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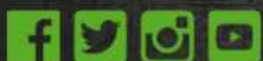
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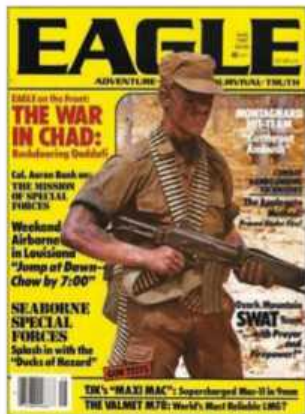
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THE ROAD AHEAD

When our former colleague, *Combat Handguns* editor Harry Kane, was putting together an early 1980s issue of *Eagle* magazine, the Internet was merely the stuff of sci-fi legend. Whoever could've imagined Al Gore was going to invent such a wonderful thing?

Technology, whether we're talking about how we produce magazine and digital content, or how the Bill Wilsons of the world design new cover-worthy firearms like the Wilson Combat EDC X9, is rocking along at breakneck speed. Get a look at Wilson's 3D-printed prototype on page 12 to catch my drift. And by the time this magazine is in your hands, we'll also have video content related to Wilson's X9 online at personaldefenseworld.com and tactical-life.com.

Now let me go all cliché on you for a second: the more



things change, the more they stay the same. Our goal today at *CH* magazine is no different than Mr. Kane's goal in decades past—we want to give you the most useful, current, cutting-edge content in the most engaging ways possible—in print and online.

Our big boss says: If I can just Google it, it doesn't belong

in this magazine. Damn right, we say! That's why in this issue—with the “never seen before” Wilson EDC X9 on the cover—and all future issues, we'll be striving to give you the most exclusive content possible. Sure, you can Google the specs on Colt's reborn Cobra revolver, but our Jeremy Clough reveals his hands-on review of the pistol before it was officially announced at this year's SHOT Show. Read Jeremy's take on page 54. And speaking of SHOT Show—we had more than 30 Athlon Outdoors contributors, including two video crews, scouring the shooting ranges and aisles for the latest firepower and gear this year. There's a great sampling of *CH*-related goods in our “Best Of SHOT” feature that starts on page 86.

It's impossible to predict where the gun media road will

take us. But I'm gonna go out on a little limb and say this: Someday in the future, an editor of a gun magazine (maybe *Combat Handguns*) will write an editorial about the new, highly affordable 3D printer that's on the market, complete with plans to print a fully functioning 9mm handgun. Maybe someday soon. —Nino Bosaz

WE STAND CORRECTED:

We misprinted the price of the Ruger Mark IV in the March 2017 issue. If you called Ruger and told them you wanted to buy the gun for \$76, and they laughed at you or hung up on you, now you know why. The MSRP is \$769. And on a serious note, on page 59 of the holster roundup, we used a stock photo that showed a revolver in an IWB rig with the hammer cocked. Big no-no. We apologize for letting that go to press and want to thank many of our readers for pointing that out to us via editdesk@athlonoutdoors.com. Keep the emails—good or bad—coming!

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PLUG INTO ATHLON OUTDOORS



FEELIN' HOT, HOT, HOT

Our Athlon Outdoors brothers over at *Ballistic* magazine put a flamethrower to the test for an upcoming feature story. You'll want to see the video at tactical-life.com. You'll also want to subscribe to *Ballistic* (outdoorgroupstore.com) to really feel the burn.

THE SWEET 13

From the Avidity Arms PD10 to the Springfield Saint, 2017 is already off to a great start. Head to personaldefenseworld.com to check out “13 New Guns We're Really Excited About for 2017.” (bit.ly/2l8ZVdz)

NO HANDS, NO PROBLEM



Hunter “Nubs” Cayll, also known as the “No-Handed Shooter,” recently sat down with Athlon Outdoors to talk about the world of competitive shooting. (bit.ly/2l8luKk)

MADNESS MADNESS

A company called Empty Shell recently created the world's first handheld Gatling gun in 5.56mm NATO—the XM556 Micro—and we've got exclusive video of it in action. Head to tactical-life.com to see it for yourself. (bit.ly/2kjFv3p)



BACKWOODS BACKUPS

Realworldsurvivor.com breaks down 10 super-reliable pocket shots for off-grid hunting and defense. (bit.ly/2lRzPuy)



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IT HAPPENED TO ME

COMPILED BY WILLIAM MILLER



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CAPTIVE NO MORE

 A woman in Wilmington, North Carolina, was beaten and bound during a home invasion this past January, but she turned the tables on her attacker, who wound up dead.

Police said Willie Franklin Stith, III, who had an extensive criminal record, was fatally shot on January 2, 2017, at an apartment complex in the 5000 block of Hunt Club Road. According to a news release, "The victim told police that while she was returning home from work around 11 p.m. last night that Stith forced her into her home at gunpoint, beat her and tied her up."

But the woman managed to undo the restraints and grab her own pistol, police said. "Once the victim was free,

she reached for her gun and shot him once. When police arrived, they found Stith near the front door. No charges have been filed at this time."

North Carolina's state prison records show that Stith, 35, served time for burglary, possession of stolen goods, larceny, vehicle burglaries and assault on a public official.

"Surreal" was how the woman, Kay Dickinson, described the attack to Wilmington's *Star-News*. "I was thinking, 'This man is going to kill me.' As soon as he took me in the bedroom, I looked over, and the gun was sitting there, and I was like, 'There's a reason why that gun is sitting there.' I was just hoping he wouldn't see it."



👉 A myriad of 911 calls swamped Arizona's highway patrol dispatchers on an early morning this past January, including reports of a rollover wreck, a man with a gun and a man holding an injured woman. All of the calls came in around 4:20 a.m. on January 12 from Interstate 10, just outside Tonopah and about 50 miles west of Phoenix. State Trooper Edward Andersson rushed to help a man and a woman near an upended vehicle, said Colonel Frank Milstead, director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

But the man inexplicably drew a 9mm handgun and shot the trooper, a 27-year veteran, in the upper right shoulder, Milstead said at a press conference. A "Good Samaritan" later told investigators that he saw the man "straddling the trooper," beating him. The Samaritan pulled over, grabbed his own 9mm handgun and called to the trooper. He ordered the attacker to stop, but the beating continued.

The man shot the attacker twice, which only stalled him. The attacker got up and kept coming, but the armed citizen finally dropped him with a fatal shot to the head.

The suspect was Leonard Penuelles-Escobar, 37, a known drug dealer in Phoenix, and a former federal police officer from Mexico, Milstead said. The injured woman, Vanessa Monique Lopez-Ruiz, 23, a native of Phoenix, was the attacker's girlfriend, and she later died at the hospital.

A week later, Milstead said, the investigation continued into what caused the initial wreck. And, he noted, officials had yet to learn why the suspect shot a trooper trying to help him. Meanwhile, Trooper Andersson's rescuer sought anonymity, but the DPS director praised his heroic actions. "He is a very humble guy, a spiritual guy, who believes God put him there that morning so that he could save Trooper Andersson's life," Milstead said.



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BREAK-IN TURNS DEADLY

👉 An early morning break-in on January 2, 2017, in Long Beach, California, ended with the fatal shooting of the burglar, local police officers said. A resident in the 200 block of East Artesia Boulevard called 911 at about 5:15 a.m. to report shooting an intruder.

Upon their arrival, police officers found the wounded man. Firefighters took him to a local hospital "where he was later pronounced deceased," police said. Officers said they believed the resident shot the man in self-defense and was not arrested.

The Los Angeles County Coroner's Office reported the man's identity: Andrew Deleon, 29. According to the police news release, he died from "gunshot wounds to his upper torso."

Tell Us Your Story!

Combat Handguns pays \$100 for each "It Happened To Me!" letter that we print. Send us your story and an accompanying high-resolution digital image to editdesk@athlonoutdoors.com. Please include your full name, address, email and phone number (including area code). A signed release is required prior to publication.

GUN TRUMPS BAT

👉 A Sarasota, Florida, family returning home one Sunday afternoon in early January encountered a man with a bat. The homeowner responded with a gun.

In a news release, Sarasota County Sheriff's Office deputies said the incident happened at about 1:23 p.m. on January 8, 2017, at a home in the 2300 block of Constitution Boulevard. According to deputies, as the home-



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owner entered the house, he noticed things out of place and "was assaulted by a burglar" who had "armed himself with a baseball bat"

The homeowner subsequently shot and killed the suspect, later identified as 30-year-old Glenn Edward Oliver. "He has an extensive criminal history and was recently released from prison after a 10-year sentence for robbery with a firearm and carjacking," deputies said. "Detectives believe the homeowner shot in self-defense and, therefore, is not facing charges at this time." **👍**



CITIZEN BACKUP

Six real-life cases show how armed citizens have helped save police lives

BY MASSAD AYOOB

In mid-November of 2016 in Lee County, Florida, a man led a sheriff's deputy on a chase at speeds exceeding 100 miles an hour. At the end of the pursuit, the driver dismounted and attacked the deputy. He had the lawman down and was beating him savagely when a passerby with a concealed-carry permit rushed to his aid. The situation degraded further, and the good Samaritan was forced to shoot and kill the offender.

At his request, the name of the rescuer has not been released to the public as of this writing. Far from getting into trouble with the law over it, the armed citizen was hailed by the sheriff for his courage, and for saving the life of his deputy. A local gun shop provided a brand-new Springfield Armory pistol to the rescuer, to replace his own pistol that had gone into evidence as part of the investigation. His act is a classic example of a good armed citizen saving a cop from a bad guy. Call it **Case One**.

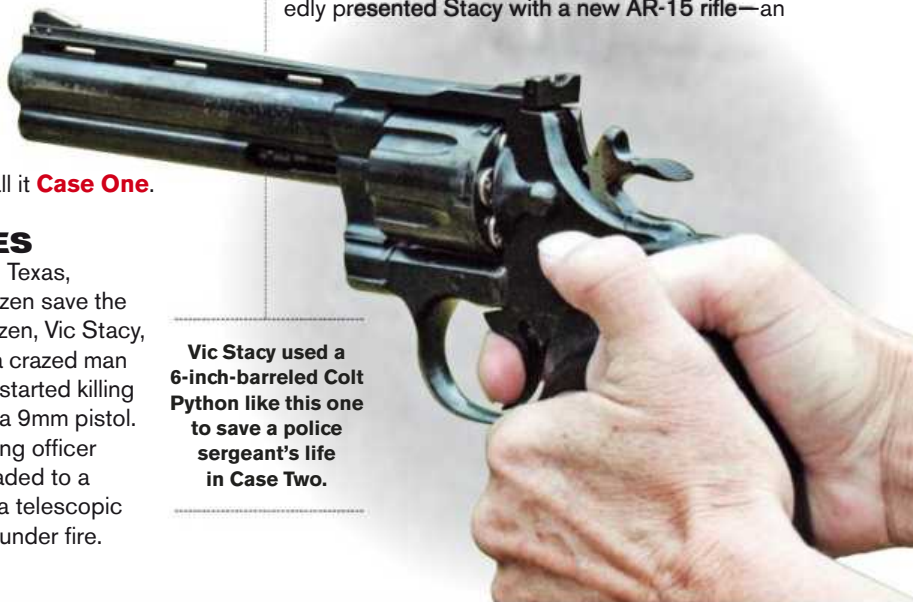
EARLIER EXAMPLES

In 2012, in the town of Early, Texas, **Case Two** saw an armed citizen save the life of a police officer. The citizen, Vic Stacy, was in the same RV park as a crazed man who went on a rampage and started killing other people in the park with a 9mm pistol. By the time the first responding officer got there, the killer had upgraded to a lever-action .30-30 rifle with a telescopic sight. The arriving cop came under fire.

He grabbed his AR-15, and keeping his patrol car between himself and the murderer, returned fire.

Unfortunately, the killer was behind a big tree, and large trees stop .223 Remington bullets more effectively than police cars stop .30-caliber rifle rounds. The policeman was in a bad situation when Vic Stacy came to the rescue. Using a 6-inch-barreled, .357 Magnum Colt Python revolver from some 50 or 60 yards away, Stacy shot and wounded the would-be cop-killer, who toppled out from behind his cover as he fell. Down but not quite out, the gunman was still trying to shoot the officer from the ground, but now the officer had a clear line of fire. He and his AR-15 finished the fight, permanently neutralizing the murderer.

Did Stacy get in trouble with the law over that? *Au contraire*. The governor of Texas himself reportedly presented Stacy with a new AR-15 rifle—an



Vic Stacy used a 6-inch-barreled Colt Python like this one to save a police sergeant's life in Case Two.

CH QUICK HIT

SAY WHAT? At Alan Korwin's helpful gunlaws.com, citizens can learn how to effectively engage with those who would like to infringe on our right to bear arms. Here's one of his gems: When an anti-gun person says "Guns are too dangerous to own," Korwin recommends saying the following: "You should take a safety class."



Alex Landeen Photo

appropriate thanks for saving the life of an embattled law enforcement officer.

Case Three went down some years before that in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 2005, a motorcycle officer was escorting a funeral procession through the city when a seemingly random motorist broke into the procession. The officer pulled him over. The motorist began exhibiting aberrant behavior and things quickly escalated. Soon, the officer was down and being beaten by a much stronger man who, some would say later, was a steroid abuser in the grip of "roid rage."

The assailant tried to take the officer's gun. The desperate cop fired his issued Glock 22, pumping a .40-caliber bullet into the attacker's abdomen. There was no visible effect. The officer was clearly losing the fight.

Perry Stephens, an armed citizen with a concealed-carry permit, saw what was happening. Despite being in a full neck and back cast, Stephens retrieved a Sig Sauer P220 in .45 ACP from his car and intervened. He ordered the assailant to stop attempting to take the officer's gun, and when words proved futile and the attacker gained control of the officer's Glock pistol, Stephens fired.

The attacker took four .45 ACP slugs to the body without abating the assault. Stephens had no choice but to shoot the man in the head with his fifth bullet. This ended both the attack and the life of the attacker.

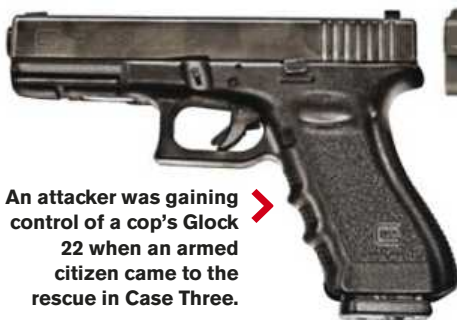
I recently had the pleasure of having Gordon Hutchinson in a MAG-20 class I taught in Baton Rouge. Gordon is a top instructor there, and he had studied this incident in great detail. On his blog "The Shootist," Hutchinson wrote, "The investigations by the sheriff's office and city police, containing reams of evidence and interviews with multiple witnesses, were turned over to the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's

"Historically, law enforcement personnel and armed citizens have always been natural allies against violent criminals."

SELF-DEFENSE & THE LAW



Alfredo Rico Photo



An attacker was gaining control of a cop's Glock 22 when an armed citizen came to the rescue in Case Three.



A citizen used a Sig Sauer P220 in .45 ACP to save a cop's life in Case Three.

Office for final determination in the case. The actions of both [the victim officer] and Perry Stephens were found to have fallen in the parameters of the justifiable homicide statutes under Louisiana law. No charges were filed against either of them." The rest of Gordon's expertly detailed account of the situation can easily be found online at theshootist.net.

Case Four unfolded in the summer of 2016 in Mount Vernon, Ohio. Once again, a crazed attacker—this one reportedly on meth—had managed to overpower a uniformed policeman and was going for his service pistol. An armed citizen intervened, taking the suspect at gunpoint before he could finish gaining control of the service pistol he was in the act of snatching from the officer's holster. In this case,

the suspect was wise enough to cease hostilities, raise his hands and surrender. Dylan Deboard, the concealed-carry permit holder who used his gun to save this policeman's life, was presented with Mount Vernon's "Citizens Award for Valor."

INTO THE PAST

Law-abiding citizens using guns to help police officers survive is nothing new.

Case Five goes back to 1934, when Rufus Youngblood and the notorious John Dillinger escaped together from the Crown Point, Indiana, jail. Youngblood, who had been awaiting trial for murder, made his way to Port Huron, Michigan. There, he entered a small family-owned convenience store and exhibited such bullying behavior that store personnel called the police.

Three lawmen responded. Youngblood turned out to be carrying two semi-automatic pistols. The officers, searching him as they took him into custody, found only one—and suddenly he whipped out the second and opened fire. The cops shot back. The hail of bullets from the murder suspect's 10-shot Savage .32 mortally wounded one officer and hit two more, and though Youngblood himself had been wounded, he was still in the fight and shooting.

Eugene Fields, the storekeeper's son, saw a dropped police service revolver on the floor and quickly snatched it up. He used it to shoot Rufus Youngblood, and it was that righteous gunfire that ended the desperate shootout. Eugene Fields was credited with saving two already wounded officers from a proven cop-killer.

We can go back further with **Case Six**. In October of 1881, the notorious gunfight near the OK Corral took place in Tombstone, Arizona. In the space of half a minute, three members of the Clanton Gang were dead or dying. On the lawmen's side, police chief Virgil Earp was tottering on a leg wound and special officer Morgan Earp was down, wounded in the shoulder and back. Armed citizen John "Doc" Holliday had killed antagonist Tom McLaury and helped to kill Frank McLaury. Holliday had sustained a minor hip injury while only Wyatt Earp stood unhurt.

One gang member, Billy Clanton, was down but not yet out, as he still held a Colt .44-40 revolver. C.S. "Buck" Fly, the owner of an adjacent photography studio, rushed out of his business with a Henry rifle and, holding the mortally wounded Clanton at gunpoint, disarmed him of what turned out to be an empty gun. It would be foolish to doubt that the law enforcement side appreciated the timely assistance of Fly and particularly Doc Holliday.

Historically, law enforcement personnel and armed citizens have always been natural allies against violent criminals. The half-dozen cases I've offered here only represent a few examples of this particular phenomenon. **CH**



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SUPERCHARGED FOR DAILY CARRY, WILSON'S NEW 9MM TAKES THE 1911 TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

BY ANDY MASSIMILIAN

BILL WILSON may have retired from running the daily operations at the company he founded in 1977, but there's no doubt that he continues to help drive Wilson Combat's research and development with several new firearms released in just the last year. The EDC X9 is unquestionably the most ambitious of the lot because it offers a fresh design that significantly departs from the 1911s that Wilson Combat and other competitive manufacturers now produce.

The EDC X9 project started in March 2015 and culminated in early 2017 after three working prototypes were made and thousands of rounds were sent downrange by multiple shooters. And the resulting pistol embodies Bill Wilson's approach to gun-making, which attends to all the large and small details—both functional and aesthetic—needed to produce a memorable pistol.



XTREME EDC



This ain't your grandpa's 1911. The EDC X9 is loaded with high-end features to make it exceptionally reliable and accurate for everyday carry—and it holds 15+1 rounds!

X9

A HIGHER LEVEL

The EDC X9 elevates the 1911 design to a decidedly higher level by going down a proven path of reliability using design features that work. That's certainly welcome because every year "groundbreaking" designs that supposedly solve some sort of problem get plenty of media attention only to undergo recalls as latent defects arise. New technology is a welcome thing, but not always on a carry pistol; Wilson made the EDC X9 a pistol you can bet your life on by selecting proven, not speculative, features.

Dimensionally, the 9mm EDC X9 fits squarely in the compact pistol category, but with a grip size that belies its double-stack magazine. The length and height are 7.38 and 5.38 inches, respectively, making the pistol nearly identical to the Colt Commander. At 28.6 ounces unloaded, the EDC X9 weighs slightly less than the Colt Commander and also has a rounded rather than square butt to increase its concealability under lightweight garments.

Wilson's new pistol holds significantly more rounds, but that doesn't impact its grip dimensions unfavorably. The EDC X9 uses a double-stack, 15-round magazine, yet, at 1.4 inches wide, it matches the width of the single-stack, nine-round Commander. Surprisingly, the EDC X9's grip width of 1.25 inches is just under the width of a standard 1911.

The EDC X9's frame is 7075-T6 aluminum while the slide and barrel are made from a billet of stainless steel. All of the small parts, including the hammer, slide stop, magazine, thumb safety, ejector, magazine release, etc., are made by CNC milling. Consistent with every other Wilson Combat pistol, you won't find any stamped, MIM or plastic parts in the EDC X9. The recoil spring has a flat profile and is made of chrome-silicon spring steel, which gives it a very long lifespan. The match-grade, 4-inch barrel has a deeply recessed muzzle to protect the crown from any accuracy-diminishing damage. The extractor is made from hardened S7 tool steel—the same material used for the tips of concrete breakers. This level of quality goes way beyond the norm for most 1911s.

The EDC X9's slide and frame are finished with Wilson's black Armor-Tuff, a form of Cerakote. The slide has a triangular profile on top that, along with the barrel fluting, helps reduce weight for more comfortable carry. To help reduce glare, you'll notice 40-lpi serrations along the top and rear of the slide as well as on the backsides of the sights. The bottom edges of the slide are also chamfered.

X9 LIFECYCLE

STAGE 1:

This 3D-printed plastic rendition helped designers gauge its overall feel.

STAGE 2:

This mechanical prototype is mostly made out of printed steel components. More changes were needed, as this version did not function well.

The EDC X9 is the result of extensive research and development spanning several prototype pistols, feedback from dozens of shooters and thousands of rounds. In fact, two test pistols have each reached 20,000 rounds by now.



The sights on the EDC X9 are functional and easy to adjust or remove. The front sight has a green fiber-optic insert, though a red insert is also included and Wilson offers other sight options. The rear Battlesight, with its wide U-notch, is adjustable for elevation via a flat-head screwdriver and windage after loosening two Torx-head screws.

INSTANT CLASSIC

The 1911 is undoubtedly one of the easiest-to-shoot pistols ever made. It points naturally, and its best qualities, namely the crisp trigger, thumb safety and beavertail grip, are preserved in the EDC X9. But this new pistol also eliminates some of the 1911's shortcomings, including its time-consuming takedown process, need for adequate and proper lubrication, limited magazine capacity and small triggerguard.

The EDC X9 also incorporates three significant features intended to make the 1911 more reliable and less maintenance intensive: a pivoting external extractor, a simplified slide-barrel locking system and reduced-length frame rails.

The extractor serves a vital role in any firearm and especially in a pistol. If it fails, you are left with a single-shot gun, and can't expect to easily



STAGE 3:

This generation sported a frame and nearly half of the small parts 3D printed in steel. The gun was fully functional at this point.

STAGE 4:

After more than 1,000 rounds through this mechanical prototype, the X9 was just about ready for prime time.



The angular slide sports Wilson's unique X-TAC front and rear serrations for easy racking, and the match-grade barrel is fluted to reduce weight.



remove a fired case by hand. This is often caused by a worn surface on the extractor claw or a weakened spring that doesn't adequately grip the rim of the cartridge with enough tension to extract it. The pivoting external extractor on the EDC X9 improves on the 1911's internal extractor because the claw maintains adequate grip strength over a wider range of spring tension. Internal extractors can also be affected by debris that can lodge in a gap between the claw and the slide.

The 1911's locking system uses two lugs on the barrel that engage two corresponding slots in the slide, and it is well documented that this pistol can seize up or become unreliable without regular cleaning and lubrication in this critical area. The EDC X9 replaces the two-lug design with a much simpler system where the top of the barrel just ahead of the chamber locks with the slide at the front of the ejection port. There are no hidden lugs—just two surfaces that are easily cleaned and lubricated. Moreover, according to Bill Wilson, this design not only reduces the need to oil your gun as much as a traditional 1911-style pistol, but it is also more forgiving if you use a lubricant that is too viscous for the temperature.



Also, as a former watchmaker, Wilson understands how friction reduces the smooth movement of parts and addressed the slide rails, which accumulate dirt and powder fouling for increased friction. These frictional forces could presumably be made worse by customers who use the EDC X9 strictly for a daily-carry piece—exposing it to dirt, dust and lint—but follow the lax cleaning practices of owning looser-fitting polymer-framed pistols.

To reduce the effects of friction-related drag on the slide, Wilson removed about 1.38 inches from the middle section of the frame rails on both side of the magazine. Removing part of the middle section rather than the ends maintains the slide-to-frame fit, and the middle is precisely where the most dirt accumulates from the magazine well and powder fouling from the chamber. Wilson's tests showed no reduction in accuracy from this modification. As noted in his book *The Combat Auto*, Wilson explains that accuracy is almost completely a function of the barrel-to-slide fit, not frame-to-slide fit; thus, the removed rail section is inconsequential for accuracy but can

You can customize your EDC X9 when ordering from Wilson by choosing between two different backstraps—one for small- to medium-sized hands and the other for larger hands—as well as three trigger lengths for a consistent hold.



improve reliability by reducing surface friction, especially when fouled. There's another reason why this design could improve reliability: Tightly fitted pistols are more reliable than those loosely fitted where parts don't align exactly the same way with each round fired. Wilson Combat pistols are tight and reliable, but like any tool with tight tolerances, they need cleaning. The frame rail reduction also offsets the possibility of less reliability from less regular maintenance.

As an indication of how well this design works, one of the EDC X9 test pistols had zero malfunctions after firing 1,500 rounds without any cleaning or lubrication while two others each passed an endurance test in shooting over 10,000 rounds of hot ammunition without any unusual wear or damage.

For easier field-stripping, the EDC X9 uses a bushing-less barrel and a one-piece steel guide rod. There's no need for a bushing wrench to take the pistol down and no hazards from a spring-tensioned guide rod plug being ejected, as with a traditional 1911. A full-length guide rod also keeps the recoil spring from snaking

around the dust cover during recoil and abrading the finish. The EDC X9's guide rod also has a Shok-Buff, a poly-fiber buffer that Bill Wilson uses on all of his pistols to reduce perceived recoil and cushion the frame from being battered by the recoiling slide.

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

Though reliability is the single most important element of a defensive pistol, it's not the whole story on combat effectiveness. Perfect operation matters little if a pistol's ergonomics and ease of shooting don't let you place rounds where they're intended to go, or if your gun holds fewer rounds than needed.

