Shok ammunition are well aware of its lethal capabilities. It's accurate, high-performance stuff. That said, the bullets in the Hydra-Shok Deep line are even better. You could say they're the Gen 2 refined version, created after years of collecting performance data points on the already excellent standard Hydra-Shok bullets.

Since the Deep version of the Hydra-Shok bullet isn't completely new, I'll just hit the high points of the design before discussing the specifics of the new offerings.

Designed to achieve optimal penetration through various barriers, Deep bullets feature a redesigned version of the center post in the middle of the hollowpoint bullet. This center post can be



seen in the accompanying photographs and is pictured on the ammo boxes and shown clearly on the mushroomed bullet I fired into ballistic gelatin.

What's the post for? It enhances penetration. As you can see by how well it's held its shape, the post is made of a very hard alloy so as to resist deformation. It is the tip of the spear (if you'll forgive the pun) for the hard, deep-penetrating core of the Hydra-Shok bullet.

Original Hydra-Shok bullets feature a tall, thin post. The Deep version is more robust at the tip and cones out toward the base, becoming much larger where it merges into the body of the bullet. This cone shape focuses hydrodynamic effect on the rest of the hollow nose, ensuring it expands instantly and dramatically. This enables the bullet to cause more tissue disruption. In other words, it stops violent threats more immediately.

Other characteristics of Federal's Hydra-Shok Deep ammo are above par, too. The powder inside is specially formulated to provide maximum performance and minimum muzzle flash in

handgun-length barrels. That propellant is ignited by Federal's own extremely reliable, consistent primers. There's absolutely nothing better. Bullets are loaded into nickel-plated cases that resist corrosion and are naturally lubricious, ensuring clean, reliable feeding and extraction in the cylinders of revolvers and the chambers of semiautomatics.

The Newest Loadings

With those fundamentals covered, let's unpack the two newest loadings in the Hydra-Shok Deep line. One is big and burly; one is petite and elegant. In full disclosure, I only fired the petite and elegant .32 H&R Magnum for this article. However, we can still look at the performance parameters of the new .45 Colt offering, too.

It pushes a 0.452-inch-diameter, 210-grain bullet at a mild-mannered 913 fps (that's the factory-rated velocity). Like other Hydra-Shok Deep offerings, the projectile in this .45 Colt ammo is optimized specifically for this load in order to provide



The new .45 Colt Hydra-Shok Deep offering is loaded with a 210-grain bullet, and its factory-rated velocity is 913 fps.

best-in-class penetration balanced with large bullet expansion. It's designed to perform through all barrel lengths, which tells me the bullet's nose is profiled correctly to feed through lever-action rifles, and the cases are loaded with propellant that does well in handgun-length barrels.

To me, the .32 H&R load is more interesting. Why? Well, just about any .45 Colt load is an authoritative fighting tool. Making the lovely-but-light-powered .32 H&R Magnum round a potent personal-protection tool is harder. Loads that effectively achieve potency are interesting. This new ammo is purported to drive its 85-grain hollowpoint bullet at 1,025 fps. Even though that's still significantly less speed and energy (and recoil) than the .327 Federal carries, it's enough to be intriguing. That 1,025 fps generates 198 ft-lbs of kinetic energy, which is about 5 percent more than a very good .380 Auto load offers.

Range Results

To wring out the new ammo, Ruger kindly loaned me two revolvers chambered in .327 Federal. As most .32-caliber enthusiasts know, firearms with .327 Federal chambers can safely shoot .32 H&R Magnum ammo, just like a .357 Magnum gun can safely chamber and shoot .38 Special ammo. Plus, .327 Federal revolvers safely chamber and fire the .32 S&W Long and .32 S&W cartridges.



The new .32 H&R Magnum Hydra-Shok Deep offering is loaded with an 85-grain bullet, and its factory-rated velocity is 1,025 fps.

