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MARCH/APRIL 2021



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IN A RIOT
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Mar./April 2021
Volume 42, Issue 2

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By William Bell

FIRST SHOT: The American gun-buying public has never before in history built up their "freedom safes" as they've done in 2020. According to the most recent NSSF National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) figures, 2020 is the record-breaking year for gun sales. The NSSF-adjusted NICS for January through October 2020 totaled 17,227,586 and already exceeded the total 13,199,172 adjusted background checks for the entire year of 2019 by 30.5 percent. Each month since March has been the strongest of that month ever recorded. This isn't just a red state versus blue state phenomenon. As

the NSSF recently reported: Never before have so many Americans of all political persuasions chosen to exercise their right to firearm ownership, including the estimated 6.9 million who purchased a firearm for the first time this year.

Are we all just acting triggered about contested presidential elections, the fears of our gun rights being stripped, new unconstitutional firearms and ammo taxes and mandatory "gun buybacks," gun czars who wouldn't know an AR-platform gun from an airsoft plinker and calls from many to defund the police?

Nope. Gun owners aren't triggered at all.

In fact, law-abiding citizens are buying guns and ammo and training to build their skill-sets because they take the responsibility of protecting themselves and their loved ones as job number one.

Our team strives to be your go-to source for new guns, gear, everyday carry tips, personal-defense and sport-shooting instruction. We appreciate you buying this issue. And note, we welcome all with open arms. We proudly bring you an eclectic mix of content for veteran firearms enthusiasts and for those millions of newcomers to gun ownership. Stay strong, and enjoy the issue!

—Nino Bosaz



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EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Nino Bosaz
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Linas Cernauskas
SENIOR EDITOR Mark Chesnut*
ART DIRECTOR/COVER DESIGN Rory Slifkin
PREMEDIA Mike Gregory
DIGITAL MANAGER Matthew Hogan
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Richard Ortega
CIRCULATION CONSULTANT Scott Hill/ProCirc
COVER PHOTO Courtesy SAR/Sean Utley*
personaldefenseworld.com • tactical-life.com
realworldsurvivor.com • ballisticmag.com
EDITORIAL INQUIRIES editdesk@athlonoutdoors.com



athlonoutdoors.com

SVP/GENERAL MANAGER Nicholas S. Seifert
ATHLON OUTDOORS
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ADVERTISING SALES
National Office

212-478-1910; sales@athlonoutdoors.com

Independent Account Representatives

NORTHEAST REGION Scott Buchmayr
978-462-6335
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DIRECT RESPONSE ADVERTISING Jim Coen
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SENIOR DIRECTOR
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MARKETING DIRECTOR Brock Norman
MARKETING COORDINATOR/
ADMINISTRATOR Maureen Pichner

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Corporate Officers

PRESIDENT, CEO Chuck Allen
CFO/TREASURER Mary Lee Vanderkooi
CORPORATE ADDRESSES
New York:
60 E. 42nd St., Suite 820,
NY, NY 10165; 212-478-1910
Nashville:
2451 Atrium Way, Suite 320
Nashville, TN 37214
800-284-5668

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SHOULD YOU SHOOT?

IF CAUGHT IN A RIOT, THE USE OF FIREPOWER IS NOT AUTOMATICALLY EXCUSED

BY MASSAD AYOUB

iStock Photo

Don't believe the talk around the cracker barrel (or on the Internet, which is much the same) suggesting that all looters should be shot. That's simply not what the law says. If we took a word association test and the proctor said "Riot," most of us would probably answer "Looting and arson." True enough, but those are entirely different things that warrant entirely different responses.

Looting and arson are both serious felonies. Arson itself breaks down into two categories. Simple "arson" is burning down something in a way that does not immediately endanger human life. "Arson of an occupied building," however, is a large cut above that in seriousness. Because of its great and obvious threat to innocent human life, arson of occupied places is categorized as a "heinous felony against the person." It is the sort of crime that can warrant use of lethal force to stop.

If pouring gasoline on your doorstep or inside an occupied structure he has broken into, he is causing clear and present danger to innocent human life. If, however, he is trying to ignite a remote, abandoned building, that's not the case, and the defender's weapon should not be fired.

Looting is essentially theft of property—

what our highest court has called "mere property"—often combined with malicious mischief and vandalism. In and of themselves, these, as a rule, do not rise to the standard of a threat that warrants deadly physical force to prevent.

PAWN SHOP INCIDENTS

Consider **Case One**, in Minneapolis in May of 2020 during the rioting that followed the death of George Floyd during his arrest there. That city's *Star-Tribune* reported that a 45-year-old man was shot in the chest with a shotgun and killed, allegedly while attempting to loot a pawn shop. The man police believed shot him, the 59-year-old owner of the pawn shop, was arrested and held in anticipation of murder charges. The deceased reportedly had a criminal record. His body was discovered on the sidewalk outside the establishment, and some said that this is where he was when he was fatally wounded. It was later reported that the pawn shop owner had been released, pending further investigation. He was not yet "in the clear."

Yet, what happens when looters become assailants? Now it's a crime against the person, and can quickly

rise to a standard that justifies use of a defensive firearm. **Case Two** occurred in The Bronx, New York, during rioting in June 2020. The pawn shop in question was a family business, and when family members arrived at the scene, thieves who had been looting the pawn shop fled. However, a "second wave" arrived, and those looters quickly turned into assaulters. The family members ran to their car and attempted to escape, but were dragged from the vehicle and savagely attacked with what was described by ABCNY as "crowbars, bricks and lead pipes." The victims, including multiple females, were seriously injured; at least one required multiple surgeries. Would this have warranted deadly force in self-defense? Absolutely...but it appears that none of the victims had a gun to defend themselves and their loved ones.

It was the intent to seriously hurt or kill innocent people, not breaking and entering nor theft, which would have allowed those family members to shoot their attackers if they could have. This was seen clearly in **Case Three**, which occurred in Philadelphia during the rioting there in June 2020. The owner of a firing range and gun shop was inside his place of business when his security cameras

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Activists take over a Seattle neighborhood, banishing the police

Second man charged with torching Minneapolis police station during protests

Couple on Trial for Shooting Rioter at 2017 Milo Yiannopoulos Speech

Headlines like these validate arming ourselves, but none of us wants to end up as a defendant. (Pistol is Langdon Custom Beretta LTT 9mm.)



The late expert on criminal behavior, William Aprill, said that avoidance was victory. He was correct.

showed multiple looters breaking in at approximately 4:15 a.m. He grabbed an M4 configuration Bushmaster AR-15 and, when the looters confronted him, engaged. One of them dropped his own gun only after the store owner shot him in the head, killing him instantly. At that point, the other looters took to their heels.

This armed citizen's shooting was recognized as clear-cut self-defense from the beginning. Why? He had not gone outside "looking for trouble." He faced criminal deadly force multiple times over: The intruder he shot was armed with a firearm and accompanied by multiple other offenders, which would have created a potentially lethal disparity of force even if there hadn't been a deadly weapon *per se* among them. All the elements to justify deadly force in self-defense were obviously present.

STREET BRAWLS

The first piece of universal advice from experts is, "If you know there's likely to be trouble, don't go there." If danger erupts, there is a significant possibility that you'll be painted as "the troublemaker who strapped on a gun and went looking for trouble." I would advise you to take the advice of the poet-humorist Ogden Nash: "When called by a panther, don't anther."

Case Four, Seattle, long before the recent spate of rioting across the country, a conservative couple went to a campus to hear a famous speaker of their own political bent. Knowing that protests were planned, the female armed herself with a Glock 26, even though she knew she

was going to a "gun-free" zone, and the male went on social media saying he was ready to crack some heads if necessary. Sure enough, they became embroiled in a heated scene with protesters. The husband found it necessary to pepper spray one of the hostile demonstrators. Then, the wife said she perceived a large Antifa-type male come at her husband with a knife, and she shot him. The couple fled the scene, not reporting their involvement until later. Both were arrested and criminally charged. After a long, expensive trial in which the wounded man refused to testify, the jury deadlocked and the prosecutor decided not to re-try the case. Nonetheless, it had been a terrible ordeal. One lesson of Case Four, of course, is not to make stupid inflammatory posts on social media. However, the overriding lesson is to avoid such potential situations entirely.

Case Five, Albuquerque, a young man went illegally armed to a protest in which people were trying to pull down a statue. When he attempted to stop them, a woman pushed him and he pushed back. She fell, and angry protesters chased him. He was knocked to the ground and attacked with a skateboard, and when one protester pulled two knives on him he drew a pistol and opened fire. The knife-wielder fell, seriously wounded. The shooter was surrounded, disarmed and protected by open-carrying "civilian militia" members until police could arrive. Originally arrested for the shooting, that charge was dropped pending further investigation. But, at this writing he remained charged with assault based on

the pushing incident, and illegal concealed carry. His having fled the initial confrontation had "rehabilitated his innocence" in the second encounter where he was knocked down and attacked with deadly weapons, supporting his self-defense plea in the shooting itself.

Many have suggested that if you find yourself in your car, surrounded by angry protesters, you should just drive through the crowd. Tactically, ramming a car or even hitting a pedestrian can trigger the airbag of a modern vehicle, accompanied by automatic engine cutoff: Now you are trapped in place *and* pinned behind your steering wheel. Addressing legality, too many people misinterpret the general legal truism that a mob can be seen as an organism, and when one is attacked by a mob, any member of the mob is subject to deadly force retaliation. True as far as it goes, but harken: Not every crowd is a mob!

A very wise (and streetwise) police supervisor in a major city, who goes by the pen name "Spencer Blue," makes a very interesting point. The peaceful protesters, he explains, are the ocean in which the sharks, the violent ones, swim. The bad ones use the innocent, well-meaning ones as camouflage, cover and concealment. For example, consider **Case Six**, the infamous near-fatal beating of truck driver Reginald Denny during the Rodney King Riot in Los Angeles roughly a quarter-century ago. He was beaten, stomped and bludgeoned by raging thugs who pulled him out of his truck after he stopped due to the presence of a crowd of protesters, and left permanently brain-damaged. Certainly, had he been armed, Reginald Denny shooting the men attacking him would have been legal. However, if he had wildly fired into a crowd and hit uninvolved protesters, that would certainly not have been justifiable. A "mob"—read "lynch mob" here—comes to a place with shared malicious intent. However, one or more vicious criminals emerging from a crowd of well-intentioned protesters does not turn the non-violent members of the crowd into a "mob."

In the end, the best bet is to assiduously avoid involvement in protests, riots or other civil disturbances. **CH**

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RENDEZVOUS STOCKPILE



**HOT NEW STUFF
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LATEST EVENT IN IDAHO**

This past September saw Athlon Outdoors host its fourth annual Rendezvous in Driggs, Idaho, near the Grand Tetons. For three days, dozens of gun manufacturers unveiled their latest and greatest wares—many still under wraps—to Athlon editors and content creators, giving us plenty of trigger time to create more content for our various print magazines and websites in the coming months. But this amazing event wouldn't have been possible without several key sponsors donating goods for every participant. Here we'd like to show our support and fill you in on the great gear that made for another awesome Rendezvous. —*The Editors*



1

2

1 5.11 TACTICAL RUSH LBD MIKE 56 L

What kind of shooting-range Rendezvous would be complete without a bag for toting clothes and gear? Embroidered with our Athlon Outdoors logo, 5.11's Rush LBD (Load Bearing Duffels) MIKE 56L is built to haul heavy loads like armor and equipment, and is made from 1050D nylon, with webbing and heavy-duty bartacking reinforcements throughout. Featuring interior mesh pockets, lashing straps, compression straps and grab handles, the duffels can be shouldered or worn as a backpack. RUSH LBD Duffels are MOLLE-compatible. (511tactical.com)

2 5.11 TACTICAL COMFORT MASK

The 5.11 Comfort Mask is built with three layers for comfort and easy wear—an outer lightweight polyester fabric, a middle SMS filtering layer and a moisture-wicking inner lining with antibacterial properties. Soft and stretchy ear loops and a thin nose wire provide a comfortable fit. Ours were branded with the *Ballistic* magazine logo. (511tactical.com)



3

3 5.11 TACTICAL CAP: Team 5.11 also provided Rendezvous participants with co-branded *Tactical Life* magazine caps that sported 5.11's ABR Diamond patch. It features a soft crown, 100-percent cotton six-panel design and a moisture-wicking jersey sweatband with adjustable hook and loop sizing. (511tactical.com)



4

4 BERETTA BOLO ALPHA JACKET: When the range temperatures started to dip, Beretta's BOLO Alpha got called on for duty. The BOLO is made of resistant nylon with protection inserts and is designed to maintain optimal body temperature. Its Alpha active insulation is engineered for consistent thermic regulation, while still allowing breathability during running and gunning missions on the range. It features YKK zip closure, chest pocket and large front pockets with YKK zippers, drawstring regulation at the bottom, elastic wrist and embroidered Beretta logo. It works great as a base-layer, too! (berettausa.com)

5 CALDWELL E-MAX SHADOWS: Putting on your eyes and ears is job number one when the range goes hot. The E-Max Shadows are Bluetooth, rechargeable electronic ear plugs designed to go where you go, play all your music and keep your ears protected. High-quality stereo sound is Bluetooth compatible with your mobile device and comes with a 23dB noise reduction rating. Dual microphones provide directional clarity and come equipped with easy-to-use touch volume controls. The charging case comes with an integrated lithium battery. (caldwellshooting.com)



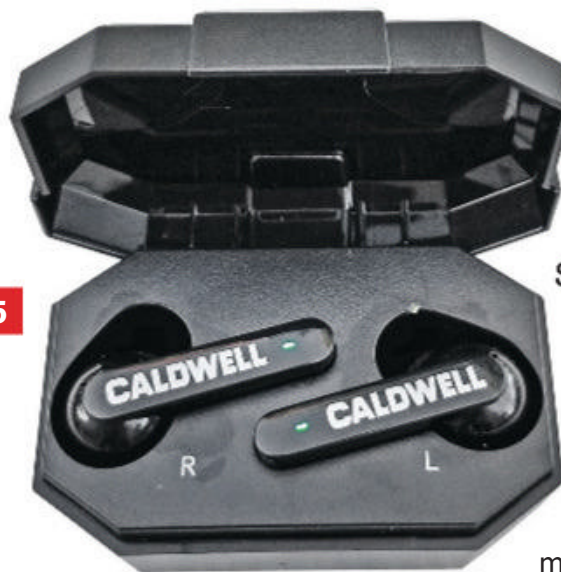
6

6 DOA SHOOTING BENCHES

Looking for a rock-solid, go-anywhere bench? Every firing station at the Rendezvous had three DOA Shooting Benches. Super-stable and rugged, yet easy to adjust, these benches feature quality steel tripods and seat supports as well as tabletops that are made from either 14-ply birch or maple for an unbeatable feel.

The seat can be moved vertically and laterally, and the entire setup can support more than 500 pounds. (doashootingbench.com)

5



7

7 DGX STEEL TARGETS

Nothing beats the pleasant ping of hitting a steel target several hundred yards away. To help us out, Dixie Gun Worx (DGX) provided dozens of durable AR500 steel targets that survived three full days of shooting, even from large-caliber rounds. (dixiegunworx.com)





8

8 HOWARD LEIGHT IMPACT SPORT BOLT EARMUFFS

Everyone at the Rendezvous used a set of Howard Leight Impact Sport Bolt earmuffs for hearing protection. Building on more than 30 years of continuous technological innovation, these electronic earmuffs combine 5x sound amplification, a 22-decibel noise reduction rating and a lightning-fast, 0.5-millisecond attack time with a slim, comfortable and ergonomic design that uses one control knob. In short, these earmuffs make it easier for you to hear range commands while canceling out the sound of gunfire. They're powered by two included AAA batteries. (howardleight.com)

9 HOWARD LEIGHT UVEX GENESIS EYEWEAR

Few things are more frustrating than having shooting glasses fog up while lining up sights on a target or swinging a scattergun over a flushing pheasant. Thankfully, Howard Leight has developed a new UVEX Hydroshield coating for its eye protection that helps keep lenses fog free up to 90 times longer than many other popular anti-fogging products. It's also scratch resistant and blocks harmful UVA and UVB ultraviolet radiation. At the Rendezvous, shooters got a chance to test this coating out on Howard Leight's ballistic-rated UVEX Genesis glasses. (howardleight.com)



9

10

10 MAGPUL DAKA VOLUME POUCH

The DAKA Volume Pouch was specifically designed to maximize usable storage space while maintaining a compact footprint. Its intuitive design allows the Volume Pouch to stand vertically on its own and expand up to 3 liters in size when in use. The wide mouth and water-resistant zippered opening allows the user to insert and remove items with one hand without having to hold it open with the other. The large translucent window makes organizing and locating gear even easier, and a single large carabiner attachment point doubles as a lashing point and carrying handle so your stored gear will always be at hand when needed. (magpul.com)



11

11 MAGPUL DAKA BIFOLD WALLETS

The DAKA Bifold Wallet was designed with the same slim styling of Magpul's original wallets, but with extra room added for things like credit cards and cash. It's made from a polymer-infused material that will stand up to hard use without slipping in your pocket. The seams are RF welded for extra durability. (magpul.com)



12

12 SILENCERCO TRUCKER HAT

Keep on trucking and keep on shooting with a slick Trucker Hat. Our hats were co-branded with the Athlon Outdoors logo. Yes, Silencerco is known for its suppressors, firearms and related accessories, but the company also has a slick selection of soft goods including hats, patches, T-shirts and more. (silencerco.com)

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2020 HANDGUN OF THE YEAR



13 SONIC BOOM REACTIVE TARGETS

Pounding steel targets is great. There's no denying that great feeling you get when you hear that resounding ping and your spotter calls out a hit. But when things go boom, the thrill factor ticks up several notches. Sonic Boom donated cases of its 2-pound exploding rifle targets for this year's event. Sonic Boom's full array of products are easy to use and see at great distances. (sonicboomtargets.com)

14 TANNERITE REACTIVE TARGETS

To keep things loud and fun, Tannerite provided several cases of its awesome reactive targets. Simply mix the powders provided into a canister, shake it up, set it a safe distance away and shoot it with a high-velocity round. The resulting blast will have everyone smiling. (tannerite.com)



15 UNDER ARMOUR MEN'S AND WOMEN'S UA TACTICAL TECH SHORT SLEEVE T-SHIRTS

Staying cool and comfortable was easy with UA's lightweight training T-shirt. Our shirts wore the Athlon Outdoors logo on the sleeve. The Tech series is made with ultra-soft fabric that wicks sweat and dries rapidly. Anti-odor technology prevents the growth of odor-causing microbes. It sports smooth, chafe-free flatlock seam construction. (underarmour.com)

16 UNDER ARMOUR MEN'S AND WOMEN'S UA TACTICAL COTTON T-SHIRTS

These super-soft, cotton-blend fabric T-shirts provide all-day comfort. The lightweight fabric allows for quicker drying than regular cotton. UA's Tactical tees are designed specifically for first responders, without big logos, so they can be worn with uniforms. (underarmour.com)



17 UNDER ARMOUR STORM EVOLUTION DAYTONA VEST

This is the one layer you don't have to keep taking off and putting on all day. That's because it actually adapts to the temperature, keeping you warm when it's cool, but letting out extra heat as the day gets going. UA Storm technology repels water without sacrificing breathability. Features: Breathable insulation through back and side with lightweight spacer fabric, woven overlay on front for wind protection, and dropped, shaped hem for enhanced coverage. (underarmour.com)

18 UNDER ARMOUR WOMEN'S BORA JACKET

Several women on the Athlon Team sported UA's Women's Bora Jacket. Its UA Storm technology repels water without sacrificing breathability. Windproof construction shields you from the elements, and its 100-percent waterproof and breathable 2.5-layer construction sports fully taped seams. (underarmour.com)



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19



20



21

AMMO MANUFACTURERS

Cases upon cases of ammunition ranging from .22 LR all the way up to .338 Lapua Magnum were needed to feed the hundreds of firearms that were tested at this year's Rendezvous. Coming up big this year with ammo donations were:

BERGER BULLETS

bergerbullets.com

BLACK HILLS AMMUNITION

black-hills.com

HORNADY AMMUNITION

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SPECIAL SPONSORSHIPS

There are many behind-the-scenes costs incurred with massive events of this magnitude—from meals and lodging to signage and more. The following companies helped immensely with time and other donations. Team Athlon Outdoors would like to thank the following companies for their contributions.