Ammo capacity is a critical starting point for any combat handgun, and Bill Wilson wanted a pistol that held 15+1 rounds but without the dimensional bulk of the existing stable of double-stack 9mm 1911s. These competitive models have equivalent payloads to the EDC X9 but are made using wide-body frames designed to accommodate the thicker, longer .45 ACP cartridge. These frames are noticeably bulky and don't provide the best control for many shooters. Though it's true that defensive uses of a handgun are typically close-range encounters on relatively large targets, a pistol that fits your hand well will help you score a precise headshot or engage hostiles at greater distances.

The EDC X9 comes with a green fiber-optic front sight and a rear Battlesight, though other options are available along with an ambidextrous thumb safety. Also note the glare-reducing serrations along the back and top of the slide.

...

Optimal gun fit means more than having a pistol that feels comfortable to hold—it also means being able to quickly access the pistol's controls without changing your firing grip and position your trigger finger at a place where the trigger moves straight to the rear without pulling the sights off target. Wilson makes a good fit possible with the EDC X9 by offering two back-strap sizes—one for small/medium hands and one for large hands—along with three trigger lengths. Customers can decide how to configure the EDC X9 for their palm size and finger length when ordering, and they can also select an optional ambidextrous thumb safety.

Combat pistols are all-season implements, and the EDC X9 improves upon the 1911 by lengthening the triggerguard to better accommodate operation when using gloves. This is more important than it may seem, because a



“The EDC X9 reflects very good engineering using reliable technology, and 10,000-plus-round durability tests validate it.”



“Wilson’s new pistol holds significantly more rounds, but that doesn’t impact its grip dimensions unfavorably.”

thicker, gloved trigger finger not only needs to quickly enter the triggerguard but also stay clear of the trigger when inserted. The EDC X9’s added room inside the guard provides extra space for safety when wearing gloves.

Finally, the frame is improved with an undercut triggerguard that places the hand slightly higher to keep the muzzle from rising during recoil.

ROUNDS DOWNRANGE

The EDC X9 proved completely reliable over the course of shooting about 400 rounds without cleaning using six different loads from five different manufacturers. The loads varied with flat-nose, round-nose and hollow-point bullets from 80 to 147 grains. The EDC X9 even functioned when I intentionally limp-wristed the pistol to try to induce a stoppage, and fully loaded magazines


easily inserted into the pistol with the slide closed, making tactical reloads easier than some other concealed-carry pistols. The slide lock, magazine release

and thumb safety were easily accessible without a change in firing grip.

Though compact pistols are sometimes tested for mechanical accuracy from a benchrest, I dispensed with that formality for the EDC X9 since its intended use as a concealed-carry pistol made benchrest testing of less practical use and Wilson guarantees five-shot groups no larger than 1.5 inches at 25 yards from a rest.

Shooting off-hand at 15 yards, the EDC X9 printed five-shot groups within 2.5 inches with Winchester and Black Hills 115-grain FMJs and sometimes scoring three shots within 1 inches. For me, these groups will undoubtedly be smaller using a production gun to better fit my hands with a longer trigger and a larger backstrap, and a trigger weight of 3.75 to 4.5 pounds compared to the 5.25-pound weight of the prototype pistol I used. The prototype trigger was good, but it has been improved with a redesigned sear.

READY TO CARRY

The EDC X9 reflects very good engineering using reliable technology, and 10,000-plus-round durability tests validates it. (By the time you read this, the round counts through these same pistols will be up to 20,000.) This pistol is also a result of a design and testing process that continually focuses on improvements—even at the margins. For instance, my pistol was a final prototype with only two additional planned design changes when I received it, but after two weeks of testing by about 14 different shooters and several thousand rounds downrange, the “final” version was improved yet again in small but meaningful ways. Some of these design changes could have gone unnoticed or overlooked by many, but instead they were corrected by a detailed performance evaluation and the critical, experienced eye Bill Wilson brings to the firearms that bear his name. For more information, visit wilsoncombat.com or call 800-955-4856. 

Editor’s Note: To see the Wilson Combat EDC X9 in action at the range, visit personaldefenseworld.com.

SPECIFICATIONS	
WILSON COMBAT EDC X9	
Caliber:	9mm
Barrel:	4 inches
OA Length:	7.38 inches
Weight:	28.6 ounces (empty)
Grips:	G10
Sights:	Fiber-optic front, Battlesight rear
Action:	SA
Finish:	Armor-Tuff
Capacity:	15+1
MSRP:	\$2,895



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SHELL SHOCKIN' DEVELOPMENT

It might be time to kick brass to the curb with the introduction of these new hybrids

BY DR. MARTIN D. TOPPER

Ammunition is probably the fastest-changing portion of the shooting sports industry. We're constantly being introduced to new cartridges, bullets, powders and even primers. But it's been decades since the introduction of aluminum and steel cartridge cases. There have been recent experiments with using polymer to replace brass, but up until the recent appearance of the NAS³ 9mm shell case from Shell Shock Technologies of Westport, Connecticut, there was no real alternative to the one-piece brass, aluminum and steel centerfire rifle and pistol cases we've all used for years. But all of that is about to change.

HYBRID DESIGN

Shell Shock's NAS³ case is a two-piece design that is made of steel and aluminum. Other cases use steel or aluminum, but the Shell Shock case is not made of just any steel and aluminum. The steel is a high-tensile nickel-steel alloy, and the aluminum is an aircraft-quality alloy with electroless nickel plating.

The concept of a two-piece cartridge case isn't new. The earliest two-piece case I could find was the .442 blackpowder revolver cartridge made for the Tranter revolver in England during the late 1860s. Today, almost all shotgun shells are of two-piece construction. Most of the two-piece designs, including shotshells, were originally designed for low-pressure blackpowder cartridges. On the other hand, the NAS³ case is designed for high pressure. It has a cylindrical steel body and an aluminum head, which are held together by a compression joint that becomes stronger as the pressure increases, forcing the two pieces of the case together. Because of this and the fact that the case walls are steel, the Shell Shock 9mm case is



Shell Shock's new NAS³ cases are designed with aircraft-grade aluminum bases and nickel-steel cylinders to outperform brass cases. In fact, these cases are 50-percent lighter and two times stronger than most brass cases.



claimed to be able to tolerate pressures up to 70,000 psi, which provides a wide margin of safety given that the SAAMI maximum average for a +P 9mm is 38,500 psi.

Because of their rather unique design and materials, the Shell Shock cases work differently than conventional solid-brass cases. When fired, cases made of brass expand to fill the chamber to prevent gas leaks, and they generally keep their expanded shape long after the bullet has left the barrel. The steel cylinders of the Shell Shock cases also expand, but they snap back quickly and remain close to their original size. Evidently, the case does not snap back until the projectile has left the bore. This prevents gas leaks and also helps keep cartridge backpressure on the breech face from reaching levels that would damage the pistol. In addition, the case's two-piece construction gives it slightly more internal volume than traditional brass 9mm cases. The Shell Shock case

1. The 124-grain Creedmoor XTP +P load made short work of a 3-gallon water jug.

2. The author tested five loads with NAS³ cases, and they all proved accurate with no signs of excessive pressure.

3. NAS³ cases are held together with strong compression joints.

4. The author hit the left steel target over 100 times at 15 yards without a single miss using the NAS³-cased ammo.



also has a more uniform and slightly larger flash hole, and its manufacturer claims that because of this it has more uniform ignition and less shot-to-shot variation in velocity.

Normally, one might expect that a shell case with all of these features would cost more than a traditional brass case. It doesn't. As of this writing, 1,000 new, unprimed NAS³ cases cost \$100 when purchased online from the manufacturer. Commercial brass costs anywhere from \$160 to \$194 online. Shell Shock also states that these cases can be reloaded as much as 32 times. A special set of resizing and flaring dies is required. A set costs \$100 and requires that the cases be lubricated even though the sizing die has a carbide insert. The dies work with a variety of commercial presses. Since this is a two-piece case, these special dies are spring-loaded so that they push the shell out rather than use the shell holder to pull the case out of the die by its rim. This would damage the

joint between the case's cylinder and head. At present, there are no reloading manuals that publish specific data for Shell Shock cases, so one should seek published information from reputable industry sources before assembling handloads.

SHOCKING & GLOCKING

As many as 10 manufacturers are offering 9mm ammunition assembled with Shell Shock NAS³ cases. Many of these are relatively new companies that came on the scene in the last few years. I acquired five samples for testing: Creedmoor Ammunition's 124-grain XTP +P hollow points (HPs), L-Tech's 124-grain Full Stop copper HPs, Fallout Ammunition's 115-grain FMJs, Velocity Munition's 90-grain Z-Shock rounds and ICC's 100-grain frangible flat-point ammo.

At the Big 3 East Training Center near Daytona Beach, Florida, I tested each load for accuracy and velocity along with reliability. In addition, I fired the ICC load and the two HP loads into ballistic gel to test for penetration and expansion. I also used the ICC and Velocity Munitions loads to shoot rapidly at steel targets to test how well the gun and ammo handled together.

Because the Glock 43 is a sub-compact pistol designed for close range, I tested the ammunition's accuracy using a two-hand isosceles stance at 7 yards with a silhouette target depicting two assailants, one standing behind the other. The front assailant had a 10-point circle in the chest area and both had 10-point triangles on their heads. I fired three 5-shot strings with each load at separate targets. The maximum possible score for each load was 150 points with fifteen 10-zone hits. I achieved the highest score—140 points with thirteen 10-zone hits—with both the Fallout and L-Tech loads. The lowest score, 115 points with eight 10-zone hits, came with the ICC ammo. No shots from any of the loads landed outside of vital areas. Clearly, ammunition loaded in Shell Shock cases is more than accurate enough for personal defense in even the smallest 9mms at 7 yards.



The NAS³-cased test ammunition was both accurate and reliable in the author's trusty 9mm Glock 43.

PERFORMANCE

GLOCK 43

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Creedmoor 124 XTP +P	1,100	1.74
Fallout 115 FMJ	1,035	1.50
ICC 100 Frangible	1,167	2.06
L-Tech 124 Full Stop HP	948	1.50
Velocity Munitions 90 Z-Shock	1,368	1.73

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 9 YARDS.



Except for the Velocity Munitions load (far left), the test ammunition—including those with flat-nose, round-nose and hollow-point bullets—ran flawlessly in the G43.

The G43 pistol produced about 100- to 150-fps less velocity than factory advertised rates. Given the gun's short barrel, that's reasonable performance. The most powerful load was Velocity Munitions' 90-grain Z-Shock, which produced an average muzzle velocity of 1,368 fps and 394 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. The L-Tech ammo was the mildest load at 948 fps and 247 foot-pounds of energy.

Reliability and handling tests were conducted by shooting mixed loads in the same magazine and by engaging a full-sized steel silhouette with over

100 rounds of rapid fire at 15 yards.

The rapid-fire portion of the test started with the pistol at a high-ready retention position. The pistol was then thrust forward into an isosceles stance and fired as rapidly as the front sight could be reacquired on target. The pistol was flawlessly reliable with all of the loads except for the Velocity Munitions load. These bullets have stepped ogives, and the gun failed to fully extract two fired cases during a 100-round test. Evidently the head of the fired case hung up on the step in the ogive of the top round in the magazine. The

extractor then slipped off of the fired case, which remained in the chamber, causing a stoppage.

In the next test, I tested the three loads from Creedmoor, L-Tech and ICC by firing them into ballistic gel. The Hornady XTP bullet in the Creedmoor load expanded rapidly to 0.6 inches and penetrated between 13 to 14 inches before it bounced back and settled at a depth of 12 inches. The L-Tech bullet also expanded rapidly, but given that the bullet has three petals that intersect at 120-degree angles, it was rather difficult to take a meaningful measurement of expansion. The best I could estimate with my calipers was about 0.66 inches. This bullet also penetrated between 11 and 11.5 inches. By cutting into the gel block, I was able to determine that the L-Tech's permanent wound channel was between 0.5 and 0.75 inches wide and had a marked spiral appearance as the blades slowly twisted through the block. The material inside the channel had a shredded appearance, indicating that this bullet both crushed and cut tissue as the blades turned. Both bullets did not lose any weight, and the fired projectiles each weighed 125 grains. In contrast, the ICC frangible bullet went in about 8 inches and completely disintegrated.


MAKING THE GRADE

Finally, it needs to be said that while the Shell Shock cases were nearly 100-percent reliable in my Glock 43, these cases are a very recent development and have a unique design. Therefore, it is possible that there could be a lack of compatibility between some specific loads using Shell Shock cases and a limited number of 9mm guns on the market today. Both Shell Shock Technologies and at least two of the ammunition companies who load 9mm ammunition in Shell Shock cases have conducted reliability tests using a broad variety of 9mm firearms with excellent results. Even so, whenever trying a new type of ammo, it's always best to buy a small amount first and try it out in the gun for which it is intended to assure reliability and accuracy. This goes for brass-cased ammo as well as

"Overall, the ammunition loaded with **Shell Shock cases** performed very well in the G43."

ammo that uses Shell Shock cases.

Overall, the ammunition loaded with Shell Shock cases performed very well in the G43. The accuracy at close range was very good, reliability was 100 percent with four of the five test loads, and the gun handled well. What's next? In the future, Shell Shock Technologies is looking to expand its offering of popular handgun and rifle cases to include the 5.56mm NATO, 7.62mm NATO, .45 ACP and .40 S&W.

Editor's Note: To see video of the author wringing out his Glock 43 with Shell Shock ammunition, check out personaldefenseworld.com. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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creedmoorsports.com; 800-273-3366

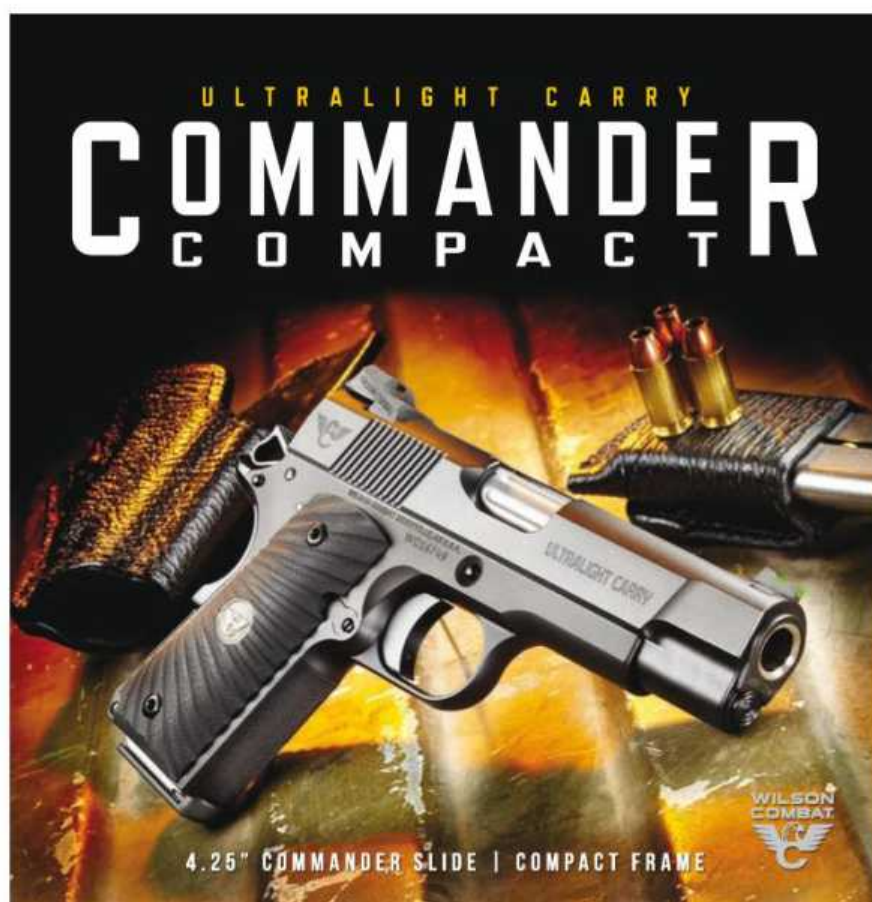
FALLOUT AMMUNITION
falloutammo.com; 385-265-2707

ICC
iccammo.com; 814-938-6820

L-TECH ENTERPRISES
606-423-9782

SHELL SHOCK TECHNOLOGIES
shellshocktechnologies.com
844-778-3243

VELOCITY MUNITIONS
velocitymunitions.com; 724-966-2140



Sub-\$400 price aside, this new ultra

WALTHER



It's safe to say, since you picked up this issue of *Combat Handguns*, that you hold strong the creed, or fundamental set of beliefs, that all people have the unalienable right to self-defense given to them

by their Creator, and that right is codified as sacrosanct in the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Arms of all types were considered by the founders of the country best held in the hands of its citizens as a means of defense against both a predatory government and the lone cutthroat.

We humans use tools; we're not equipped with naturally powerful weapons like claws, tusks or venom. Nor do we have camouflage to hide or the ability to fly to escape danger. To defend ourselves, a tool acts as a force multiplier—it makes us more powerful than if we face an attacker barehanded. It is the tool that allows the elderly and crippled to defend against a more powerful attacker.



- reliable CCW is poised to please the masses

BY RICHARD JOHNSON

One creed we can all live by, Walther's latest 9mm combines new technology and ergonomics with a price tag that'll make your jaw drop—especially when you see how reliable it is.





Having the tool you need for self-defense can often be an economic decision, as the most vulnerable in society are often the least able to afford a good-quality firearm. Since a cheap tool—be it a socket set or a handgun—will almost always cost you more in the long run, I would never purchase, nor recommend, a poor-quality weapon.

Unfortunately, quality and price tend to be proportional—especially with lower-cost firearms. In many cases, inexpensive guns tend to be of poor quality. While there are some notable exceptions, I'm comfortable with saying that there are more reliable self-defense firearms above \$400 than there are below it.

Taking advantage of modern manufacturing techniques to reduce costs, Walther is aiming a new gun at an underserved place in the market: reliable, but inexpensive, full-sized handguns.

CREED CREDENTIALS

Announced late in 2016, the Creed is a 9mm pistol that Walther Arms is offering with a very aggressive \$399 price tag. Since Walther makes high-quality firearms, I found the price particularly exciting: Could the company produce a top-notch handgun that was reliable enough for personal protection at that price? Walther sent me a production gun to review so I could find out for myself.

ABOVE: The Creed is easy to disassemble for cleaning and maintenance. Also note the Picatinny accessory rail and the magazine well, which has cutouts on each side for fast reloads.

BELOW: A small hole at the top-rear of the barrel hood serves as a visual loaded-chamber indicator.



The 9mm cartridge is a solid choice for self-defense. While there are undoubtedly variations in performance between popular handgun cartridges, quality self-defense ammunition in 9mm has shown time and time again that it is just as effective

as other popular calibers. In fact, there are many police agencies that have begun a migration back to the 9mm after fielding the .40 S&W and other calibers during the past several decades.

In the context of the Walther Creed, the 9mm also makes sense because of its affordability. For a buyer on a budget, ammunition costs are a factor in how often the gun is trained with. Right now, the 9mm is the least expensive centerfire handgun chambering I can find on the market. If cost is a concern, this is likely an important aspect in your gun purchase decision.

Walther elected to make the Creed hammer-fired. Many modern self-defense pistols are striker-fired, and Walther has its share of those. However, with this pistol, the company went with a classic ignition system. The hammer is small



SPECIFICATIONS	
WALTHER CREED	
Caliber:	9mm
Barrel:	4 inches
OA Length:	7.3 inches
Weight:	27 ounces (empty)
Grip:	Polymer
Sights:	Three-dot
Action:	DAO
Finish:	Matte black
Capacity:	16+1
MSRP:	\$399

and mostly concealed within the rear of the slide. This ensures it does not snag on clothing if you decide to use the Creed as a carry pistol. While I found the Creed to be a bit large for daily carry, it can be used for this if you have the right holster and clothing selection.

As you pull the trigger to the rear, the hammer angles back before dropping on the firing pin. Very little of the hammer is ever exposed outside of the gun. The hammer cannot be cocked for single-action shooting even if you try to catch it outside of the slide and pull it back with your thumb.

Like the Walther PPX, the Creed uses a pre-cocked, double-action-only (DAO) trigger to work the hammer. This gives the gun a very light-feeling trigger pull that is smooth with a crisp break. You do not have to let the trigger all the way out before the gun is ready to fire again. I would not say the reset is short, but it isn't long, either. Essentially, the Creed gives you the smoothness of a traditional DAO trigger with the light, crisp feel of a good striker-fired gun.

One of the really nice features about this pistol is how easy the slide is to work. Not only was it one of the first things I noticed about the test pistol, but my wife also noticed it right off the bat, too. She's no slouch with a pistol, but as a smaller woman, she simply doesn't have the same upper body strength that I do. For her, she can run a slide with heavy resistance but would prefer not to if given her druthers. I imagine a lot of people are exactly like her.

The magazine holds 16 rounds, and the Creed uses the same magazines as those used in the PPX. This is great for shooters, as it means that there is already an ample supply of spare magazines in circulation. Your local gun shop should have a few on hand already.



Despite carrying a 16-round double-stack magazine, the polymer frame is surprisingly thin, and like other Walther pistols, the cross-directional texturing on the grip offers more comfort and control in hand.



The Creed has a large portion of the grip cut away at its base. Each magazine uses a relatively tall baseplate that tapers in toward its top, forming a pyramid-like slope. This textured slope fits into the frame cutaway and offers an excellent grip on the magazine should you ever need to strip it out of the gun after experiencing a malfunction. The baseplate is large enough to grasp while wearing gloves.

Walther did not cut any corners on the finish of the gun. The slide and barrel are both Tenifer treated and then finished in matte black. Tenifer is a kind of salt-bath ferritic nitrocarburizing process that hardens and seals the metal so it is more resistant to surface marks and corrosion. My test sample had no visible flaws in the finish, and it felt very good to the touch.

As with many modern pistols, the Creed uses a polymer grip frame. Polymer has proven to be a very reliable choice in nearly 50 years of service in pistol manufacturing. The grip area of the frame uses the company's distinctive cross-directional texturing to help lock the gun in the hand without being unnecessarily abrasive.

Even with a double-stack magazine, the grip of the gun feels thinner than some other pistols. For me, my small- to medium-sized hands can solidly grasp the pistol and my finger can press the trigger straight back. The bump at the bottom of the gun's backstrap looks odd to me, but it fits into my hand perfectly.

COST SAVINGS

So, you might be asking "If this gun is so great, how is Walther able to sell it for such a low price?" Well, Walther hasn't specifically laid out where the costs savings are in this pistol, but there are a few things that I can take a guess at.

First, the gun does not have ambidextrous controls. Although the magazine release is reversible, the slide stop lever is not. If you are right handed, or a southpaw who is used to shooting a right-handed gun, this is not likely a problem for you.

Second, the gun does not have interchangeable backstraps. Other Walther pistols like the PPQ M2 do. While swappable backstraps can make a big difference in fitting a gun to your hand, you don't need them if this gun fits correctly. The key is to get your hands on one in your local gun shop and see how it feels. If your trigger finger doesn't address the trigger properly, you may wish to look at another pistol. But I suspect this pistol will fit many people just right.

Lastly, there are a variety of manufacturing techniques that can be employed to save




accuracy. If you are recoil and noise sensitive, this may be a good choice for you. The velocity and bullet design should be adequate for expansion in flesh even after penetrating heavy clothing, yet the kick isn't bad at all.

For a thoroughly unconventional ammunition choice, take a look at Liberty Ammunition's 50-grain Civil Defense load. This lightweight round is loaded to +P pressures and throws a nickel-jacketed copper hollow point downrange at nearly 2,000 fps from the Creed. While heavy-bullet, high-pressure loads produce more felt recoil than many of the lighter offerings, the recoil was very light with the Liberty load. In fact, the felt recoil was so light I would not have thought I was shooting a 9mm handgun if I hadn't loaded it myself. The downside is that the round does produce a louder report and more flash than the other loads I tested.

The accuracy was good with all loads. At ranges of 7 to 10 yards, I was able to put rounds into a 6-inch circle as fast as I could pull the trigger. With slower, more deliberate fire, five-shot groups of about an inch were possible. The most accurate rounds were Hornady's 124-grain American Gunner XTPs. This load uses a hollow point bullet that I've found to be a reliably accurate bullet in all of the calibers and weights I have tried. With this load, I got a best five-shot group of about 0.75 inches.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While the talking point on the Creed might be the price, for me the bottom line is the top-notch reliability of the gun. As I've stated, for personal protection, I demand a gun that will work when I need it. The Creed proved itself in this regard. That the gun is both easy shooting and accurate further enhance its usefulness for self-defense. The sub-\$400 price tag means that more people will have a good gun on hand should evil come calling. For that, the company should be lauded. For more, call 479-242-8500 or visit waltherarms.com.

Editor's Note: To see the Walther Creed in action, visit tactical-life.com and personaldefenseworld.com. 

PERFORMANCE		
WALTHER CREED		
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Hornady 124 American Gunner XTP	1,108	0.75
Liberty 50 Civil Defense +P	1,197	1.12
Sig Sauer 115 V-Crown JHP	1,162	0.98
BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 7 YARDS.		



The Walther Creed ran over 1,000 rounds of 9mm ammunition from 13 different makers flawlessly, which is absolutely impressive for such an affordable defensive pistol.

production costs without affecting the reliability or durability of the Creed. For example, the amount of machining done on the slide appears to be substantially less than that of the more expensive PPX. This shouldn't affect reliability—just appearances.

RANGE TIME

Before I go any further, I want to make sure that I am very clear on this point: Based on the production gun I had for review, the Walther Creed is a very reliable, accurate firearm that is perfectly suited for self-defense use. For a self-defense pistol, I insist on reliability. Accuracy, recoil, hand fit and everything else are also important, but if the gun is not reliable, it has no place in a self-defense role. The Creed proved utterly dependable while also being completely capable in the other areas I

value in a quality defensive firearm.

With a little more than 1,000 rounds through the gun, I had no malfunctions of any kind. Not a single one. I tested 13 different 9mm loads. From hyper-velocity 50-grain hollow points to 147-grain subsonic loads, the gun ran all of them without a hitch. That is excellent performance at any price.