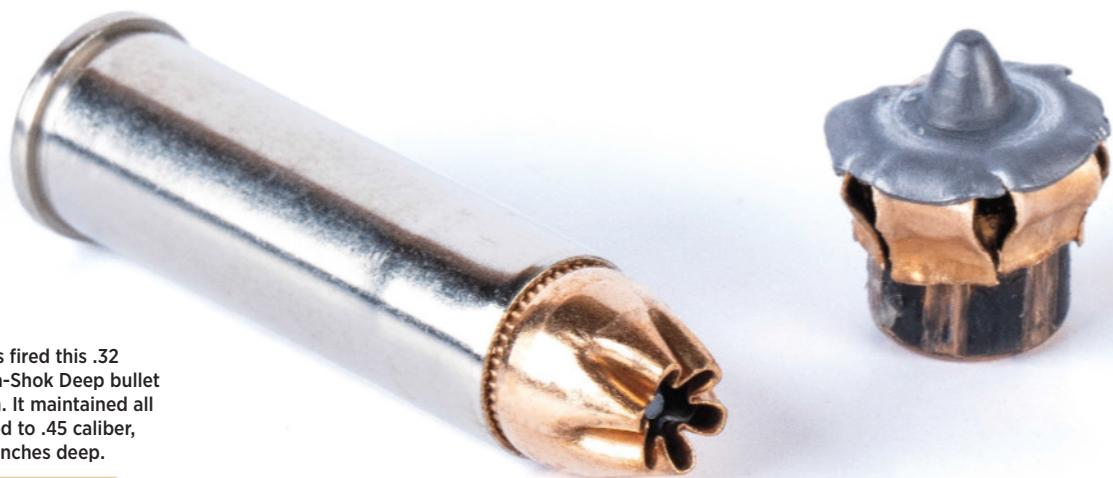


Joseph fired the new .32 H&R Magnum Hydra-Shok Deep ammo in a double-action Ruger SP101 with a 3.0-inch barrel (top) and a single-action Ruger Single-Seven with a 4.62-inch barrel (bottom). Both guns are chambered for .327 Federal.

With a few boxes of the new Federal .32 H&R Magnum Hydra-Shok Deep ammo in hand, I invited my two boys (Henry and William, ages 11 and 15, respectively) to the local range to wring out the new load. After posting a sheet full of target spots at 25 yards, I set up my Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph and sandbag shooting rest.

One of the Ruger revolvers immediately found a place in my heart. It's a Lipsey's exclusive built on the svelte single-action Single-Seven model, making it a seven-shooter with a 4.62-inch barrel and stainless-steel construction. The weight is 34 ounces, it has fully adjustable sights, and it is just right. I can't think of a lovelier little centerfire revolver.

HYDRA-SHOK DEEP



Joseph and his sons fired this .32 H&R 85-grain Hydra-Shok Deep bullet into ballistic gelatin. It maintained all its weight, expanded to .45 caliber, and penetrated 13 inches deep.

The other is a double-action Ruger SP101 with a 3.0-inch barrel. We have a family history with 3.0-inch compact Ruger wheelguns—they're as tough and reliable as a railroad spike and serve wonderfully on the belts of modern cowboys—but they've all been five-shot versions. The frames are too small to house six rounds of .357 Magnum ammo. So, it was with keen interest that I unboxed the six-shot, .32-caliber version.

It looks and feels like home—because it's familiar. However, recoil with the .32 H&R Hydra-Shok Deep cartridges wasn't familiar. I found it to be much more polite than I'm accustomed to when firing .357 Magnum SP101s.

The SP101 shot very low—about eight inches low at 25 yards—with the .32 H&R Magnum rounds. Presumably, the SP101's nonadjustable iron sights are engineered for use with more potent .327 Federal ammo. Shooters using .32 H&R ammo in this revolver will have to hold high at that distance, or file down the fixed front sight. At the more common self-defense distance of seven yards, the new Hydra-Shok Deep ammo out of the SP101 hit much closer to point of aim, approximately 1.5 inches or so low.

I didn't have that experience with the Single-Seven. Its adjustable rear sight made it easy to get perfectly sighted-in at 25 yards.

Predictably, with its longer sight radius and adjustable sights, the Single-Seven produced the smallest groups. Its average over a series of three consecutive five-shot groups at 25 yards was 1.60 inches. That's darned good for an iron-sighted revolver being fired by someone with middle-aged eyes. Accuracy with the SP101 wasn't bad, either. It posted a 2.68-inch average for three, five-shot groups.