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FN AMERICA

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PRIMARY ARMS

primaryarms.com



SCCY FIREARMS

sccy.com



WEATHERBY

weatherby.com



19 UNDER ARMOUR SPORTSMASK

When health officials said healthy people should wear facemasks, UA started building prototypes until it made the perfect one for athletes. UA's Sportsmask has the airflow you need, a cool feel, and the best fit for running, training and shooting on the range. (underarmour.com)

20 US PALM AK 30R MAGAZINE

No goodie bag is complete sans a magazine for running your favorite AK-platform firearm. US Palm's dependable AK30 mag features a sealed, one-piece design built with a proprietary polymer for endurance. A low-friction, self-cleaning polymer follower keeps performing while the stainless steel latch cage ensures positive loading that won't give way when you need it most. The unique waffle and tread design that distinguishes the magazine provides a solid grip for the shooter during loading and unloading while providing rigid reinforcement. (uspalm.com)

21 TETON VALLEY LODGE

We owe a special thanks to the Teton Valley Lodge in Driggs, Idaho, which hosted us throughout the week with excellent cabins, five-star meals and the most kind and helpful staff you'll ever meet. Seriously. Everyone enjoyed their stay, and we couldn't recommend the scenic lodge more for fly fishing or whatever outdoor pursuits you're looking for. (tetonvalleylodge.com) 

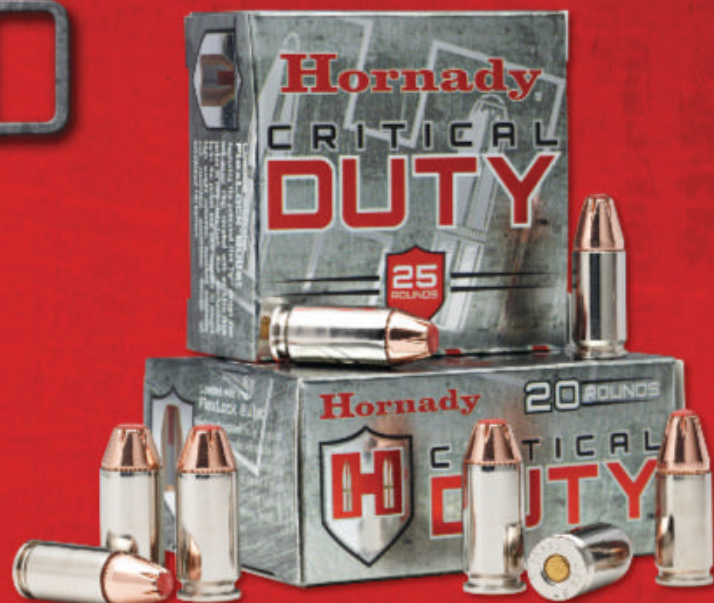
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WHAT'S IN YOUR RANGE BAG?

TIM HERRON GIVES US THE GOODS ON HIS TOP GUNS AND GEAR

BY KAREN HUNTER



I could not be more excited with this issue's featured pro, Tim Herron. Not only is Herron a professional shooter for Federal Premium Ammunition, he also shoots professionally for Nighthawk Custom. Federal Ammunition has been leading the way since 1922 by staying on the cusp of technology and pioneering new products with great ingenuity. Their name is synonymous with reliability and remains one of the most trusted names today in the ammunition industry.

Nighthawk Custom is well known for the custom craftsmanship that goes hand in hand with their own unique philosophy of, "One Gun, One Gunsmith." Each gun produced by Nighthawk Custom is crafted from start to finish by the hands of one gunsmith, alone. Maintaining this philosophy reinforces the character of Nighthawk and the pride they pour into every gun they make. To shoot professionally for Nighthawk and represent their name, the shooter would naturally have to possess the abilities and characteristics that live



up to the Nighthawk Custom high standard. Nighthawk found the perfect match with Tim Herron.

FIRST TIME

Prior to shooting, Herron had a lengthy career in autocross racing, affiliated with the SCCA (Sports Car Club of America) from 1998 to 2009, while also teaching as a performance driving instructor. It was in 2010 that he picked up a handgun for the first time for self-defense purposes and immediately fell in love with shooting.

"It gave me an immediate Zen type of feeling that is



so hard to explain," he said. "When you shoot, it is just you, your sights and the target all working together. It unlocked a part of me like nothing had before and I could not get enough." Hooked, Herron dived into the competitive shooting world headfirst and never looked back. Later in that first year he noticed that his race car had not seen one event and he knew without a

doubt his life had changed. Herron sold his race car, tools and parts, and began shooting competitively full time.

It was not long after that Herron's passion for teaching surfaced once again, now in the form of handgun instruction. "I have a passion for teaching and want to give everyone the same wonderful experience as I have had with great mentors and coaches," he explained. "I want every

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FIREPOWER

Going beyond the basics brings us to Herron's guns. The War Hawk Recon has the same features as the War Hawk Government model. It boasts a unique tri-cut slide top and top serrations that come to an arrow point, giving it a design that stands out from other 1911s. Shooters are able to go at least 5,000 rounds without a recoil spring change due to Nighthawk's EVERLAST Recoil System. Aggressive cocking serrations provide a solid purchase to rack the slide, while the one-piece magazine well/mainspring housing ensures fast reloads. Herron went with the Railscales G10 grips, giving his War Hawk a sleek, sexy appearance.

The War Hawk Recon has a forged government-size frame and a match-grade .45 ACP barrel. Herron has two that are identical in case one fails during competition. Considering these guns are handcrafted by Nighthawk, the likelihood of that happening would be very slim. Nighthawk Custom guns are hand fitted from start to finish with all components handcrafted in house. These guns

shooter to have the same 'wow factor' that creates a lifelong desire and journey."

I asked Herron if he had any hesitation jumping into a competitive world where he was considered a beginner. "The thing I always tell folks is don't hesitate to try competitive shooting or to take a class. I dislike the excuse, 'I'll wait till I'm good enough or better.' How do you expect to get better if you don't jump in now?" His own advice literally served him well as this race car driver turned pro shooter has had a more than impressive career.

TITLES

Herron is a USPSA Grand Master in both single-stack and limited division, with experience in defensive shooting, IDPA, Steel Challenge, bullseye and target shooting, Bianchi and the occasional trick shot. Herron is literally one of the top 10

shooters in the nation. Titles include but are not limited to:

2018:

- USPSA Handgun National Championships Single Stack Division Top 10 (7th overall)
- New Mexico High Desert Classic Single Stack Champion
- Illinois Sectional Single Stack Champion (4th consecutive title)
- Kansas Sectional Single Stack Champion (3rd consecutive title)
- 3rd Overall USPSA Single Stack Classic Nationals
- 3rd Overall USPSA Battle in the Bluegrass

- **2017:** Top 16 USPSA Single Stack National Championships
- **2014, 2017:** USPSA Area 4 HOA SS Division Champion
- **2014, 2016:** USPSA Area 3 HOA SS Division Champion
- **2013-2017:** 5-time Missouri State USPSA Single Stack Champion.

With a list of accolades like that, it is not difficult to see why Nighthawk Custom and Federal Ammunition would stand behind Herron as one of their pro shooters. Herron represents both companies quite well.

Concerning Herron's equipment, I was not surprised to find very little inside his bag, just the necessities. To me, this is evidence of how little is needed when you have talent combined with a great gun. For the basics, here are Herron's go-to choices:

- 1. Ear Pro:** Peltor Electronic Tactical Headset.
- 2. Eye Pro:** Hunters Gold Eye Protection.
- 3. Belt:** Mach 1 Speed Belt Combo from Dominate Defense.
- 4. Holster:** Custom made from Red Hill Tactical.
- 5. Shot Timer:** The Commander by AMG Lab.
- 6. Ammunition:** American Eagle 230-grain .45 ACP by Federal Ammunition.

WHEN YOU SHOOT,
IT IS JUST YOU,
YOUR SIGHTS
AND THE TARGET
ALL WORKING
TOGETHER."



← Tim Herron's War Hawk Recon pistols from Nighthawk Custom are works of art and shoot as good as they look.

beginner to experienced, Herron has become a highly sought-after coach, mentor and trainer on the competitive shooting circuit.

I asked Herron what his advice would be to those competitors considered to be in the beginner realm. "You have to push yourself if you want to get better, and you can't be afraid of failing," he said. "You're going to make mistakes. This is how you learn. We learn from the failures observed, not the successes achieved."

For more information, visit timherronshooting.com

are absolute tack drivers, and I would venture to say any one of us would want one for each hand.

Herron was not just "given" guns from Nighthawk, instead he was able to sit with Nighthawk Custom gunsmith Joey Lehr to discuss exactly what he would need and want to run in competition. "Tim actually came here to Nighthawk and sat with me while I built his pistol," Lehr said. "It was a unique experience for him to see his pistol being built, but my experience was great as well. I got to listen to him point out aspects of the pistol that are important to him as a competitive shooter. It was a great learning experience for me to hear about the details that are important from his perspective." That's what sets Nighthawk apart from the rest—One Gun, One Gunsmith.

In addition to competitive shooting, Herron is also a firearms instructor specializing in competitive pistol shooting. Teaching all levels of shooters from

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BRACED FOR ACTION

RUNNING THE 9MM CALIBER ROCK RIVER ARMS LAR-15M PISTOL

BY DR. MARTIN D. TOPPER

 AR pistols with arm braces have a lot going for them, especially if they're chambered in 9mm. That's because they're short, light, handy, easy to shoot accurately and more concealable than a rifle. They also don't emit a blinding fireball or sound like a stun grenade on steroids when fired indoors. In addition, 9mm ARs extend the useful range of the 9mm cartridge to at least 100 yards. Add the fact that contemporary 9mm ammunition has better terminal ballistics than ever, and a person could do a lot worse than add a 9mm AR pistol with an arm brace to his or her gun safe.

GUN DETAILS

The pistol I received for testing was a Rock River SBX-K Arm Brace

with a 10.5-inch barrel. I asked for this model because I wanted to see how accurately the test gun would shoot at 100 yards. I was also very interested in knowing whether the 9mm cartridge would gain significant velocity when fired from a 10.5-inch barrel as compared to the 4-inch barrel found on many 9mm duty pistols. There are three other Rock River 9mm AR pistols with arm braces: an SBX-K with a 7-inch barrel and two BT-9 models that have either 7-inch or 10.5-inch barrels. The BT-9s are very similar to the SBX-Ks except that the BT-9s have an extendable arm brace, a different lower receiver and use double-column Glock magazines.

The evaluation began by examining the 10.5-inch SBX-K on my workbench. This pistol has an extruded aluminum A4 upper receiver with a

↓ This would-be robber is no match for the SBX-K at 20 yards.



This very tight 1.63-inch group was fired → from the SBX-K at a distance of 100 yards using the Norma MHP ammunition.



← The SBX-K is a state-of-the-art pistol for home-defense in urban environments.

...THE ROCK RIVER SBX-K DELIVERS EVERYTHING THAT A 9MM DUTY PISTOL CAN OFFER AND UPS THE ANTE BY PROVIDING MORE FIREPOWER AND MUCH GREATER EFFECTIVE RANGE."



→ The SBX-K features Colt-style magazines, a fixed tactical arm brace and room to mount a variety of optics and accessories.

SPEC BOX

**ROCK RIVER ARMS
LAR-15M SBA3
ARM BRACE**

CALIBER:	9mm
BARREL:	10.5 inches
OA LENGTH:	29.25 inches
WEIGHT:	6.3 pounds (empty)
BRACE:	SB Tactical SBA3
SIGHTS:	None
ACTION:	Semi-Auto
FINISH:	Matte black Type 3 hard anodized
CAPACITY:	33+1
MSRP:	\$995



↑ The Sig Romeo 5 2-MOA red-dot was a perfect match for the SBX-K, making rapid target acquisition easy day or night at close to medium range.



dust cover, but it has no forward assist. The lower receiver is a forged RRA-9 that fits only Colt-type 9mm AR magazines. The 10.5-inch, 1-in-10-inch twist chrome-moly steel barrel is chrome lined and comes lapped from the factory, so there is no need for a break-in period. The muzzle has a 1/2-36 thread and an A2 flash suppressor. The trigger is a smooth single-stage setup that has a 7-pound soft break. The 9.25-inch handguard is M-Lok compatible for mounting tactical accessories like a Crimson Trace Railmaster Pro light/laser. Weight is 6.3 pounds and overall length is 29.25 inches with the SB Tactical SBX-K arm brace. (Editor's Note: This model is no longer offered with the SBX-K brace, but you can get it with the SBA3 Arm Brace.) This makes it a very handy personal-defense firearm. The test gun has the same high quality of manufacture as all other Rock River firearms I've used. I found no tool marks, rough surfaces, sharp edges or any other signs of poor manufacture. Fit was very good with only a minimal amount of side-to-side play between the upper and lower receivers and no vertical play whatsoever. Overall, the SBX-K is a well-made pistol.

SHOTS DOWNRANGE

Because the SBX-K is a defensive firearm, I developed a tactical drill in addition to doing the traditional tests from the bench for accuracy, velocity and reliability. A total of 11 loads were run through the pistol. Six loads from Hornady, Black Hills, Wilson Combat, Federal, Remington and Underwood were 100-percent reliable in the SBX-K with details in the included table. In addition, a 100-grain frangible training load from International Cartridge Company was also completely reliable and was used to run only the tactical drills.

Functioning issues were encountered with four loads: the Sig 124-grain V-Crown, Inceptor ARX, Norma MHP and Norma Envy ammo. The SIG 124-grain +P V-Crown ammo has a wide hollow point and a broad meplat. Occasionally the edge of its hollow point would hang up on the top of the chamber before the nose of the bullet could tilt down and the round could fully go into battery. The Sig load works well in other guns, so this might be a specific issue of gun/ammo incompatibility. The Inceptor ARX load experienced Phase 3 stoppages, and both Norma loads had a single incidence of failing to eject the last round when the gun was fired from the bench. I reloaded the magazine

Norma's Envoy 9mm ammunition is a 124-grain FMJ that is perfect for training, competition and defensive engagements that require deep penetration.

with Norma's Envy and held the SBX-K firmly against my body and fired from a standing position. All rounds ejected, so it might be that the gun needed to be held more firmly when fired from the bench with the Norma loads, and with the ARX as well. I spoke to gunsmith Jamie Zern at

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the Florida Gun Exchange about the ejection issue and he said that when using standard-pressure, low-recoil, light bullet loads like the Inceptor ARX in blowback-operated 9mm ARs, the ammo can sometimes fall just outside the gun's operating window. The Rock River Arms' AR platform on which the SBX-K is built was originally designed for 5.56mm NATO rifle ammunition, but the 9mm is a pistol caliber. It is not uncommon to have ammo compatibility issues arise when a semi-auto gun designed for one cartridge is converted to a very different cartridge.

Three 50-yard, five-shot groups were fired with each of the reliable defense loads. The loads from Underwood and Hornady were also used to fire on two targets at 100 yards. A Sig Romeo 5 2-MOA 1x red-dot sight was used because the SBX-K is intended for close to intermediate range personal-defense. Red-dot sights handle very quickly in any light condition, and their 1x magnification

PERFORMANCE:

ROCK RIVER ARMS SBX-K

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 100 Honey Badger	1,173	2.57
Federal 135 Hydra-Shok Deep	907	2.27
Hornady 135 +P Critical Defense	1,049	2.24
Remington 124 Golden Saber Black Belt	1,238	1.98
Underwood 90 +P Extreme Defender	1,501	1.94
Wilson 124 +P Gold Dot	1,173	1.52

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 50 yards.



allows the shooter to keep both eyes open. Because the Romeo's 2-MOA dot subtends 1-inch at 50 yards and 2 inches at 100 yards, this setup doesn't allow for tack-driving accuracy at longer distances. Add in the effects of a gusting 8 to 12 mph wind plus the limited ballistic coefficient of pistol bullets, and MOA groups become very unlikely.

All of the ammo tested at 50 yards shot at least one group that was under 2.5 inches, clearly indicating the SBX-K has good tactical accuracy. As for 100-yard testing, I compared the trajectories of the lightest and heaviest bullets being tested to see how much more the heavier bullet would drop at 100 yards. The 90-grain Underwood bullet dropped an average of about 2 inches, while the 135-grain Hornady projectile dropped about 7 inches. So it's important to know the trajectory of your chosen defense cartridges when shooting a 9mm AR pistol at distances beyond 50 yards.