To start my range time with this gun, I put 150 rounds of Sig Sauer's 115-grain FMJ practice load through the pistol to warm it up and see where it was hitting. After another 150 rounds of 124-grain ball ammo, I then got to testing the pistol with all kinds of personal-defense ammunition.

Sig's 115-grain V-Crown jacketed hollow points are standard-pressure rounds that offered little recoil yet moved at a fairly zippy 1,162 fps on average. This load also turned in good

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◀ **DOUBLESTAR C26**



◀ **HECKLER & KOCH HK45**



◀ **DAN WESSON BRUIN**



**SCOFF IF YOU MUST,
BUT THESE THREE GEMS
ARE READY TO BUCK THE
TREND ON WHITETAILS**

BY JAY PINSKY

.45 FOR DEER?

MY FAVORITE HANDGUNS are chambered for the .45 ACP. I like using that round in 1911s, polymer-framed pistols and everything in between. I know there are faster choices. I know there are more powerful choices. But I like the .45 ACP.

I also absolutely love to hunt. I hunt just about anything and everything I can, mostly in my home state of Virginia. I like to hunt with a rifle and a bow. I tend to do more bowhunting these days and enjoy the challenge of getting as close as I can, and then one more yard, before I shoot. This philosophy would serve me well after I decided to learn to hunt whitetails with .45 ACP pistols.

BASIC BALLISTICS

Within a nanosecond of this idea, I did a reality check by reaching out to a few industry experts. Neal Emery at Hornady was the first person I talked to, and he had a lot to say. For hunting deer, Emery recommended I use the caffeinated stuff, or +P loads, that Hornady developed.

What is +P ammunition? It's ammunition that has been loaded to pressures above industry standards but below the redline of SAAMI "proof" pressures. In short, +P loads give you more velocity. For example, the fastest .45 ACP load I shot was Hornady's 220-grain Critical

DoubleStar's C2G comes equipped with a match-grade barrel, Novak three-dot sights, aggressively checkered VZ Gunner grips, a Picatinny rail and a Dragon Hyde DLC finish to help resist corrosion.



Duty FlexLock +P, which screamed out of my 6.3-inch-barreled Dan Wesson Bruin at a chart-topping 1,130 fps, which is 158 fps faster at the muzzle than Hornady's standard 200-grain XTP load, which of course is a lighter bullet.

Emery suggested the loads with more speed to help me get better penetration with such a big bullet, stating that the lower velocities of a round like the .45 ACP, with such a big frontal area, limit penetration even before accounting for bullet expansion. His final words of advice: "I wouldn't hesitate to use [the .45 ACP], but I definitely wouldn't stretch the shots out very far."

On that note, I decided to set a personal limit of 25 yards regardless of the gun, ammunition or my skillset come hunting season on white-tails here in Virginia. I'm sure many of you will say that's still too far, and still others will boast about clean kills at double or even triple that range. Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the good folks who set and enforce our local hunting regulations, have their own standards for handgun hunting: "Pistols and revolvers are lawful for deer and bear hunting only in those counties where hunting deer and bear with rifles is lawful. Cartridges used must be .23 caliber or larger and have a manufacturer's rating of 350 foot-pounds muzzle energy or more."

Based on the tested and verified velocities of the best hunting loads in all three of the guns I tested, I was well within the legal requirements

SPECIFICATIONS

DOUBLESTAR C2G

Caliber:	.45 ACP
Barrel:	5 inches
OA Length:	8.75 inches
Weight:	39 ounces (empty)
Grips:	VZ Gunner
Sights:	Novak three-dot
Action:	SA
Finish:	Dragon Hyde DLC
Capacity:	8+1
MSRP:	\$1,929





SPECIFICATIONS

DAN WESSON BRUIN

Caliber:	.45 ACP
Barrel:	6.3 inches
OA Length:	9.7 inches
Weight:	43.9 ounces (empty)
Grips:	G10
Sights:	Adjustable tritium
Action:	SA
Finish:	Matte black
Capacity:	8+1
MSRP:	\$2,194

even out to 100 yards, with the best performance coming from the Hornady 220-grain Critical Duty FlexLock +P rounds out of the Dan Wesson Bruin, providing 624 foot-pounds of energy (fpe) at the muzzle and still arriving at 100 yards with 475 fpe at 986 fps. The least powerful performance came from the shortest barrel in the HK45, which shot the Hornady 230-grain XTP +P rounds at 950 fps and 461 fpe at the muzzle and 871 fps and 388 fpe at 100 yards. While other hunting loads were faster, the Hornady 230-grain XTP +P grouped very well from the HK45 at 0.59 inches at 25 yards, and I'll choose accuracy over speed whenever I can. Still, 25 yards was the rule for me. Not only did I keep this promise, but it changed the way I think about hunting overall. But more on that later.

You'll notice that the first thing I talked about were my bullet choices. Why? Because when you're talking about hunting with a .45 ACP—and really any hunt with any caliber—what bullet you choose and how well you place it matters far more than the manufacturer's name on the boom stick you have in your hand. What gun you choose does matter, though. And I'm all about a handgun's fit and feel for hunting.

DOUBLESTAR C2G

The first handgun I decided to use was a superbly built 1911—DoubleStar's C2G. The company had dazzled me with a silky-smooth

Sporting a 6.3-inch barrel to get the most out of your .45 ACP ammo while offering a longer sight radius, the Bruin also features an adjustable rear sight, a high-swept beavertail and G10 grip panels.



AR-15 a few years back, so when I found out DoubleStar made a .45 ACP, I knew I wouldn't be disappointed. And I wasn't, as the full-sized 1911 instantly became my carry gun. It's what inspired this whole story.

The DoubleStar C2G sports a match-grade, stainless steel, 5-inch barrel, Novak three-dot sights, VZ Gunner grips, a forged steel frame, a Picatinny rail and an eight-round magazine. My pistol's trigger broke reliably at 4.5 pounds according to my RCBS trigger pull gauge, and the gun has never failed to cycle anything I've fed it. The single-action pistol is black and coated in what DoubleStar calls its Dragon Hyde DLC finish. I've put thousands of rounds through this gun, and it still looks like new. I've drawn and holstered it hundreds of times, banged it against brush, trees and dirt and hunted with it in the rain with absolutely no problems. The best part of the pistol for me—and the part of the gun I remember the most—are the sharp, aggressive VZ Gunner grips. They really keep my hands glued to the pistol and on target, whether I'm shooting light duty rounds or +P loads. The gun's clean shape, solid fit and reliable accuracy make me a very confident shooter.

At the range, the DoubleStar C2G shot quite well, grouping three Black Hills 230-grain FMJs into 0.81 inches at 25 yards from a rest with an average muzzle velocity of 865 fps. With the hunting ammunition, the best group, measuring

“Hunting deer with a handgun where you set a limit to 25 yards or less means you have to hone your stealth as much as your shot.”

While the slide and frame on the author's HK45 are sand colored, the controls—including the DA/SA trigger and ambidextrous slide and magazine releases—are black for a stylish contrast.



1.12 inches, came with Hornady's 220-grain Critical Duty FlexLock +P rounds with an average muzzle velocity of 1,062 fps.

DAN WESSON BRUIN

The next pistol I tested was the Dan Wesson Bruin, which sports a 6.3-inch barrel. The longer barrel gives shooters a better sight radius and adds a little pep to your ammunition. That 1.3-inch difference in barrel length translated to higher velocities over the DoubleStar C2G. For example, the 220-grain Hornady +P load clocked in at 1,062 fps from the C2G and a whopping 1,130 fps on average from the Bruin. Remember, Neal Emery recommended the most speed possible for the .45 ACP, and this is where the Dan Wesson Bruin shines.

The Bruin holds eight rounds in its magazine just like the DoubleStar, but its grips are made of G10, and it has tritium sights, a forged stainless steel body and a tough “Duty” finish. The trigger on my test model was just as crisp and equal to the DoubleStar in pull weight at 4.5 pounds, but it shot the tightest groups on average out of all three handguns. The best group came with the Black Hills 230-grain FMJs, measuring 0.57 inches for three shots at 25 yards with an average velocity of 930 fps. Hornady's 220-grain +P load clustered three shots into 0.94 inches at an average of 1,130 fps.

In all, the Bruin is a silky-smooth handgun designed to give hunters the maximum benefits a 1911 platform will allow with a long, slick barrel, clear sights and a trigger crisper than Kentucky Fried Chicken. That extra inch of barrel matters in more ways than one, though, as its balance, holster fit and pointability differ considerably from what most folks know a 1911 to be, so make sure you're ready for it.

HECKLER & KOCH HK45

Last but not least, I added my favorite polymer-framed pistol to the mix with Heckler & Koch's HK45. While both the DoubleStar and Dan




SPECIFICATIONS	
HECKLER & KOCH HK45	
Caliber:	.45 ACP
Barrel:	4.46 inches
OA Length:	8.03 inches
Weight:	31.2 ounces (empty)
Grip:	Polymer
Sights:	Fixed
Action:	DA/SA
Finish:	Sand
Capacity:	10+1
MSRP:	\$1,199

Wesson 1911s are well-machined works of art, the HK45 is the gun I carry the most, shoot the most and beat on the most. Why? It fits my hands like a pair of Isotoner gloves and shoots softer than the other two guns, although they weigh more. The pistol's slide, decocker, exposed hammer, gorgeously bright sights and wide, easy-to-feed magazine well all pull me to this gun time and time again.

The HK45 wasn't the most accurate overall, but it was accurate enough, and it shot the tightest group with a hunting load of all the guns, which surprised me. With the Hornady 230-grain XTP +P ammo, the HK45 created a best three-shot group measuring 0.6 inches at 25 yards with an average velocity of 950 fps. It wasn't the fastest, but it was fast enough. This gun fed and shot everything I could find, and it worked well covered in mud, soaking wet, above freezing, below it. As long as I fired the gun in single action, the trigger was just fine with its 5.25-pound pull.

IN THE FIELD

For two months, I rotated each of the three guns through hunting opportunities to allow Lady Luck to choose which gun landed my first handgun harvest. I got hold-your-breath close during the rut when I played hide-and-go-seek with a mature buck. I grunted the deer to within 50 yards and even drew the DoubleStar 1911, but that old, wise buck kept circling me until I flinched, making a mistake on wind and getting busted before he met my requirement of being within 25 yards. It was still a great hunt. A few weeks later, I pulled my HK45 out on a doe who never let me see her vitals despite being only 10 yards away in the woods.

Hunting deer with a handgun where you set a limit to 25 yards or less means you have to hone your stealth as much as your shot. I'm still working on both, so the only happy ending for this story is for the deer—for now. The deadline for this story came before the end of deer season here in Virginia, so I am hoping to add an author's note about which gun got me my first deer with a handgun. If not, there's always next year. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

DAN WESSON

danwessonfirearms.com; 607-336-1174

DOUBLESTAR

star15.com; 859-745-1757

HECKLER & KOCH

hk-usa.com; 706-568-1906



PERFORMANCE

DAN WESSON BRUIN

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 230 FMJ	930	0.57
Black Hills 230 JHP	925	1.01
Gorilla 230 Silverback HP	880	0.89
Hornady 200 XTP	972	0.94
Hornady 220 Critical Duty FlexLock +P	1,130	1.05
Hornady 230 XTP +P	1,000	1.33

DOUBLESTAR C2G

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 230 FMJ	865	0.81
Black Hills 230 JHP	904	1.76
Gorilla 230 Silverback HP	829	1.18
Hornady 200 XTP	903	1.44
Hornady 220 Critical Duty FlexLock +P	1,062	1.12
Hornady 230 XTP +P	955	1.39

HECKLER & KOCH HK45

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 230 FMJ	842	1.41
Black Hills 230 JHP	876	1.73
Gorilla 230 Silverback HP	752	1.51
Hornady 200 XTP	882	1.44
Hornady 220 Critical Duty FlexLock +P	1,014	1.33
Hornady 230 XTP +P	950	0.60

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST THREE-SHOT GROUPS AT 25 YARDS.



GET YOUR 1911 ON

Don't let this "expert's gun" scare you off!
Running this classic just takes some practice

BY MICHELLE CERINO

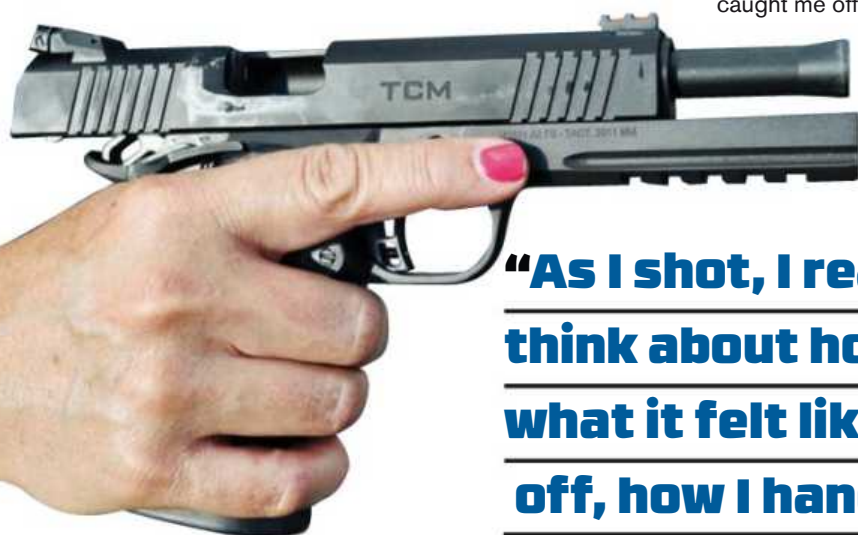
MANY FRIENDS AND EVEN ACQUAINTANCES enjoy giving their two cents to any new shooter interested in purchasing her first pistol. Most have very strong opinions that consist of the words "never" and "always." When I began shooting, I learned with a Smith & Wesson M&P9. It had no manual safety, a polymer frame and about a 5.5-pound trigger pull. When I helped teach classes, students would sometimes show up with the infamous Model 1911. I'll admit, at first I looked at the 1911 like a frog looking at a wristwatch. Why would anyone want to shoot that? It's so heavy, and how can you be sure to always engage the safety? What's so good about a gun that originated in the late 1890s?

To help get a better understanding of the 1911, I began asking people in our classes or at competitions about 1911s. Most of the people I questioned liked to preach to me, or just give me opinions like "It's the best gun ever made and the only kind I will shoot." Or, "It's old technology. I don't know why anyone would want to still carry that."

I decided to do a little hands-on research by making the move to a 1911. I chose the Springfield Range Officer in 9mm and used it at this past year's Crawfish Cup and the famed Bianchi Cup.

LEARNING THE DESIGN

The first time I picked up someone's 1911, its weight caught me off guard. It felt much heavier than I expected. Most striker-fired guns have polymer frames. This makes them physically lighter to carry and less fatiguing to hold for firing. The 1911's all-metal frame almost doubles the



"As I shot, I really tried to think about how the gun felt—what it felt like when it went off, how I handled the recoil."



ABOVE: It's important to practice holding your 1911 with a high thumbs-forward grip so you can disengage the thumb safety as you draw the pistol.

LEFT: The 1911 platform might be over 100 years old, but modern builds like the STI Elektra (shown) offer plenty of custom features to suit all shooters.

while you draw, and it must be reengaged when you holster your gun. The grip safety can be an issue if your hands are small or you're not used to having a high grip. Thankfully, since I use a high thumbs-forward grip, it only took a short while to get used to.

With a high thumbs-forward grip, my thumb sits right on top of the thumb safety on the draw so I can disengage it on the way to the target. My thumb

remains there the entire time I shoot. Once I am done firing, my thumb moves under the safety and pops it back up to engage it. My thumb stays "hitchhiked" while reholstering the pistol. On my next draw, I repeat the process.

A word of advice for those not used to a high thumbs-forward grip: If you place your thumb beneath the safety when firing, there is a good chance you'll bump it up from recoil and engage it. Of course, this will prevent you from firing your next round. This is actually a common issue on the training range.

TRIGGER TIME

The first 1911 I handled was a student's gun. Thankfully, this took place while safely dry firing, as it had a 2.5-pound competition trigger that completely caught me off guard. Honestly, it felt like I just touched the trigger—I don't even remember applying pressure. His 1911 had a light trigger for competition, and factory 1911 triggers typically weigh between 3.5 and 5.5 pounds. But still, what a difference! The trigger press is straight to the rear

weight by comparison. I needed to know why someone would choose a heavier gun.

For those who shoot competitively, a heavier gun has its advantages. The more the gun weighs, the less felt recoil it generally has. This means the muzzle and sights settle back on the target quicker, which translates to faster follow-up shots. The grip angle felt fine to me, too, but I still had my concerns.

My striker-fired semi-autos do not have manual safeties, and other than on my AR-15, I haven't had to deal with them much. On the other hand, 1911s have thumb and grip safeties. Learning to manipulate the thumb safety every time takes practice. The thumb safety is disengaged

Sean Utley Photo



A 1911-style pistol like the DoubleStar PHD in .45 ACP makes sense for home defense because of its ergonomics, stopping power and crisp trigger.

instead of the mechanical lever found in other pistols. It's almost like a button.

As I mentioned before, my pistols have a trigger weight around 5.5 pounds with a decent amount of pre-travel before the trigger actually engages and the shot breaks. My 1911 came with a 2.5-pound trigger and very little pre-travel. I touch the trigger before I shoot, squeezing through the pre-travel before the shot breaks. This takes lots of repetitions drawing and dry firing before heading out to the range for live fire. Knowing your trigger—how it feels and works—makes all the difference in the world. With a little practice, I came to appreciate the 1911's crisp, consistent trigger.

MAGAZINE CAPACITY

Whether competing in 3-Gun or getting involved in a gunfight, magazine capacity

HOW I LEARNED THE 1911

When learning a new firearm, I will generally do some dry-fire practice. This allows me to really concentrate on what I am doing, thinking through each step without any visual distractions. I may even close my eyes to focus on what I feel. I also have a tendency to talk to myself as I practice (and many times when I shoot). This verbalization helps me remember important steps like disengaging the safety. Finally, when learning a new trigger, I like to watch my trigger press. Knowing exactly what it looks like helps me when I start missing shots during competition. I know what I need to feel, how it should look and I repeat to myself, "Press the trigger." For the 1911:

1. I began by working on the safeties and practicing my draw. I practiced making sure to disengage the safety on the way out of the holster, and reengaging it once I made the conscience decision to stop shooting. This had to become a habit, part of my gear manipulation.

2. Dry fire, dry fire, dry fire. Holding the pistol in my hand, I watched my

trigger press. Then I closed my eyes and felt the trigger press. I kept racking the slide and dry firing until I could confidently touch the trigger without the handgun going off inadvertently.

3. I practiced drawing and pressing the trigger with the goal of consistently disengaging the safeties and not having any unexpected shots. I practiced this until I was confidently and successfully handling the 1911-style pistol.



4. Now I was ready for live fire at the range. You should always dry fire a couple of times before going live. I did this quite a few times, making sure I worked the safeties successfully every time.

5. Once confident I could successfully run my 1911, I loaded live rounds. Since this was the first time I was shooting my 1911, I shot close-in targets. As I shot, I really tried to think about how the gun felt—what it felt like when it went off, how I handled the recoil. My goal was to shoot smoothly, not quickly.

6. After a few days of shooting my Springfield and feeling confident in my motor program, I started shooting for distance.

7. Finally, the time came to increase my speed. Before ever heading back to the range, I practiced dry firing at home first with a timer. It took many days at the range before I started shooting for distance and speed. Then I began my training for the Crawfish and Bianchi Cups with the NRA's Action Pistol course of fire.

—Michelle Cerino

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matters to me. I could not figure out why anyone would want to carry such a big, heavy gun with so few rounds. The 1911 was designed to use single-stack magazines that hold anywhere from seven to 10 rounds, plus one in the chamber, of course.

This is when I was introduced to “wide-body” competition 1911s. These are double-stack guns with higher capacities and typically longer slides and barrels. Some of these guns even sport polymer frames. All I could say at the time was “Wow!” These 1911s are very pleasant and fun to shoot with out-of-this-world accuracy. Knowing how to run the 1911 platform now allowed me to appreciate these “hot rods.”

HISTORY IN YOUR HANDS

They say people will often mock what they do not understand, and I often mocked the 1911 due to my lack of

WANT MORE? >>>>>>>>

Now that you're primed to get into 1911s, check out **Athlon Outdoors'** latest issue of *Model 1911: America's Handgun*. The 2017 edition is packed with the latest information on new guns, tactics and related gear. Order your copy today at outdoorgroupstore.com.



knowledge. But this process was eye-opening and educational for me. Many misconceptions were dispelled, and I learned quite a few new aspects of the platform. The 1911 is a dedicated weapon system that requires specific knowledge, training and maintenance. However, I probably won't carry one for personal protection due to its weight, capacity and manual safeties. I also don't find the .45 ACP very pleasant to shoot, and I will probably stick to the 9mm as my primary caliber of choice.

What I found out is that the 1911 is truly an amazing platform, and I no lon-

ger wonder why it's so popular among shooting enthusiasts. From classic single-stacks to competitive double-stacks and everything in between, you can buy or build a 1911 to meet your needs. With all of the 1911 models and accessories on the market, you could own two dozen of them, and not one would look like the other.

Although I'm not ready to toss out my striker-fired guns, I will take the opportunity to admire and fire any 1911 that comes my way just to feel the history and luxury of 100-plus years of nearly unchanged engineering. **CH**

THE 1911 SPECTRUM

Although I primarily trained and competed with the Springfield Range Officer, I began to acquire and fire many other 1911s.

1 The Rock Island Armory TCM TAC Ultra FS HC Combo is a wide-body, double-stack 1911 that can be converted to fire either 9mm or .22 TCM rounds. This is a fun gun to shoot. Although it's a little heavy, the recoil from .22 TCM rounds was non-existent. Of course, the 9mm conversion is more economical, and changing the chambering is easy to accomplish. The fiber-optic front sight and black rear sight are a bonus. (armscor.com; 775-537-1444)

2 The Springfield Range Officer 9mm came straight from the factory with great features. The 2.5-pound factory trigger, fiber-optic front sight and adjustable, all-black rear sight were all I needed to shoot this gun well. The gun also holds 10+1 rounds, making it right up my alley, and it's easy to get fast hits with. (springfield-armory.com; 800-680-6866)

3 The DoubleStar PHD (Personal Home Defense) is probably the most well-built factory 1911 I've handled. You could tell this gun is hand-built the moment you touch it. This 1911's excellent trigger, fit and finish make it a must-see for anyone who knows 1911s. The downside for me is that it currently only comes in .45 ACP. (star15.com; 859-745-1757) —Michelle Cerino





ATHLON OUTDOORS

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BY ANDY MASSIMILIAN

PHOTOS BY SEAN UTLEY



THE M&P SERIES is the flagship of Smith & Wesson's handgun line, with models in four sizes (long-slide, full-sized, compact, subcompact) and in several calibers: .22 LR, 9mm, .40 S&W, .357 SIG and .45 ACP. The M&P pistols evolved from the Sigma series, which the company designed to compete with other polymer-framed pistols on the market. For several reasons, however, the Sigma never was a big success. In contrast, the M&P pistols are engineered differently and are essentially much better. Though both models were originally made simultaneously, the more durable and full-featured M&P prevailed while the Sigma was discontinued.

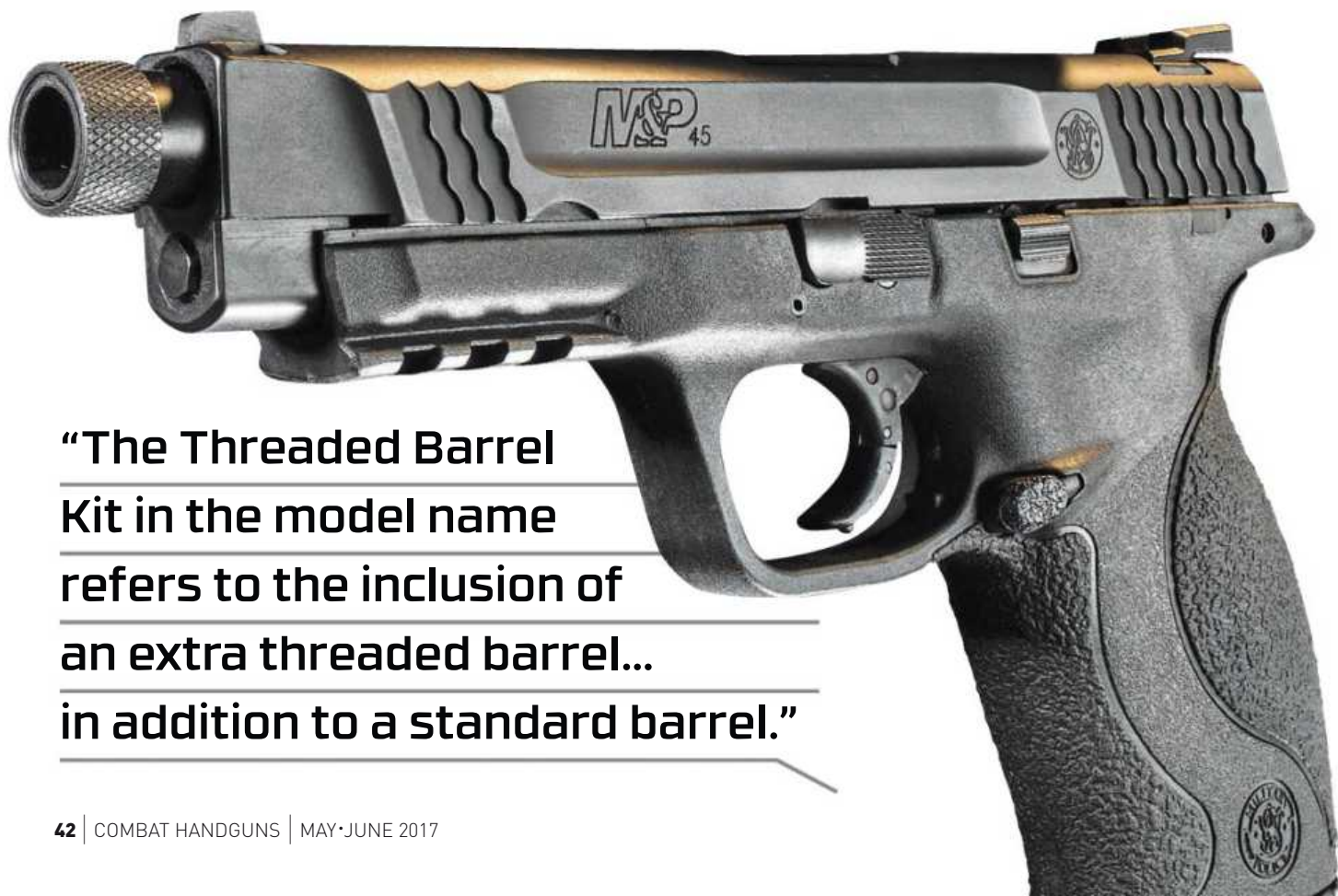
Firearms equipped from the factory with threaded barrels to mount sound suppressors have become much more prevalent in recent years, and though the trend seems to have taken hold more so with rifles, suppressor-ready pistols like the M&P45 Threaded Barrel Kit are now widely available. The Threaded Barrel Kit in the model name refers to the inclusion of an extra threaded barrel (with a thread protector) in addition to a standard barrel. The kit adds \$120 to the MSRP over the base model, which saves you \$55 over purchasing a separate barrel from Smith & Wesson.