Velocity out of both revolvers was a bit shy of Federal's advertised velocity number but not by much. The Single-Seven, with its 4.62-inch barrel, produced an average of 992 fps. I have no doubt that one of the longer-barreled Single-Sevens would have achieved factory advertised speed. The SP101, with its 3.0-inch

barrel, averaged 966 fps, which is actually rather impressive for a semi-snubby wheelgun.

With technical accuracy testing accomplished, I moved off the sandbags and ran a few informal drills with each handgun. Both mowed down eight-inch steel plate racks at seven yards with ease. Both rang the 15-yard IPSC target comfortably. When I moved to a 50-yard steel hostage target, I couldn't hit the steel "hostile" head with either gun, but I managed to accidentally ring the hostage target multiple times, prompting a chuckle out of my boys.

Handing the revolvers over to them, I watched them plow through the knock-down plate racks and ring the steel torso targets. Recoil was so mild with the .32 H&R loads that it almost looked as if they were shooting .22 rimfires.

Before we ran out of ammo, I brought out a block of ballistic gelatin and let them each fire one of the 85-grain Hydra-Shok Deep bullets into it from a distance of about five feet. Both bullets expanded beautifully, as we expected, with the noses of the mushroomed projectiles measuring an average of 0.45 inch across. Penetration was about 13 inches. Weight retention with both recovered bullets was 100 percent. Later, after photographing one of the bullets, we joked that Hydra-Shok Deep is an enchanted load, since the mushroomed projectile with its cone-shaped center post looks like it has a witch's hat.

Hydra-Shok Deep ammo is built for self-defense and for duty use. It's not advertised for hunting, or even for trapping or the like. So, I have to ask does the new .32 H&R Magnum load offer fighting authority in the same realm as the .45 Colt or the .45 Auto or the .40 S&W or the .38 Special +P? Or even the 9mm Luger, for that matter? I won't claim that it does. However, its 85-grain bullets do penetrate well enough to reach the vitals and provide systemic disruption from just about any angle. And most importantly, the cartridge is super easy to shoot well.

Although I personally wouldn't choose either .32 H&R revolver loaded with Hydra-Shok Deep ammo over my favorite 9mm semiautomatic pistol for everyday carry, I would absolutely pick it for trail work. By that, I mean anything from running a trapline on snowshoes to working cattle on horseback. I think it makes for a terrific handgun for a government trapper who might hunt down a dozen or more livestock-killing mountain lions or whatnot each winter.

Another great use for this high-performance ammo—particularly in the Single-Seven revolver—is for teaching youngsters and new shooters to confidently handle a centerfire sidearm. The sleek seven-shooter fits perfectly in my son Henry's hand, and he shoots it super comfortably. At the same time, it's none

too small for me, and I think it's just a blast to shoot. (Again, pardon the pun.)

Here's the crux of the matter: Federal is expanding the Hydra-Shok Deep ammo line to cover all the popular cartridges—and more. At the time of this writing, you can get .32 Auto, .32 H&R, .380 Auto, .38 Special +P, 9mm Luger, .40 S&W, .45 Auto, and .45 Colt. Whatever cartridge you like to pack for personal protection, you can likely find Hydra-Shok Deep ammo for it. This ammo is accurate, it generates admirable velocities, and it is engineered to perform consistently well through a variety of clothing, glass, drywall, sheet metal, and other barriers. What's not to like? **ST**

.32 H&R MAGNUM HYDRA-SHOK DEEP ACCURACY & VELOCITY

AMMUNITION	VEL. (FPS)	E.S. (FPS)	S.D. (FPS)	25-YD. ACC. (IN.)
Ruger Single-Seven, 4.62-in. Barrel				
Federal Personal Defense 85-gr. Hydra-Shok Deep	992	37	12	1.60
Ruger SP101, 3.0-in. Barrel				
Federal Personal Defense 85-gr. Hydra-Shok Deep	966	68	16	2.68

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of 15 rounds measured with a Garmin Xero C1 Pro Doppler chronograph.



Both test revolvers produced good accuracy. The Single-Seven was particularly impressive, averaging 1.60 inches for three, five-shot groups at 25 yards.

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WE'VE PROFILED SEVERAL OTHER SHOOTING, HUNTING, AND FISHING shows that are available at MyOutdoorTV.com, but one we'd like to draw readers' attention to this time is one of our more specialized shows. It's called *Wild Upland*, and it's a *Gun Dog* production.