With some 9mm loads, the 10.5-inch barrel on the SBX-K did not generate an increase in muzzle velocity and energy compared to shooting them from a duty pistol with a 4-inch barrel. For example, the Hornady 135-grain +P Critical Duty and Underwood 90-grain +P Extreme Defender actually generated less muzzle velocity and muzzle energy from the 10.5-inch barrel of the SBX-K than from my S&W M&P9 2.0 Compact. On the other hand, both the Sig and ARX loads showed significant gains in velocity and energy from the 10.5-inch barrel. So when selecting defense ammo for an AR-type 9mm firearm, it can be very

NEW NINES

As I was finishing this article, I received two new Norma loads from Norma's parent company Ruag and tested them for function in my Glock 43 and the SBX-K. These new loads are a 108-grain MHP (monolithic hollow point) with petals that rapidly expand to an average 0.8 inches. This new bullet penetrates about 9.5 inches of 10-percent ballistic gelatin and is designed to be a home- and urban-defense load with controlled tissue and barrier penetration to help prevent collateral damage. The second load is the 124-grain FMJ Envy. It penetrates deeply. I made an extra



trip to the range to chronograph both loads in the SBX-K and also shoot two five-shot groups with each load at 100 yards. Velocities and energies were 1,258 fps and 380 fpe for the MHP and 1,139 fps and 364 fpe for the Envy. The tightest 100-yard group for the MHP was 1.63 inches and the



Envy's best group was 5.73 inches. Reliability of both loads was very good in the G43, but ejection was somewhat less vigorous with both loads in the SBX-K. For further information, visit norma-ammunition.com.

Federal also has a new 9mm load designed for carbines. Called Syntech PCC, it has a polymer-coated, 130-grain round-nose projectile with a factory specified velocity of 1,130 fps. For further information, visit federalpremium.com.




← The author engages a target depicting a would-be assailant from behind cover using the SBX-K. Notice that he does not crowd cover and keeps his arms tucked in when “pieing” corners.

useful to chronograph several loads in addition to testing them for accuracy, trajectory and reliability.

The tactical test involved a store robbery scenario. Imagine that you and

your spouse own a liquor store. One evening you're in the office working on the books and a customer walks in just before closing. He walks up to the counter, pulls a gun and demands

money from your spouse, who is at the cash register. Suddenly someone yells, so you pick up your SBX-K and pie a simulated doorway (stacked 55-gallon drums) just in time to see the robber turn and point the gun at you. In self-defense you fire a double tap to his chest. This drill was repeated five times. Then the drill was repeated five more times substituting a single headshot for the center chest double tap. Distance to the target was 20 yards. Average time for the five double taps was 4.26 seconds with all shots in the torso and 8 of 10 shots in the upper chest. Average for the five headshots was 2.76 seconds with all 5 in the lower half of the face.

When loaded with compatible ammo, the Rock River SBX-K delivers everything that a 9mm duty pistol can offer and ups the ante by providing more firepower and much greater effective range. For further information, visit rockriverarms.com. 

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SINCE 1977

WILSON COMBAT'S 1911 ACP

A SALUTE TO THE ATTAINABLE 1911— THE AMERICAN COMBAT PISTOL

—| By William Bell • Photos by Jordan Bell |—

Bill Wilson has been in the firearms business for some 45 years, starting in retail sporting goods sales, then in 1977 evolving into Wilson Combat, making custom 1911 pistols. He has since expanded into upgrades for pistols like the Beretta Model 92G; Glock 17, 19 and 45; plus AR-platform pistols and lines of custom AR-10s, AR-15s and Model 870 shotguns. Wilson's products are all first-rate and he has as customers all branches of the U.S. military, DHS, Border Patrol, Marshal Service, Texas Rangers and many other elite LE agencies worldwide. Add to this top shooting competitors of various disciplines, plus legally armed citizens who want a high-end firearm for personal- and home-defense.

Wilson Combat firearms don't fit the "every-man" budget, but recently Wilson has started building a 1911 pistol using quality parts, but with reduced options and streamlined production methods, resulting in a lower price for consumers. That pistol is the American Combat Pistol (ACP).

GUN DETAILS

The Wilson Combat ACP is offered in three sizes: full-size with a 5-inch barrel, "Commander" with a 4.25-inch barrel, and "Compact" with a 4-inch barrel. All will share certain standard features such as carbon steel construction, and a black non-reflective Armor Tuff finish comes standard. The ACP introduces the Eagle Claw grip and slide surface, a pattern that offers a non-abrasive, tactile grip under adverse conditions but won't harm hands or clothing during use. The front and backstraps of the grip frame meld in





→ The final test was shooting the Wilson Combat ACP as rapidly as possible at a 10-inch round steel plate at 7 yards. Some 60 rounds were fired without any malfunctions.



WILSON COMBAT'S 1911 ACP

with the pattern on the black G10 grips, and the slide serrations are also modeled after this design. Other commonalities in the ACP line include Bullet Proof (BP) "High-Grip" beavertail grip safety, BP thumb safety and BP magazine catch. They also all come with a skeletonized commander hammer, contoured magazine well and a stainless steel match-grade barrel and flush-cut bushing. A windage-adjustable Battlesight rear sight with a red fiber-optic front sight comes standard. Customer options are limited to finish, sight choice and grip color choice (black or gray). The

ACP can be had in 9mm or .45 ACP.

I chose a full-size 9mm model with a 10+1 capacity. It came in a gray, zipper-top nylon carrying case with a central gun compartment, two gear pouches and a flap-covered magazine storage area. Included are a sample container of Ultima Lube, a cleaning cloth and two magazines. The magazines are Wilson 1911 Tactical Elite models, which are made of stainless steel and offer superb ammo feeding, positive slide lock when empty, and the strongest magazine tube available. That virtually eliminates feed lip cracking and general fatigue. The black polymer base pads are removable, and there are numbered observation slots at the rear of the tube.

The trigger is of medium length, and the pull is factory set for a crisp 3.5 to 4.5 pounds. My test sample ACP had a trigger pull that averaged 4.2 pounds per my Lyman Trigger Pull Gauge and was indeed crisp. Fit and finish were superb, and the feed ramp was well polished for reliable cartridge feeding. Stamping and laser-etchings were few and tasteful. This is a most business-like pistol, for sure.

Bill Wilson categorically rejects the notion of using "wimpy" 9mm loads



I THINK BILL WILSON WILL GET QUITE A FEW ORDERS FOR HIS NEW ACP, MAYBE EVEN FROM ME!"

in his 1911 pistols. That inexpensive, 115-grain FMJ "off brand" is usually the prime offender for causing malfunctions. With this in mind, I went with Black Hills 115-grain FMJ loads. Black Hills makes top-drawer ammo that has proven to be accurate and reliable over the many years I've used it in gun testing. A fairly new load that I included was Federal Syntech Defense with a 138-grain HP bullet with a blue synthetic coating that

The cartridge case appears to be moly-coated. Back in business is the new Super-Vel Ammunition Co., complete with hot cartridges in the traditional yellow boxes. I used a +P load with a 115-grain XTP-JHP bullet. Lastly, along with the ACP pistol, Wilson Combat included a supply of their remanufactured competition/practice 9mm load with a 135-grain hollow-base, flat-point FMJ bullet, rated at 950 fps out of a 5-inch barrel.

SPEC BOX

WILSON COMBAT 1911 ACP

CALIBER:	9mm, .45 ACP
BARREL:	5 inches
OA LENGTH:	8.7 inches
WEIGHT:	41.6 ounces (empty)
GRIPS:	Eagle Claw G10
SIGHTS:	Battlesight rear, red fiber-optic front
ACTION:	SA
FINISH:	Black Armor Tuff
CAPACITY:	10+1/8+1
MSRP:	\$2,595

reminds me of the old Nyklad material. On impact, the bullet separates into three segments and the base/core. The core penetrates 12 to 28 inches in bare ballistic gel, and the segments create secondary wound channels more than 6 inches deep. This stuff works as advertised; I shot it into a Clear Gel block myself a while back.

I also used an MHP (Monolithic Hollow Point) load by Norma that propels a 108-grain bullet at high velocity for extreme terminal performance. The pointy-nosed bullet has a hollow cavity in the tip, which is closed forming an open "x."

LEATHER

A full-size Wilson ACP 1911 weighs 46.2 ounces loaded and is by no means a small gun. You'll soon realize, as I did, that it requires a solid holster and belt combination to carry this pistol. After packing a handgun as an LEO, then as a legally armed citizen for many years, I don't even consider anything other than an OWB belt holster worn on my right hip at about the 5 o'clock position. Since I only carry concealed, I favor an open-top design that uses exacting holster fit as the only retention device. To pack the ACP, I chose a hybrid kydex and leather rig from CrossBreed Holsters. Cataloged as the SuperSlide OWB Holster, it literally has a huge, pan-



1

1. The most unique feature of the WC 1911 ACP is the Eagle Claw Grip. Fluted-style serrations on the G10 grip panels mate with like serrations on the grip frame for a very secure hold. 2. The ACP has a red fiber-optic front sight, stainless steel match-grade barrel and bushing, plus a rugged black ArmorTuff finish. 3. Standard on the ACP is Wilson's windage-adjustable Battlesight with a deep U-notch. The hammer is a skeletonized commander style.



2



3

cake-shaped leather backing with three 1.75-inch belt slots that allow it to be worn on the hip or cross-draw. Riveted to this flap is the kydex holster body, which is precision molded to the specific gun it will be used to carry. Most of the retention is provided in the tight fit of the holster to the triggerguard. The design of the holster pulls the gun and grip tight to the body to aid in close concealment. The shape and construction of this shuck also provides good weight distribution of your firearm, ensuring comfort and stability. There are four colors available for the leather and four for the kydex. For a magazine pouch, I used a single-mag capacity belt model from DeSantis, and all the gun and carry gear was supported by a 0.25-inch-thick DalTech Bull-Belt that's 1.5 inches wide and has a steel liner inside.

GETTIN' IT DONE

I put my portable target stand out at a distance of 25 yards and attached two Birchwood Casey 12-by-18-inch Double Bull's-Eye targets. Shooting was done from the bench, using a sandbag rest.

Wilson Combat guarantees its 1911s will shoot 1-inch groups at 25 yards. My best 5-shot group was scored with the Black Hills 115-grain FMJ load at 1.67 inches. Second place was with the Norma MHP load (1.94 inches), and that round had the smallest group average at 2.21 inches. None of the group averages went over 2.5 inches, and for me that's not half bad.

Next, up I put the Wilson APC through a 30-round combat-qualification course with shooting done at 3, 7 and 15 yards. I elected to use the Wilson 135-grain HBFN cartridges as I had a good supply of them. I loaded four Wilson magazines with six rounds each, then donned my leather gear and unzipped my windbreaker. My target from PJL-

USA was a realistic human target depicting a fully-dressed bad guy pointing a revolver and standing slightly at an angle. Shooting was done from concealment and after each stage, a 360-degree threat assessment was performed. At

3 yards the ACP was presented from the holster and six shots fired from the one-handed, point-shoulder stance using the strong hand. A rapid reload was performed, the pistol placed in the support hand and six more shots were fired, then another reload performed. Withdrawing to 7 yards, the pistol was drawn and fired using a two-handed hold and a flash sight picture. This stage called for three double taps, then a fast reload. Again from 7 yards, the pistol was presented and two rounds were shot center-mass, then one to the head for a "failure" or body armor drill. This was then repeated. I had to stop at this point and load a magazine, then moved back to the 15-yard barricade. Here, the handgun was drawn, and two shots were

WILSON COMBAT'S 1911 ACP

fired using the sights from the left side of the barricade standing, then two from the right side standing, then I knelt and fired my last two rounds. All hits were in the "K-zone" scoring area and several hit the target's handgun.

Lastly, my son/photographer Jordan and I did some steel plate shooting using the Wilson ammo. The plate was 10 inches in diameter and we decided to start shooting double taps at 5 yards, then move back 5 yards at a time until one of us missed with both rounds. We made it back to 30 yards before the requisite two misses in a row were made. We then moved back up to 7 yards and with full magazines, using a two-handed hold and fired 10 rounds as fast as possible without sights. We were both surprised when we each emptied a couple of magazines with no misses.

CONCLUSIONS

The Wilson Combat 1911 had a few issues I'll touch on. On several occasions early on in the T&E the slide did not go fully into battery after a shot. This happened with three brands of my 9mm test ammo. The gun was lubed prior to the range outing, but not during the test shoot. This only happened during the bulls-eye shooting. For the combat and steel target shooting stages, there was nary a bobble. Perhaps some "wearing in" was all that was needed? During rapid fire, there were no malfunctions of any kind and the magazines popped out with aplomb and then locked into place during reloads. Recoil wasn't even noticeable.

If I were to use an option on this gun, it would be to replace the sights. For precision accuracy testing, I cannot abide a fiber-optic front sight. My 65-year-old



eyes don't do well trying to focus on a glowing red orb. I just couldn't get a clear sight picture where I could align the top of the front sight with the top of the rear sight. Said rear sight has a deep U-shaped notch and my eye wanted to center that red orb in the U-notch, much like using a peep sight, which caused me to shoot low. Now for combat-type shooting and getting a flash sight picture, it works pretty well. Then again, I don't like plastic on a sight, period, as plastic sights are more prone to loss or damage. I have a "war story" about that.

With these two issues out of the way, the Wilson Combat ACP was a joy to shoot. The weight and Eagle Claw



↑ Four five-shot groups were shot using the ACP with each of the five test loads. The best five-shot group was made using Black Hills 115-grain FMJ.

← A standard recoil spring comes on the ACP, but an added touch that decreases wear on the locking mechanism is this blue nylon recoil buffer.

grip design made recoil and muzzle flip almost negligible. The gun held rock-steady during rapid fire, the sights were easy to pick up in a hurry

and magazine changes were almost instinctive. One blurb on the leather: CrossBreed offers a "Combat Cut" on the SuperSlide holster, and I recommend

this option. The full-size leather flap makes it very difficult to get a good grip on the gun before clearing leather. I figured out a way to do what needed to be done, but it took some pre-range practice. To sum things up, I think Bill Wilson will get quite a few orders for his new ACP, maybe even from me! For more, visit wilsoncombat.com

PERFORMANCE:

WILSON COMBAT 1911 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills Factory New 115 FMG	1,173	1.67
Federal SynTech 138 SJHP	1,104	1.98
Norma MHP 108 Monolithic HP	1,190	1.94
Super Vel 115 XTP-JHP	1,326	2.28
Wilson Combat 135 HBFN-FMJ	974	2.38

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.




 TRAINING
THE
NONE


WHEN AMMUNITION IS IN SHORT SUPPLY, START GRASPING AT AIR



Gun owners know the importance of training on a regular basis. We also know how expensive our hobby gets. Ammo costs money and recently has become about as hard to find as that needle in the proverbial haystack. For us everyday-carry types, we are faced with a huge dilemma in these crazy times. Do we hold on to all the ammo we can possibly get our hands on and not train, or do we continue training and shed a tear every time we send a round down range? I was faced with this exact dilemma, which sent me looking for alternatives to live-fire training.

I played around with laser systems, which were pretty cool but it gets kind of old having to constantly rack the slide on my pistol to reset the trigger, and you don't get any kind of recoil. I then discov-

ered the answer to my dilemma. It is a way to work on holster draw, first-shot times, target acquisition and sight picture all in the comfort of your own home and at a fraction of the cost of live-fire training. That answer is airsoft pistols.

THE GOODS

Now, I know what you're probably thinking. Trust me though, Airsoft guns have come a long way and are far from toys anymore. I ordered a Glock 19 and Glock 17 from Umarex, along with a can of Green Gas and some 6mm airsoft BBs. The guns are pretty much exact replicas of your favorite pistols. Without the orange tip, I bet most would never be able to tell the difference at first glance. I carry

a Glock 19 often, and this Umarex airsoft replica G19 features the same ergonomics, function, feel and handling as its actual firearm counterpart and even comes in very close to the same weight. The airsoft G19 even fits right into my existing holsters.

I think you are probably starting to get the idea here. You can take down, clean, reassemble, shoot and holster the same way that your EDC firearm functions. The magazines look the same and release the same way, also. The G19 will hold 19 rounds of 6mm BBs and the gun fires at 290 fps. The action works and feels pretty much exactly like my standard Glock 19, and the slide even locks back on an empty magazine.

Ammo for the airsoft gun is much easier to find and a whole lot cheaper than live rounds, as

— | BY ANDY GROSSMAN | —



With the Umarex airsoft gun's similar look and feel to a Glock 19, the author was able to practice several aspects of shooting without a trip to the range.



well. I picked up a bottle of 2,700 0.20-gram BBs for only \$8.99 and the Green Gas that is needed to operate the gun was only \$11.99 for a can that has lasted me more than a month now. The Glock 19 has an MSRP of just under \$170. In reality, for under \$200 you can get started training without live ammo. With ammo prices the way they are right now, that's not even the cost of two range sessions if you shoot 100 rounds each time.

Obviously, you could just shoot at paper on a tree or something, but why waste the BBs? I found a way to reuse them with an awesome target system from IC13 called the FAT Airsoft Target and Trap Kit. The FAT (Firearms Adaptable Training) target is a simple, convenient and fun way to practice your draw, trigger press, reloads and any other firearm mechanics in your own home with the use of an airsoft gun. The target is made out of 304 stainless steel and is specially designed to trap your airsoft BBs. There is even a door that makes cleanup very simple and allows you to reuse your BBs if you choose.

I ordered the FAT Airsoft Target Full System Bundle from IC13.us, which came with a stand, the trap, 10 cardboard targets and a challenge cover, which covers the outside of the targets making for a bit more of a challenge. The entire bundle pack was \$125.99 so it definitely adds a little cost. However, it still is worth

SPEC BOX

UMAREX GLOCK 19 AIRSOFT

CALIBER:	6 mm
BARREL:	3.25 inches
OA LENGTH:	8.75 inches
WEIGHT:	1.40 pounds (empty)
GRIP:	Polymer
SIGHTS:	Fixed rear, post front
POWER SOURCE:	Green Gas
VELOCITY:	290 fps
CAPACITY:	19
MSRP:	\$170

it to save that precious ammo and those expensive range costs right now. Plus, the fact that I can train in my own living room is just fantastic.


TRAINING TIME

Now that I had everything I needed to safely and effectively train at home, it was time to try it out. I put together the target system from IC13, loaded up some BBs and filled my magazine with green gas. Standing in my living room, I removed my Glock 19 from the holster on my hip and exchanged it for the loaded airsoft gun; it was a perfect fit. I drew from the holster and put rounds on target.

The Umarex Glock was a bit

louder than I expected, and the blowback action was fantastic. You even get a little smoke coming out of the barrel behind each round. I unloaded that first magazine in just a few seconds with a giant smile on my face. Naturally, my son, who is 6 and loves shooting, came out of his room to see what the commotion was all about and he immediately started begging to shoot it. Of course, I let him and immediately realized how useful this airsoft training system was going to be in my house.

With airsoft, it was very simple to teach my son sight picture and trigger squeeze. For my training, I was able to work on draw, sight acquisition and first-shot times from draw—all things that most public ranges won't even allow you to practice. I was also able to really pay attention to my sight picture and work on my aim a bit more. If you carry a gun with a light or laser, you can even utilize that same device and actually train with it using the airsoft guns, as well.

In these crazy times, we all must stay diligent in our training and we must be ready at all times. When ammo is so hard to find and so damn expensive when you *do* find it, an alternative is definitely necessary. Even though there will never be a replacement for live-fire training, Airsoft could very well be the answer to your ammo and training prayers. For more information, visit umarexusa.com. 