VERSATILE M&P45

The M&P45 uses a striker-fired trigger system similar in mechanics to other polymer-framed pistols. The striker is partially cocked by the operation of the slide, and pressing the trigger fully cocks and releases it to fire the pistol. This is essentially a double-action design since the action of the trigger both cocks and releases the striker. The M&P45 also has a trigger designed to be “drop safe” since it only moves rearward if depressed and pivoted in such a way that it can move rearward. The M&P45 design, however, departs significantly from polymer-framed handguns in all other respects. And though the M&P45 Threaded Barrel Kit does not come with a manual thumb safety, Smith & Wesson offers other M&Ps with them.

The full-sized M&P45 shares certain features used in the M&P CORE and Shield designs. These pistols all use a stainless steel chassis with integral slide rails instead of molded-in inserts to stiffen the polymer frame. Also, the action parts (e.g., the slide lock levers) and locking block are also directly connected to this chassis. This steel-to-steel connection is distinct from many other polymer-framed designs that rely on parts independently molded into a plastic frame rather than connected in one unit.

The pistol's 5.18-inch barrel sports 0.578x28 threading, and Smith & Wesson includes a knurled thread protector. The M&P45 also comes with three-dot sights that are a bit too short to use over the top of a mounted sound suppressor.



“The Threaded Barrel Kit in the model name refers to the inclusion of an extra threaded barrel... in addition to a standard barrel.”

SPECIFICATIONS

SMITH & WESSON M&P45 THREADED BARREL KIT

Caliber:	.45 ACP
Barrels:	4.5 and 5.18 inches
OA Length:	8 inches
Weight:	29.6 ounces (empty)
Grip:	Polymer
Sights:	Three-dot
Action:	Striker-fired
Finish:	Matte black
Capacity:	10+1
MSRP:	\$719

The use of steel in the M&P's sights and recoil spring guide rods, for instance, are two elements of this pistol's more durable design compared to pistols that use plastic. The M&P45 also has a Melonite finish on the slide, sights, extractor and barrel—inside and out—which has proven to be a very durable finish.

Field-stripping the M&P45 is simple but requires an additional step—pushing the sear downward so that it does not engage the striker and keep the slide from being removed. After removing the magazine and ensuring the chamber is empty, lock the slide to the rear and look downward, into the open action, to locate a small metal tab painted yellow. This tab must be pushed downward, which presses the sear out of alignment with the rear of the striker. Now rotate the takedown lever and pull the slide assembly forward, off the frame. Though the tab is small and seems flimsy, it has no func-

The slide, barrel and extractor are coated inside and out with Melonite for enhanced corrosion resistance. Also note that the pistol uses a steel recoil spring guide rod that holds the spring captive during disassembly.



tion other than to allow disassembly: There's no need to be concerned about breakage rendering your pistol inoperable in a gunfight.

The M&P45 has a very well-designed grip that came about from an extensive research and development investment made on Smith & Wesson's part. Smith & Wesson's engineers determined that an 18-degree grip angle was ideal for instinctively pointing a pistol, and subsequently incorporated it into all of the full-sized and compact M&P series pistols.

The M&P45's grip panel can be changed to fit the shooter's hand by simply removing a pin from the base of the frame and then removing the grip panel. While changing backstraps alone will adjust the trigger reach, it won't address palm fit, which is a major factor in comfort. With the M&P45, the three grip panels add to the trigger reach and also adjust the grip's girth. This is the only pistol where the user can adjust side thickness and backstrap width that I know of other than HK's P30, HK45 and VP series pistols. Smith & Wesson also got it right with the contour of the grip side panels. They fit the curve of your hand rather than being flat-sided.

Changing the size of the grip panel improves comfort, but the more important aspect is to find





Flu Grant Photo

a panel that positions your finger on the trigger in a way that your trigger stroke goes straight to the rear without disturbing the sights. Find out what size works best by dry-firing using all three grips, and don't assume that the panel that feels the best is the best for trigger control. A laser-aiming device like the Streamlight TLR-2 HL I use works well for this exercise because you can see exactly how much the pistol moves as you work the trigger. When you find the right one, be mindful that there may be tradeoffs between choosing the best trigger stroke and how easily you can access the magazine release and slide lock lever.

RANGE TI-RANT

To measure the M&P45 Threaded Barrel Kit's inherent accuracy, I used the standard, non-threaded 4.5-inch barrel and a rest to fire three 230-grain FMJ loads from Black Hills, Remington and Winchester. I also ran the pistol with the threaded 5.18-inch barrel and an Advanced Armament Corporation Ti-RANT 45S suppressor. I tested the pistol's reliability using several brands of ammo, including those with hollow-point bullets, and there were no stoppages or malfunctions with any of the loads, with or without the sound suppressor.

All three FMJ loads shot accurately, with the smallest five-shot group of 1.4 inches being delivered with the Black Hills ammo, followed by the Remington and Winchester loads at 1.7 and 2.5 inches, respectively. The Black Hills load was match grade, as the results reflected. Also, this is a full-power load, so it had a 43-fps

In testing, the M&P45 Threaded Barrel Kit ran flawlessly with and without a titanium, 9.3-ounce AAC Ti-RANT 45S sound suppressor mounted. The gun also uses stainless steel, 10-round magazines (below) with witness holes.



higher average velocity than the more economical Winchester-brand practice ammo.

The M&P45's trigger pull weighed just over 7 pounds, according to my Lyman digital trigger pull gauge. Its take-up and creep were typical of many striker-fired pistols where the striker is partially cocked by the cycling of the slide and fully cocked and released by action of the trigger.

You might be wondering how much of an uptick in velocity to expect from using the threaded 5.18-inch barrel over the standard 4.5-inch barrel. I conducted an informal test with the Remington and Winchester loads. The results showed that the average increase in velocity from the extra barrel length was only 6 fps for the Remington load and 39 fps for the Winchester. The increase in velocity was greater, however, when comparing the velocity with the standard barrel to the threaded barrel with the AAC Ti-RANT 45S suppressor in place. Here the increase was 43 and 97 fps for the Remington and Winchester loads, respectively. This increase, as expected, results from the bullet losing frictional contact with the barrel but still accelerating from the forces of gas pressure within the suppressor.

The AAC Ti-RANT 45S is the shorter version of the original Ti-RANT 45. I own both versions but prefer the shorter model because it usually provides less of a point-of-impact (POI) shift. The POI shift is the change in the place a bullet strikes the target when a suppressor is mounted to the firearm. With the M&P45, the POI shifted directly downward by about 4 to 5 inches at 20 yards with the suppressor attached.

“The M&P45 Threaded Barrel Kit comes with a lifetime warranty and offers additional features, very good durability and a very good grip.”

The exact shift was difficult to quantify because the sights on the M&P45 are low profile, and it's hard to obtain a good sight picture because the sound suppressor gets in the way. High-profile sights would rectify this, but even after an exhaustive search, I could not locate any that could be installed without additional machining on the slide. One solution is to remove both the front and rear sights using the MGW Sight Pro adjustment tool and install an optical sight at the rear, like the Leupold DeltaPoint. I have used the MGW Sight Pro tool for replacing and drifting dovetail-mounted sights on several pistols and find it does the job without damaging the slide and with a certain degree of precision.



QUIET RIOT


The M&P45 Threaded Barrel Kit comes with a lifetime warranty and offers additional features, very good durability and a very good grip. All of this adds up to make it competitive with other polymer-

PERFORMANCE

SMITH & WESSON M&P45 THREADED BARREL KIT

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 230 FMJ	814	1.40
Remington 230 FMJ	789	1.70
Winchester 230 FMJ	768	2.50

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 25 YARDS.

framed pistols. Though suppressor-height sights would be a big enhancement for this pistol, the additional threaded barrel offers a significant cost savings. For more, visit smith-wesson.com or call 800-331-0852. 

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RUGER LCP II



CALIBER
.380 ACP

BARREL
2.75 inches

OAL LENGTH
5.17 inches

WEIGHT
10.6 ounces
(empty)

GRIP
Glass-filled
nylon

SIGHTS
Fixed

ACTION
SA

FINISH
Matte black

CAPACITY
6+1

MSRP
\$349



Two .380 ACP pocket pistols with 21st century features duke it out

BY GARRETT LUCAS

One of the most prolific and innovative firearms designers of the 20th century, John Moses Browning brought a host of inventions that revolutionized the firearms industry. His designs were so pivotal that many are still in use today.

His biggest contribution to the industry was the development of semi-automatic and fully automatic firearms,

bringing to market the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), the .50-caliber Browning machine gun, the Browning Hi-Power, the Browning Auto-5 shotgun and the highly celebrated Model 1911.

His influence extends beyond these legendary arms, though, and his efforts are still reflected in a significant segment of today's products. One example is the still very popular .380

ACP round. Yes, the man who brought us the venerable .45 ACP, the stuff of legends, also brought the somewhat diminutive .380 to the world via handguns that were a bit more discreet and imminently easier to carry.

.380 BASICS

Introduced in 1908, the .380 ACP round was designed to be fired from the new Colt Model 1908 Pocket Hammerless. Soon after, the caliber became a huge success and was used not only by consumers, but also militaries and police agencies around the world for decades to come.

By today's standards, especially here in the states, the .380 ACP round is eschewed by some experts as being anemic in comparison to more powerful offerings like the 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. Even the most ardent supporters will admit that the .380 ACP is the absolute floor for a reliable defensive weapon.

With advances in metallurgy and today's polymer technologies, new

BERETTA PICO

CALIBER
 .380 ACP

BARREL
 2.7 inches

OAL LENGTH
 5.1 inches

WEIGHT
 11.5 ounces
 (empty)

GRIP
 Polymer

SIGHTS
 Three-dot

ACTION
 DAO

FINISH
 Matte black,
 Inox

CAPACITY
 6+1

MSRP
 \$400



life is continuously breathed into the century-old caliber by making pistols that fire the round lighter, more compact and easier to conceal. Additionally, the improvements made to modern ammunition, specifically hollow-point rounds, have enhanced the .380 ACP's terminal performance, making it a more viable defensive round than ever.

For a closer look at modern pistols chambered for the .380 ACP, I recently tested the new Ruger LCP II and Beretta Pico side-by-side for this "Tale of the Tape." Both pistols are interpretations of what each company believes to be the ideal, modern, concealed-carry .380 for today's shooters.

RUGER LCP II

Ruger set the concealed-carry market on fire several years back with the introduction of the LCP in .380 ACP. Some believed the .380 ACP had run its course, however, once the 9mm version, the LC9, was released, but Ruger revisited the issue by changing the original pistol and bringing an improved



version online in late 2016.

The specifications for the LCP II include a weight of 10.6 ounces (helped by the glass-filled nylon frame), an overall length of 5.17 inches and a barrel length of 2.75 inches. The LCP is also just 3.71 inches tall and 0.75 inches wide. Both the barrel and slide are blued, and the included six-round magazine has an extended finger rest just long enough so shooters can comfortably control the pistol.

Probably the most significant change with the LCP II is the inclusion of the new single-action (SA) trigger versus the double-action-only (DAO) trigger of the original. Still a hammer-

fired pistol, the LCP II's SA trigger pull is quite impressive indeed. With a smooth pull and clean break, my test sample's trigger weighed between 4.5 and 6 pounds depending on where the trigger scale's "finger" was placed on the trigger and integral safety. The average weight came in somewhere around 5.5 pounds, and you really have to try it to fully appreciate how good the trigger is for a pistol of this type.

The LCP II comes with an integral set of low-profile sights. They are all black and not easy to pick up quickly against dark backgrounds, though they are certainly better than just a groove and a front sight. Both the slide release

and the magazine release are unobtrusive but still easily activated without shifting the small pistol around in your hand. Ruger also worked in a good amount of texturing into the grip to ensure a secure purchase on the pistol. The LCP II ships with one magazine and a nice, grippy pocket holster.

BERETTA PICO

Despite being a micro .380 like the LCP II, the Pico has many design differences that definitely set it apart from Ruger's offering. Beretta kept maximum concealability in mind while creating the feature set and specifications list for the diminutive pocket pistol.

Coming in at just 0.73 inches wide, the Pico is the thinnest .380 ACP pistol I've had a chance to handle and shoot. To achieve this measurement, both the magazine release and the slide release are flush with the slide and frame. The Pico is perfectly flat on both sides with no protrusions at all. Other specifications include an unloaded weight of 11.5 ounces, a stainless steel barrel and slide, an overall length of 5.1 inches, a barrel length of 2.7 inches and an overall height of 4 inches.

The Pico's operating system is a DAO affair, meaning every shot requires a long trigger pull, and there's no option for cocking the hammer for an SA shot. The average trigger pull of my test Pico was approximately 11.5 pounds. Of course, some may favor the heavier trigger pull for safety reasons.

The Pico is slightly taller than the Ruger LCP II because it comes with three-dot front and rear sights that are replaceable, though the factory sights are excellent for a pistol of this type. The pistol ships with a sturdy, zip-up carry case and two 6-round magazines. One magazine is flush-fitting while the other has an extended finger rest large enough for the entire grip to accommodate all three of my fingers, though that may vary for individual users.

IN THE RING

I put both of these pistols through their paces at the range with Speer's 90-grain Gold Dot hollow points and Winchester's 95-grain Defend JHP ammunition from the Train & Defend line. As expected, both pistols were



extremely reliable, and neither experienced a malfunction with a total of 300 rounds being fired between the two.

Though the barrel lengths on the Pico and the LCP II are very close, the Pico had faster velocities with both brands of ammunition. The Winchester Defend rounds ran at an average of 886 fps from the LCP II at 15 feet while the same rounds from the Pico registered an average of 914 fps. The Gold Dots came in at 913 fps from the Ruger and 923 fps from the Beretta.

As mentioned, the Pico has a set of extremely nice three-dot sights, and the very first five-shot group from a standing rest at 7 yards was one hole measuring just 0.63 inches. The average of five 5-shot groups for the Winchester and Speer loads came in at 1.62 and 1.41 inches, respectively. Shooting did get a little problematic the more groups I fired because of the heavy trigger pull, which was exacerbated by my trigger finger rubbing against the inside of the

triggerguard and eventually developing a blister after extended use.

The LCP II's accuracy was almost as good from the standing rest with average group sizes of 1.63 and 1.67 inches for the Speer and Winchester rounds, respectively. I attributed the accuracy difference to the LCP II's rather small and basic black sights, which were difficult to pick up against the dark targets. If this were my personal pistol, I would remedy the issue by putting some fluorescent paint or fingernail polish on the front sight.

The Ruger's advantages include the smoother and lighter trigger pull and the larger triggerguard. These factors, despite the factory sights, allowed me to stay on target more easily and maintain better control during rapid follow-up shots.

There were differences between the two pistols in terms of handling characteristics as well. While the Beretta Pico is easy to conceal with its thinner profile, the flush-mounted slide release was difficult to engage and not an ideal arrangement for quick combat reloads. The magazine release on the Pico is ambidextrous, but because of the pistol's small size, I was not able to engage the release effectively without taking my hand almost off the grip entirely and hitting the release on both sides with my thumb and forefinger.

Though the LCP II is slightly wider than the Pico, both the magazine and slide releases were easily engaged

“The Pico offers great sights, a corrosion-resistant stainless slide and barrel, and the relative safety of a heavier DAO trigger.”

quickly without significantly shifting the position of the shooting hand. Giving up a few hundredths of an inch in width for this operability under stress is worth the sacrifice in my opinion.

THE VERDICT

Both pistols are similarly priced if you take into account the cost of a second magazine for the LCP II. The dimensions of both handguns are almost the same, with the Pico weighing an ounce more and being a few tenths of an inch taller with the sights.

The Pico offers great sights, a corrosion-resistant stainless slide and barrel, and the relative safety of a heavier DAO trigger. Conversely, the

Ruger is lighter and more compact, has an exquisitely clean-breaking trigger, and sports controls that are easier to manipulate under stress.

As for the final verdict, I can't make the call. Everyone is different, and it's up to the end-user to decide what they value most in a 21st century .380 pocket pistol. Hopefully, advances will keep being made and these questions will continue to be debated for another century to come. **CH**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

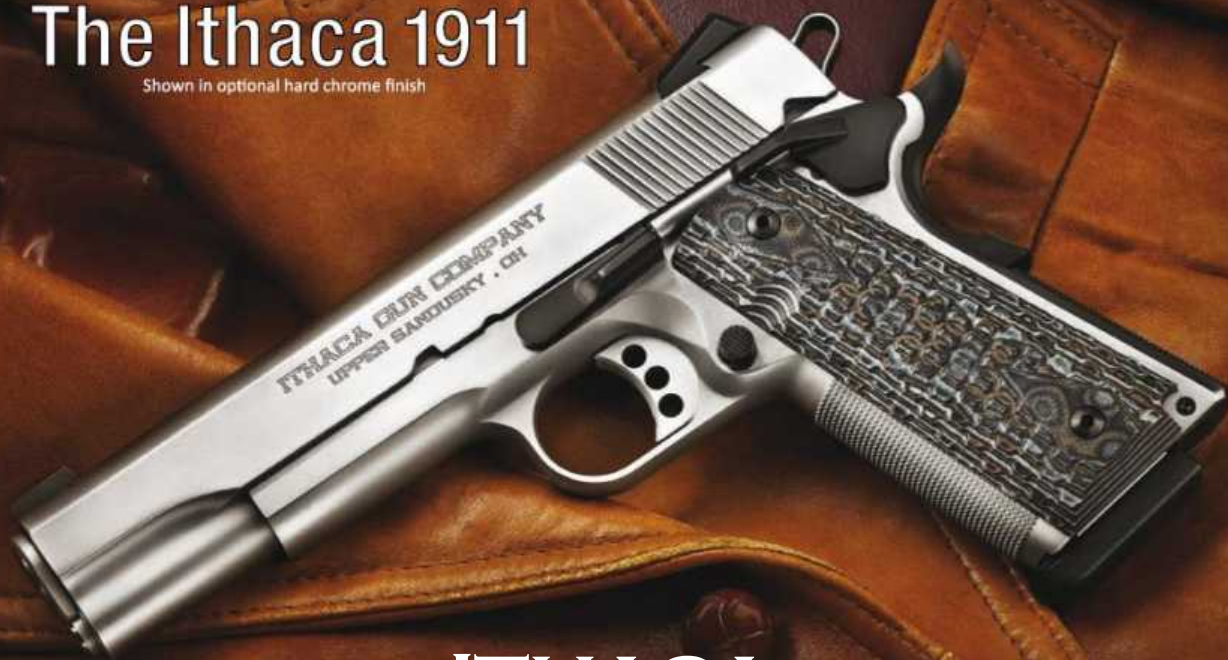
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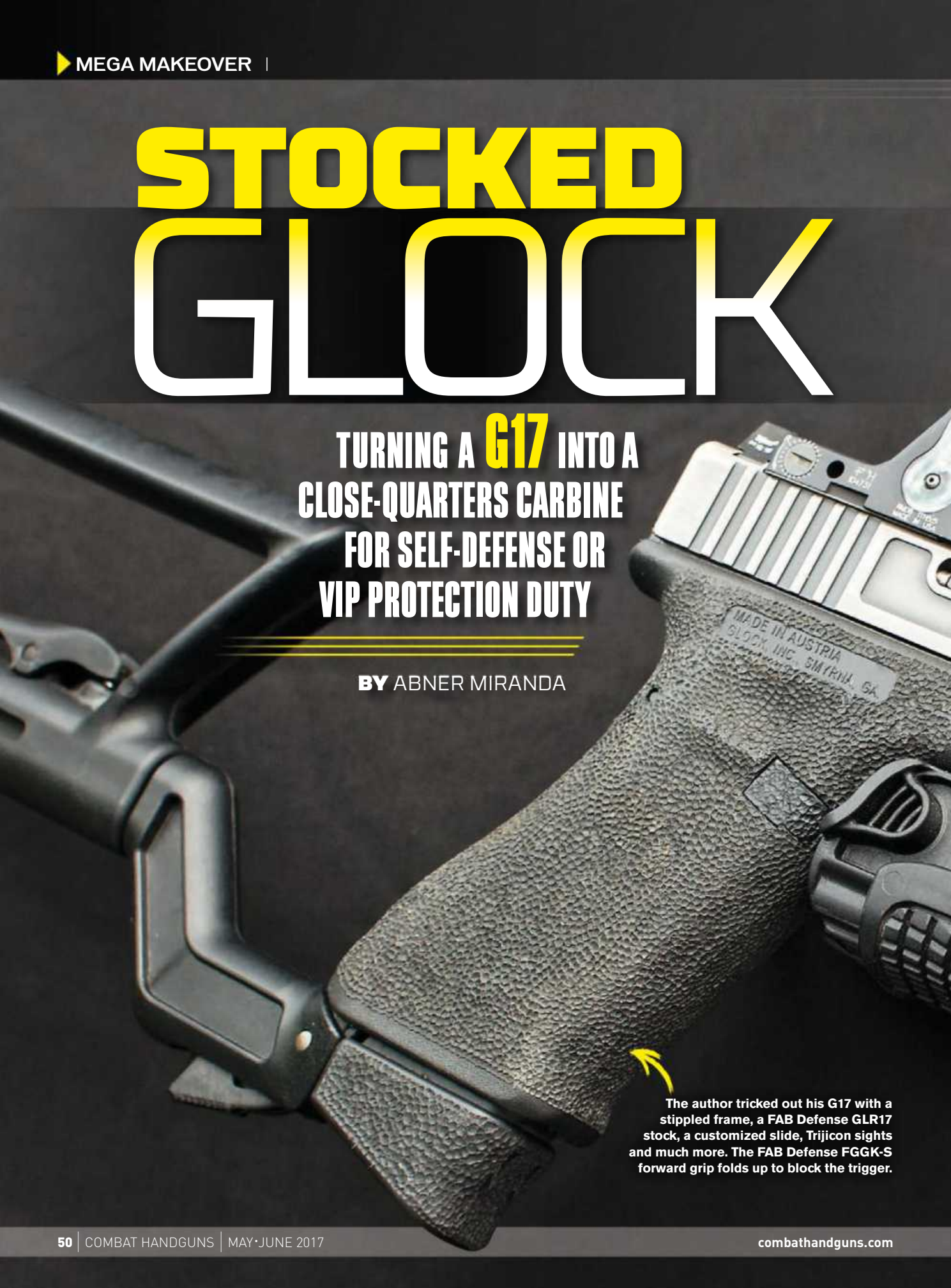
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TURNING A **G17** INTO A
CLOSE-QUARTERS CARBINE
FOR SELF-DEFENSE OR
VIP PROTECTION DUTY

BY ABNER MIRANDA



The author tricked out his G17 with a stippled frame, a FAB Defense GLR17 stock, a customized slide, Trijicon sights and much more. The FAB Defense FGK-S forward grip folds up to block the trigger.



There's an old Shaker axiom that says, "Let it be plain and simple, of good and substantial quality, unembellished by any superfluities which add nothing to its goodness or durability." This is something I keep in mind when I set up a weapon.

A few months ago, I took a hard look at what I was carrying to deal with an active killer. Such attacks are now our present truth, and we need to recognize that the war is no longer over there—now it's over here. I took a hard look at the fact that rifles, and even conventional submachine guns, just weren't as concealable as I'd like. Even if you get into the really small SMGs, you're still talking about

considerable size, weight and cost. I also wanted this weapon to be able to use the same magazines as my Glock 17. Lastly, I wanted the weapon to use "off the shelf" technology so I wouldn't have to struggle to find replacement parts. With that in mind, I settled on another G17—with a unique twist.

CUSTOM CARBINE

I refer to this weapon as the GS17. Before I go further, I must point out that if you're going to do this, you must register your Glock as an SBR with the BATFE.

The GS17 is amazingly light at 2.2 pounds, complete with a Trijicon RMR, Trijicon suppressor sights, a FAB Defense GLR17 stock, a FAB Defense FGGK-S forward grip and a paracord sling. This stock and foregrip setup has been around for a long time. Unfortunately, we most often see these pieces being used in pointless full-auto, magazine-

dump videos. So they're generally thought of as just party trick pieces. But this is far from the truth. The additions can make even an OEM Glock very accurate, and your follow-up shot speed will increase dramatically. I've tested these theories with my wife and kids. I would have shooting competitions with two shooters, side by side, running stock G17s, and the speed with which they knocked down their targets was astounding. It got to the point where my "tween" daughter was able to best me a couple of times. That's when I realized that this needed a closer look.