Wild Upland is an "aspirational production dedicated to wingshooting adventure and the gun dogs that sustain the action." This show blends applicable dog training tactics, lessons in canine health, and hunting how-to, giving viewers the opportunity to apply such tips to their own "legend-worthy" pursuits. It's hosted by Kali Parmley, associate publisher of *Gun Dog* magazine, and it features passionate hunters and their well-trained bird dogs as they pursue wild game across America's untamed landscapes.

At the time of this writing, three seasons of *Wild Upland* are offered, with 10 episodes each. Some of the topics presented include Idaho sharptail grouse and Hungarian partridge, Maine ruffed grouse, South Dakota pheasant, Utah waterfowl, Idaho Gordon setters, Florida snipe, Carolina woodcock, Arizona quail, Wyoming sage grouse, Montana sharptail grouse, Texas dove, Nebraska pheasant, Montana pheasant, Oregon pheasant and quail, Washington mixed bag, Texas quail, Utah chukar, Colorado

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ptarmigan, dusky grouse, Wyoming waterfowl, Minnesota ruffed grouse, Wisconsin ruffed grouse, Georgia quail, and Idaho chukar. Seasons 1 and 2 each have a special episode that presents that season's highlights, and episode 10 of season 3 is a mixed bag that wraps up the entire season. The episodes generally run about 22 minutes, so there's plenty of wingshooting action and dog training content from all around the country.

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SHOOTER'S SHOWCASE

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Wheelgun Wunderkind

Being a self-described sucker for .32s, Terry thinks the S&W Model 431 Ultimate Carry revolver is named appropriately. **BY TERRY WIELAND**

IT IS NOW MORE THAN A CENTURY—108 YEARS, to be precise—since Walter Winans, the acclaimed pistolero, author, and champion of dueling as an alternative to overburdened law courts, pronounced the revolver dead and as good as buried.

The semiautomatic pistol, said Winans, “now rules the day” and within a decade the trusty old wheelgun “would be no more.”

Well, to paraphrase Mark Twain, rumors of the revolver’s death have been greatly exaggerated. New ones are landing in the market on a regular basis, from super-powerful beasts for hunting big game to my current pet, Smith & Wesson’s Model 432 UC in .32 H&R Magnum. The UC stands for “Ultimate Carry,” and I’m not about to argue. Of course, I’ve been a sucker for .32s generally—rifles, pistols, you name it—for as long as I can remember, and a big, big fan of the S&W Model 442 Airweight in .38 Special.

The Model 432 is similar. It has a titanium cylinder (hence light weight). It’s a J-Frame that in .32 H&R Magnum holds six rounds instead of the J-Frame’s usual five. It’s hammerless (hence double-action-only) and has no internal lock (hence virtually foolproof.)

Since its introduction in 1984, the .32 H&R cartridge has promised a lot but, generally, delivered considerably less. But the potential was always there, and now that potential is being realized in the form of some seriously good self-defense ammunition. My favorite, for several calibers, including .38 Special, is Hornady’s Critical Defense. It matches outstanding bullets with sufficient velocity for excellent expansion, even in snubnose revolvers.

This is where conventional ammunition almost always fell short. You could put a hollowpoint bullet in a .38 Special, and from a long barrel it might expand on cue, but from the 2.0-inch barrel of a J-Frame, it would perform little better than a standard roundnose. Not the Hornady Critical Defense. In my experience, it delivers enough velocity from a short barrel to ensure expansion. And Federal Premium Personal Defense, with its 85-grain Hydra-Shok hollowpoint, is also right up there. (Editor’s Note: See Joseph von Benedikt’s feature article elsewhere in this issue for an in-depth report on Federal’s new-for-2025 Hydra-Shok Deep .32 H&R Magnum offering.)

Smith & Wesson’s Model 432 UC is an ultralightweight snubnose in .32 H&R Magnum that can pack a serious punch with premium ammunition.

The Model 432 weighs in, unloaded, at a mere 12.7 ounces. Fully loaded with Federal Personal Defense ammo, it comes in at 15 ounces even.

For practice, you can load it with anything from .32 S&W (Short) up through .32 S&W Long in a variety of lead bullets to .32 H&R loaded light or loaded for “bear.” I have even fired .32 ACP in a modern .32 H&R revolver (useful in a pinch), and for hand-loaders, the possibilities are wider than for any other caliber.