RINGING STEEL



WILSON COMBAT'S NEW SCORABLE STEEL TARGET OFFERS BOTH VISUAL AND AUDIBLE FEEDBACK

BY BRYCE M. TOWSLEY



Just a few days before writing this, I helped teach a Women on Target program at my local gun club. In talking with some of the participants after the event, the single complaint was that the pistol section (I taught long-range rifle) used the same paper target for all 35 shooters. They complained that they could not tell if they were hitting or missing the target. The solution I suggested for next year

was a steel target: No matter how many times it's been hit previously, you get instant feedback. When the steel rings, indicating a hit, people smile. When it doesn't, indicating a miss, they try harder.

Even for us graybeards who have been shooting a long time, there's nothing like the instant gratification of ringing steel targets. The downside is that a hit in the center sounds just like a hit on the bottom edge. If it rings, you hit it, but you did not necessarily hit it well.

LEVELING UP

The new Scorable Steel Target from Wilson Combat is unique in that it has scoring areas defined on the target by cuts in the steel. The silhouette target itself is 21 inches tall and 12 inches wide with a head measuring 6 by 6 inches. The scoring ring in the head is 4 inches in diameter, and the scoring ring in the center of the target is 7 inches in diameter.

The target stands 5 feet and 5 inches tall on its stand. The bottom



footprint of the stand is 17.5 inches wide and 30 inches long, so it's very stable. This target is extremely portable, and the stand, column and target all break down easily to carry in a truck or even the trunk of a car. The target with the bracket installed only weighs 26 pounds, so it's easy for anybody to transport. The target hangs at a 20-degree angle so that any bullet that hits it is directed down into the ground, making it very safe.

The target is made from AR500 armor-plate steel, so it is rifle rated. However, as with any steel target, impact velocity should be well under 3,000 feet per second to reduce damage. If a steel target is used for rifles, it should be dedicated to rifle use and not be used for close-range pistol. This is standard safety with any steel target. AR500 is the toughest stuff out there, but it can be pock-marked by rifles, which opens the door to splash back

when shooting close with handguns. On the other hand, a pistol shooter can't send enough ammo downrange to wear out this target.

Of course, when shooting, you need to paint the target to cover the previous hits. Anybody who has used steel targets knows that cheap white rattle-can paint covers poorly. Bill Wilson recommends almond color, which covers much better. When shooting with Bill at his range in Arkansas, we only painted the misses outside of the scoreable area, which saved on paint. This way, if it rang and the bullet didn't mess up any paint, you hit the scoreable area. A total miss kicked up dirt from the backstop and ridicule and scorn from the other shooters.

With most steel targets, there is a tendency for the shooter to get a bit lazy. "If it rings, it's a hit, so let's go fast and not worry about accuracy."

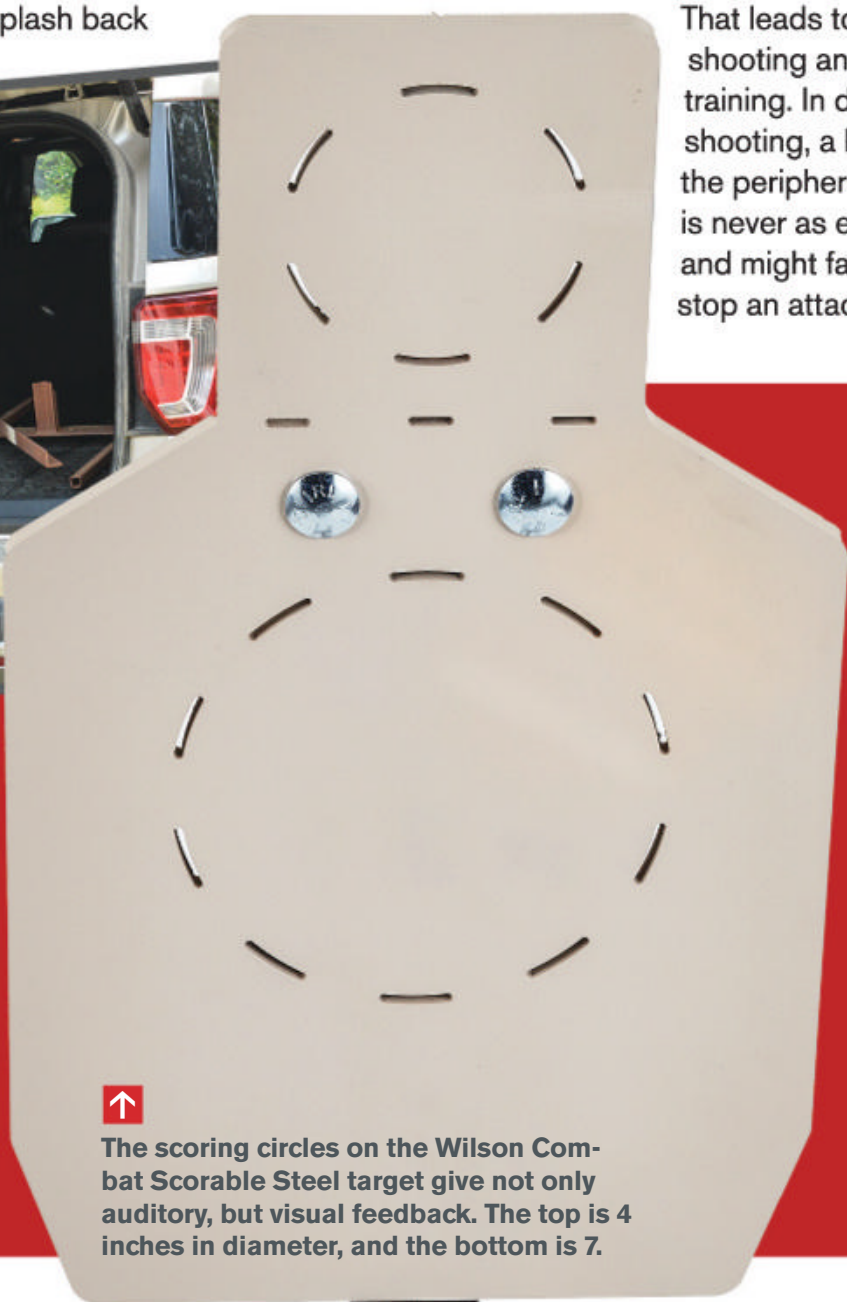
That leads to sloppy shooting and poor training. In defensive shooting, a hit on the peripheral edges is never as effective and might fail to stop an attacker. In

competition, this sloppy shooting will result in points lost. It's always better to focus on hitting a small portion of the target. Remember the old shooter's adage: "Aim small, miss small." While a bit senseless on the surface, it simply means to aim at a small part of the target, not the whole target.

DRILLING IT IN

This target is outstanding for training as it changes the dynamics of any common training drill while still giving the instant gratification of using a steel target. With the scoreable areas on this Wilson Combat target, you must slow down, focus on the fundamentals and shoot for accuracy. As they say, "Speed will follow." For safety, steel should be at least 15 yards away from the shooter, which is about double the normal 7-yard drill distance. This is to avoid splashback from the bullets. It also increases the difficulty of the drills exponentially and forces the shooter to really focus on accuracy.

The Mozambique Drill (or Failure Drill as it's called in more politically



The scoring circles on the Wilson Combat Scorable Steel target give not only auditory, but visual feedback. The top is 4 inches in diameter, and the bottom is 7.



→ Shooting the Mozambique Drill (or Failure Drill) with the Wilson target forces more accuracy while still giving that ringing feedback we all love so much.

correct circles) is a pistol-training classic. It's also known as "two to the body and one to the head." It came out of a real-life scenario during the Mozambique War, which is how it got its name. A Rhodesian mercenary, Mike Rousseau, encountered a guerrilla armed with an AK-47. Two shots to the body at 10 paces with a Browning Hi-Power 9mm failed to stop the aggressive action of the guerrilla, so Rousseau shifted his aim and attempted a headshot, hitting the guerrilla's neck and stopping the attack. Rousseau later related the story to Jeff Cooper, who incorporated the Mozambique Drill into the training routine for his "modern technique" shooting method.

If you're a shooter, you know all this. In fact, you've probably shot this training drill many times. We all like to go fast, and with most steel targets, we can get away with a little error in shot placement. This Wilson Combat target makes the shooter slow down just a little and place the shots with precision, as they should be. Only hits count—two to the scoring ring in the center and one to the scoring ring in the head. In a real life-or-death situation, speed is of course important,



↑ The Wilson Combat steel target takes down for easy transportation and only weighs 26 pounds with the bracket installed, making it simple to carry.

but it's worthless without precision of shot placement. You can't miss fast enough to win a fight or a match.

BILL'S OWN DRILLS

While at Bill Wilson's Arkansas range, which is just outside his back door, we also did the Bill Drill on the scorable targets. This is another training classic invented by Wilson himself. The drill is simple but more difficult to execute than you might think. The idea is to get away from the double-taps so common to training or competition. There is no rule that says an aggressor will stop after two hits, and considering the trend to smaller cartridges in carry guns, this is truer

today than ever before. So, this drill focuses on shooting enough to stop the threat—or until your trigger finger cramps up, whichever comes first.

To do the Bill Drill, follow this simple procedure: At the buzzer, draw and place six shots on the center of the target as fast as possible without missing. All six must hit the designated area to count. Misses add a second to your time.

The trouble with this drill is, again, that we all want to go fast and impress our friends. So, the tendency is to start out fine, but as the round count goes up, shooter focus often goes down. Instead of focusing on the next shot and the one after that,

the shooter often starts thinking about going fast and starts to miss. It's pretty common to miss the last few shots because the shooter is thinking about finishing rather than those last shots. With big steel targets, shooters can get sloppy. With the Wilson Combat Scorable Target, if you only count hits on the center scoring ring, the drill forces you to focus on accuracy more than speed.

Once you start to think that you're hot stuff, shift the aiming point to the 4-inch scoring ring on the head portion of the target. Draw and place six shots on the scorable part of the head. To do this well, you must be thinking about the front sight and trigger manipulation rather than how fast Bill Wilson can shoot this drill. If you try to match his speed, you will fail. Never mind how I know that.

The Bill Drill II expands on this concept. The first time, draw and shoot one shot. Reholster and restart the timer. At the buzzer, draw and shoot two shots. Repeat with three, four and five shots. Misses are one second added to your time. Combine all the times for your score. Bill says that anything eleven seconds or faster at seven yards is outstanding. When shooting at 15 yards, I add 50 percent to the time, although that's probably too generous.

I find that I'm shooting steel more frequently in my training, teaching or just for fun. Most of my shooting is on public ranges where I bring my targets home after each session. Some steel targets are big, bulky and heavy to transport, but this Wilson Combat Scorable Target is easy for just one person to tear down and move. Because of that, it goes with me to the range just about every time I plan to shoot handguns. Some of my other targets grumble that I don't love them anymore, and to be brutally honest, it's their weight. This slim, trim target is invited on a lot more shooting dates than the heavyweights. Discrimination? Probably, but my back complains a lot less. For more information, visit wilsoncombat.com. **CH**



→ While the Bill Drill is a favorite of many, shooting it on the Wilson Combat Scorable Target forces the shooter to focus more on accuracy.





WILSON COMBAT'S X-TAC ELITE



If you have a new target, you need a new gun to use on it, right? I think that's an unwritten rule that we must obey.

I've been banging and clanging on this steel target with a Wilson Combat X-Tac Elite Compact handgun. This mid-size 1911 is designed for carry and hard, high-round-count training. It's available in .45, .38 Super and 9mm. While I prefer a .45 for carry, I like a 9mm for training and shooting. Ammo is less expensive, and the lower recoil is easier on old, battered hands and wrists. The compact gun uses eight-round 9mm magazines.

This handgun has a carbon steel frame with black Armor-Tuff finish. The frontstrap and mainspring housing have the Wilson Combat

X-Tac pattern gripping surface. It's very effective under any condition while not wearing the skin off your hands. The gun has the Wilson Combat flared Bullet Proof Magazine Well for faster reloading. The beavertail grip safety and hammer are the company's Concealment Bullet Proof design—low profile for easier carry. The Tactical Bullet Proof Safety is my one complaint. It's right-hand only and I'm left-handed. Bill Wilson offered to change it out, but this is a testing-and-evaluation gun that will be returned, so I didn't bother. If it were my gun, I would have ordered an ambidextrous safety from the start.

The trigger comes with a medium-length pad, which I like. The pull is clean and crisp at 2 pounds, 9 ounces. The grips are black G10

Starburst with pewter medallions. The gun features X-Tac rear cocking serrations and a heavy chamfer on bottom of the slide. The bull barrel measures 3.9 inches from the back of the hood to the muzzle. It's finished with a deep, recessed cone crown and has a fluted chamber. The sights are a Wilson Combat Battlesight rear with fiber-optic front sight—fixed but windage adjustable.

This compact steel handgun is heavy enough at 38 ounces to be easy to shoot fast. With proper technique, the front sight is back on target and ready for the next shot whenever I am. The X-Tac Elite Compact Black Edition is a good-looking, high-performance handgun that will lead the pack for defense or on the range.

—Bryce M. Towsley



POWER PUNCHING

A LOOK AT FEDERAL'S NEW PUNCH LINE
OF DEFENSIVE CARTRIDGES

BY FRANK MELLONI



People hem and haw when I recommend cycling out their carry ammo every six months, usually citing the cost. Sure, defensive rounds cost more than basic FMJ ammunition, but performance is so critical that there simply isn't a valid reason not to keep what's in your magazines fresh. While on the topic of actually using your defensive ammo, it's important to remember that firing some is the only way to get used to the increased recoil and recovery time between shots. Federal is always up on today's shooting trends and training practices, and thus has released the company's new Punch line of ammunition designed specifically for civilian carry. This new line of ammo is affordable enough to practice with, or at least cycle out twice a year without crying.

BEHIND THE PUNCH

The idea behind Punch stemmed from reviewing the typical gunfight between a thug and an armed citizen. Most CCW holders that find themselves in an altercation are nearly within range of physical contact and usually have nothing between themselves and the bad guy other than some bad breath. Now, the average Joe defender is usually carrying the same ammo that police carry, and it is usually overkill because of the type of encounter they might face. When police make contact and the threat flees, they might have to engage, sometimes through barriers such as auto glass or soft cover. If we take the same scenario and put say, me, in the cops' place, after

the threat flees I'm going home. I might even wind up in jail if I pursue him/her and fire a lethal shot.

Furthermore, "duty" ammo is typically designed to work best through duty weapons, think mid-sized or full-sized guns. Putting something designed for a 4- or 5-inch barrel through a 2-inch barrel is going to drop its velocity significantly and likely hinder, or completely negate, expansion. No expansion means no energy transfer, and no energy transfer means no stopping power. Punch bullets were designed to expand at the lower velocities yielded by common carry pistols, and the science behind the line wasn't too involved, which means less expense passed on to the customer. Federal's ballisticians took what they knew about making law enforcement ammo and sim-



Built for great expansion at lower velocities, federal's 9mm Punch ammo also proved quite accurate, with a best 10-yard group of just 1.38 inches.



plified it to create devastating expansion simply by softening the lead, adjusting jacket thickness and modifying the skives, which are the serrations that we see running down the side of the bullet.

HARDWARE

Well, all of this got me excited enough to want to do a little shooting...and a little shooting turned into a lot of shooting once I found out that five different calibers were going to be released at one time. That's not bad news, it just meant that I was going to need some more guns. I had .380 ACP covered with my Taurus Spectrum and I had 9mm covered with both my Canik TP9sf and my Walther PPS M2. I always like to incorporate my personal carry pistols into these self-defense ammo tests because guess where the leftovers go, granted that they perform well. Although I don't carry it, I rolled out my Auto-Ordnance commemorative Trump 1911 for the .45 ACP sample because, frankly, it's just too nice to leave in the safe! As for the guns I don't have, I have never been a fan of .40 S&W and I'm about two generations too late to be carrying a .38 Special, so I reached out to my friends at Smith & Wesson for some loaners. A few days later, a .40-caliber Shield and a Model 66 Combat Magnum in .357 showed up at my local gun store,



Shooting the .38 Special Punch ammo through a snubnose revolver, the author found the bullet dumped all its energy into the target.





“FOR A TINY GUN WITH NEXT TO NO SIGHTS, I WAS ABLE TO KEEP MOST OF MY GROUPS INSIDE OF 3 INCHES AND THE RECOIL WAS ALSO VERY MANAGEABLE.”

leaving me everything that I needed to get the job done. Well, that is except the ammo...so I waited...and I waited... and I quarantined...and finally everything showed up, sans .380 ACP. Life must go on, so I said, “The hell with it, good enough!” and scheduled a range day.

Aside from guns and ammo, I packed up the car with two 16-inch blocks of Clear Ballistics 10 percent FBI gelatin, along with a Caldwell G2 chronograph to get an idea of how close to the advertised velocities these would be flying. My range day started with a typical October monsoon, which is fine because I wanted to see how this ammo held up under real-life conditions. Defensive ammunition will likely be carried in soggy weather at some point in its lifecycle, or at the very least it is going to be subjected to humidity from sweat and body heat. This is one of the reasons why Federal opted to seal

the primers with the signature blue-colored sealant. Many might see this as an unnecessary expense, but anything that makes life-or-death ammo more reliable is worth the extra buck or two in my eyes.

DOWN RANGE

Up first was the wheelgun, which I have to admit I was kind of excited about after all. The Model 66 has a brilliant matte stainless finish and a trigger that was a real joy to squeeze, particularly in single action. The Punch revolver offering comes in the form of .38 Special +P and pushes a 120-grain bullet at an advertised 1,070 feet per second (fps). The 2.75-inch barrel gave me an average of 993 fps and produced 10-yard groups that were between 2 and 3 inches. That’s not stellar for close-range shoot-

ing, but I’ve never seen amazing results from .38 being sent through a .357 so I’ll give it a pass. Besides, at 10 yards that’s still good enough for a headshot. We’re not shooting a bullseye match here so why fuss?

Moving along, I turned my attention to the 9mm. Federal went with the 124-grain pill, likely because that is the middle ground in this cartridge. The logic here is simple enough, poke in the middle and it’ll run well through a wide variety of guns. Well, I didn’t have a wide variety of guns—I had a Walther PPS M2 and the Canik subcompact. Both guns are built with shorter barrels, but in my opinion that is the true acid test as they offer less opportunity to build up the required pressure to cycle the slide. All of the rounds fired and functioned just fine through both guns, and I used the Canik for the accuracy test because I had just fitted it with a Riton MPRD. With it, I landed several sub 1.5-inch groups into our 10-yard target. Sure, having a red-dot helped, but a bad round isn’t going to fly straight no matter how perfect the sight picture is.