The GS17 is much faster to deploy than any submachine gun or personal-defense weapon (PDW) due to its scant weight. Another benefit is that it only measures 17 inches long with the stock collapsed and 22 inches extended. The GS17 allows you to transition from target to target without overtravel. It's almost as fast as your eyes are at aiming your hands—think about that.

The downside of this setup is that it's still just a pistol. Its accuracy is contingent on the ammo and the shooter's abilities.

So what's the point of the GS17? CQB! This setup is strictly for use within 25 yards. The GS17 is

small, light and super-fast in room-clearing exercises. At 25 yards, this setup can deliver fast headshots much faster than can be done off-hand. Of course, discussions about accuracy in the context of the GS17 are purely academic due to the distances common in close-quarters engagements. Active killers attack quickly, and whatever you have with you is all you get to draw from.





The GS17 is slim, light and fast, making it perfect for close quarters. It's only 22 inches long with the stock extended, and the upgraded sights and barrel ensure accurate hits out to 25 yards.

"The GS17 is much faster to deploy than any submachine gun or personal-defense weapon... due to its scant weight."

That is why the GS17 is perfect as a backpack gun. At less than 18 inches in length, it excels at hiding in plain sight.

If you're intending on carrying a weapon like this customized GS17, you must be mindful of the rapid decay of accuracy inherent in pistol rounds when fired out of short barrels. A 9mm fired from a 4-inch barrel does an adequate job of incapacitating your enemy in close quarters. If you take that same 9mm and send it down a longer 6-inch barrel, you dramatically increase its velocity, accuracy and efficacy against armored threats.

BUILDING THE GS17

When starting out on this project, the top criteria was good accuracy. Notice I didn't say "superb accuracy." There is a certain amount of inaccuracy inherent to close-quarters situations, and when your

threat is a few feet away, you don't have time to get off the perfect shot.

The first iteration of the GS17 used a Glock 17 slide with a set of fiber-optic sights. Pistol sights work great when held at arm's length. However, once the pistol is brought close to the eyes, which is the case when shouldering the GS17, the sight picture changes dramatically and it's very difficult to get a crisp sight picture. In the compressed CQB world, you really need an optic that you're looking *through*, versus sights you have to look *at*. Fortunately, outfitting a pistol with an optic is much easier nowadays than it was even two or three years ago.

I wanted to mount a Trijicon RMR on the GS17. After trying a few add-on mounts, I decided it might be better to mount the optic directly to the slide, allowing me to keep the iron sights. So, I reached out to my buddy, Daniel

Moore, of Visionary Machine & Design, in Rossville, Georgia. Daniel is one of those machinists who's exceptionally good at his craft. Daniel and I worked out the details of the slide design, then he wrote the program, tested it and started milling.

Daniel and I worked at removing enough weight from the slide to compensate for the RMR's weight. It turns out we came in slightly below the original weight, which is pretty cool considering we were guessing on this one. Now you might be wondering why the slide weight matters. If a weapon unlocks too slowly or too quickly, its accuracy and reliability can be affected, not to mention its lifespan altogether. Weight equals resistance, which equals dwell time. I wanted to keep the recoil impulse as close to Glock specs as possible so I could shoot any bullet weight without issues. Well, it worked; thus far I've tried various weights and manufacturer's loads without any malfunctions.

The final step was coating the slide in nickel-boron for protection from the elements. I've worked with this coating for years and can personally attest to

its prowess at defeating most abuse. However, it's important to understand that unless every metal component of the weapon is coated in nickel-boron, you're going to cause a lot of wear on the areas that don't have lubricant between them and the nickel-boron-coated components.

Why would you make all of the other components in your weapon work harder than they have to? Everyone knows how slick nickel-boron is, but few know about its considerable hardness. It's this hardness that abuses any component that comes in contact with nickel-boron-coated surfaces. The slide on the GS17 is nickel-boron coated, but none of its internals are. Nothing in the frame is coated, either. So, yes, I clean and lube this weapon every time I use it.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

We now live in a world where long-range accuracy has become boringly normal, however, people have forgotten that 25 yards is a really long distance for fighting with a pistol. Think about how many variables potentially lie between you and your moving threat at 25 yards. Airsoft and Simunitions guys know exactly what I'm talking about. To survive a gunfight, you must move and efficiently work the angles to your

SPECIFICATIONS	
CUSTOM GS17	
Caliber:	9mm
Barrel:	5 inches
OA Length:	17-22 inches
Weight:	2.2 pounds (empty)
Stock:	FAB Defense GLR17
Sights:	Trijicon suppressor, RMR
Action:	Safe Action
Finish:	Black, nickel-boron
Capacity:	17+1
MSRP:	N/A

threat. You seldom get to stand still and fire at the enemy. The GS17 was made for moving quickly.

Another point to consider is the Glock's lack of an external safety. Typically, a holster will offer an additional layer of safety for your Glock. However, a holster isn't really feasible for a Glock equipped with the FAB Defense FGK-S. Logic dictates that such a holster would be too big and just impractical—"tacti-cool" but "impracti-cool." Fortunately, the FGK-S foregrip swings up and extends to the rear, creating a safety cap over the triggerguard.

The final facet that needs covering


is the conspicuous absence of a light. Here's the logic behind it. Obviously the foregrip keeps you from adding a light to the Glock's rail. But active killers almost always attack in lighted, heavily populated spaces. These killers are after a body count, so they'll typically attack in well-lit spaces.

I know what some of you are thinking: "What about shootings in clubs or movie theaters?" You're right, but keep in mind that movie theater shootings and the one that occurred at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando are exceptions, not the rule. Also, you must remember that those are "gun-free zones" and you'll never fix stupid by violating the law and carrying a weapon there.

So, once again, the theater and nightclub shootings are non-variables in this equation. Every other shooting out there is likely to occur in a lighted, heavily populated space, and the GS17 is ready for that purpose.

PARTING SHOTS

At the range, I found that if I hunkered down and took my sweet time, I could pretty much stack rounds with carry ammo and could get palm-sized groups with ball ammo. However, I choose to test my weapons while running drills that incorporate multiple targets and movement. The more targets, the more you're sucked into the drill and the less you'll pay attention to the fundamentals. That is when a weapon really stands out in its ability to deliver.

The custom GS17 delivers the goods in a very small package. It's the perfect weapon to put the element of surprise back into the hands of the good guys, and contrary to what some believe, the solution to the crime problem is, indeed, getting more guns into the hands of the good guys. 



The FAB Defense GLR17 stock (above) locks into the debris channel within the grip frame. The nickel-boron-coated slide is fitted with a Trijicon RMR (left) and has layered serrations on top (below).



FOR MORE INFORMATION

GLOCK

glock.com; 770-432-1202

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VISIONARY MACHINE & DESIGN

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A CLASSIC, ALL-AMERICAN DA/SA REVOLVER RETURNS WITH A FEW NEW TWISTS

BY JEREMY D. CLOUGH



THE LAST DECADE of Colt's history has been one of slowly regaining the place in the market that was once rightfully its own. While this may sound a bit bold, note that between the AR-15, Model 1911 and Model 1873 Single Action Army, there are very few major firearms manufacturers that do not make at least one clone of a Colt product. Several make more than one, and at least one makes all three. Colt's resurgence has begun with the dramatically increased quality of its Model 1911 pistols and has included the increased availability of Colt AR-platform rifles. To this, add the reintroduction of a double-action revolver.

The stainless steel Cobra is more than just a reinterpretation of the classic Detective Special snub-nose, though. It's an entirely new pistol with its own scalable architecture that we can expect to see in

other revolver models yet to be introduced. But first, a few words on how we got here.

ORIGINAL MODELS

The snub-nose Colt revolver properly begins with longtime Colt employee John Fitzgerald, who was renowned for taking Colt's bulky New Service .45 revolvers and lopping off their 5-inch barrels to around 2 inches, along with their hammer spurs and triggerguards, to create stout, concealable defensive pistols known as "Fitz Specials."

Sometime around 1920 or 1922, he turned his attention to the smaller Police Positive Special, a version of the Colt Police Positive lengthened to take the longer .38 Special cartridge. The snub-nose Detective Special (which retained both its spur hammer and triggerguard), was introduced in 1926 and

COLT's COBRA STRIKES



The Cobra builds on Colt's long history of concealable double-action revolvers that goes back some 90 years. This new .38 Special +P variant arrives in stainless steel.

BACK

stayed in production in its original form for nearly 50 years, to the tune of some 400,000 guns. Later versions included the lightweight Agent and Cobra, the latter of which fit into Colt's "Snake" series, including the Anaconda, Boa, Diamondback, King Cobra and Python.

In addition to its popularity for police and civilian use—not to mention a fair number of Humphrey Bogart movies—the Detective Special was adopted by the U.S. Army. Primarily issued to CID agents according to former infantry officer Timothy Mullin, who included it in his book *100 Greatest Combat Pistols*, contemporary military manuals cover things such as the qualification course for the Detective Special, which extended to 50 yards, and even the tracer variants authorized for use in it!

This may seem a bit ambitious in our world of mini semi-autos. The wheel-gun, however, still has an edge when it comes to simplicity of use and reliability, especially in close quarters. Viewed from a combative approach, shootings often occur at contact distances, something you may have little or no control over. While a contact shot creates a truly devastating wound, it may also stop a semi-auto from firing at all, and

SPECIFICATIONS	
COLT COBRA	
Caliber:	.38 Special +P
Barrel:	2 inches
OA Length:	7.2 inches
Weight:	25 ounces (empty)
Grip:	Hogue rubber
Sights:	Fiber-optic front, integral rear
Action:	DA/SA
Finish:	Stainless
Capacity:	6
MSRP:	\$699

again, the shooting options available to you are largely up to an attacker, not you. Not to mention that a revolver can be fired from inside a pocket. A semi-auto can typically only do that once.

THE COBRA RETURNS

Envisioned as a pragmatic defensive pistol, the current Cobra has an easy-to-replace front sight—a red fiber-optic unit comes standard, but other options are forthcoming—and is currently available only in .38 Special +P. While a revolver chambered for the .38 Special may seem unusual in world where we're used to magnum snubbies (Colt offered the Detective Special in .357 as the Magnum Carry nearly 20 years

ago), those guns have serious drawbacks for self-defense. It's not a matter of velocity loss, which is a mere 100 fps or so between 4- and 2-inch barrels. Rather, the blast, flash and recoil of full-power .357 Magnums, which are especially savage with a lightweight frame, are very difficult to manage for most shooters, making crucial follow-up shots slow at best. The combination of a steel frame and .38 Special +P chambering, however, makes the Cobra much easier to handle than the lightweight magnums, which feel a lot like getting hit in the hand with an axe handle.

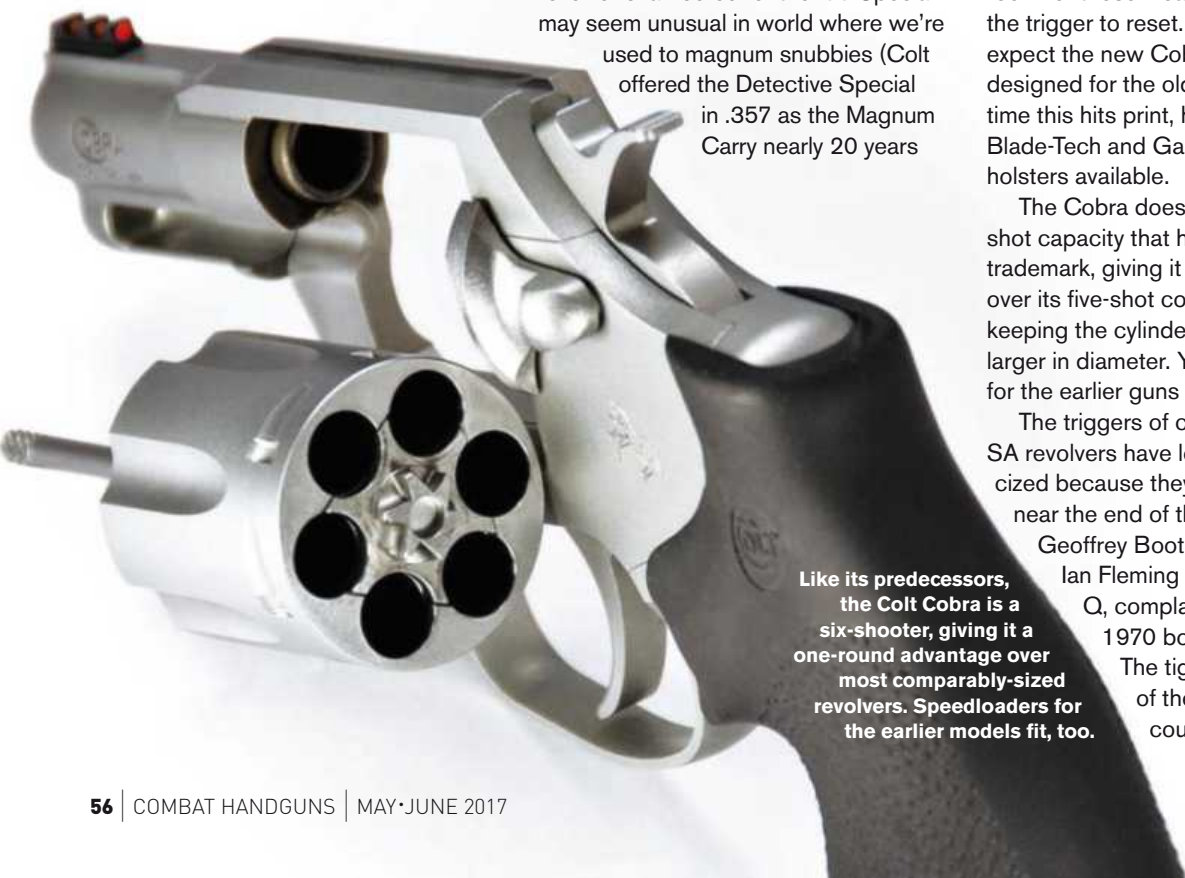
In addition to focusing on the handling qualities, Colt also sought to reduce the amount of hand-fitting required to build the guns, long a source of frustration for those who have tried to work on Colt double-action/single-action (DA/SA) revolvers. Currently, the hand is the only part of the mechanism that has to be fitted by hand, and that will soon be supplanted by machine fitting.

The triggerguard has also been made substantially larger and given a distinctive profile more square than the earlier guns, which allows more room for those wearing gloves and for the trigger to reset. And you shouldn't expect the new Cobra to fit in holsters designed for the older model; by the time this hits print, however, both Blade-Tech and Galco should have holsters available.

The Cobra does maintain the six-shot capacity that has long been a Colt trademark, giving it one extra round over its five-shot competitors while still keeping the cylinder only 0.1 inches larger in diameter. Yes, speedloaders for the earlier guns will fit.

The triggers of classic Colt DA/SA revolvers have long been criticized because they tend to "stack" near the end of their strokes. Even Geoffrey Boothroyd, after whom Ian Fleming patterned Bond's Q, complained about it in his 1970 book *The Handgun*. The tightly curved trigger of the original guns could also be quite

Like its predecessors, the Colt Cobra is a six-shooter, giving it a one-round advantage over most comparably-sized revolvers. Speedloaders for the earlier models fit, too.





The new Cobra comes with user-interchangeable fiber-optic front sight, a large triggerguard and a Hogue grip with finger grooves.

“The stainless steel **COBRA is more than just a reinterpretation of the classic Detective Special snub-nose...”**

unpleasant on the trigger finger. Colt has gone to great lengths to remedy this on the Cobra, revamping the trigger system to use a linear leaf spring and a much straighter trigger (which has also been moved rearward, along with the entire grip frame) to increase the finger's leverage on the trigger system. The end result is a different trigger than what I'm used to feeling on DA/SA revolver, and far better than the typical Colt trigger, dispensing entirely with the traditional stacking.

The stacking itself is not entirely bad, as it lets an experienced shooter “stage” the trigger for precise shots, something that may cause other shooters to jerk the trigger. For defensive work, though, smoother is better.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

For me, the Cobra represents a certain symmetry. My first revolver was a Detective Special, and customizing that gun became the first article I wrote for this magazine. I've never met Harry Kane, then-editor of *Combat Handguns*, in person, but he very kindly allowed me an opportunity by accepting and publishing that piece. That was 17 years and a couple hundred articles ago. I wrote for him, off and on, until he retired several years ago.

That pistol, which I still own, had the front sight modified with a tritium insert and had both the face of the trigger and the action smoothed to make the



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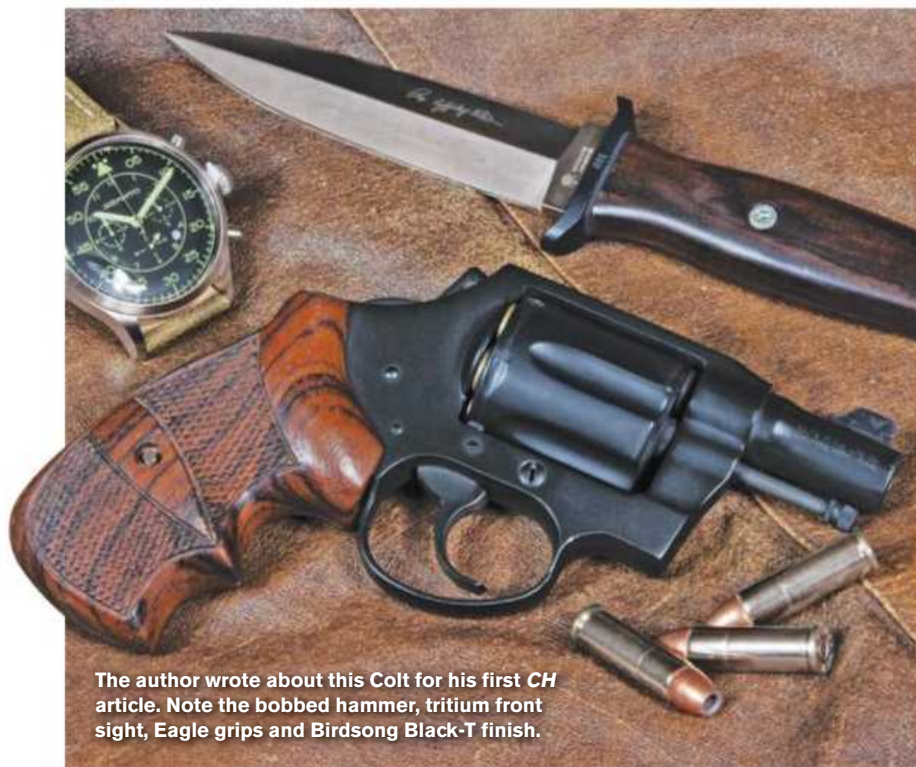
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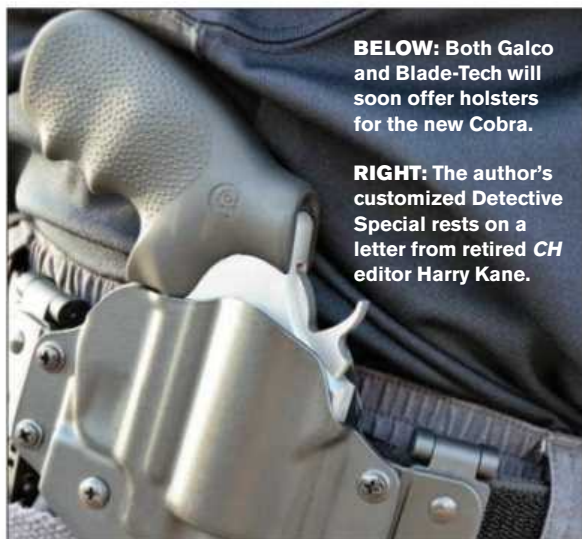
The author wrote about this Colt for his first *CH* article. Note the bobbed hammer, tritium front sight, Eagle grips and Birdsong Black-T finish.

trigger pull more manageable. These are readily accessible with the new Cobra, but on that gun they represent permanent changes, ones I might not have made had I realized the significance of its military markings. The ex-Army .38 proved surprisingly accurate, posting 7-yard groups around an inch and a handheld 25-yard group of 3.5 inches, making those 50-yard qualifications suddenly seem a lot more realistic.

I had the chance to shoot the Cobra this past November while at a press event at Gunsite, and it likewise proved quite capable. Although I only shot the new Cobra at 7 yards, I spent quite a bit of time with it, shooting it right-handed, left-handed and with both hands from a modified Weaver stance. If anything, it was more accurate than my early gun—so much so that when we got tired of shooting improbably small groups with it, we just started shooting the staples holding the target up.

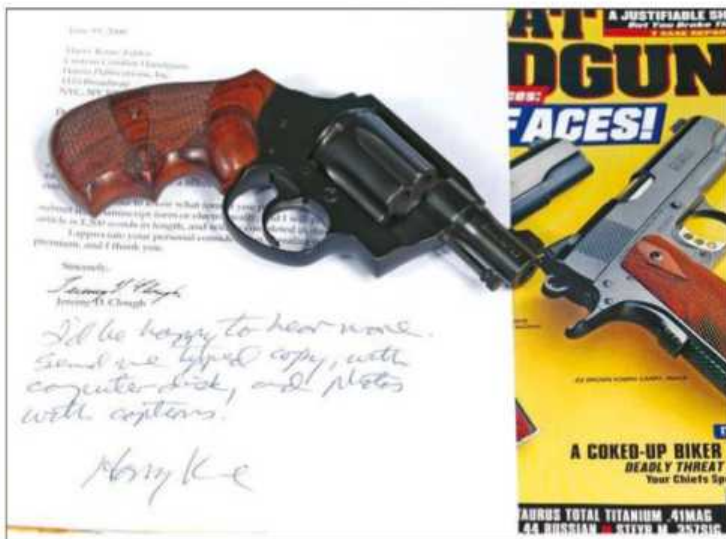
To the folks at Colt who worked so hard to improve on the past instead of being content to repeat it, well done. And to Harry Kane—thank you. Without you, I wouldn't have been there at Gunsite with a Colt in my hand, and this article, like so many others, never would have been written. I'd also like to thank Dr. Chris Coulter, Gary Paul Johnston and Nathan Tippins. For more, visit colt.com or call 800-962-2658. **CH**

“To the folks at Colt who worked so hard to improve on the past instead of being content to repeat it, well done.”



BELOW: Both Galco and Blade-Tech will soon offer holsters for the new Cobra.

RIGHT: The author's customized Detective Special rests on a letter from retired *CH* editor Harry Kane.



GET AN ERGO DELTA GRIP

Ergo has long been known as a premier manufacturer of ergonomic grips for the AR and other rifles as well as rail covers. But now the company has applied its skills towards improving the grip on small J-Frame revolvers. The J-Frame is arguably the single most popular revolver for concealed carry with rock-solid reliability and convenience, but the grip angle has never been ideal. Fortunately, changing the grips on your revolver is easy.

The new Ergo Delta Grip is dimensionally the same size as standard compact grips but takes a decidedly different approach. The 45-degree angle grip accomplishes several goals, the first of which is filling the

hand with a textured rubber grip with finger grooves that at first seem odd but actually prove very comfortable and improve the user's control of the revolver while shooting heavier loads. The rubber used on the Ergo Delta Grip provides a very firm hold, as anyone familiar with the company's AR-platform pistol grips can attest.



FAST ON TARGET: The ergonomic shape of the grip also provides a very natural pointing angle that immediately brings the barrel in line with the eye and on target. This natural point of aim means that you can simply grasp the grip and hold the revolver straight out without having to twist your wrist to bring the sights onto the target. Finally, because of the grip's shape, it actually helps prevent printing through clothing and more naturally hides the shape of the revolver. Additional grips for other revolver models will be available soon. For more information, visit ergogrips.net or call 877-281-3783.
—Jay Collins

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LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

»»»»»»» **TWO GENERATIONS**

ACE THE GUNSITE 250 COURSE

WITH A NIGHTHAWK HI-POWER

BY RICHARD MANN





WHEN YOU'RE A FATHER, you relish the proud moments that come with that title. You watch your kids graduate elementary school, learn to ride a bike and excel in sports. I've been fortunate to enjoy many of those occasions. However, one of my most cherished memories will be my son's graduation from my alma mater and his trouncing of the old hands on the pistol range.

When Sabastian (or "Bat" as we like to call him) was 13, I sent him to Gunsite for a three-day rifle and pistol tutorial. I'd worked with him extensively on marksmanship basics and firearms safety. However, there comes a time when teaching is best administered by an outside source. The dynamic relationship between parents and children, and even between parents, often gets in the way of learning. When he turned 16, I knew it was time for him to go to shooting school.

THE SCHOOL

Jeff Cooper established the American Pistol Institute—now Gunsite Academy—at his Gunsite Ranch in Paulden, Arizona, in 1976. During the next 40 years, it became the bastion for civilian firearms training. The 250 Pistol class offered at Gunsite has remained relatively unchanged during all that time. All over the world, this course is considered the premier foundation for defensive handgun training.

The author's son, "Bat," works through an outdoor simulator with Eric Ingersoll, one of Gunsite Academy's top instructors. Only 16 years old, Bat recently completed the Gunsite 250 Pistol course with top honors.





The curriculum is designed to take someone who has never fired a handgun and elevate him or her to the point where they're confident that they could use a handgun to defend themselves. This is not a competitive shooting course. It's not a course to teach you how to be a Delta Force operator or SWAT officer. It's intended to ground you in the basics of the defensive pistol, improve your mindset and prepare you to win a fight for your life.

The intensive five-day training program starts with safety and progresses from there. You'll learn to operate your handgun, how to properly present your handgun and how to hit what you shoot at. You'll fire in excess of 1,000 rounds under the tutelage of some of the best and most experienced firearms instructors in the world.

You'll work from the holster, shoot with both hands, shoot while moving, shoot in the dark, engage multiple targets, learn footwork, learn a fighting stance, learn to shoot under pressure and how to tactically negotiate structures in a hostile

environment. You'll also conduct various live-fire, threat-based scenarios where you must make shoot and no-shoot decisions. When all that is over, you'll participate in a fast-paced, man-on-man shoot-off against your fellow students. If you win, you won't get a fortune—just plenty of fame and bragging rights.