The double-action trigger pull on the Model 432 I have is a touch heavy and not as smooth as an S&W can (and should) be, but a competent trigger job puts that right. I should add, it’s not so heavy that I’m reluctant to carry it, and I shoot it reasonably well as is. Since the gun’s realistic zone of action is from breathing distance to, I dunno, seven yards, maybe, I’m not too worried.

The last few years have seen scads of new holsters come on the market, with a huge number intended for concealed carry. To my mind, though, the ideal way to tote the Model 432 is tucked in your jeans with just the grip showing in front of your hip.

This used to be called the “Mexican carry,” and if you have the gun in the car and need to get out and walk, it’s super fast to tuck it in, and it’s very unobtrusive. Beats strapping yourself into (and out of) a holster every time. The hammerless feature of the Model 432 means there’s nothing to catch on your clothes if you need it fast. It’s also handy in a jacket pocket.

I know this runs counter to the modern age and its emphasis on specialized bits of equipment for every purpose. My Model 432 is not my car gun; that honor goes to, variously, an assortment of Beretta semi-automatic .22s, .32s, and .380s, although in some circumstances I feel very comforted with my Broomhandle Mauser, complete with stock, perched on the passenger seat. In my part of Missouri—a very low-crime area—we’re all so well armed, the Broomhandle is less a tool of destruction than a fashion statement.

A century may have proved Walter Winans wanting as a prophet of handgun fashion and as a wheelgun aficionado. I’m happy about that. On the other hand, when it came to dueling, I think he had a point. Bring back the duel, and folks would be a lot more polite.

ST

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meters; Men's Dueling Pistol, 30 meters, Team; Men's Running Target, Single Shot; Men's Running Target, Single Shot, Team; Men's Running Target, Double Shot; and Mixed Sculpturing. He won gold in Mixed Sculpturing and silver in Men's Running Target, Single Shot, Team.

Walter was a renowned equestrian sculptor and exhibited at the British Royal Academy at least 14 times. His Olympic medal-winning statuette was named *An American Trotter*. After winning the gold medal, Walter donated the sculpture to the Swedish Olympic Committee for inclusion in the Swedish Museum of Athletics.

Walter participated in international horse shows held in England for many years, winning distinction in many of them. Also, in 1910, Walter sent several horses to the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Winans suffered a heart attack, collapsed in his sulky, and died while driving his horse, Henrietta Guy, during a trotting race in Parsloes Park, Dagenham, Essex, England, on August 12, 1920. He was

68 years old, and he is buried in Highgate Cemetery, London, England.

Obviously, Walter was an accomplished marksman. He was a painter, a sculptor, a sophisticated and widely traveled person, and a huntsman. He also was an accomplished writer. He wrote a number of magazine articles and books, including *The Art of Revolver Shooting* (1901), *Hints on Revolver Shooting* (1904), *Practical Rifle Shooting* (1906), *The Sporting Rifle* (1908), *Shooting for Ladies* (1911), *Automatic Pistol Shooting* (1915), and *The Modern Pistol and How to Shoot It* (1919).

Winans was immortalized in a lithograph that was published by *Vanity Fair* on August 17, 1893. The caricature was made by Sir Leslie Ward, a.k.a. "Spy," and it was titled *The Record Revolver Shot*. A description of it states, "It emphasizes Winans's status as a record-holder in revolver shooting and the unique blend of artistry and athleticism that defined his public and private life."

Lastly, the Winans Range at the National Shooting Centre, Bisley, England, is named in his honor. **ST**