Going up in caliber (or down depending on who you ask), I reluctantly grabbed the .40 Shield and performed the same test procedure. Here I got to feel the “snap” of a full-house self-defense load as I punched paper and recorded an average velocity of 1,101 fps with the 165-grain bullets. Surprisingly, this bastard child of 9mm and 10mm produced the tightest five-shot group of the day, only 0.78 inches at the same 10 yards that all of the other pistols were tested.

My last round for the day was the powerhouse combo of John Moses Browning’s .45 ACP fired out of a Donald J. Trump-inspired 1911—a combination that couldn’t be more American if I wrapped it in bacon. The classic 230-grain bullet got up to around 900 fps and grouped pretty well for defensive .45 ACP. Recoil was stout but manageable, and all 100 rounds ran without a hiccup, which is saying a lot for a 1911 running hollow-point ammo.

Before stepping off of the range, I selected the .38 Special +P to fire into the ballistics gel. I went with this round because it had the lowest energy of the four rounds tested and thus would generate the “worst-case scenario”



**PERFORMANCE:
FEDERAL PUNCH AMMO**

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
.380 ACP 85 JHP	978	2.43
.38 Special 120 JHP	993	2.38
9mm 124 JHP	1,123	1.38
.40 S&W 165 JHP	1,101	0.78
.45 ACP 230 JHP	912	1.19

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second and accuracy in inches for best five-shot group at 10 yards.

results. I decided that I wanted to do a heavy clothing test, so I placed a layer of denim, covered by a layer of leather over the block to replicate some of the heaviest materials the average human being might be wearing. From the same 10- yards, I took a knee, rested my wrists and fired a shot that impacted slightly off-center and exited the gel in short order. My second shot centered right up and produced a 3-inch cavity after passing through about 5 inches of the gel. After this initial mushrooming the bullet tumbled and landed at the very beginning of the second block with next to no energy left. In the grand scheme of things, this is exactly what I would hope to see in my SHTF ammo—predictable expansion and complete energy transfer in relatively short order.

CALDWELL G2 CHRONOGRAPH

➔ Knowing your bullet's speed is a critical piece of the puzzle when considering which ammo to carry. Numbers on the box usually correlate to a very specific barrel length. By reducing barrel length you also reduce velocity, and if you pass a breaking point the projectile might no longer expand. The Caldwell G2 Chronograph assisted in this piece in a big way. First, it clocked speeds from each of the five types of ammo fired. After gathering the velocity, it instantly computes averages as well as standard deviations, giving a numerical value for each cartridge's consistency




in the given firearm. Setup is simple, as the kit includes the pictured tripod and contains an onboard rechargeable battery. Best of all, the G2 is built with its own light

system in case you have to make do with cloudy skies or have to do your testing at an indoor range. For more info, visit caldwellshooting.com.
—Frank Melloni

ENTER THE .380

After packing up my gear and returning home I was greeted by a small package from brown truck Santa...yep, it was the damned .380! Sooooooo about 45 minutes later I found myself back at the range, setting up the chronograph again...and maybe mumbling just a swear word or two under my breath. My relationship with .380 ACP has always been a little strained as this cartridge was originally on my "no" list. However, after putting it through gel I was able to verify how effective it could be with modern ammo. Speaking of modern ammo, the Punch .380 is built around a light-for-caliber 85-grain bullet, which is okay with me because

it isn't 5 grains of weight that makes something lethal, it's how well it transfers its energy and how well it can be placed on the target. For a tiny gun with next to no sights, I was able to keep most of my groups inside of 3 inches and the recoil was also very manageable. Hell, I might even start shooting this thing a little more if I can keep a supply of these around.

After my second range session, I packed up my gear, again, and headed out. In case you were wondering, yes it was the Punch ammo that I carried on my way home. I did this because I like to practice what I preach, and thus left the old rounds that I carried there in the dirt after working on my offside pocket draw—one shot at a time. Remember folks, when you cycle out that old ammo you aren't wasting it, you're training with it. Punch ammo makes it hard to skip this critical practice just to save a few bucks a year. You owe it to yourself and those around you to carry fresh rounds, so get out there and go shooting. For more information, visit federalpremium.com. 



The combination of the Trump 1911 and the Federal Punch .45 ACP ammo wasn't just patriotic, it was very accurate, too.

*A true expert
can't resist a lesson.*

Here's one thing we know—
everything we still don't.
Even after 38 relentless years.
And thank God, because that's
our fuel—in every experiment and
handshake and the promise of a
new idea at zero dark thirty.
We're in it for the chase and
when you believe in striving for
perfection, you always will be.

**TO LOCATE A DEALER NEAR YOU,
PLEASE CALL 800.568.6625**


Ammunition

WWW.BLACK-HILLS.COM



TALE OF THE TAPE

WIDTH: 1.10 INCHES



HEIGHT: 5.04 INCHES

GLOCK 48 MOS

CALIBER
9mm

BARREL
4.17 inches

OAL LENGTH
7.28 inches

WEIGHT
20.6 ounces
(empty)

GRIP
Polymer

SIGHTS
Three-dot

ACTION
Striker-fired

FINISH
Nitride

CAPACITY
10+1

MSRP
\$582

OAL: 7.28 INCHES



GLOCK 48 MOS

It's only fitting that we look at the Glock pistol first. Because of their extreme reliability, the Glock lineup is really what all other polymer-frame, striker-fired pistols are measured against. The G48 MOS (Modular Optic System) is Glock's newest pistol offering that offers a milled slide for the installation of a miniature red-dot sight, which is becoming more and more popular on carry pistols these days.

The G48 MOS is based on the single-stack form factor that began with the six-round G43. Because of its small size and slender profile, the G43 was an immediate success due to its ease of concealability, even with

AN UNLIKELY CONTENDER SQUARES OFF AGAINST THE OLD GUARD

BY GARRETT LUCAS



Most savvy gun folks know that Glock didn't invent polymer-framed pistols, but Glock was the company that made them mainstream. With the introduction of the G17, the gun world has never been the same. Nearly every major pistol manufacturer

has since introduced its own version of a modern polymer-frame, striker-fired pistol.

Surprisingly, even Mossberg jumped into the fray just a couple of years ago with its own iteration, the MC1sc subcompact, after nearly a century of not producing handguns.

Just recently, Mossberg offered up its latest model, the MC2c, which has as its closest competitor the Glock G48. In this edition, we pit the two against each other to compare strengths and weaknesses, and to find out if Mossberg can out-Glock the Glock.

9MM STRIKER-FIRED SHOOTOUT GLOCK 48 MOS VS. MOSSBERG MC2c

CALIBER
9mm

BARREL
3.90 inches

OA LENGTH
7.10 inches

WEIGHT
21 ounces
(empty)

GRIP
Glass-reinforced
polymer

SIGHTS
TruGlo Tritium Pro

ACTION
Striker-fired

FINISH
DLC

CAPACITY
13+1

MSRP
\$595



pocket carry. Naturally, there were some buyers that, while liking the single-stack profile, felt limited by the low round count. Glock responded with the G43X and the G48, both of which had taller grip frames to accommodate a 10-round magazine.

The G48 MOS offers some of the company's latest upgrades including a reversible magazine release and front cocking serrations. As part of its Slimline series, the G48 MOS also features a shorter trigger distance, a Slimline mounting rail for accessories and an improved match-grade barrel. Perhaps the most impactful upgrade, at least for me, is the built-in beavertail. The slides on most Glocks from earlier generations tended to catch the skin

on my hand when cycling, and the new beavertail design completely mitigates that issue for me. The G43X has the same beavertail design and is one that I carry on a regular basis.

The G48 MOS features the same subtle grip texturing you'll find on Gen5 pistols. It's serviceable enough, but I feel it could be much better to really lock in the user's grip for control. On the other hand, the barrel and slide are both treated with a nitride

finish and then topped off with a black oxide treatment for excellent corrosion resistance against perspiration and the elements.

The pistol I received for review was a blue-label version and came with three-dot tritium sights installed. However, according to a Glock rep, these aren't available from the factory to retail buyers. Instead, Glock's standard three-dot sights are supplied for an MSRP of \$582 for the MOS variant.

The trigger on the sample pistol I received for review was rather nice for a Glock. It had a fairly crisp break at an average of 5.35 pounds and it didn't have the mushiness you associate with older generation striker-fired pistols. While the Glock folks haven't really made any radical changes to their lineup over the years, they get my respect for the incremental improvements they've been making along the way.

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TALE OF THE TAPE



Despite its slim profile, the G48 MOS was still quite manageable during recoil, even with +P loads.



With the Glock Marksman Barrel, the G48 MOS offered good accuracy as well as superb reliability.



MOSSBERG MC2C

Mossberg is no babe in the woods when it comes to the gun industry, but it is still a relative newcomer to the world of modern pistols. Even so, the company has been strutting its stuff lately with some excellent offerings in the pistol market like the new MC2c, which is a 9mm compact that's really a scaled-up version of the original MC1sc subcompact.

In contrast to the Glock's somewhat boxy styling, the MC2c showcases a more rounded grip frame that offers that soap-bar feel in the hand. The MC2c settles very comfortably in the hand while offering superb control due to the excellent grip texturing. With different styles of texturing on the sides and both the frontstrap and backstrap, the user has no problem locking in with a sure grip during fire.

The texturing also continues up top with index pads on the frame and angled serrations at both the front and the rear of the slide for confident manual manipulation. That slide is created from 416 stainless steel and features a black DLC finish for superb protection against wear and the elements, though a matte-stainless slide is also available. The model I received included TruGlo's Tritium Pro sights, and while they're definitely worth the upgrade, they do bump up the MSRP from \$490 to \$595.

Mossberg's striker-fired pistols are somewhat unique with their Safe

Takedown System that allows the user to remove the striker from the pistol before cleaning. This precludes the user from having to pull the trigger in order to remove the slide, thus making the process a little safer overall. Aside from the innovative takedown system, Mossberg is also on the leading edge with popular features like the flat-faced trigger on the MC2c, as well as the reversible magazine release.

What impressed me even more with the MC2c was how the company packed 13 rounds into a package just slightly smaller than the G48 MOS. While both have the same 1.1-inch width, the Mossberg is just a hair shorter in both length and height, yet the MC2c offers three additional rounds of ammo in the standard magazine.

For additional capacity, the second magazine that ships with the MC2c has an extended baseplate and holds 15 rounds. It should be noted, however, that the MC2c will not accept magazines from the Glock 43X or G48. The original MC1sc would work with Glock G43 magazines, but that ability to accept Glock magazines did not translate to the larger MC2c.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

After getting to the range, and as is often the case when doing compar-

isons, I found myself wishing I could have a hybrid pistol of the best features from each. Mossberg did its homework with the ergonomics of the MC2c. The rounded and contoured grip was very comfortable to hold, and the proprietary texturing locked the pistol down for excellent control during fire. For lack of a better way to describe it, the G48 MOS just felt a little generic in the hand, and the texturing left a little to be desired.

Where the G48 MOS had a stark advantage was the trigger pull. While I preferred the flat-faced trigger on the MC2c, the pull itself was a little hinky. There was a distinct rubbing/dragging sensation near the end of the pull. Also, the trigger seemed to hang up just a bit near the end of the pull and then suddenly lurched back once enough pressure was applied. This made a slow, smooth trigger pull tricky while shooting for groups from a bench. However, this is the third Mossberg pistol I've tried and the other two did not have the trigger issues that this one exhibited.

Speaking of accuracy, both pistols performed fairly well with their groupings at 15 yards. Oddly enough, the best five-shot group I could get from each pistol

9MM STRIKER-FIRED SHOOTOUT

GLOCK 48 MOS VS. MOSSBERG MC2c



The great texturing and solid ergos of the MC2c make it very comfortable to shoot and easy to control.



was 1.75 inches—but with different ammunition. The G48 MOS seemed to prefer Sig Sauer's 124-grain Elite V-Crown, while the MC2c's favorite load was Federal's 147-grain HST. Of course that can change from pistol to pistol, so the end user will need to figure out which load their pistol likes best.

To keep the comparison fair, I didn't test the Glock with a red-dot installed. However, it's worth noting that a red-dot would probably help tighten up the groups quite a bit since the combat sights aren't exactly the best for target shooting, especially with my eyes. Also, the G48 MOS seemed to shoot the most consistently for all five shots. The Mossberg routinely turned in four shots under 1 inch with a fifth shot opening up the groups significantly.

While neither would be considered a marksman pistol, both shot more than accurately enough to fulfill their role as defensive pistols. Similarly, both pistols were extremely reliable as well, with no mechanical failure of any kind. While testing the two, my shooting buddy, Lincoln, and I both inadvertently activated the magazine release on the Mossberg with our grip during strings of

fire. It happened once with me and several times with Lincoln. The end user might have to adjust his or her grip to avoid this issue.

While the G48 MOS had the advantage with the trigger, the MC2c definitely upped the ante with the higher capacity magazines. Glock falls a little short in this area, primarily due to its polymer magazine design. Thankfully, Shield Arms has come up with a solution with their S15 magazine. By using a thinner, metal magazine body, the S15 is able to house 15 rounds of 9mm ammunition in a standard magazine, putting the capacity on par with the Mossberg.

This gives the G43X/G48 user the same firepower of a G19 in a slender, single-stack profile. This is a very attractive add-on for G43X/G48 users, but it adds to the overall price of the package. The S15 magazines cost \$40 to \$44 each, and since metal magazines will wear out Glock's polymer mag catch, it is recommended to install Shield Arms' metal magazine release. This is an additional \$27. Installation of the Shield Arms mag release is a breeze. After watching the video on the company's website, I swapped out the factory release in under three minutes.


The good news is that the S15 magazines were absolutely superb. They ran just as reliably as the factory magazines, with no failures of any kind during my testing. The only downside I noticed was that after I installed the new magazine release, the Glock polymer magazines stopped dropping freely. The new S15 mags dropped cleanly and freely, but not the factory polymer magazines. So, if you're going to swap out the release, get ready to commit to investing in several S15 magazines.

CHOOSING YOUR DRUTHERS

With very similar MSRPs, the G48 MOS and MS2c are state-of-the-art pistols that both deliver excellent reliability and good accuracy. At this price point, the Mossberg offers great ergos, tritium sights and higher-capacity magazines.

The Glock weighs in with a nicer trigger, an optics-ready slide and better aftermarket support if you want to dress it up a bit.

It all comes down to your priorities and what features you favor most. The upside is that no matter what you're

looking for, you're sure to find it available in today's market. It's just a matter of preference and style, but when things go sideways, either one will absolutely get the job done. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

GLOCK
glock.com

MOSSBERG
mossberg.com

SIG SATIONAL

How many pistols do you own? Of those pistols how many do you actually utilize?

I'm not talking about the occasional exposure to the light of day that happens when friends come over. I'm talking about shooting, training and carrying.

This begs another question: How many pistols do you need? How many are feasible and manageable? These are questions that often come up in my head as I peruse my pistol inventory. For me, this platform has moved almost solely into the "useful tool" category. I need it to do work and accomplish goals, and have little patience for it just sitting there looking pretty (although I really appreciate great aesthetics on any firearm) in my safe.

As I continue to mature in my pistol execution and habits, I find increased need for specificity as it pertains to my daily routine. It is also helpful if the system can "morph" for my more occasional and "special" circumstances. Historically, this

has meant the need for more guns. But with the advent of the Sig Sauer FCU, that is no longer the case, for now I can have a centralized control unit that is easily swappable from grip to grip, and I can configure the slides, barrels and even magazine wells to suit my needs. It's more personalized if you will.

The Custom Works FCU opens a whole new world of customization of the P320 platform from Sig, as well as a whole host of manufacturers and custom accessory makers, providing a standard core for them to work off of. A parts provider can focus on making grips, or slides, or barrels or any combination of P320 focused products.

The Custom Works P320 FCU fits all 9mm, .40 S&W, .357 Sig accessories, but will be limited to 9mm parts and accessories initially. FCU is basically

a frame and trigger unit that is coated in Titanium Nitride. It's a handsome piece, and the unique coating is available to the stand-alone purchasers of the FCU from Sig. This Custom Works FCU comes with a gold, lightened and skeletonized Legion trigger. It also features a





INTRODUCING THE CUSTOM WORKS FCU AND P320 COLLECTIVE

—| BY SEAN UTLEY |—



The Custom Works P320 FCU is the core around which a wide array of P320s can be built, representing customization potential like never before. Throw in the Sig P320 Collective, and things are looking up for those who love this semi-auto.

unique Custom Works FCU serial number. Factory complete guns will have a different color FCU.

TEAM WORK

Along with the launch of the Custom Works FCU is the Sig P320 Collective. The Collective is the joining of forces between Sig and several other premiere manufacturers of Sig P320 parts and accessories. This means a near endless flow of new and unique parts and accessories for the end user, all spurred by the FCU itself. For end users, this means the complete customization of your P320, your way. Even in these days of plentiful plastic parts, originality is becoming more difficult to find. But the Collective should help ensure freshness in the 320 lineup.

Collective members will have their own FCU. Instead of the gold colored version, it will be black in color to denote that it's a Collective FCU. Functionally it will be the same. This means Collective members can buy their own FCU's and build a complete gun around it and sell it to you as a complete firearm. It will be available to members with three different triggers—curved, flat and Legion. Members will not be able to sell the black FCU as a standalone product.

The initial list of Collective partners is 15 deep and will grow as Sig grants partnership to more companies. But what must be preserved is the commitment to quality. Parker Mountain Machine, Zev Technologies, Grey Ghost Precision, Wilson Combat, L2D Combat, Grayguns, True Precision, Faxon

Firearms, Dawson Precision, Norso and others are part of the Collective.