THE PISTOL

Just prior to Bat attending the 250 Pistol class, I'd conducted a review of the new Browning Hi-Power from Nighthawk Custom. I've been a fan of the Hi-Power for ages and consider it one of the premier fighting pistols. Introduced in 1935, the Hi-Power was the first pistol to use a double-stack magazine. With that and its link-less barrel and pivoting trigger, it would serve as the basis for most of the modern defensive handguns of our time. In essence, the Hi-Power was a steel version of the Glock about 50 years before the Glock was ever conceived.

However, even though the Hi-Power has been used by more militaries than



Nighthawk completely overhauls the Hi-Power with custom cocobolo grips, a new trigger system, stippling along the front- and backstraps as well as the top and rear of the slide, new sights and a seamlessly extended grip tang.



SPECIFICATIONS	
NIGHTHAWK BROWNING HI-POWER	
Caliber:	9mm
Barrel:	4.63 inches
OA Length:	7.75 inches
Weight:	29 ounces (empty)
Grips:	Cocobolo or G10
Sights:	Gold bead front, Heinie SlantPro rear
Action:	DA/SA
Finish:	Cerakote
Capacity:	13+1
MSRP:	\$3,195

“Never underestimate what a well-trained young man can do with an old-style pistol.”



GUNSITE FOR KIDS

Gunsite offers a Youth 250 Pistol course for 13 to 16 year olds, and it's an ideal summer camp. Tuition for this class is only \$1,000 compared to \$1,650 for the adult version. The curriculum is very similar, but Gunsite keeps the tuition low as a way of supporting our next generation of gun owners: Gun Culture 2.0. —Richard Mann



➤ In the course, Bat learned to master his Hi-Power, drawing quickly and making accurate hits from a variety of positions. Later, he learned to navigate through one of Gunsite's shoothouses (far left).

any other handgun, and even though the Hi-Power has fought in more wars than any other handgun, it is not perfect. Its primary detractor is the short tang that barely extends over the web of the hand. Another drawback is the Hi-Power's unfriendly trigger, a byproduct of an integral safety that will not allow the pistol to fire unless a magazine is inserted.

Custom gunsmiths have been correcting these Hi-Power issues for many years. However, these customizations have been one-off propositions where you send them your Hi-Power and they fix it. In 2015, Nighthawk Custom worked a deal with Browning to buy Mark III Hi-Powers in bulk and work their magic on them. The result might be the best fighting pistol ever to accept a double-stack magazine.

The first thing Nighthawk does is address the tang by extending it a full inch. This eliminates any chance of hammer bite on the web of the hand and further enhances an already superb grip. This extension of steel is done so flawlessly it appears as if the pistol has simply grown into the form before you. You won't find a joint, evidence of welding or any other indication that the frame was

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“Placing the Nighthawk-modified Hi-Power in your hand feels so good it might just make your knees weak.”



not cast with the extended tang. Placing the Nighthawk-modified Hi-Power in your hand feels so good it might just make your knees weak.

Then, the same gunsmith who did that glorious work—at Nighthawk, every pistol is assigned a dedicated builder who works on that pistol from start to finish—applies a textured treatment to the front- and backstraps and underneath the triggerguard. This helps stabilize your grip without biting like checkering. It also looks amazingly elegant. Continuing with this elegance, the rear and top of the slide are textured, and a French border is applied.

A black Heinie SlantPro rear sight is then fitted to the slide along with a 0.125-inch-wide front sight post with a 14-karat gold bead. Unlike many modern sighting systems utilizing too narrow of a notch or a front sight that is too wide, there's room to spare here. This makes for seriously fast targeting.

The gunsmith then removes the factory firing mechanism and installs a new steel hammer, an improved sear lever and a straighter trigger. He also does away with the magazine-disconnect safety. The result is a pivoting trigger that glides through its stroke as smoothly as tanning oil runs down the body of a Victoria's Secret model. The trigger breaks crisply at about 4 pounds.

Other tweaks include a magazine release with 25-lpi serrations, a contoured

Bat used Hornady's 115-grain American Gunner XTP load exclusively for the Gunsite course, where the Hi-Power's flawless reliability and accuracy stood out among newer pistol designs.



▶ PERFORMANCE

NIGHTHAWK BROWNING HI-POWER

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Federal 115 Syntech TSJ	1,168	2.06
Hornady 115 American Gunner XTP	1,142	1.32
Hornady 135 Critical Duty	1,043	1.66
Sig Sauer 124 V-Crown JHP	1,165	1.95

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magazine well, a crowned barrel, a tighter slide and frame fit, and rounded edges all around. The entire pistol—with the exception of the barrel—then receives a corrosion-resistant Cerakote finish in either all black or two-tone black and chrome. To round out all this wonderfulness, you can choose between checkered cocobolo grips or G10 grips, both with the Nighthawk logo.

I figured this would be the perfect pistol for Bat to take to his class. Nighthawk loaned me one for several weeks, and we found it ate up Hornady American Gunner ammunition like a fat man at a Vegas buffet. With his Galco Avenger holster and magazine pouches, Bat was ready to go to school.

TOP GUN

Bat ended up in a class with students of all ages, but he was the youngest. The next two youngest shooters dropped out before the course ended, and that left him with two handfuls of adults to share his experience with. They were all armed with modern semi-automatics, most of which were of the plastic variety. Bat was the youngest shooter in the class, and he was using the oldest handgun design.

I was at Gunsite while Bat was taking his class, but I wasn't involved. This was partly because I was helping with the 2016 Scout Rifle Conference and partly because I wanted the experience to be his and his alone. Every evening we discussed the course, and as I had done, he was experiencing highs and lows as the training progressed. On numerous occasions, he said he didn't think he was at the head of the class.

When the last day came, it was time for the shoot-off. Bat was apprehensive because he knew that I had won the shoot-off when I'd taken my 250 course. I tried to ease the anxiety by telling him he'd graduated and to just have fun. In the shoot-off, two shooters each square off against two 8-inch steel plates at about 7 and 10 yards, with a split pepper popper between them. The object is to knock over both steel plates, conduct a speed reload and put your half of the pepper popper down first. You progress through the competition on a best three out of five elimination sequence.

GRADUATING GUNSITE



Shooting has always been something I did with my father. Needless to say, I was anxious when Dad said I was going to take the 250 Pistol class at Gunsite Academy. I'd always wanted to go; my mother and father have trained there numerous times. I wanted to learn how to shoot properly, and more than that I wanted to do what my parents had done.

Being nervous made focusing on the first day very difficult. I shook almost the whole day. Just the fact that I was there made me nervous, not to mention being around all the good shooters in the class. I had so much to learn compared to those older shooters.

By the second day, things were looking up. I'd made a friend or two, and suddenly the skills these people had seemed much more obtainable. By the end of day two, I started to shoot just as well as they



did. The things my father had taught me had laid the foundation for what I was learning.

I considered graduating an incredible feat because the stress I'd placed myself under was something completely new to me. I'd competed at the state finals in track but had never been more nervous than the day of the shoot-off. I wanted to win but was shocked when it happened. Graduating the class has given me more confidence than anything in my life. —Sabastian

The young man pulled it off, graduated as a Marksman and won the shoot-off. He and I both have our shoot-off sterling silver ravens and a certificate from the same institute of higher learning. Actually, we have a lot more. Bat is a more confident teenager; one who knows if he had to, he could use a handgun to protect himself and our family. As much as I travel,

that is a comfort. Never underestimate what a well-trained young man can do with an old-style pistol. **CH**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

GUNSITE ACADEMY

gunsite.com; 928-636-4565

NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM

nighthawkcustom.com; 877-268-4867

IN THE CLEAR

Stay in the fight with these do-or-die malfunction-clearance drills

BY ROBERT JORDAN

Everything manmade will fail. I don't care how expensive or well maintained your car, your watch or your gun is—eventually, it will fail. There are several common types of weapons malfunctions, and you need to know how to quickly clear them to get back in the fight.

Over 90 percent of pistol malfunctions are magazine related. The most common malfunction? A magazine that is not fully seated. Every time you load your pistol, you should rack the slide to put a round in the chamber, then eject the magazine and top it off. If the gun holds 10 rounds in the magazine, why would you walk around with only nine

rounds in it? The problem is that it is more difficult to seat a fully loaded magazine. The round on top is compressed down when it pushes up against the bottom of the slide. Inevitably, sometimes the magazine won't be pushed in until it fully "clicks" into place. The first time the gun fires, it will kick out the empty case, but it won't pick up the next round and feed it into the chamber. The second shot becomes a *click* instead of a *bang*.

TAP, RACK, TARGET

The first solution for this begins with a proper loading sequence. After you load your pistol and reholster it, pop out the magazine and top it off. Then, reseal it in the mag well. Always give it a tug to make sure it is fully seated. Even after doing this, you can still have a magazine that isn't fully seated if the magazine release button accidentally gets bumped. The second shot will be the dreaded *click*.

The three steps for fixing this malfunction are tap, rack and target. First, release your grip with your support hand and bend the elbow of your strong arm. Your weapon should be back in your "work zone," directly in front of your face. You should be able to see your weapon and see your target by simply changing your focus. Do not bring the weapon down—you will look down and inevitably lose sight of your threat. Cant the weapon slightly toward your support side, slightly skyward, and roll it so that you can see the bottom of the magazine. With the base of the palm of your support hand, tap the bottom of the magazine with authority. There is no reason to be gentle here. This will reseal the magazine if it isn't seated already.

→ It's best to use plastic dummy rounds to simulate a double-feed during your range practice so that nothing is pressing against the back of a live primer.





The second step is to rack the slide. This chambers a new round. It can also clear an empty case out of the chamber if it did not fully extract last time. There are several methods for racking the slide. Whichever you choose, do it the same way every time. I recommend rolling the pistol inboard as far as you can until the gun is almost upside down. Grasp the back of the slide where most pistols have cocking serrations and rack the slide to the rear vigorously. Let your thumb and forefinger slide off of the rear of the slide to keep yourself from “riding” the slide back forward. Sliding your hand off of the rear allows the full strength of the recoil spring to drive the slide forward and chamber a new round. If you “ride” the slide forward, the spring may not have enough strength to fully chamber the next round. Remember, move the gun around your hand, not your hand around the

It's important to prepare for any eventuality, and no matter how fancy or expensive your gun is, it will malfunction at some point. Practice dealing with common problems now before it's too late.



gun. Rolling the gun inward takes less effort and time than moving your hand from the bottom of the magazine to the top of the slide.

Finally, reassess your target. As you roll the pistol back upright and reestablish a good two-handed grip, shift your focus back to your target to see if follow-up shots are needed to stop the threat. We used to call this immediate-action drill a “tap, rack, bang.” However, you may not always need to fire another shot after your malfunction has been cleared. We changed “bang” to “target” to help remind us to evaluate our target before we pull the trigger again.

DOUBLE FEEDS

Occasionally, you will come across faulty ammo. I have seen factory ammo that had hard primers and even primers installed upside down that didn't fire. A “stovepipe” is when an empty



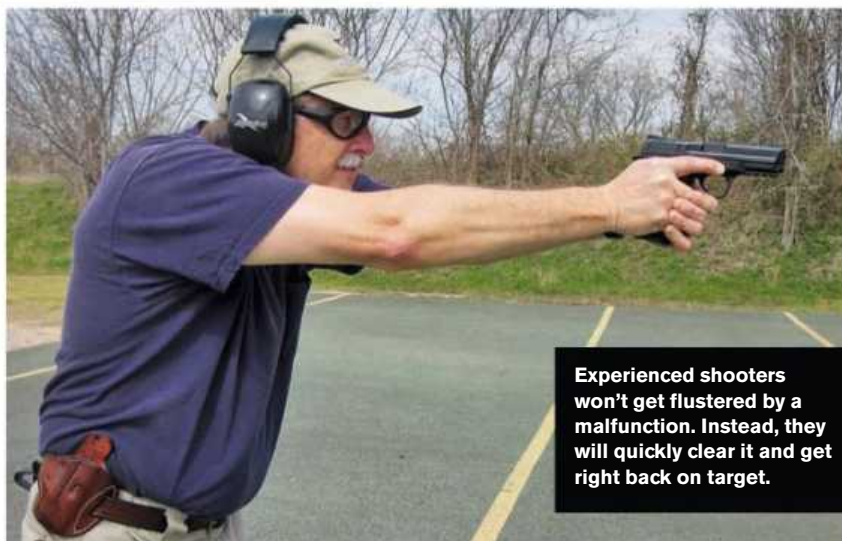
When it is time to do an immediate-action drill, bring the weapon up close to your face, tap the bottom of the magazine (far left) to make sure it's fully seated and rack the slide (left).

casing gets caught by the slide before it has fully ejected. With the slide out of battery, it cannot fire. A "tap, rack, target" maneuver will clear every one of these malfunctions. This should be your immediate response, and it should be conducted without even looking to see what caused the malfunction. This will get your weapon back into the fight at least 90 percent of the time.

However, there are those times when a "tap, rack, target" response doesn't fix the problem. The next most common malfunction is a "double feed." A double-feed occurs when a case (loaded or empty) is stuck in the chamber, the slide is back and it is trying to push another round into the chamber as it comes forward. The rear round can't go in and the front round can't come out. No amount of tapping or racking will clear this malfunction.

There are two slightly different methods for clearing this jam. The first is "lock, rip, work, load, rack, target." Lock the slide to the rear. This relieves the pressure on your magazine and allows you to remove it. Rip the magazine out while depressing the magazine release button. Work the action by quickly slingshotting the slide to the rear at least three times. This should clear that round out of the chamber. Now load a magazine into the mag well, rack the slide and reassess your target.

The slight variation is instead of locking the slide to the rear, simply pull it to the rear while depressing the magazine-release button. A firm shake downward will often drop the magazine out of the gun. Then work the slide, load the new



Experienced shooters won't get flustered by a malfunction. Instead, they will quickly clear it and get right back on target.

magazine, etc. This second variation is slightly faster. Guys on tactical teams usually prefer it, but they usually have several more magazines on their belt that they can use to reload their pistol. The one that landed on the ground is simply left there.

If you are in plainclothes and have only one or no backup magazine, use the first technique and secure the magazine after you rip it out. After you rip the magazine out of the pistol, secure it somewhere so you can use it to reload. Some people can hold it between their ring and middle fingers on their dominant hand. Others find it easier to jam into a pocket or down the front of their pants. After you work the slide, use that mag to reload.

Drills for clearing stoppages should be practiced regularly. Fortunately, they are easy to work into almost any type of shooting exercise. Get some plastic, dummy rounds. Yes, they will

occasionally break after extended use, but they are cheap and it won't bother you nearly as much when you lose a few of them as it will when you lose an expensive snap cap. Throw one or two dummy rounds interspersed into each magazine when you load up. Put them in different spots and then mix up your mags. Practice your "tap, rack, target" drill until it becomes second nature. Start slowly and do it right every time. Too many shooters get flustered and they remember to rack the gun, but they forget to tap the magazine first. Set up double-feed malfunctions by slipping a dummy round into the chamber and then inserting a loaded magazine and releasing the slide. Don't forget to tap, rack and target before you lock, rip, work, load, rack and target. **CH**

Editor's Note: For more shooting tips and tactics from today's top trainers, check out personaldefenseworld.com.



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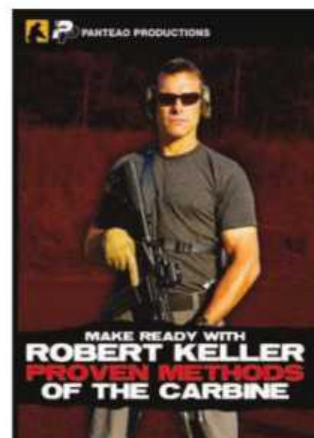
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Following on the success of its big brother, the new Ruger American Compact Pro—shown with a Crimson Trace Rail Master—offers a smaller striker-fired pistol with many of the same features today's shooters demand for self-defense.



RUGER DOWNSIZES ITS VERSATILE, **STRIKER-FIRED AMERICAN** WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT

Ruger's new American Compact Pro is very likely the most solidly built polymer-framed handgun on today's market. From its glass-filled nylon grip frame to its stainless steel chassis and slide, it's very clear that this is one pistol that's made for a lifetime of shooting under all conditions. But the American Compact Pro isn't just rugged—it's also versatile. If you're right- or left-handed, you'll be able to easily operate this pistol. Need a light or a laser? Just attach it to the integral Picatinny rail on the underside of the dust cover. Long or short fingers? No problem. Three interchangeable backstraps allow you to adjust the trigger reach to fit a wide variety of hand sizes. Want new sights? Just drift out the factory Novak sights and install whatever you desire. Add to this the fact that the test sample sent to me is chambered in the widely available, mild-kicking 9mm, and the American Compact Pro comes very close to being an all-around defensive pistol for everyone—civilians and professionals alike.

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STATE OF THE ART

The ruggedness and versatility of the American Compact Pro arises from the fact that the entire American Pistol line was built to meet the requirements of the U.S. Army's Modular Handgun System. These requirements were developed to provide a broad range of soldiers with an easy-to-use self-defense pistol that can function under unforgiving conditions.

Ease of use is facilitated by a variety of features. The gun has a 6-pound trigger with a smooth take-up, a clean break and a short reset. In addition, the American Compact Pro has special recoil-reducing features. The cam on the barrel lug is designed to keep the slide and barrel together a little longer and distribute recoil more evenly. The undercut triggerguard facilitates a high hold on the grip and helps reduce muzzle flip. And the dual recoil spring helps tame the stoutest +P loads. All of these features make the American Compact Pro a gun that's easy to operate and shoot well.

One unique feature is the pistol's fully pre-tensioned striker. It offers two important benefits not found in striker-fired pistols with partially tensioned strikers. First, the fully pre-tensioned striker does not require the trigger to be pulled to decock the striker before the pistol can be disassembled. This can be dangerous if the gun has been improperly unloaded. Second, the American Compact Pro does not require its user to stick a tool through the ejection port to lower an internal lever in order to decock the pistol



Built for sustained +P ammunition use, the pistol features a 3.55-inch-long, stainless steel barrel, a nitride-coated slide and a dual recoil spring assembly. Also note the Picatinny rail molded into the dust cover for mounting lights and lasers.

during disassembly. This avoids the potential of damaging the firing mechanism. With the American Compact Pro, you just lock the slide open and turn the takedown lever 90 degrees and it automatically decocks the gun, making it very safe to field-strip.

Other important features include the sturdy, one-piece, stainless steel chassis. It contains the frame rails and fire control mechanism. The chassis is surrounded by an equally sturdy grip frame made of high-performance glass-filled nylon that maintains its dimensions under all environmental conditions and also provides a sturdy and consistent mount for accessories. Also, the external surfaces of the slide are nitride coated. This increases the pistol's ability to resist corrosion and produces a non-reflective matte black surface that reduces glare.



Ruger designed the American Compact Pro with a low-mass slide, a special barrel cam and an undercut triggerguard to help reduce recoil as well as muzzle flip.

Finally, the American Compact Pro's magazines are well built. The steel magazine components are nickel-teflon coated for smooth insertion and extraction from the magazine well. The short, compact magazine holds 12 rounds, which is two more than most guns of its size. This pistol also comes with one of the full-sized, 17-round magazines used in the standard-sized Ruger American Pistol. A sturdy magazine sleeve is provided with the 17-rounder to extend the gripping area further and offer a sure hold during rapid fire. Altogether, this is one pistol that's designed to be user friendly and reliable in the field.

Good engineering is critical in a pistol used for personal protection, but the most important element in a firearm intended to save your life is quality, and the American Compact Pro is definitely a quality product. Externally, the finish on the slide and frame on my test sample were blemish-free. All of the edges were straight and smooth, leaving nothing to cut the hand when racking the slide or doing speed reloads. The white dots on the snugly fitted Novak sights were perfectly round.

The interior of the pistol was equally well made and finished. There were no rough spots on any of the interior parts or surfaces, except for a set of faint machining marks on the underside of the slide where it was relieved to accommodate the chamber. The slide-to-frame fit was tight, but not so tight as to prevent functioning under all environmental conditions. Ruger has even posted a video of environmental testing on its website that clearly demonstrates the gun's ability to fire under a wide variety of adverse conditions. Overall, the American Compact Pro gets a high rating for quality.

SPECIFICATIONS

RUGER AMERICAN COMPACT PRO

Caliber:	9mm
Barrel:	3.55 inches
OA Length:	6.65 inches
Weight:	28.7 ounces (empty)
Grip:	Glass-filled nylon
Sights:	Novak LoMount Carry three-dot
Action:	Striker-fired
Finish:	Matte black
Capacity:	12+1, 17+1
MSRP:	\$579



The top of the smooth, angular slide is fitted with Novak LoMount Carry three-dot sights. Also note the ambidextrous magazine and slide releases as well as the grip sleeve included with the extended 17-round magazine (above).



RUGER WRING-OUT

I conducted several live-fire tests to determine whether the American Compact Pro performed as well as it looked. The first involved bench-testing it for accuracy and velocity. The next focused on performance in timed body armor drills. I also used the pistol to shoot an Army "L" rapid-fire match as well as an IDPA match.

The bench testing was performed at the Bullseye range at the Flagler Gun Club. I used five different loads to measure the gun's accuracy: Remington 115-grain JHPs, Hornady 135-grain Critical Duty FlexLock +P rounds, Black Hills 115-grain FMJs, Wolf Performance 115-grain FMJs and HPR 124-grain XTPs. To stabilize the pistol, I used an MTM Case-Gard



The Ruger American Compact Pro is designed so it can easily be taken down in the field. Shooters don't have to pull the trigger or lower any sort of internal lever to decock the striker during the disassembly process.

rest and sandbags. Since this is a compact pistol designed to be used at relatively close range, the accuracy test involved shooting three 5-shot groups at 15 yards. The best group for each load is listed in the accompanying chart.

The single best group, created with the Remington 115-grain JHP ammo, measured 2.32 inches. The average for all of the 15-yard groups was 3.99 inches, which is acceptable for a close-range defensive handgun. At 1,111 fps, Remington's 115-grain JHPs also had the highest velocity. The Hornady load had the best overall ballistics, with a best group measuring 2.34 inches and an average velocity of 1,069 fps. This produced 343 foot-pounds of energy (fpe), the highest muzzle energy of the loads tested.

The body armor drills conducted at the Volusia County Gun & Hunt Club involved taking one lateral step and drawing from the holster at a distance of 7 yards. A random beep from a Competition Electronics shot timer started the drill in which two shots were fired to the chest and one to the head. I used the Wolf 115-grain FMJs for these drills, and I mounted a Crimson Trace Rail Master laser on the pistol's dust cover for quick aiming. I repeated the drill three times, and my average time was 5.92 seconds with a score of 80 of 90 possible points. All of my shots were in vital areas. The American Compact Pro clearly proved that it was up to the task, and the laser sight ensured good hits.

Next, I tested the pistol on the 15-yard rapid-fire stage of the Army "L" course at the Flagler Gun Club Bullseye match. I use a two-handed isosceles stance to fire the two 11-second, five-shot strings required for the stage. This gives me a way to compare the pistol I'm testing with other pistols I've reviewed. The Ruger American



Ruger ships the American Compact Pro with three nickel-Teflon-plated magazines—two 10-rounders and one 17-rounder—as well as grip modules to customize the gun.



“Altogether, this is one pistol that’s designed to be user friendly and reliable in the field.”

well from cover, pointed quickly and was easy to reload. During the match, it did have some problems extracting a relatively new type of practice ammunition. Given that it had proven perfectly reliable with every other type of ammunition, the only thing to be said is that the old adage is correct: Test a gun thoroughly with the ammunition you intend to use for self-defense before you carry that ammo on the street, because every gun will usually have at least one load it doesn’t like.

A REAL PRO

Overall, the Ruger American Compact Pro does an excellent job of fulfilling the need for a concealment pistol that can be used by almost every shooter. It is highly reliable with all of the defensive loads I put through it, and it is built to last. Combine that with a full-capacity magazine in 9mm, and it is clearly a formidable defensive handgun. For more information, visit ruger.com. **CH**

PERFORMANCE		
RUGER AMERICAN COMPACT PRO		
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 115 FMJ	1,158	3.14
Hornady 135 Critical Duty FlexLock +P	1,069	2.34
HPR 124 XTP	995	2.60
Remington 115 JHP	1,111	2.32
Wolf Performance 115 FMJ	1,159	3.35

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 15 YARDS.



Unlike some compact pistols, the 9mm American Compact Pro is designed to accept the larger 17-round magazines of the standard-sized Ruger American Pistol (shown).

Compact Pro scored a 94-2X, which is reasonably close to my best ever score of 100-6X. Not bad for a service-style pistol that costs about five times less than the custom 1911 that holds the record! This little Ruger 9mm shoots very quickly and accurately.

The final live-fire test involved using the American Compact Pro in an IDPA match at the Titusville Rifle & Pistol Club. I often shoot IDPA matches when testing defensive pistols because it gives me a good idea of how well the test gun handles under stress. I don’t shoot for speed; instead, I focus on using the tactics I’d use on the street, and the main measure of performance that matters to me is shot placement. Specifically, I want to know how the pistol handles, if reloads are quick and easy, and how well the pistol points. These are the handling characteristics that often make a big difference in real life. The American Compact Pro handled

MORE AMERICAN OPTIONS

The Ruger American Compact Pro is also available in .45 ACP, and some variants sport manual safeties. Caliber and size differentials don’t affect their prices. Currently, all Ruger American Pistol configurations—14 options are available—have MSRP of \$579.



RIMFIRE VICTORY

YOU WON'T HAVE TO
SETTLE FOR SECOND PLACE
WITH S&W'S AFFORDABLE
NEW TARGET .22

BY CLAIR REES

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR .22 LR autopistols ever produced was the Ruger Standard pistol that debuted in 1949. This was the gun that launched Ruger's spectacular gun-making career. Resembling the iconic German

Luger, this highly successful gun has gone through several iterations, from the Mark I to the current Mark IV. I own a handful of Mark I and II Rugers, including a highly customized version fitted with Dino Longuerio's Speed Strip Kit.