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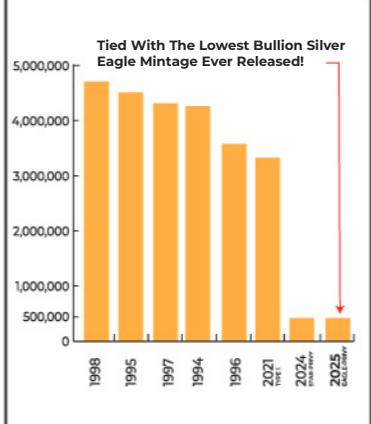
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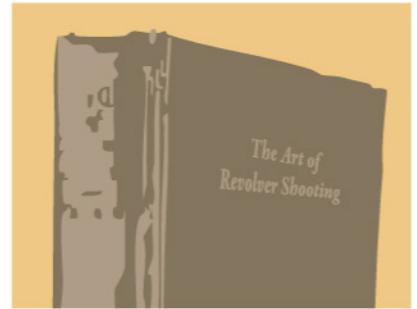
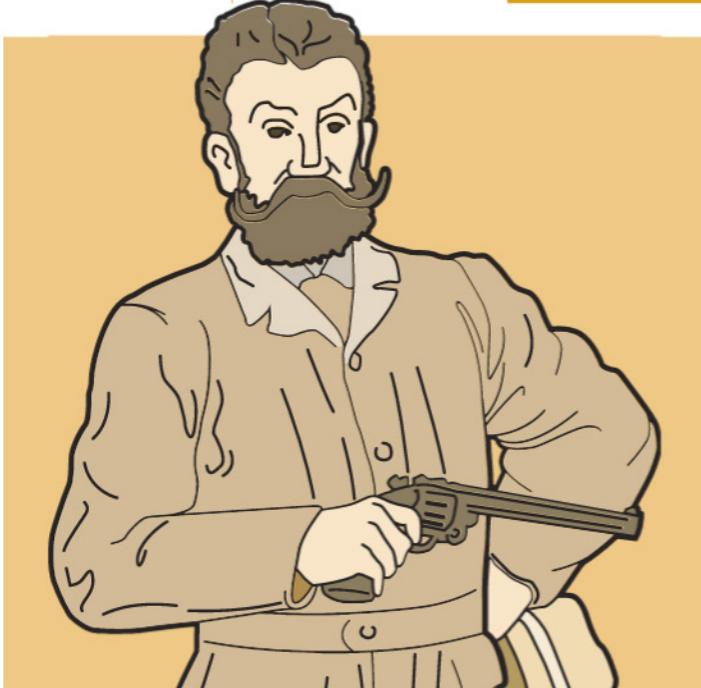


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The Stately Shootist/Sculptor

Walter Winans was a medal-winning American Olympic shooter who never set foot on American soil until he was 58 years old. **BY JOEL J. HUTCHCROFT**

EXPANDING ON SOMETHING TERRY WIELAND wrote in his "Gunsmoke" column in this issue of *Shooting Times*, I'm profiling a unique American shooter who had an intriguing life story. Walter Winans won Olympic medals as a shooter and as a sculptor, the only American to do so. He also was a painter, a horse breeder, and a writer.

Walter William Winans was born on April 5, 1852, to Americans William Louis Winans and Maria Ann de la Rue at the Nikolaevsky Railway Works in St. Petersburg, Russia. At the time, William was in charge of building the first major railroad in Russia. He succeeded, became very wealthy, and settled in England, never returning to the United States. Walter was raised in St. Petersburg and Kent, England. He took the oath of allegiance to the U.S. at the age of 18 at the U.S. Embassy in St. Petersburg before moving to Kent, but he didn't set foot on U.S. soil until 40 years later, at the age of 58. Because of his father's vast holdings, Walter held hunting and shooting rights on nearly 250,000 acres in the Highlands of Scotland and spent

much time there as a young man. He lived a dignified life of privilege.

Walter learned to shoot and handle guns, and he became quite proficient with them. He won the revolver championship in England on 12 consecutive occasions and the dueling pistol championship in Paris in 1900. In 1908, at age 56, Walter represented the United States at the London Summer Olympics in Men's Free Pistol, 50 yards; Men's Small-Bore Rifle, Disappearing Target, 25 yards; Men's Small-Bore Rifle, Moving Target, 25 yards; Men's Running Target, Single Shot, and Men's Running Target, Double Shot. He took gold in Men's Running Target, Double Shot. Interestingly, at the 1908 Olympics, a question was raised about his eligibility because he had never set foot in America, and before he could participate, he was required to swear his allegiance to the U.S. Consul General.

In 1912, at age 60, Walter represented the United States at the Stockholm Summer Olympics in Men's Free Pistol, 50 meters; Men's Dueling Pistol, 30

Walter Winans (1852-1920) was an accomplished marksman, sculptor, and writer. He won Olympic gold and silver medals for shooting and an Olympic gold medal for art competitions.

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