Let's say you have an FCU and you want an XTG heavy grip module, but would like a slide and barrel from Parker Mountain Machine. That's completely doable. Or if you want to change out the grip module for a customized version from Wilson Combat, you can do that, too. You can have a custom carry setup

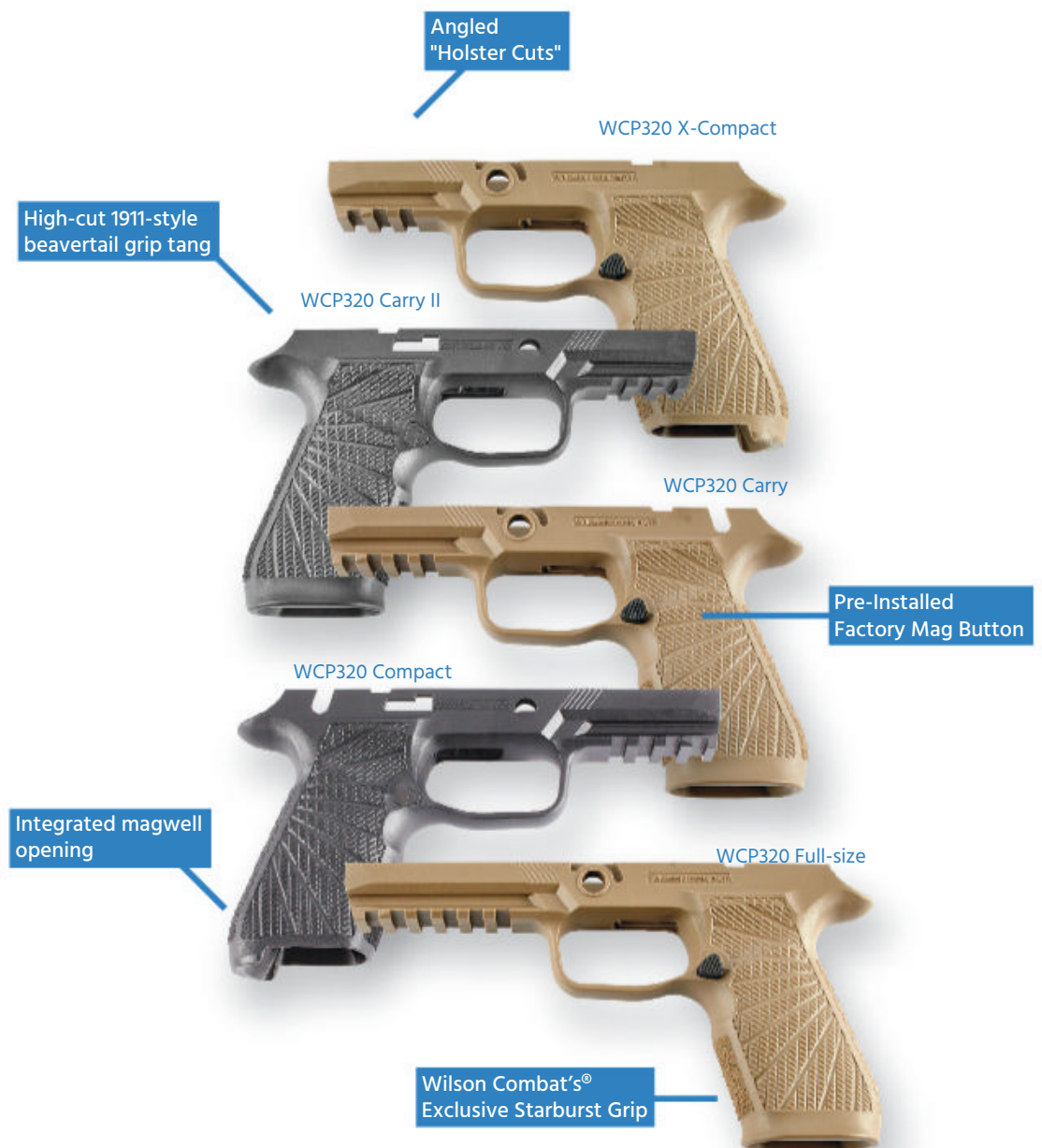
and a custom tactical range setup—it's up to you. All you have to do is remove the Custom Works FCU from the grip and transfer to another grip. It's a process that takes roughly a minute—even for me.

BUILD IT

In order to aid in the building of your custom P320, Sig has launched a new page on their website. The Custom

THE IDEAL GRIP FOR YOUR 320

14 GRIP MODULE VARIATIONS AVAILABLE TO FIT ALL MODELS



MY FIRST TRIGGER PRESS OF THE PMM CREATION LITERALLY LEFT ME SPEECHLESS WITH A BEWILDERED LOOK ON MY FACE... ”



Learn more at www.wilsoncombat.com



Didn't know so much variety was possible? It is now, using the Sig 320 FCU and the various top-quality parts provided by the large number of outstanding Collective partners.



Works P320 FCU studio was created so that users can dream, design and build a P320 from the ground up. The studio walks you through your build starting with the grip mod and all its options, then it allows you to pick other compatible parts from there, like the slide, barrels, guides and springs, magazines and optics. While there are a myriad of options, your build is sure to come out fully operational because the suite will notify you of incompatible parts together in a build. For instance, it might be a grip module that is too short for the slide. While you can still select incompatible parts, for obvious

reasons, it's best that you avoid doing so. You can also register your FCU on the site and receive a one-time 10 percent off all the items you select.

SHOWCASE

Earlier in 2020 we visited Sig to get some hands on experience with the Custom Works FCU and to be educated on the Sig Collective. Many Collective members came out and put their wares on display and gave us the opportunity to test and evaluate several options. It was here that the sheer scope of possibilities for the P320 platform was realized.

It's quite an eye opener to see a nearly-entire Wilson Combat P320 pistol build, save for the Grip Module. Everything else was made by Wilson Combat, who has shown no fear in the customization of platforms beyond the 1911, which they are most known for.

P320 slides will obviously be a hot commodity, and the options will not disappoint. With everything from full-size, heavy slides to keep the recoil tame to chopped, beveled, shortened and lightened, the Collective creators and Sig have you covered. And, because of the information sharing from Sig, the slide

SIGSAUER





Utilizing top-quality parts from the manufacturers in the Sig P320 Collective, the sky's the limit on the P320 you can create for whatever your intended use might be.

weight and dimensions will be correct, ensuring a properly functioning pistol.

Customized Grip Modules will be popular and plentiful as well, with several manufacturers offering grips with varying sizes and grip angles, as well as varying levels of stippling. While you can replace the magazine well on the grip modules, some manufacturers are producing grip modules featuring integrated magazine wells.

STAND OUT

While there were many options and pistol configurations on hand, every unit ran tip-top, which is a testimony to their serious approach to the platform's development. That said, there was a




THE CUSTOM WORKS FCU OPENS A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF CUSTOMIZATION OF THE P320 PLATFORM FROM SIG...”

clear winner in this shooter's eye. Parker Mountain Machine showed up with a comped P320 that literally blew my mind.

Officially known as the PMM P320 XComp Ultra, it features a two-port compensator and a proprietary barrel system from PMM. The slide is a subcompact version, and this allows the compensator to sit flush with the end of the grip module, which in this case was the Sig Legion TXG (tungsten) model. The compensator is said to reduce recoil and muzzle rise by 45 to 55 percent, depending on the type of ammo being utilized. While I'm always skeptical of such claims, I have not reason to doubt its validity after shooting the pistol. My first trigger press of the PMM creation literally left me speechless with a bewil-

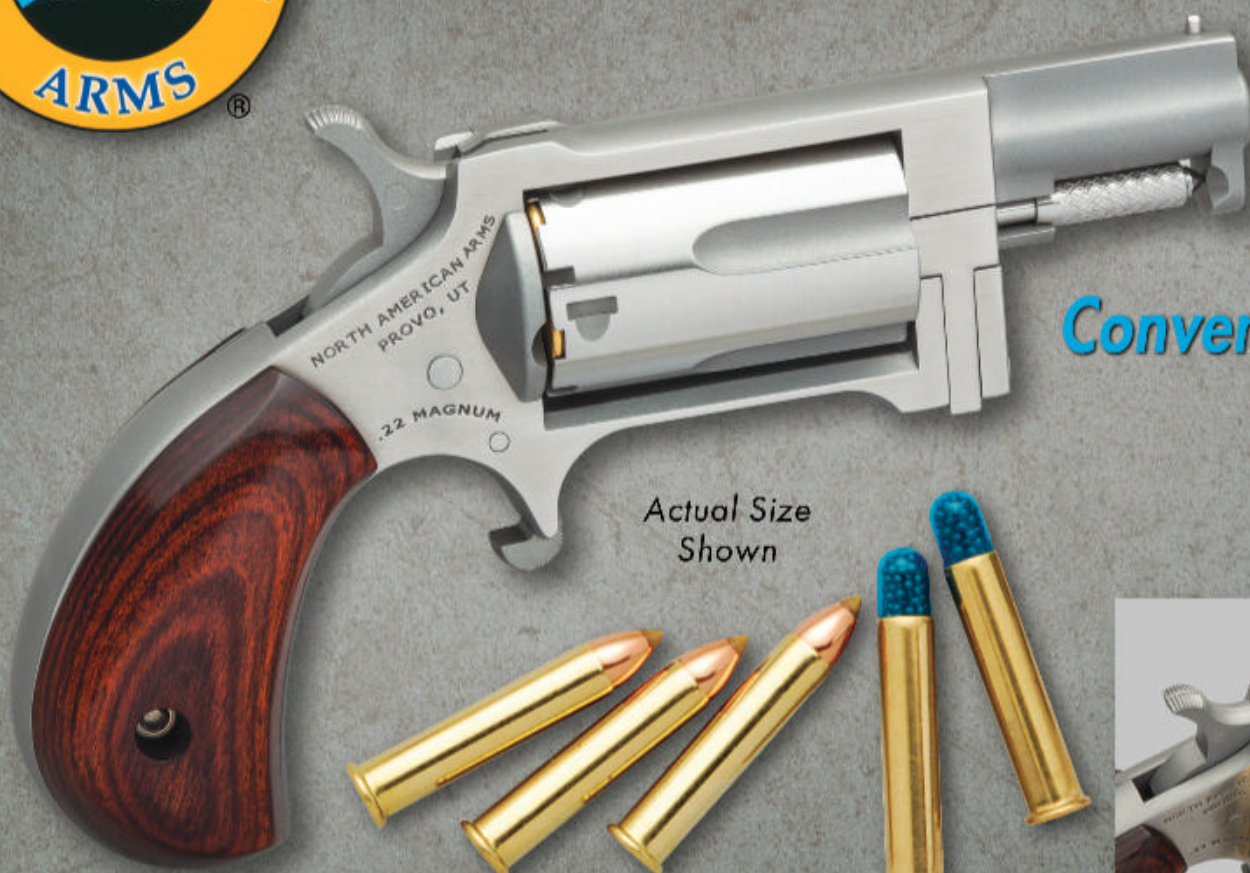
dered look on my face—a truth that was captured real-time on video, which you can see at tactical-life.com. While there, check out the support video on the Sig Custom Works FCU and Collective.

WINNER

Sig Sauer continues its onslaught and absolute domination in the firearms arena with this modular system. Modularity can be a blessing and a curse, and typically I shy away from it. But as of now, the Sig Custom Works FCU seems to be a solid winner that will free up the creativity of manufacturers and owners alike. And it appears it will allow end users to have more gun for less money—a proposition that most of us can easily subscribe to. For more info, visit sigsauer.com. 





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← Seven-shot cylinders in both .357 Mag. and 9mm come stock with the Taurus Model 692 revolver.

THE RIGHT TRACKER

SHOOTING TAURUS' SEVEN-SHOT .357 CONVERTIBLE TO 9MM POWERHOUSE

BY WILLIAM BELL • JORDAN BELL PHOTOS



Admittedly, I'm a dyed-in-the-wool wheelgun man. I get excited when a new revolver is introduced, and to me this new Taurus is something to get worked up about. In my opinion, which is backed up by numerous gun tests over the years, Taurus does a fine job of building revolvers that are comparable to anyone's. This new gun is built on the Taurus equivalent of the L-frame, which makes it a medium-frame +P and allows room for a seven-round cylinder. This "multi-caliber" revolver comes with a .357 Magnum cylinder installed and a second cylinder/crane assembly in

9mm. So, you can use .357, .38 Special +P or standard pressure loads, .38 Long or .38 Short, plus 9mm. With the cylinder open for loading, a push button on the right side of the frame above the trigger-guard is pressed so the .357 cylinder/crane assembly can be removed and the 9mm cylinder inserted in its place. For simultaneous ejection of expended 9mm cases, full-moon Stellar clips are provided.

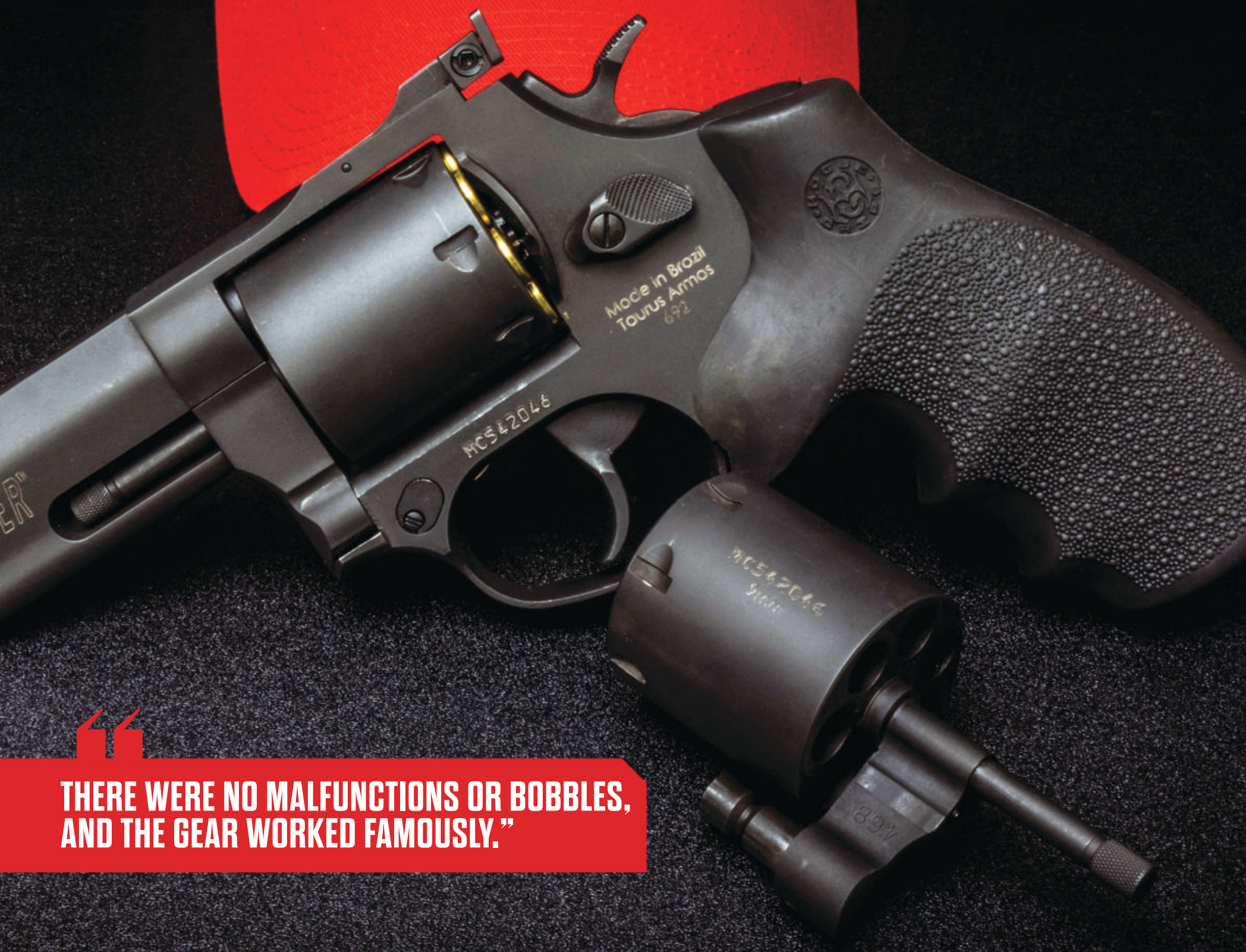
GUN DETAILS

The Model 692 comes with either a handy 3-inch barrel or a 6.5-inch barrel for range

work or hunting. Both barrels are ported on both sides near the muzzle and have a full lug below, and the barrel on the 6.5-inch version has a vent rib. A matte black or a matte stainless steel finish is available, and both are fitted with a fully adjustable rear sight and an orange-inlaid ramp front sight. Both also feature the soft rubber "Ribber" Grip. This is a traditional DA/SA revolver with a checkered hammer spur and wide, smooth-faced trigger. The trigger on my test gun broke clean with a 5.87-pound SA pull and a smooth DA pull that I'd guesstimate at about 13 pounds. As far as fit and



MAKE REVOLVERS
GREAT AGAIN



THERE WERE NO MALFUNCTIONS OR BOBBLES,
AND THE GEAR WORKED FAMOUSLY.”

finish, I have no complaints. The Model 692 comes in a cardboard box with the extra cylinder and a safety padlock, plus owner's manual.

The Model 692 that I elected to test was matte black with the 3-inch barrel. I chose this particular gun for its usefulness for self-defense carry. I'm a fan of the 3-inch barrel and find it a versatile length that helps improve cartridge ballistics, yet it's short enough to aid in concealment. The matte black finish is non-reflective and business-like in appearance. At 35 ounces empty, with the right holster and belt combination it is easy to carry and hide beneath appropriate clothing. One thing I did change was the "Ribber" grips. While they really help absorb recoil and aid in shot recovery, they add bulk to the gun and are very "tacky" feeling, adhering to shirts worn loosely over top of them. I decided to replace mine with Hogue black rubber Monogrips. They fit my hand a lot better and don't grab the Hawaiian shirts I like to wear in the summer, plus I can shift



← During practical shooting tests, the Taurus was carried in a Sourdough rig from Simply Rugged Holsters.

"IT WILL BE STAYING WITH ME AND WILL MAKE A GOOD ADDITION TO MY CONCEALED-CARRY HANDGUN BATTERY."

my hand around them better if I don't get the hold I like when I first grasp them.

GEARING UP

With a revolver of this size and weight I decided that the best holster for concealment would be a belt holster worn on the hipbone with a high ride and open at the top. This perfectly describes the Sourdough Pancake Holster from Simply Rugged Holsters. This rig is made for medium- to large-frame handguns, is shaped for the specific handgun and has three belt slots that are 1.75 inches. These slots allow the user to adjust the angle of cant or wear it crossdraw, and also can convert the Sourdough to a shoulder holster. The list of options is mind boggling and includes safety straps, choice of materials, stamping or carving.

For a gun belt, I chose the Peacekeeper from Black Beard Belts.

Not only is this belt very



SPEC BOX

TAURUS MODEL 692

CALIBER:	.357 Mag./9mm
BARREL:	3 inches (ported)
OA LENGTH:	8.14 inches
WEIGHT:	35 ounces (empty)
GRIPS:	Ribber
SIGHTS:	Adj. rear, orange ramp front
ACTION:	DA/SA
FINISH:	Matte black or stainless
CAPACITY:	7
MSRP:	\$640-\$692 (stainless)



supportive, but it is incrementally adjustable by 0.25-inch increments so you can cinch it up to your size and comfort level. I chose one in black that is 1.43 inches wide and made from a nearly indestructible polymer-coated nylon material. It has a unique, removable ratcheting buckle and ladder strap system (like a billet with teeth), and is stiff on the non-buckle end, curving inward. It looks and feels like leather, and a lifetime warranty is standard.