This innovative kit overcame the biggest drawback to owning Ruger .22 autopistols—it enables you to remove a single screw located handily on top of the receiver, then quickly strip out the bolt for cleaning the action and bore. Until the new Mark IV came along (which has a hinged barrel and receiver, allowing you to take the pistol down quickly for cleaning), Ruger .22 pistols were notoriously difficult to disassemble—and even harder to reassemble—for maintenance. Maintaining the early Ruger autopistols was a nightmare, particularly when it came time to put the stripped gun back together. After attempting this daunting chore a time or two, I suspect many Mark I, II, and III owners simply left them intact, ignoring the rigorous maintenance requiring full disassembly.

PHOTOS BY JOHN REES





If you're ready to enter the winner's circle, it's time to meet Smith & Wesson's new SW22 Victory, a rimfire built for precision with a crisp 3-pound trigger and adjustable fiber-optic sights for only \$409.

After well over a half-century of production, the folks at Ruger have finally seen the light. I'm amazed the company took so long to simplify the assembly/disassembly processes.

While the newest Rugers have eliminated the takedown bugaboo, Smith & Wesson's SW22 Victory addressed this right from the beginning. This all-new handgun vaguely resembles Ruger's popular rimfire pistol, but there are some important differences.

VICTORY SPECS

For starters, the SW22 Victory tips the scales at 36 ounces unloaded versus the stainless Ruger Mark IV Target's 42.8-ounce heft. The S&W's weight lies farther back, giving it a noticeably different balance. The gun rests comfortably in the hand, aided by a generously proportioned ambidextrous grip. The grip is textured for a solid hold and features

finger grooves immediately behind the trigger. Borrowing from Ruger, the gun has circular S&W medallions on both grip panels.

The SW22 Victory sports a 5.5-inch-long, stainless steel, bull barrel and is fitted with excellent adjustable sights featuring eye-catching green fiber-optic inserts. These bright green inserts help align the sights in a hurry for quick and easy aiming. S&W also provides a 5.5-inch-long Picatinny rail that can be mounted on the receiver to accommodate a variety of different optical sights.

The single-action trigger has a crisp let-off that consistently weighs an even 3 pounds on my RCBS scale. The reset seems virtually instantaneous, making the gun easy to control. A screw-adjustable trigger stop is inset into the face of the polymer trigger. This over-travel stop is preset at the factory and shouldn't need further adjustment.



The rear of the bolt features wide grooves on both sides to help with manually charging the single-action pistol. The SW22 Victory also comes with two 10-round magazines featuring retractable followers for loading.



The rear of the bolt is deeply and horizontally grooved to provide a firm grip for cocking, and projects 0.88 inches from the rear of the receiver. Because of a myopia I've developed (blame advancing age), manually retracting the bolt initially required a fair amount of rearward pressure. However, this eased a bit after a few hundred rounds were fired.

The bolt locks open after the last round in the magazine has been expended. It can also be locked to the rear by slowly allowing the bolt to close until it engages the manual bolt stop found on the left side of the receiver. The bolt stop is large enough for easy operation, as is the manual safety located just behind the bolt stop lever.

Located on the left side of the magazine, the magazine follower button is easy to depress without damaging your thumb. The gun comes with two 10-round magazines, cutting down on reloading time. A magazine safety prevents accidental firing if the magazine isn't fully seated.

EASY TAKEDOWN

As mentioned, the SW22 Victory is very easy to disassemble for cleaning. Simply remove the hex-head screw at the front of the triggerguard (an Allen wrench is supplied), and the barrel/receiver assembly lifts off the frame. The bolt can then be removed, allowing access to the bore for cleaning from the chamber end. The barrel can be dismounted by backing out a setscrew (using the same Allen wrench) at the

SPECIFICATIONS	
S&W SW22 VICTORY	
Caliber:	.22 LR
Barrel:	5.5 inches
OA Length:	9.2 inches
Weight:	30.6 ounces (empty)
Grips:	Polymer
Sights:	Adjustable fiber-optic
Action:	SA
Finish:	Stainless
Capacity:	10+1
MSRP:	\$409



PERFORMANCE		
SMITH & WESSON SW22 VICTORY		
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
CCI 40 LRN	1,040	2.65
Federal 40 Gold Medal Match	1,092	2.20
Remington 36 Golden Bullet	1,122	1.95
Remington 40 Golden Bullet	1,105	2.10
Winchester 40 Super-X	1,117	2.00
Winchester 40 Supreme	1,077	1.75

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 25 YARDS.

“This new autopistol has proven flabbergastingly reliable, earning it high points in my book.”

bottom of the receiver and simply pulling the barrel and receiver apart. No twisting is required. This simplifies changing barrels. Volquartsen offers a couple of aftermarket barrels to choose from along with some laminated-wood target grips. I expect to see other SW22 accessories made available soon.

S&W advises SW22 owners to periodically check the tightness of the barrel setscrew and tighten it if necessary. Smith & Wesson's excellent, well-illustrated instruction manual takes you step by step through the disassembly and reassembly process. This includes how to remove and replace the spring and guide rod from the bolt—a step not usually necessary for cleaning and lubrication. In addition to the instruction handbook, the takedown process is covered in detail on the S&W website.

The manual also warns against over-oiling, recommending a single drop of lubricant on top of the bolt, one on each side of the bolt rail, and a drop on the extractor when the bolt is open. This is helpful advice, as I know from experience how applying too much lubricant can prevent normal operation.

The manual also shows how to disassemble and reassemble the pistol's magazines in a step-by-step process.

This is good to know in case you begin experiencing magazine malfunctions. I haven't taken many autoloader magazines apart, but if this becomes necessary, detailed instructions are a big help.

As with any rimfire firearm, S&W warns against dry firing the SW22. Dry firing will soonpeen the firing pin, rendering the gun unreliable. Those who insist on dry firing their rimfire rifle or handgun will eventually experience misfire problems.

PLINKING TIME

While I was in high school, I purchased my first .22 LR autopistol from Montgomery Ward. In those innocent days, anyone could buy guns through the mail without government interference. I'm no longer sure that's a great idea, but I miss those uncomplicated days.

My French-made autoloader looked neat, but when I finally took it to the local dump to try it out, I made an unhappy discovery. This was the original “jam-o-matic.” While firing the 10 rounds of .22 LR ammo the gun's magazine held, I invariably experienced at least two or three stoppages—failures to feed, cartridges hanging up in the ejection port and occasional misfires. It didn't matter what brand of long rifle

loads I used—the gun hated them all.

Frustrated, I soon parted company with the French-made autopistol, preferring a succession of far more reliable .22 revolvers. I was a confirmed rimfire revolver man for several years until I discovered American-made autopistols that fed and fired much more reliably. The latest of these is the SW22 Victory. For starters, my test sample has flawlessly fed and fired every kind of .22 LR ammo I've put through it, including 500 mixed standard- and high-velocity loads from almost every manufacturer. That itself is remarkable. When firing most rimfire autopistols, I can almost always count on having an occasional expended case hanging up in the receiver, or a round that fails to fully seat.

The fact that the SW22 Victory has yet to malfunction continues to surprise me. At any rate, this new autopistol has proven flabbergastingly reliable, earning it high points in my book. This is particularly noteworthy in a gun priced at just over \$400. That should get the attention of competing pistol makers.

Firing Winchester 40-grain Supreme rounds off-hand, I was able to consistently print five-shot groups averaging 1.75 inches. The recoil was virtually unnoticeable, and shooting the new SW22 Victory was a real pleasure.

WINNING THE DAY

When it's time to return my test sample to S&W, I'll have some serious thinking to do. I already own far too many guns (if that's possible). However, my test gun has the serial number of 1956, the same year I graduated high school, which I have to admit is tempting.

This gun is a worthy competitor to Ruger's venerable line of autopistols. Until the new Mark IV recently came along, choosing the SW22 would have been no contest. The S&W's far simpler and easier takedown process would have made it the obvious gun of choice. Now Ruger has finally stepped up to eliminate its head-scratching takedown chores, but the new SW22 retains a substantial economic advantage. It's a whole lot of gun for the money. For more information, visit smith-wesson.com or call 800-331-0852. **CH**



Both the HEX Tactical SS (top) and the HEX Tactical DS (bottom) sport STI's unique hexagonal slide serrations.



THE NEW
TACTICAL SS 4.0
STRIKES THE
EDC 1911
SWEET SPOT

BY PAUL SCARLATA



To earn its name, the HEX Tactical SS 4.0 features stylish and functional hexagonal cuts at the front and rear of the slide for easy racking. Also note the pistol's ambidextrous thumb safety (below left) and beveled mag well (below right).

If John Moses Browning was to return to this earthly plane, I believe he would be totally flummoxed when he saw what has happened to his most famous design, the 1911 pistol.

While many of its more ardent fans believe the 1911 pistol was the "perfect" fighting handgun as originally designed, since its introduction gunsmiths (of varying degrees of skill and enthusiasm) and handgun manufacturers have been striving to make it more reliable, accurate, ergonomic, user friendly and attractive. And none of these have been more successful at this task than STI of Georgetown, Texas.

STI offers one of the most complete lines of 1911 pistols on the market today. A perusal of the company's website will show the prospective customer pistols suitable for military/police service, concealed carry, home/business defense or competitive shooting. And right off the shelf, these pistols feature every "bell and whistle" demanded by today's serious defensive and competitive shooters. All the customer has to do is take it out of the box, load the magazines and they're ready to handle any task a semi-auto pistol might be put to.



Paul Budde
Photo

While STI is perhaps best known for its line of modular-frame, high-capacity pistols, which are major players in the action shooting sports, the company also offers a complete line of metal-framed 1911 pistols. Which brings us to the subject of this article: the new HEX Tactical Single-Stack (SS) 4.0.

HEX SPECS

As its name indicates, the HEX Tactical SS 4.0 is a single-stack 1911 with a 4-inch barrel, which makes it slightly shorter, and thus easier to conceal, than a traditional Commander-sized 1911. For those desiring a longer sight radius, STI also offers the HEX Tactical SS 5.0 with—you guessed it—a 5-inch barrel.

One glance at the pistol and you'll know where its name comes from. Instead of serrations or grasping grooves, the slide has a series of intricately machined hexagonal cuts at the front and rear. These provide an extremely secure purchase when racking the slide to chamber a round or clear a (hopefully rare) jam. While these are eminently practical, there is a slight downside. I shoot a 1911 with a high-thumb grip (thumb on top of the safety), and on a

Along with a hexagon-shaped hammer, the HEX sports a skeletonized trigger with an overtravel adjustment screw, a dust-cover rail, a fiber-optic front sight, a Heinie Ledge rear sight and an extended beavertail.

few occasions I held my thumb against the slide, which resulted in some abrasion from the hexes. Of course, pain is an excellent teaching tool, and I quickly learned to place my thumb under the safety for the rest of the testing.

The HEX has what STI refers to as a "tri-topped" slide where metal has been relieved along the outer edges, giving it what I call a "half-hex" profile when viewed from the front or rear. This reduces the slide's weight to help ensure proper functioning with ammunition of varying weights and ballistics.

For targeting, the pistol uses a red fiber-optic front sight and a Heinie Ledge rear sight. Both are mounted in dovetails and can be adjusted for windage. The Ledge rear sight has a large square notch for fast alignment with the highly visible fiber-optic front, and the ledge or lip allows you to rack the slide one-handed against a belt, pocket or other gear in an emergency.

As is SOP on today's high-end 1911s, the ejection port has been lowered and flared to ensure that spent cases get out of the way reliably. The match-grade, stainless steel barrel is retained by the traditional 1911-style bushing, and disassembly is greatly eased by STI's Recoil

"Thanks to its short length, the HEX was easy to conceal, and the VZ Alien grips and frame checkering allowed her to get a firm purchase..."





Becky Scarlata Photo

Master system, which uses a plastic sleeve to contain the compressed recoil spring/guide rod unit when you remove them from the pistol. This will really be appreciated by those of us who have had sundry springs and bushings fly away only to land in inaccessible corners of our workshops.

The HEX's steel frame features an aggressively checkered frontstrap and mainspring housing for improved handling and recoil control, which are further enhanced by a set of VZ Alien G10 grip panels. In fact, the grips provide such a firm purchase, even with sweaty or oily hands or when wearing gloves, that I believe you'd have to tear the skin off the palms of my hands before you could take this pistol away from me.

An ambidextrous thumb safety comes standard, as does a skeletonized trigger with an over-travel adjustment screw, a beavertail grip safety with a palm swell and an elongated, lightweight hammer with a hexagonal shape. The frame has a short dust cover with an integral rail for mounting lights, lasers or other tactical accessories. The magazine release and slide stop lever are both mounted in the proper 1911 positions.

To help ensure smooth reloads, the bottom of the grip frame has a modest magazine well funnel that is the same width as the grip frame itself, further enhancing the HEX's concealability. Lastly, the entire pistol has a black Cerakote

At the range, the 9mm STI HEX Tactical SS 4.0 was accurate, reliable and, thanks to its VZ Alien grip panels and the aggressive checkering on the front- and backstraps, very easy to control during range drills.



finish, which provides protection from wear, abuse and environmental extremes—and is damn good looking, too.

9MM TESTING

Our decision to test a 9mm HEX will no doubt result in a number of irate letters from those who believe that chambering a 1911 in anything other than the iconic .45 ACP is tantamount to treason. But, as I have stated in earlier *Combat Handguns* articles, with improvements in bullet design and propellants, the 9mm no longer has to take a backseat to larger-caliber cartridges when it comes to on-target performance. And in the 1911 platform, the 9mm provides a higher capacity (nine or 10 rounds versus seven or eight) and lighter recoil for faster, more accurate follow-up shots. To my way of thinking, chambering "Old Slabsides" for Georg Luger's legendary cartridge is a win-win situation.

Having tested and competed with a number of STI pistols over the years, I was not surprised in the least when the HEX we received was an attractive item whose quality of parts, fit and finish were first class.

My wife, Becky, and I took advantage of a mild November morning to escape from the office and run the HEX through its paces at our local gun club. Test-firing it from an MTM K-Zone rest at 15 yards showed it was capable of all the accuracy my crude efforts could wring out of it. As can be seen from the performance table, it was boringly easy to produce five-shot groups in the sub-2-inch range with four different brands of 9mm ammunition.

Instead of perforating cardboard combat targets, we decided it would be more fun to see how the HEX performed running drills on

SPECIFICATIONS

STI HEX TACTICAL SS 4.0

Caliber:	9mm
Barrel:	4 inches
OA Length:	7.88 inches
Weight:	40 ounces (empty)
Grips:	VZ Alien G10
Sights:	Fiber-optic front, Heinie Ledge rear
Action:	SA
Finish:	Cerakote
Capacity:	10+1
MSRP:	\$2,099

► PERFORMANCE

STI HEX TACTICAL SS 4.0

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 124 JHP	1,100	1.50
Browning 147 BXP	888	1.75
Hot Shot Elite 115 FMJ	1,158	2.00
Winchester 90 Super Clean FMJ	1,288	1.25

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 15 YARDS.



“...it was boringly easy to produce five-shot groups in the sub-2-inch range with four different brands of 9mm ammo.”

Becky Scariata Photos



12 steel plates that my club recently installed. Starting with a full 10-round magazine in the pistol, I engaged 10 plates, performed a reload, engaged the remaining pair and made up any misses. I am pleased to report that running this drill five times only required the expenditure of an extra five rounds of 9mm ammo.

As is my SOP with any new CCW handgun, I carried the HEX for the next week in a BlackHawk TecGrip IWB holster. The TecGrip's outer shell is made of a special material that will hold fast to most any other material, eliminating the need for a clip. I can tell you that it remains where you put it and does not move around when you draw the pistol.

The following week, Becky used the HEX as her regular carry gun, toting it in a Galco

The HEX's short overall length made it easy to conceal in a discreet Galco Metropolitan Holster Handbag, as the author's wife, Becky, found in testing. The author also carried the gun comfortably in a BlackHawk TecGrip IWB holster.



Metropolitan Holster Handbag. Thanks to its short length, the HEX was easy to conceal, and the VZ Alien grips and frame checkering allowed her to get a firm purchase as she withdrew the gun from the handbag. She did feel that it was bit on the heavy side and thought the option of an alloy frame would make a lot of sense.

My only complaint about the HEX is the magazine release button, which is rather flat and on occasion I had trouble manipulating it. I would like to suggest that STI offer an extended release as an option. Other than that, I found the HEX Tactical SS 4.0 to be a very practical pistol, and I would not hesitate a moment in recommending it for those who prefer the 1911 platform for concealed carry. For more information, visit stiguns.com or call 512-819-0656. **CH**

BEST OF SHOT

Taking stock of the best guns, ammo and gear debuted at the 2017 SHOT Show

AS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS, the 39th annual Shooting, Hunting & Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show was a big hit. Dozens of manufacturers came to Las Vegas to show off their new wares and provide a sneak peek to us hungry journalists. In the following pages, we've highlighted some of the best new guns, ammo, holsters, range goods, safes and more. Read on to find out more, and make sure you keep your eyes peeled for these new products to hit shelves soon.

HANDGUNS



AVIDITY ARMS PD10

Part of the Eagle Imports umbrella, Avidity Arms has introduced its first firearm, the PD10. A purpose-built, striker-fired 9mm built in America, the PD10 was designed by renowned defensive shooting instructor Rob Pincus as his answer to what he saw was lacking in the options available to someone looking for a personal-defense firearm. It comes standard with a 10-round Chip McCormick magazine. The single-stack magazine helps keep the width of the pistol stay below an inch for a full-sized feel without sacrificing any concealability. The rear sight is designed so it can be used to rack the slide one-handed in the case of one hand or arm becoming incapacitated. Rob's goal was to offer the complete package at a reasonable price while still offering a limited lifetime warranty to the original purchaser. When the PD10 becomes available in the next couple of months, the MSRP is expected to be under \$500. (eagleimportsinc.com; 732-493-0333)



CHIAPPA CHARGING RHINO 60 DS

Chiappa's Charging Rhino 60 DS was designed in cooperation with IPSC and ICORE shooters. This double-action-only (DAO), 9mm, six-shot revolver has a specially tuned trigger, a fiber-optic front sight, an adjustable rear sight and a 6-inch barrel. It comes with ten 9mm moon clips for quick reloads. (chiappafirearms.com, 937-835-5000)



FNS-9 COMPACT FDE

While the FNS-9 Compact was debuted last year, FN is now offering a Flat Dark Earth (FDE) version. This short 3.6-inch-barreled pistol was designed to be snag-free to facilitate quick draws from concealment. The three-dot sights allow for faster target acquisitions. It has a 12+1 or 17+1 capacity depending upon the magazine used. Weighing 23.4 ounces unloaded, the black and FDE versions should be at home with any shooters looking for a compact striker-fired handgun. (fnamerica.com; 703-288-3500)



HUDSON H9

The 15-shot H9 is a brand-new 9mm from Hudson Manufacturing in Temple, Texas. This unusual pistol combines a striker-fired ignition system with a 1911 grip angle and a 1911-style trigger that has a built-in safety. Designed to accommodate a broad variety of shooters, it features ambidextrous controls and a removable lower backstrap. It also has a Trijicon HD front sight and a built-in dust cover rail for lights and lasers. Unique among its features are its low bore axis and lowered recoil spring. (hudsonmfg.com).



KIMBER MICRO PISTOLS

Kimber showed several Micro 9 models to include the Stainless Raptor, Sapphire CDP, Bel Air and CDP (LG). They all have 3.15-inch barrels, 6+1 capacities and Kimber "carry melt" treatments for smooth edges to reduce snags upon drawing. Each has its own personality like the Raptor, with its scale accents and tritium night sights, or the Bel Air, with its polished slide and special turquoise color. Also new are a couple of .380s that are quite eye-catching. The Micro Amethyst sports a satin frame with a deep purple slide and controls and some engraved scrollwork on the slide, and the Micro Desert Night features a matte black slide and a desert tan frame. Both have 2.75-inch barrels and 6+1 capacities, and tritium night sights complete the package on the Amethyst. (kimberamerica.com; 888-243-4522)



MAGNUM RESEARCH DESERT EAGLE L5

The new L5 is offered with a 5-inch barrel and features a hardcoat anodized black aluminum frame while the slide and barrel are made of carbon steel. It also has Hogue finger-groove rubber grips as well as Magnum Research's widely popular integral muzzle brake. The new lighter version of this popular Desert Eagle .44 Magnum puts it under 50 ounces, which makes it easy to carry while hunting. (magnumresearch.com, 218-746-4597)



REMINGTON R9

This 4.5-inch-barreled, striker-fired 9mm comes with two magazines that hold either 10 or 18 shots. It also has small, medium and large removable backstraps as well as a specially contoured slide that Remington states makes for easy racking across a wide variety of hand sizes. This full-sized, polymer-framed pistol weighs only 26.4 ounces unloaded, making it one of the lightest high-capacity 9mms. (remington.com; 800-243-9700)



RUGER LCRx

Along with the new LCP II, Ruger has unveiled the LCRx revolver in .357 Magnum. This compact revolver carries five rounds in its extensively fluted 400 series stainless steel cylinder. That fluting, combined with the polymer fire control housing, helps reduce its overall weight. An exposed hammer allows for single-action shooting, which is enhanced by the next-generation friction-reducing cam for a smoother trigger pull. It sports a Hogue Tamer overmolded grip and a pinned front sight. (ruger.com)

ROCK ISLAND ARMORY G1 10MM

Rock Island Armory has expanded its GI-series pistol line by adding a new gun in 10mm. While many of the new 10mm 1911s sport 6-inch barrels, this all-steel gun has a 5-inch barrel and overall dimensions very similar to other 5-inch-barreled 1911s. The pistol's design is a combination of features from the 1911 and 1911A1, with a short trigger and a flat mainspring housing. (armscor.com; 775-537-1444)



SMITH & WESSON M&P M2.0

S&W has undertaken a major upgrade of its popular M&P duty pistol. The new M2.0 series has a lighter trigger with a crisp let-off and a fast, audible reset. Combine this with new aggressive grip texturing, four interchangeable backstraps, a redesigned stainless steel chassis and an enhanced magazine release, and the result is a pistol with improved handling qualities. The new pistol will be available in 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. Buyers can choose between black or Flat Dark Earth models with or without thumb safeties. (smith-wesson.com; 800-331-0852)



SIG SAUER P320 X-SERIES

Sig's new P320 X-Series pistol (shown) is available in 9mm and .40 S&W with a new "X" grip module, a removable magazine well, a 5-inch bull barrel, an extended slide release, a fiber-optic front sight and a Dawson adjustable rear sight. Another new introduction is the P320 RX. Instead of the Dawson sights, it has SIGLITE suppressor sights and comes fitted with one of Sig's ROMEO1 reflex sights. (sigsauer.com, 603-610-3000)



BEST OF SHOT



IVERSON CUSTOM CARRY

For the "have it your way" crowd, there's a new custom weapons maker on the block—Iverson Arms, led by industry veteran, Eric Iverson. Iverson Arms' goal is to design and build the best custom and production weapons systems and accessories in the world. Iverson's initial offering is a 1911-style handgun, with the slide and frame made from aerospace-, military-grade material with precision fitting for each piece. Some options currently available are 4- and 5-inch barreled guns, bobtail or full frame, tactical rail, or standard, and square or round triggerguard. Initial offerings will be chambered in 9mm and .45 ACP. Iverson's frames and slides are currently available in 416 SS, 17-4 SS, 4140 (chrome moly), aluminum (frames only), and Titanium. (iversonarms.com; 321-408-1724)



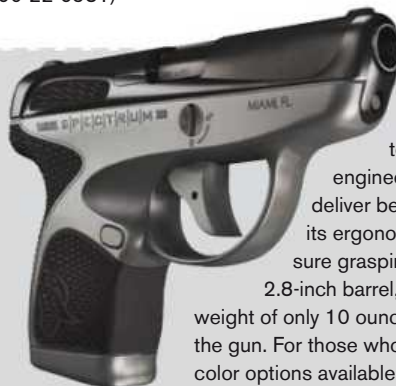
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY EMP 4" CCC

The new EMP 4" Concealed Carry Contour (CCC) from Springfield is a new version of the 9mm EMP with a 4-inch, match-grade bull barrel, a satin-finished stainless steel slide and a black hardcoat anodized frame. More enhancements include G10 grip panels with aggressive Posi-Lock texturing for a non-slip hold, a red fiber-optic front sight and a snag-free, two-dot rear sight. The pistol earns its name thanks to its bobtail-style frame, which helps prevent printing. (springfield-armory.com; 800-680-6866)



STANDARD MANUFACTURING S-333 VOLLEYFIRE

An unusual pistol was shown at this year's SHOT Show that fits into this category: the S-333 Volleyfire. It holds six .25 ACP rounds in a non-rotating barrel assembly, and upon each long pull of the large slab trigger, two rounds discharge simultaneously. It will be available later in the year in several different colors. Of course, there is lots of controversy about the .25 ACP's effectiveness for self-defense, but the S-333 is new and unique, so we'll see how it is received in the marketplace. (stdgun.com; 860-22-6581)



TAURUS SPECTRUM

The .380 ACP Spectrum is considered by Taurus to be a groundbreaking new micro pistol designed, engineered and built in the U.S. The pistol is touted to deliver better comfort and control in this platform through its ergonomics and proprietary "soft-touch" polymers for sure grasping surfaces, even wet. The pistol is a DAO with a 2.8-inch barrel, a long 7- to 9-pound trigger pull and an unloaded weight of only 10 ounces. Six- and seven-round magazines come with the gun. For those who prefer a little flair, there will be more than 70 color options available. (taurususa.com; 800-327-3776)



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY XD MOD.2 4" SERVICE MODEL

Along with the new EMP 4" CCC, Springfield has unveiled a 4-inch-barreled XD Mod.2 Service Model in .45 ACP. Thanks to its redesigned "GripZone" frame, this pistol is much easier to carry for those who prefer larger calibers. This pistol comes with two 13-round, stainless steel magazines, a fiber-optic front sight, a two-dot rear sight and a dramatically redesigned slide that makes for easy racking in any condition. (springfield-armory.com; 800-680-6866)