Finally, I went through my speed loader box and came up with two HKS Model 587-A speed loaders and a black leather double belt pouch. These loaders are made for the S&W seven-shot L-frame revolvers, along with the seven-shot Taurus .357 Magnum wheel-guns. They're constructed of



← The orange-face ramp front sight and adjustable rear sight make getting on target quickly a simple task.

machined aluminum and have a locking/unlocking knob to hold or release the cartridges into the cylinder chambers. I've used HKS speed loaders for many years.

To evaluate the Taurus Model 692 as both a .357 and 9mm, I chose four loads in .357 Magnum and three in 9mm. First is the Black Hills 125-grain JHP Magnum. This weight of JHP has always been the top contender for stopping power in this caliber. A close runner up is the 110-grain JHP from Cor-Bon, which is easier to control in rapid fire. I also included a load once used by the Border Patrol, the 158-grain JSP from Federal and, of course, a traditional 158-grain lead SWC from Remington. For 9mm I chose a 147-grain FMJ with a flat nose from Aguila of Mexico, a 115-grain FMJ load from Black Hills and the new Federal Syntech Defense with its 138-grain segmented Syntech-coated HP.

RANGE TIME

My testing and evaluation were done at an outdoor range at the NRA Whittington Center. I got my velocities first; these were about what I expected, and the ports didn't seem to have a significant detrimental effect. A bench and sand-bag rest were used for the accuracy potential evaluation, and due to the 3-inch barrel I limited the range to 15 yards. Shooting was done single-action only using an RE Factor Tactical paper target with five 10-by-6.5-inch oval bullseyes. I started with the 9mm, and decided not to use the Stellar clips for this



part of the test as the 9mm cartridges headspace on the case neck. My best five-shot group measured 2.24 inches with the Black Hills 115-grain FMJ cartridges, and none of the three-group averages went over 2.84 inches. Recoil was modest, with no hiccups.

Shooting the .357 Magnum loads was a bit more exciting, but I'd installed the Hogue Monogrips, and together with the ports I didn't feel the recoil, and muzzle flip wasn't excessive. The tightest five-shot group came with the 110-grain JHP from Cor-Bon at 1.89 inches. The largest average group was 2.7 inches, so I feel this new Taurus has plenty of inherent accuracy.

To test practical accuracy, reliability and controllability in rapid fire, I used a modified combat qualification course and fired 35 rounds instead of the usual 30, due to the

seven-shot cylinders. The Peacekeeper gun belt was threaded through my trouser belt loops and the Simply Rugged Pancake Holster added, along with the double HKS speed-loader pouch. I again started with the 9mm configuration and used a mix of the Aguila and Black Hills FMJ cartridges. The Stellar

moon-clips fit just fine in the speed-loader pouch and were quickly retrieved by putting a fingertip in the center hole and lifting the loaded clip out. Another RE Factor Tactical target was used, this one a humanoid silhouette with scoring areas.

Shooting began at 3 yards from the holster. I then moved

into a point-shoulder stance and shot with the right hand, reloaded and shot with the left hand, then reloaded. After each stage, a 360-degree threat assessment was completed before working the revolver back into the holster. Next, I moved back to 7 yards, drew and fired 3+2+2 in three strings, using



PERFORMANCE:

TAURUS MODEL 692

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
9MM	▼	▼
Aquila 147 FMJ-FP	944	2.31
Black Hills 115 FMJ	1,133	2.24
Federal 138 S-JHP	1,072	2.38
.357 MAG	▼	▼
Black Hills 125 JHP	1,214	2.27
Cor-Bon 110 JHP	1,323	1.89
Federal 158 JSP	1,087	2.29
Remington 158 LSWC	1,136	2.28

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 15 yards.

the sights and a two-handed hold. After reloading, again at 7 yards, a body armor drill was performed—three shots to center mass and one to the head, then two center mass and one to the head. Backing to 15 yards I used a pole for a barricade, fired two shots from the left side (with sights), two from the right side, and then fired three shots kneeling from the right side. All shooting on this course was double-action.

FINAL NOTES

I repeated the combat qualification course with .357 Magnum and used a mix of the test cartridges. The HKS 587-A speed loaders were used with the rimmed .357 rounds. My possible score on the combat/qualification course was 350 points. With the 9mm cylinder in place, my score was 340/350; my two head shots looked like nostrils. I dropped three more points with the harder-to-control .357 Magnum, but still made 337/350, the two head shots not quite as impressive, but still 10s. All the bullet “patterns” were in the K-zone of the silhouette target, and I felt that practical accuracy in rapid fire was more than sufficient.

There were no malfunctions or bobbles, and the gear worked famously. I found the Stellar clips easier to load with than the speed loaders, but the 9mm cartridge is shorter and the bullet more rounded than the .357 loads. The Black Beard belt and Simply Rugged holster kept the Taurus secure and in place during the two courses. I really liked the

blaze-orange ramp front sight on the Model 692; it was very quick to pick up in rapid fire. The weight of the gun, good grips and porting made it controllable no matter what load I was using. At no point did the cylinder change button present any issues.

Two items would have made things better. I feel that shaving off a pound from the SA trigger pull would improve accuracy, as during the bulls-eye shooting it was just a tad heavy. And, with a full-lug 3-inch or 6.5-inch barrel, I don’t know why

Taurus couldn’t have made the ejector rod maybe 0.25 to 0.30 inches longer. No biggie for the 9mm, but the .357 cases would’ve been easier to extract with a longer rod. There’s no locking point at the end of the rod, so why make it short?

Other than these small complaints, I was very pleased with the Taurus Model 692 with the 3-inch barrel. It will be staying with me and will make a good addition to my concealed-carry handgun battery. I sighted the revolver

FOR MORE INFORMATION


TAURUS
taurususa.com

BLACK BEARD BELTS
blackbeardbelts.com

HKS PRODUCTS
hksspeedloaders.com

RE FACTOR TACTICAL
refactortactical.com


SIMPLY RUGGED HOLSTERS
simplyrugged.com


in for the 110-grain JHP Cor-Bon load. Now, I’d like to find a seven-shot speed strip! 

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ESCAPE

BY PAUL SCARLATA

REVOLVER SHOWDOWN
WITH SMITH & WESSON,
TAURUS AND RUGER



RUGER
SUPER
GP 100

There is no doubt that we are living in the “age of the semi-auto.” If you visit your local newsstand or the magazine rack at a big-box retail store, chances are that those firearm magazines on display that do not have AR-15s on their covers have some type of high-tech, self-shucking pistol.

Those readers who are familiar with my ramblings know that while much of my literary endeavors concern semi-auto pistols, down deep I am a fan of the roundgun.

I cut my handgunning teeth with a .22 revolver; the first handgun I took a whitetail with was a long-barreled .357; one of my regular carry guns is a .38 snubie, as is my wife’s car gun; and I have shot many an Action Pistol match with a roundgun. My older brother, an ardent shooter and engineer in the firearms indus-

try, has long held that, “For the first six shots, a double-action revolver is the best handgun in the world.” And who am I to argue with my big brother?

But there lies the rub... “six shots.” While one can purchase a semi-auto pistol today whose magazine holds between 12 and 20 rounds of ammunition, why would you bother with a revolver that holds a measly half-dozen rounds? Well, back in the day when semi-autos were known for their quirky operation, revolver-armed law enforcement personnel were fond of saying “six for sure” about their duty wheelguns.

A number of years ago I attended a shooting school where one of the instructors carried a revolver. When several of us questioned his choice of sidearm, he told us, “If you can’t handle a defensive situation with a good .38 revolver, you don’t need a handgun. You need a SWAT team!”

I WANT MORE

While there have always been .22 revolvers that held more than the regulation six rounds, it wasn’t until the 1990s that we saw a new breed of wheel-

ROLLING AN EIGHT

gun that held seven .38/.357 cartridges. For a number of years I competed in the Second Chance Bowling Pin Shoot with a matching pair of S&W 686+ seven-shot .357 revolvers. And while they, and I, performed quite well, do you know what I always wished for? That's right, an eight-shot revolver.

But time and technology stand still for no one. They say if you wish long and hard enough your wishes (might?) come true. Well, for me they did. Today those three taipans of the handgun world—Ruger, S&W and Taurus—all offer eight-shot revolvers. Emails were dispatched to the three gunmakers and over the next few weeks parcels arrived at my front door containing Taurus Model 608, S&W Performance Center M627 and Ruger Super GP100 revolvers.

DIFFERENCES

Let's take a closer look at our three contenders. Their similarities include 100-percent stainless steel construction, all have swing out cylinders and traditional DA/SA trigger systems, their cylinders hold (big surprise) eight rounds of .357 Magnum or .38 Special ammunition. All three feature fully adjustable rear sights and all have exposed hammers that can be cocked for precise, single-action shooting.

But there are also differences. Barrel lengths vary from 5 inches (S&W) to 5.5 inches (Ruger) and 6.5 inches (Taurus). The Ruger stands apart with a unique looking barrel shroud that is ventilated to help cool the barrel and a fluted cylinder that not only reduces weight but looks sexy as all get out. The S&W's slab-sided barrel is not only distinctive looking but has a full-length under lug—as does the Taurus—to add recoil-dampening weight up front and to protect the ejector rod. And the Taurus stands out with a full-length ventilated rib and is the only one of the trio with a ported barrel to help hold down muzzle flip. Front sights also differ with the S&W having a gold bead up front, while the Ruger's is a green fiber-optic and our Brazilian entry sports a blade with a red insert.

The S&W and Taurus are both built



Becky Scarlata Photos

→ Richard Cole (above) shoots the Speed Drill with the Ruger Super GP100. Dick Jones (right) found the Ruger was just the ticket for ringing the ram target.

on their firms' large revolver frames but the Ruger is unique in that it uses the larger Redhawk frame to allow for the eight-shot cylinder, but the lower section of the frame where the lock works reside is of GP100 size so as to allow for the dual-spring system, which was necessary to refine the trigger pull. Both

the Taurus and Ruger use transfer-bar systems to ignite cartridges, while the S&W has a frame-mounted firing pin.

Both the Ruger and the S&W come with wooden grips, although the latter's box contained a set of Hogue rubber grips. The Taurus features recoil-absorbing rubber grips with finger grooves.



8-SHOT REVOLVERS

➤➤➤➤➤	S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 627	RUGER SUPER GP100	TAURUS MODEL 608
CALIBER:	.357 Mag/.38 Spl	.357 Mag/.38 Spl	.357 Mag/.38 Spl
BARREL:	5 inches	5.5 inches	6.5 inches
OA LENGTH:	9.5 inches	11 inches	11.7 inches
WEIGHT:	43.2 ounces (empty)	47 ounces (empty)	51 ounces (empty)
GRIP:	Wood/synthetic	Hogue hardwood	Rubber finger groove
SIGHTS:	Adjustable rear/gold bead front	Adjustable rear, fiber-optic front	Adjustable rear, red insert front
ACTION:	DA/SA	DA/SA	DA/SA
FINISH:	Matte Silver	PVD	Matte stainless
CAPACITY:	8	8	8
MSRP:	\$1,302	\$1,549	\$760



→ Dick Jones (above) knocks down plates with the M627. While the S&W was the lightest of the guns, its Hogue grips provided outstanding recoil control.



SHOOTING THE MOON

The S&W and the Ruger both have their cylinders cut to allow the use of full-moon clips. Made of spring steel, these hold eight rounds of ammo and allow very fast reloads and positive unloading.

Since the Taurus does not accept full-moon clips, we contacted 5 Star Firearms (5starfirearms.com) who kindly provided us with several of their eight-round T8-.357/.38 speed loaders. These are machined from billet aluminum and use a twist knob to secure the rounds in the loader body and release them for fast reloading.

Once our trio of revolvers arrived, Becky and I zeroed each at 25 yards

with both .38 and .357 ammo and all three showed they were capable of producing groups in the 2-inch range. We then disassembled, cleaned and lubricated each wheelgun, which would be the only maintenance they received. As in past Battle Royale shoot offs, if one malfunctioned at the range we would attempt to correct the problem on site. If that was not possible, the revolver would be scored up to that point and then put aside while we finished testing the remaining handguns.

To have help judging the performance of our three rotating handguns, we contacted long-time Battle Royale participants Richard Cole and Dick Jones. It required little urging for them to assist Becky and I in burning up free ammo. As in the past, we ruminated about the best drills to run the revolvers through and came up with the following:

Plate Rack Drill: The shooter faces a rack of six steel plates from 8 yards. Upon the signal he lifts his revolver and engages the plates. Score will be the average time for five runs plus a five-second penalty for any plate left standing.

Speed Drill: The shooter engages three steel targets offhand, from 10, 15 and 20 yards, with two rounds each. He then performs a speed reload and repeats. Score will be the total time for three runs plus a five-second penalty for any miss.

Steel Ram Drill: Each shooter engages a steel silhouette ram target with 16 rounds of .357 ammo from 35 yards firing the revolver from an MTM K-Zone rest. Score will be five points for all hits on the target minus five points for any misses. Note that each revolver was cleaned with a brush and lubricated after the first two stages.

AMMO APLENTY

Winchester and Sig Sauer kindly provided us with a suitable quantity of 130-grain FMJ .38 Special ammunition for shooting the plate and speed drills, while Black Hills Ammunition sent along a supply of .357 Magnum cartridges loaded with 158-grain JHP bullets to engage the silhouette target. To compare the shooters' performances, a Competition Electronics Pocket Pro shot timer (competitionelectronics.com) was used to score the plate and speed drills.

As we had done in previous Battle Royales, each revolver was graded on a 1 (worse) to 5 (best) scale in seven categories: reliability, ergonomics, trigger control, sights, recoil control, offhand accuracy and ease of reloading. These were then added together to give each gun a final score in each category.

Taking advantage of a cool, October morning, the four of us met at the



← This 25-yard target shot with the Taurus Model 608 had all five rounds in the ring and measured exactly 2 inches...great accuracy.

Becky Scarlata Photos

Piedmont Handgunners range in Southmont, North Carolina. After painting all the targets, we proceeded to send rounds down range. While one of us shot, another ran the timer, a third kept score and Becky served as photographer. Once our profligate expenditure of ammunition was completed, we sat down and scored the three roundguns.

Becky Scarlata Photos



The author (center) and his friends, Richard and Dick, pose with a properly dented U.S. Steel ram target.

EXPLANATION OF RESULTS

Reliability: Despite increasing the mainspring pressure on the S&W, we experienced a large number of light strikes/misfires with all three brands of ammo. We could not find anything mechanically wrong with it, but Richard was unable to complete the Steel Ram stage with it when it failed to ignite 10 rounds in a row. We had two light strikes with the Ruger, which went off on a second try, while the Taurus ran like gangbusters with anything we fed it.

Ergonomics: The three revolvers all had their controls in the proper positions and were easy to manipulate, but we all criticized the Ruger's smooth, wooden grips. One of us, who has small hands, found them too large and all of us felt they needed checkering or striping to improve purchase. While two of us approved of the Smith's Hogue finger-groove grips, one disliked the way they felt. The Taurus' grips were hand-filling without being overly large and nicely textured.

Trigger Control: The S&W had a smooth, stage-free trigger stroke even when the mainspring was tightened down all the way. All three of us felt the Ruger's was lighter than the Taurus' but longer and had a stage in it. While the Brazilian entry's trigger was the heaviest of the three it had a consistent, stage-free stroke, and the three of us all shot our best times on the Plate Rack drill with it.

Recoil Control: With its ported barrel and heavy weight, the Taurus owned this category hands down. Despite their differences in mass, the S&W and Ruger tied here with the Smith having superior grips while the Ruger was heavier.

shooter did his part.

Reloading: The Ruger and S&W both scored low in this category as the three of us experienced a great deal of difficulty with their full-moon clips, which held the cartridges too tight. Cartridges in full-moon clips need a bit of "wiggle" to line them up with the chambers and insert them smoothly. In addition, the Ruger's large grips interfered when inserting the clips. The 5 Star speed loaders worked as expected and allowed us to recharge the Taurus' cylinder faster with much less fumbling.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

RUGER
ruger.com

SMITH & WESSON
smith-wesson.com

TAURUS
taurususa.com

EIGHT FOR SURE

In conclusion, aside from the S&W's ignition problems, we found that these revolvers handled well, with the exception of reloading with the full-moon clips, and were suitably accurate in simple operating drills. For uses where fast reloads are not a determining factor (target shooting and hunting) they should all serve quite well.

It should come as no surprise to the reader that the three of us chose the Taurus as our favorite revolver. Richard put it so well when he opined, "Wonderful to shoot. Nice surprise."

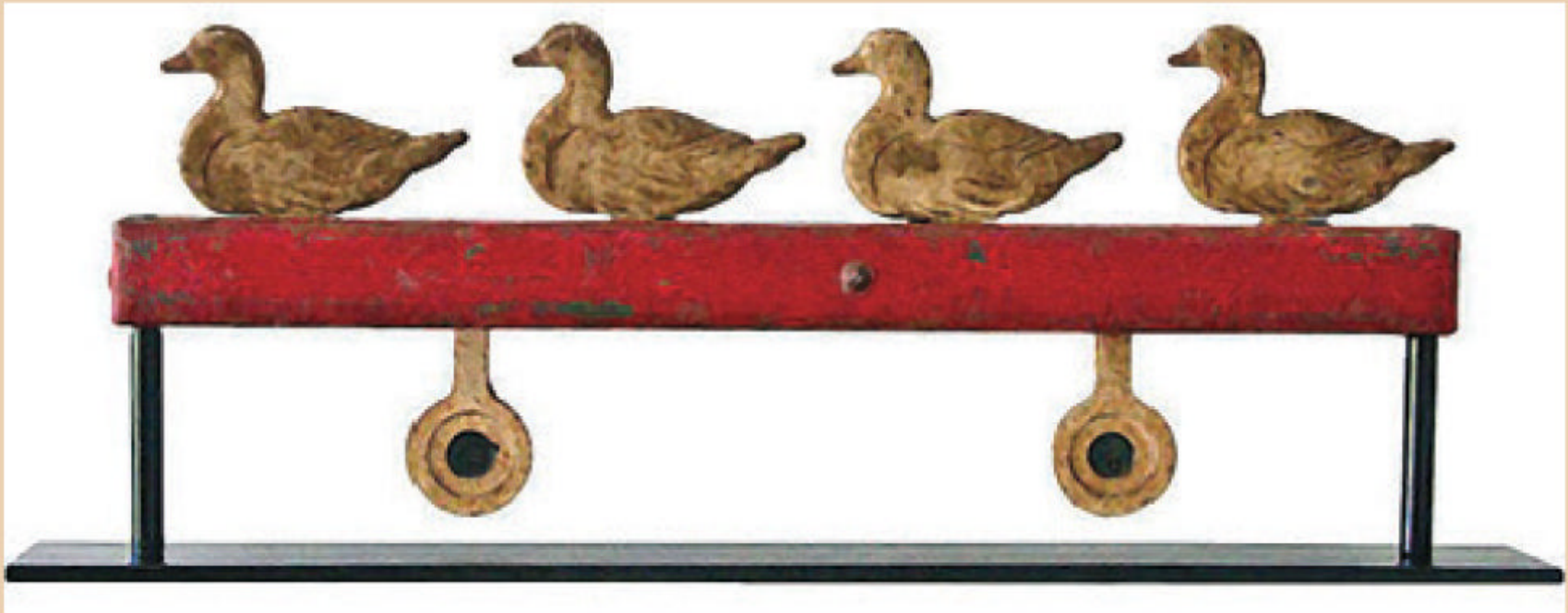


	S&W	RUGER	TAURUS
RELIABILITY:	2	12	15
ERGONOMICS:	12	8	14
TRIGGER CONTROL:	14	7	10
RECOIL CONTROL:	10	10	15
SIGHTS:	7	13	9
ACCURACY:	12	12	13
RELOADING:	7	7	13
TOTAL:	64	69	89



Note: 15 was a perfect score in each category.