WALTHER CCP

New this year from Walther is the CCP (Concealed Carry Pistol) with Softcoil technology. The new technology in this delayed-blow-back 9mm bleeds off some gas to push on a piston under the barrel, resulting in less felt recoil. The barrel is 3.54 inches long, and the pistol has a 5.5-pound trigger pull. The CCP has an 8+1 capacity, an ambidextrous magazine release and a 22.3-ounce weight unloaded. It also sports a black Cerakote or brushed stainless slide. (waltherarms.com; 479-242-8500)



STI HEX TACTICAL 3.0

STI recently released its HEX Tactical 3.0, a shorter, more compact version of the popular HEX Tactical 4.0 and 5.0. This 3.7-inch-barreled version sports a Cerakote finish and unique Hex serrations on the slide for easy racking from any angle. Both single-stack (SS) and double-stack (DS) versions in 9mm are available, and the latter offers a whopping 15+1 capacity. (stiguns.com; 512-819-0656)





BLACK HILLS HONEYBADGER

Black Hills has introduced three new loads in its Honey Badger line of ammunition, which employs uniquely fluted bullets. These all-copper Lehigh Defense bullets don't expand; instead, they use fluid dynamic pressure caused by the passage of tissue over the flutes to open a deep and wide permanent wound cavity. The new loads include a 125-grain 9mm, a 135-grain .45 ACP and a 160-grain .44 Magnum. (black-hills.com, 605-348-5150)



FEDERAL .38 SPECIAL +P HST MICRO

Federal's new Micro HST load in .38 Special is designed for maximum accuracy and terminal effect. This load has its bullet seated flush with the case mouth like the old .38 Special wadcutters used for Bullseye competitions. This reduces air space in the cartridge and promotes more consistent ignition for increased accuracy. Improved terminal performance is the result of using a new .38-caliber, 130-grain HST bullet that expands rapidly when it hits the target. (federalpremium.com, 800-379-1732)



COLT DEFENSE

Colt has partnered with DoubleTap Ammunition to produce a new line of self-defense ammunition. The line contains four pistol and revolver loads with jacketed hollow-point (JHP) bullets, including a 90-grain .380 ACP, a 110-grain .38 Special, a 124-grain 9mm, a 180-grain 10mm and a 230-grain .45 ACP. (doubletapammo.com, 866-357-1066)



G2 RESEARCH TELOS

G2 Research has introduced two new loads in its Telos line. The first is a .38 Special +P with a 105-grain bullet that leaves the muzzle at 1,150 fps, and the second is a 92-grain 9mm +P load that has a muzzle velocity of 1,220 fps. Both bullets are designed to fragment into seven sections. In ballistic gel, the six nose petals radiate out from the main wound track and leave a 5-inch spread at a penetration depth of about 5 inches. The base of the bullet penetrates straight to 12 inches. The process of fragmentation is designed to cause all of the bullet's energy to be spent within the target, greatly reducing the possibility of overpenetration. (g2rammo.com)



COLT NATIONAL MATCH

The second line of ammunition produced by DoubleTap Ammunition for Colt is called Colt National Match. These cartridges are match grade, and three pistol loads with full-metal-jacket (FMJ) projectiles are available: a 124-grain 9mm, a 180-grain 10mm, and a 230-grain .45 ACP. Rifle rounds are also available. (doubletapammo.com, 866-357-1066)



POLYCASE INCEPTOR ARX

PolyCase has introduced a new Inceptor ARX load for the .357 Magnum with a bullet that weighs 86 grains and leaves the muzzle of a 4-inch-barreled gun at 1,650 fps. This load uses PolyCase's fluted ARX bullets, which are made from a polymer-copper blend and do not expand. Instead, these bullets produce ballistic trauma by a Venturi effect caused by the flutes, which accelerate tissue fluids as they travel over the bullet during penetration. These high-pressure fluid jets create a wide and deep permanent wound channel that gives this load its stopping power. (polycaseammo.com, 912-335-5101)



FEDERAL .22 LR HUNTER MATCH

This rimfire load uses a 40-grain hollow-point bullet that is tuned for optimum expansion and penetration out to 100 yards. It also has a nickel-plated case to ensure reliable feeding and extraction. (federalpremium.com, 800-379-1732)



SIG SAUER 9mm FMJs

Sig introduced several new competition/training loads as part of its Elite Performance line at the 2017 SHOT Show. Two of the loads are 9mm FMJs. The first is a 124-grain load with a muzzle velocity of 1,166 fps, and the second weighs 147 grain and has a muzzle velocity of 986 fps. (sigsauer.com, 603-610-3000)



WINCHESTER SUPER CLEAN

Winchester has introduced a new load to its non-toxic Super Clean line for 2017. This .45 ACP loading contains a 160-grain bullet with a brass jacket and a zinc core. The projectile leaves the muzzle at 1,100 fps. (winchester.com)



HEVI-SHOT HEVI-DUTY 9mm FRANGIBLE

Hevi-Shot has introduced a non-toxic, 9mm, frangible target load. It uses 100-grain bullets that leave the muzzle of a full-sized pistol at 1,150 fps. (hevishot.com, 541-367-3522)

BEST OF SHOT HOLSTERS



ALIEN GEAR SHAPESHIFT

Alien Gear's new ShapeShift Modular Holster System should be available soon. The Idaho firm touts this as a groundbreaking design offering an "endless array of custom carry options." One holster can be adapted to many different carry positions, from an IWB position to a thigh rig and any other carry method you might require. Made in the U.S., all of the parts needed for the transformations are included. (aliengearholsters.com; 208-215-2046)



COMP-TAC CAVALRY

Comp-Tac produces the Cavalry holster specifically for pocket guns. A hybrid holster combining Kydex with a leather backing, it is ideally sized for IWB carry. Adjustments can be made for cant and retention as well as ride height. (comp-tac.com; 281-209-3040)



BLACKHAWK OMNIVORE

The new BlackHawk Omnivore is a multi-fit holster that accommodates more than 150 styles of semi-automatic handguns with an accessory rail. The active retention mechanism doesn't wear the handgun's finish, and three variants are available. It locks onto the company's proprietary Rail Attachment Device in the Non-Light Bearing model, and onto the frame of the light in the Streamlight and Surefire models. A thumb release disengages the locking mechanism when drawing the handgun. (blackhawk.com; 800-379-1732)



DESANTIS NYLON MINI-SCABBARD

Founded in 1972, DeSantis Gunhide is one of the largest holster manufacturers in the world. Recently, the company expanded its extensive lineup to include the Mini-Scabbard, which is made of ballistic nylon and thermoformable materials. It features an adjustable tension device and accommodates belts up to 1.75 inches wide. (desantisholster.com; 800-424-1236)



BRAVO CONCEALMENT DOS

Makers of Kydex carry systems right here in the U.S., this Texas company released its DOS (Drop Out of Sight) IWB holster for deep concealment. Tough and durable, it can be made in options for pistols with lights. Bravo offers a 30-day money-back guarantee and a lifetime warranty. (956-783-7682; bravoconcealment.com)



DSG HOLSTERS

DSG Arms recently began offering carry rigs under the DSG Holsters name. Already in use by law enforcement personnel throughout North America, these holsters are made of Kydex. The new DSG Alpha fits pocket guns and comes with a limited lifetime warranty. (dsgarms.com; 800-382-7571)



CROSSFIRE ELITE

Crossfire is known for producing a number of holsters, including the Undercover, which is designed for revolvers. All of the holsters are made in the U.S. and carry a limited lifetime warranty. One new rig is the EDC, a hybrid inside-the-waistband holster designed for extreme comfort and easy concealability. It is small, low profile and contains a comfort panel for extended wear. (crossfiregear.com; 208-461-8888)



EL PASO SUMMER CRUISER

El Paso Saddlery has been making holsters in Texas since 1889, and it's known for its beautiful Western rigs. The company also produces modern variants, including the new Summer Cruiser IWB holster in rough-out cowhide for natural adhesion to clothing. A metal reinforced rim at the mouth keeps it open for easy reholstering. With a forward cant and a polished interior for easy draws, it is available for several small pistol designs. (epsaddlery.com; 915-544-2233)



GALCO SCOUT IWB GEN 2

New in the Galco lineup is the Scout IWB Gen 2. The rough-out steerhide "grabs" clothing and stays put while the polished interior helps ensure a smooth draw. It is an open-top holster with no cant, and right- and left-hand models are available for both semi-autos and revolvers. (800-874-2526; galcogunleather.com)

FOBUS XDSC

Based out of Israel, Fobus is known for producing holsters from a proprietary material that is considered superior to Kydex. New for 2017 is the inside-the-waistband XDSC holster, and variants are available to fit a number of popular compact semi-autos, including the Beretta Nano, Springfield XD-S, Ruger LC9 and S&W M&P Shield. (fobusholster.com; 267-803-1517)



GOLD STAR HOLSTERS

With the new Opti Carry Slim from Gold Star Holsters, "Opti" stands for options. Capitalizing on the same features of the original Opti Carry, only with a slimmer clip, this new design fits tighter to the body, especially when worn in an OWB position. The holster is made gun-specific using a combination of Kydex and Hermann Oaks leather. (goldstarholsters.com; 417-413-1922)



HIGH THREAT CONCEALMENT

High Threat Concealment is a veteran-owned business that specializes in tactical gear. At SHOT this year, the company offered both IWB and OWB options molded from a high-impact PVC/acrylic alloy that can withstand extreme temperature and rough use. The company's "no heat" vacuum-forming process avoids the stresses common to traditional heat forming. (757-750-0300; highthreatconcealment.com)



KAOS CONCEALMENT

Kaos also makes its Kydex holsters exclusively in the U.S. The holsters are ambidextrous with adjustable cant capabilities. The clips are made of injected polymer, and all of the edges are smoothed for snag-free carry. The company's newest holster, the Fusion Plus, can be configured for IWB or OWB carry and comes with all of the necessary parts. (kaosconcealment.com; 661-496-3707)

CROSSBREED HOLSTERS EXECUTIVE GUN BELT

Crossbreed is well known for their leather/Kydex hybrid holsters, but they also make a line of belts that are well-made and functional. Constructed of 7 oz. tanned belt strips, matched with a 7 oz. leather liner and joined with industrial adhesive, each belt is then beveled, burnished and stitched with 277 thread (4 color options) and hand oiled. Colors are black or brown, matt or gloss, with buckles in gunmetal gloss, matte or bronze. Belt widths are 1.25 or 1.50 inches, and the 0.25-inch thickness makes for a strong belt with superior support for your holstered handgun. (crossbreedholsters.com; 888-732-5011)



PISTOL WEAR PT-2

Pistol Wear makes innovative holsters for use with all styles of clothing. The company's holsters are soft but incorporate the favorable properties of rigid holsters. Breathable and lightweight, they work very well when you're jogging or otherwise active in loose-fitting clothing. Pistol Wear's latest patent-pending design is the PT-2. Designed for small semi-autos and revolvers, it has a outer pouch wall insert to prevent the gun from printing. It provides noise-free access and is hand washable. (pistolwear.com; 918-364-5617)





SUREFIRE MASTERFIRE

Where most holsters secure a firearm directly, the SureFire MasterFire attaches to a pistol-mounted SureFire light. The benefits of this are that shooters won't have to buy holsters for their specific pistols, and because of the design, pistols can be holstered with a sound suppressor attached. Given that it's made by a company known for its products' durability, it'll be interesting to see if this new holster catches on with military and police. (800-828-8809; surefire.com)



ULTICLIP

The Ulticlip was designed to replace spring clips on existing holsters and provide 10 times the retention force with a smaller footprint when the holster is clipped to a belt or clothing. The Ulticlip is 100-percent American made. There are two sizes to cover most holsters on the market. (ulticlip.com; 239-400-2547)



TAGUA GUNLEATHER

Tagua makes 100-percent cowhide holsters with lifetime warranties. But this year the company has stepped into the polymer world with the CZY-APP, which fits multiple small pistols. Another introduction is the IPH 3, an ambidextrous leather holster adjustable for three different carry styles. (taguagunleather.com; 866-638-2482)



STICKY HOLSTERS

As the name implies, with every Sticky holster, retention is based on the friction between the supple rubber exterior and compression in the waistband or pocket. The interior is woven Cordura nylon with closed-cell foam between the layers that conforms to the gun's profile. There are no hooks or clips, so each holster is ambidextrous, and breathability was a big factor in designing these rigs. (844-416-1844; stickyholsters.com)



TALON HOLSTERS

Home of the "No Bull" guarantee, Talon produces traditional leather holsters in the U.S. using only American components, including Hermann Oak leather. The company was started by a career LEO who knew what worked and what didn't, and he put that knowledge into his products. New for this year are tuckable and IWB pocket holsters that fit the newer sub-compacts from Kahr and Glock as well as models that accommodate lasers. (talonholsters.com; 850-363-3396)



URBAN CARRY G2

The G2, the second generation of the original Urban Carry IWB holster, is made of 100-percent saddle-grade leather in Tennessee. Developed with user input, the G2 rides below the waistband for comfort and requires a lift-and-draw technique. It also has a custom steel clip to withstand pulling in stressful situations. Two styles for different guns/mounting options and a laser-compatible version are also available. (844-446-5783; urbancarryholsters.com)

VEDDER QUICK DRAW

The Quick Draw is a leather/Kydex hybrid that's handmade to fit your gun to perfection. The backing/sweat guard is made of premium 10- to 12-ounce leather that disperses gun pressure points to aid in comfort. The holster's durable pre-cut belt loops are designed for sturdy belts up to 1.75 inches wide to secure the holster close to your body. The Kydex portion of the rig is molded to precisely fit the specific handgun, and a sight channel ensures clearance with all front sights. The Quick Draw is made to fit 13 different handgun models and comes in black leather with 16 colors of Kydex. (vedderholsters.com; 352-729-6749)



VERSACARRY PROTECTOR S2

The Protector S2 from Versacarry is a leather OWB/IWB holster for right-hand carry. Users can choose between black or distressed water buffalo leather. The holsters are hand-crafted in Texas from the highest-quality materials. The Protector S3, also an OWB/IWB rig, is a versatile design that can be adjusted to fit most handguns. (versacarry.com; 855-278-9678)



BEST OF SHOT

NEW GEAR



CHAMBER-VIEW UNIVERSAL HANDGUN ECI

The new Chamber-View Universal Handgun ECI is uniquely designed to fit most handguns from .22 to .45 caliber in one single unit. Made of 100-percent ultra-durable blaze orange silicone, the Universal Handgun ECI provides instant recognition that a firearm is safe by indicating a fully open action to surrounding shooters, personnel and observers. (chamber-view.com; 603-864-8999)



KAHR FIREARMS GROUP APP

Imagine you are at the range and something unforeseen happens that requires a detailed disassembly. A scenario like this is what Kahr Arms envisioned when it developed the free KFG application. Besides catalogs for Kahr Arms, Thompson, Auto-Ordnance and Magnum Research products, the app includes owner manuals for all of these products as well as parts lists, technical data, operating instructions and disassembly/reassembly instructions. Better yet, the app is free. (kahr.com; 508-795-3919)

HOPPE'S BLACK

Hoppe's released a new line of products designed expressly for maximum performance in high-round-count rifles and handguns. Formulated to withstand temperatures from -65 to 540 degrees Fahrenheit, Hoppe's Black will prepare and maintain firearms for any high-volume scenario. The line includes gun cleaner, precision oil, copper cleaner, a grease syringe and lubricating cloths. (hoppe's.com; 800-423-3537)



CRIMSON TRACE LG-485 LASERGUARD

The new Crimson Trace LG-485 is a combination light/laser-aiming module designed specifically for the Smith & Wesson M&P Shield series of handguns. Because of this, it molds seamlessly into the triggerguard of the Shield pistol while still providing 150 lumens of bright LED light and a laser adjustable for both windage and elevation. Red and green laser versions are available (crimsontrace.com; 800-442-2406)



GUNGENICS CLEANING KITS

Gungenics offers an ingenious solution to keep bore brush bristles out of your fingers and caustic cleaning solutions off your skin. The company has designed a cleaning rod with a quick-detach system and color-coded bore brushes, jags and patch loops. To eliminate smashing your fingers at the front of the barrel, like on a revolver, the handle is elongated. All of the parts are made from sturdy, non-marring glass-reinforced nylon. (gungenics.com; 614-902-0802)



G-SIGHT LASER TRAINING PRO

Dry fire practice is critical to developing marksmanship skills, and the G-Sight Laser Training Pro mobile application helps the shooter review shots with the aid of a laser cartridge and smartphone. The Laser Training Pro app is free and easy to use. Simply set up a target, calibrate it and start training. Each shot can be reviewed, or the entire session can be evaluated at its end. (g-sight.com; 626-594-0016)

BEST OF SHOT



LABRADAR

Knowing the velocity of your bullet is instrumental in developing accurate and effective loads. The LabRadar is a ballistic velocity radar positioned beside the shooter, not in front of the muzzle. Just point the unit at the target and the LabRadar will record velocities and calculate standard deviations and extreme spreads as well as maximum, minimum and average velocities. The unit will record any number of shots and works in any light conditions. (mylabradar.com; 316-866-2525)

MANTISX

MantisX offers a new training system designed to improve your shooting without leaving your home. The lightweight MantisX module installs on your firearm's rail system. It can be used for live fire, dry fire and airsoft. The user then installs the smartphone application, turns on the MantisX and pairs the device with the phone via Bluetooth. The data collected can be used to evaluate and correct problems, and track progress over time. (mantisx.com)



LYMAN AUTO ADVANCE TARGET SYSTEM

If you shoot a lot or maybe have an infirmity that makes walking downrange a chore, check out Lyman's Auto Advance Target System. Shooters can use a handheld remote to advance the target rolls at distances up to 200 yards. The unit is battery operated, so there is no need for an electrical outlet. A variety of target rolls are available to suit the shooter's needs. (lymanproducts.com; 800-225-9626)



LASERMAX SPARTAN SPS-C-R

While LaserMax has been making pistol lights and lasers for years, the new Spartan SPS-C-R adds something new to the mix—both. Powered by a single AAA battery, the new Spartan SPS-C-R sports both a 120-lumen tactical light and an adjustable laser sight. Both the laser and illuminator are powered by that single AAA battery, and the unit is available in two varieties—one with a green laser and the other with a traditional red laser. Features include a 10-minute auto-off power-saver mode, oversized electronic touch pads and durable polymer/aircraft aluminum construction. (lasermax.com; 800-527-3703)

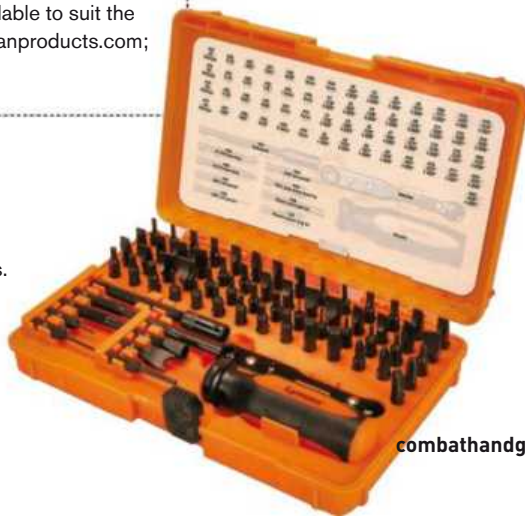


MGM TARGETS STEEL CHALLENGE PLATE RACK

If you're a pistol shooter, a plate rack can be loads of fun. Unfortunately, they are heavy and expensive, often with price tags that put them out of the reach of most recreational shooters. MGM Targets has solved that problem with its Steel Challenge Plate Rack, which uses simple 2x4s for support on which to hang the six 8-inch, hexagon-shaped AR500 steel plates. (mgmtargets.com; 888-767-7371)

LYMAN TOOL KIT

Not having the right tool with you during a range session can be one of the most frustrating experiences. Lyman's Tool Kit comes with bits for slotted screws, hex screws, Torx screws and Phillips screws. Also included are specialty bits for Weaver scope rings, Glock front sights and 1911 bushings. There are pin punches and a ratchet wrench for maximum torque. All of the tools are neatly organized in a secure plastic container. Lyman offers both a 45- and 68-piece kits. (lymanproducts.com; 800-225-9626)



SPORTEAR GHOST STRIKE

SportEar's new Ghost Stryke ear pieces offer up to six times hearing amplification while simultaneously blocking any noise in excess of 85 decibels. Small enough to be worn while hunting or even at a concert, the plugs offer all-day comfort without the bulk of a headset and have adjustable volume controls. (sportear.com; 866-422-5502)



REAL AVID GUN TOOL MAX

Real Avid's Gun Tool Max is an extremely effective multi-tool. It has needle-nose pliers, a carbide cutter, a universal choke tube wrench, a carbon scraper, windage and elevation adjusters, detachable pin punches, a hook, a three-position locking bit driver with 12 bits, a stainless steel knife blade and a tap hammer. Real Avid includes a nylon sheath so you can wear the Gun Tool Max on your hip during your range outings. (realavid.com; 800-286-0567)



STREAMLIGHT TLR-6

Streamlight's new TLR-6 light/laser unit is designed specifically for concealed-carry firearms. Built from high-impact polymer, the TLR-6 fills the void left by full-sized and micro lights for concealed carry. More than that, the new TLR-6 features a 100-lumen LED light and an integrated 640nm red laser. A version is also available for non-railed 1911s. (streamlight.com; 800-523-7488)



WALKER'S RAZOR VX

The new Razor XV incorporates a neck-worn device with retractable digital ear buds. It's so low in profile that it won't interfere with a rifle or shotgun's buttstock, yet it can enhance your natural hearing by a factor of nine. The Razor XV's "no fail" sound-activated compression circuit protects your ears from muzzle blast and reduces overall sound output by an impressive 31 decibels. It also features Bluetooth so you can stream music or answer a phone call while protecting your hearing. The Razor XV's batteries are rechargeable, and it comes with an AC wall adapter and a micro USB cord for charging. (gsmoutdoors.com; 877-269-8490)



TETRA GUN DRY FINISH LUBRICANT

Tetra Gun Dry Finish Lubricant was designed expressly for shooting in dusty, sandy conditions. Unlike oil-based lubricants, Tetra Gun Dry Finish Lubricant is applied wet and then dries, providing a layer of lubricant less likely to attract dirt, grit or sand. (tetraguncare.com)



SUREFIRE XC2

The XC2 is based on the XC1, the lightest SureFire WeaponLight on the market. Like the XC1, the XC2 still features the MaxVision beam—a proprietary reflector/bezel combination that produces a super-wide beam of light. Where the XC2 differentiates itself from its predecessor is the inclusion of a laser-aiming module. While that's pretty neat itself, what's amazing is that the size of the unit is almost unchanged. It's like getting something for nothing. (surefire.com; 800-828-8809)

JEFF COOPER: FROM THE HIP

Timeless excerpts from *Gunsite Gargantuan Gossip*

HUNTING HOGS: We learn from a correspondent in France that wild pigs have become a serious agricultural problem there, as they have been in Germany for some time, and now increasingly so in Australia. Hunting the “wild boar” is a fine pastime and should be encouraged widely. French farmers do not seem to like this idea, however, and now maintain that the wild hog should be exterminated. The people who condemn hunting frequently have to face this. They would rather there were no wild animals than that anyone should enjoy hunting them.

ON THE 5.56: In our year-end sea stories we heard a remark from an old line infantryman from Vietnam who, when he was introduced to the M16 rifle, opined, “I ain’t got time for ‘em to bleed to death.”

MIND THE GAP: Television commentator Tom Brokaw had offered a curious analysis of what may be called “generation diversity.” In one instance, an elderly gentleman was complaining to a social scientist about the mindless vandalism of young people who take it upon themselves to smash property just for laughs. The latter was inclined to minimize the perniciousness involved as simply the normal exuberance of youth. The plaintiff was asked, “Well, what were you doing when you were 17?” The answer: “I was fighting on Guadalcanal.” Yes, Virginia, there is a generation gap.

HOT OR COLD? Current jargon holds that a “hot burglary” is one committed when the resident of the dwelling is at home—a “cold burglary” when he is not. Since the disarmament of the British public, hot burglary is up 50 percent—as opposed to a steady 13 percent in the United States.



^ If you need to get rid of pests like hogs before they decimate crops, why not have some fun doing it?

According to the Colonel, shooters should be able to hit ping-pong-ball-sized targets at 7 yards, even when they're moving. <



Howard Communications Photo

TO STOP A TYRANT: We see that the Canadian Foreign Minister, one Axworthy, feels that the priority for the United Nations should be the adoption of a global convention prohibiting the international transport of small arms to anybody except government. Here we have a senior and important official of a significant nation unashamedly flaunting the face of tyranny. In his view, nobody but governments should have access to arms. We all should trust governments, right?

LAST STAND: Not long ago I saw a bumper sticker that read, “Custer had it coming.” This is my candidate for the silliest remark of the season. We all have it coming, buster, but very few of us can expect that Wagnerian ride to Valhalla! Perhaps Tecumseh, at an earlier date, but certainly not Sitting Bull nor Crazy Horse. From the beginning of history it has been the soldier’s ambition to die in action, sword in hand and face to the enemy. In scanning the list of heroes’ deaths, we may note that while vast numbers of men have died in battle, only a few have arranged to go

out with truly heroic flourish: Leonidas, El Cid, Valens, Beornoth, General George Pomeroy Colley at Majuba Hill, George Armstrong Custer and, perhaps preeminently, Horatio Nelson. There are others, but not many, and George Custer is certainly inscribed on the gold role of honor. So he had it coming—and so have you, and so have I—but we can hardly expect the premium gold card which is our ticket into the halls of splendor. If various sorts of “activists” wish to make fools of themselves, let them refrain from preaching to others.

AIM SMALL, MISS SMALL: In view of this modern passion for minor-caliber sidearms, it would seem to be a good idea to produce a target which represents only the eye sockets of a human adversary, and which is capable of quick movement both lateral and vertical. To use a small-caliber pistol efficiently for defensive purposes, the well-trained shooter should be able to hit a ping pong ball reliably at ranges of up to 7 yards, even when that target is in motion. ☐

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