You're a sitting duck



in a gun-free zone

Public safety is a critical part of the education campaigns of the Second Amendment Foundation, and with good reason. Without a self-defense option, we are all at greater risk.

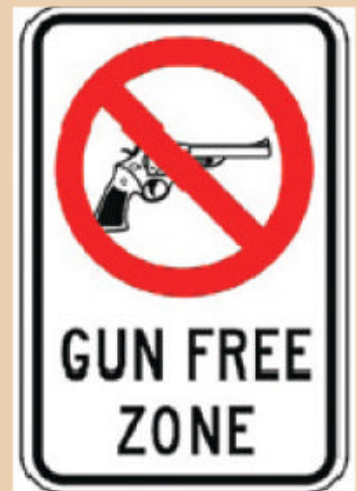
The facts support our concerns about gun-free zones. The Crime Prevention Research Center (CPRC) recently finished updating a list of mass public shootings worldwide.

FACT: Over the course of 18 years, 1998 to 2015, the CPRC found 2,354 attacks and at least 4,880 shooters outside the U.S. and 53 attacks and 57 shooters within this country. The study found the U.S. makes up 1.49 percent of the murders worldwide, 2.20 percent of the attacks, and less than 1.15 percent of the mass public shooters.

FACT: Most gunmen are smart enough to know that they can kill more people if they attack places where victims can't defend themselves; 98 percent of mass public shootings since 1950 have occurred in places where citizens are banned from having guns. In Europe, every mass public shooting in history has occurred in a gun-free zone. And Europe is no stranger to mass public shootings. In the past eight years, it has experienced a per-capita casualty rate 50 percent higher than that of the U.S.

FACT: The U.S. is a relatively safe place from these shooting attacks precisely because so many attacks are thwarted by legally armed good Samaritans.

FACT: The evidence shows that gun-free zones are not the answer. Truth is, they are an added danger because they prevent legally armed citizens from defending themselves and their neighbors. It's time to get rid of gun-free zones. The U.S. has tried them for more than 20 years and evidence shows that gun-free zones actually increase the danger. Nobody wants to be a sitting duck in a maniac's shooting gallery.



The Second Amendment Foundation
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PRO CARRY

GUNSITE'S PROFESSIONALS TALK ABOUT THEIR CARRY HOLSTERS AND GUNS

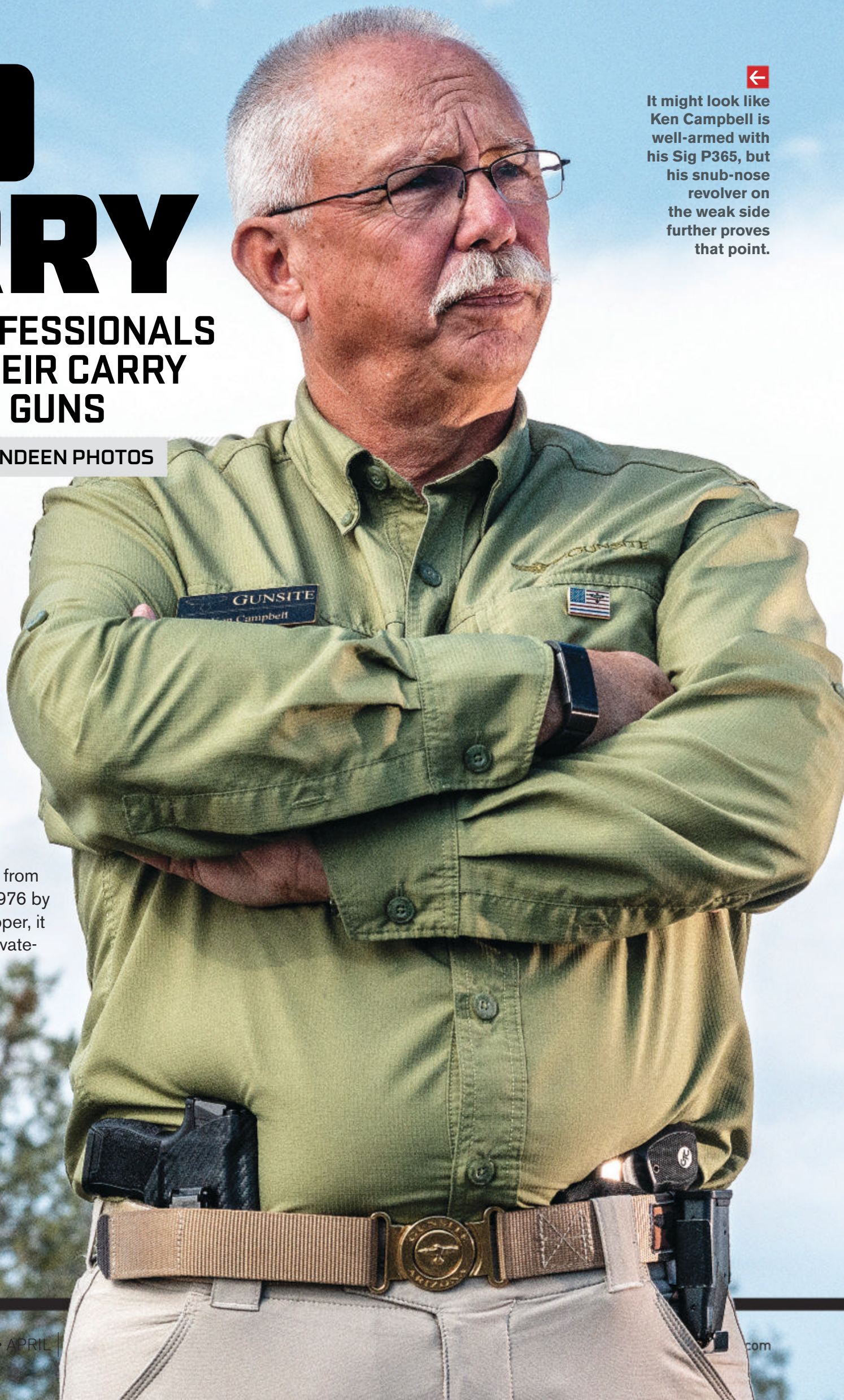
BY MIKE DETTY • ALEX LANDEEN PHOTOS



Arizona is rich with resources. At one time this state provided the country with more than 60 percent of its copper demand. A rich silver vein helped establish Tombstone in the 1880s, and the nearby grasslands of Sonoita were and are home to many cattle herds. The Grand Canyon is another of Arizona's scenic wonders, and the state's riches are vast and diverse. But my favorite resource is Gunsite Academy located just outside of Prescott and just a four-hour drive from my home in Tucson. Founded in 1976 by retired Marine Lt. Colonel Jeff Cooper, it is one of the oldest and largest private-



It might look like Ken Campbell is well-armed with his Sig P365, but his snub-nose revolver on the weak side further proves that point.



ly-owned training facilities dedicated to teaching gun-handling skills to civilians. Boasting nearly 2,000 acres with more than 15 ranges and three live-fire shoot houses, Gunsite is considered graduate school for serious students of weaponry.

While the facility is top notch in every respect, it is the instructor cadre that makes Gunsite Academy the number one choice among responsible armed citizens. Nearly all of the instructors have either military or law enforcement experience and a majority of them have both!

But, I was curious to know what the instructors grab when their wives ask them to go out and get a gallon of milk. A recent trip to Gunsite allowed me the opportunity to ask my favorite instructors.

KEN CAMPBELL



Ken Campbell is currently the chief executive officer of Gunsite and answers only to its owner, Buz Mills. But long before he was an employee of

Gunsite, Campbell started taking classes there and became an instructor in 1992. Campbell spent a total of 35 years with Boone County Sheriff's Office in Indiana and eventually retired as the Sheriff.

When I asked Campbell what he'd put on to go to the convenience store, he told me, "I'm not a plastic holster kind of guy, but having said



that I put on a HAWG holster with a Sig P365 and wear it IWB in the appendix position. The holster clips to your pants, not your belt. Initially, I was like, no way! But I found it to be comfortable and you'll tear my jeans off before the holster will let go. The owner of HAWG (Help America Wear Guns) is a former Marine and the neat thing is he'll only use American-made products for his holsters, from the clips to the Allen wrenches he includes, and even the bag it is packaged in. I even wore a Glock 19 from here (Prescott, Arizona) to Indiana and back driving

with my Glock 19 at the 4-o'clock position inside the waistband and it's just really comfortable. And, again, I'm not a plastic holster guy!"

Campbell also carries a back-up to his primary concealed gun. In fact, each of the instructors I spoke with carried two guns for their milk runs. Campbell related, "I've carried two guns for over 40 years and it's not a habit I want to break. In fact, every time you've ever seen me, I've been carrying a Smith & Wesson, five-shot .38 Special J-frame in a Sticky Holster. Bill Halvorsen, one of our instructors with 27 years of

“YOU KNOW WHAT, I CARRY THE SAME GUN FOR EVERYTHING NOW. I TEACH WITH, RUN THE RANGE WITH AND CARRY A MODIFIED GLOCK 19.” — ED HEAD, GUNSITE INSTRUCTOR

experience with LAPD and Glendale PD, showed me years ago how to conceal the gun behind my twin magazine carrier on my belt.”

Campbell carries a S&W Model 60 in his Sticky Holster and the gun is all but invisible behind his 1911 mag pouches. The Sticky Holster, in this case the MD-5 medium, stays in place when the weapon is pulled. The raw neoprene is tacky and stays put on the beltline without any securing straps. But once the gun has been drawn, for safety sake, the Sticky Holster must be removed from the pants and the gun reinserted before it is put back into its carry position. Campbell carries his gun at the 10 o'clock position with the butt positioned for a left-hand presentation, but as he demonstrated for me, it can be grabbed by either hand and put into action quickly. He has also outfitted his revolver with a Crimson Trace Lasergrip so he can place shots on target even if he can't get a sight picture. That makes a lot of sense to me. Even when Campbell isn't wearing his 1911 and twin magazine carrier, he can easily blouse his shirt over the top of the J-frame, concealing it completely.

ED HEAD



Ed Head is an Air Force Security Police veteran as well as a retired Border Patrol agent who spent much of his career on the

California/Mexico border. Many of the media and private training events I've attended at Gunsite have been taught by Head. He's an excellent instructor and someone I have developed a great deal of respect for over the years.

I asked Head, what gun and carry rig he'd grab if his wife asked him to run out and get a gallon of milk. His reply surprised me—at least, initially. “You



Gunsite instructor Ed Head, an Air Force Security Police veteran, carries his modified Glock 19 in a Simply Rugged CID leather holster. He keeps a brown and black one on hand depending on what clothing he is wearing, and matching magazine holders are also always present.

know what, I carry the same gun for everything now,” Head said. “I teach with, run the range with and carry a modified Glock 19. I carry it in the same holster and in the same place always. It is in a Simply Rugged CID leather holster. I have a couple of them—I have a brown and a black one depending on what I'm wearing. I am trying to be consistent with doing everything the same way all the time. Sometimes I do carry a back-up to my primary gun and if I do, I carry it on my weak-side hip and it is a modified Glock 26. It is a smaller gun but will take

my Glock 19 magazines and I usually carry one extra magazine. Sometimes I carry a spare 15- or 17-round magazine, but lately I've been carrying a 24-round magazine, just because.”

Head had told me about an incident several years ago when two illegal aliens attempted to carjack his truck in a grocery store parking lot. I asked him if he was wearing the Glock 19 at the time.

“No, you see that was a sad lesson,” he said. “That was right after I retired from the Border Patrol and moved to Prescott Valley, and I went to the grocery store with a five-shot J-frame on my right hip. Then this incident happened, and I said to myself well... this is just stupid. Sometimes I'll be out in the yard with a J-frame and I can just stick it in my back

pocket or if I am doing yard work a belt holster. But I don't go out and about with a five-shot J-frame anymore. That incident in

“I'VE CARRIED TWO GUNS FOR OVER 40 YEARS AND IT'S NOT A HABIT I WANT TO BREAK.” — KEN CAMPBELL, GUNSITE CEO

Q&A WITH KEN CAMPBELL

CH: Between the COVID lockdowns and the riots, there have been record gun sales this year and there are more first-time gun buyers. What advice do you give these new gun owners?

Ken Campbell: Jeff Cooper, our founder, was a wise man and a renaissance man in many ways. He once said, "Just because you own a piano does not make you a pianist."

These new gun owners need to do their due diligence and get good training. Don't just look on the internet, watch some videos and think, 'I shall rise to the occasion.' You will not—you'll default to your level of training. When bad things happen to you, you'll need to have that default level set to something that will save you and your loved ones' lives. Do your due diligence, find your trainers and get training.

We've been fortunate—we've had four record years here and then 2020 happened. So I'm thinking asterisk here. Despite this, we're coming back and still might beat 2019 numbers. Our September newsletter went out yesterday, and this morning we had 15 application requests.

When the pandemic hit March 15, people quit traveling, and a lot of our classes dropped off. Thanks to the Constitution, we're an essential service here. So, we stayed open, but our numbers dropped off. People were too afraid to travel. A lot of folks said, "Hey just hang on to my money I'll come sometime later this year."

The folks that are buying the new guns, our numbers are up there as well. We have four of our Number 250 pistol classes scheduled in the month of October. There were originally just two, but those two filled so quickly we doubled them.

We're also scheduling more



tutorials, which are one-on-one or private classes. Want to bring your family, your co-workers or your church group? We can set up a private class. Some of the more liberal folks don't want people to know that they've come and trained with the unwashed. We've done this for years, whether it's corporate executives or celebrities. So, we're happy to do private classes for them.

We're seeing more revolvers in classes. We just finished a five-day #250 revolver only class. Some of that is due to being a neighbor to California, and they don't restrict shotguns and revolvers. And, right now, those might be the only type of guns left on the shelves at gun stores. I, for one, don't feel under-gunned when I have my revolver on, and I certainly don't feel handicapped when I'm holding a shotgun.

CH: Gunsite is the Mecca for 1911 shooters, but the newbies will be looking to you for advice as to what gun to bring. Thoughts?

Ken Campbell: When someone calls and says, 'I just signed up for a #250 class, what gun should I bring?' the first thing I tell them is rent a gun from us. We charge \$35 a day to rent the gun—we're not getting rich on that. That includes the pistol, the holster, the magazines and the belt. Let's say

you rent a Glock 17 or a S&W M&P or 1911 and on Monday that gun is not working for you, we trade you out for a different one. That way you can see what works for you, what fits your hand. That's something you can't figure out just holding it in a gun store. This is what we suggest, and that's how you become an informed consumer. I'm an old 1911 guy, but more often than not, I recommend a Glock, S&W M&P or one of the other striker-fired semi-autos. Here at Gunsite, the handgun has to be 9mm or above in power. The striker-fired gun is a gateway drug and many of our students return to take the #250 with a 1911. Simpler is better, and that allows the shooter to focus on the fundamentals of shooting.

CH: Where do you see the trend going with handgun optics?

Ken Campbell: Twenty-five years ago we started seeing these funny juice cans on top of carbines. And then we started noticing just how quick and accurate some of these people were with these optics. The sights became more robust and smaller and smaller, and now everybody has a red-dot on their carbine. Five or 10 years ago, we started seeing red-dots on pistols. But the critical part is how robust they are. There's a lot of

energy on top of that slide. We're seeing more and more of these sights, and they are quick and accurate and they are holding up. For people our age (61), and their eyes not being what they once were, they are of tremendous help. It used to be I'd struggle to make a shot at 25 yards with irons, and now at 50 yards I'm ringing that steel. So, to answer your question, red-dots are the up-and-coming thing. Heck, even the little Sig P365s have little bitty red-dots on them. But you have to learn with iron sights, because at some point technology will fail. Ultimately, it is up to our client as to whether to bring a gun with a red-dot sight. If you bring it, we'll teach you to run it! Having both eyes open and a full field of view is a good thing!

ABOUT GUNSITE

Gunsite was founded in 1976 by retired Marine Lt. Colonel Jeff Cooper. He was a proponent of the Modern Technique, which he developed while competing at the Big Bear Lake, California. Borrowing on Jack Weaver's bent elbow and push-pull grip, Cooper expounded on it and developed a curriculum designed to ingrain life-saving skills and confidence-boosting ability in his students in just a week's time. Gunsite covers more than 4.5 miles of area and boasts numerous ranges including a 2,000-yard range, as well as classroom facilities, shoot houses and a fully stocked pro shop. There is a campground for use by clients with RVs and campers, hot showers and laundry facilities. Gunsite staff trains law enforcement, military and qualified civilians in safe and effective use of firearms. To schedule a class or learn more about Gunsite, visit the website at gunsite.com.

—Mike Detty

the grocery store parking lot and a couple others convinced me that the J-frame is not what I want for fighting.

“I used to teach with 1911s all the time, and I teach revolver classes and I carried revolvers for years with the Border Patrol and I’ve just settled on the idea that I’m going to teach with, train with and carry the same gun all of the time. I’ll use the other guns for specialty classes but otherwise I am sticking with that one Glock 19.”

I’ve seen Head run a revolver and he is deadly. I know he also enjoys revolvers and has a few that are so beautiful and exquisitely tuned that they make fellow shooters drool. So, it was a surprise to see that Head has decided to train, teach and carry with just one gun, but his arrival at this decision is based on a lifetime of experience and I have to respect that and learn from it.

Simply Rugged’s headquarters is a mere 15-minute drive from Gunsite, so on my return home I stopped and saw Rob Leahy. He was an Army MP and got his start making holsters and gear for his buddies. He makes his holsters the old-fashioned way and they are built to last. While I visited with Leahy, one of his leather benders made a CID holster for my POF-USA P19—a very limited run of guns they did this year that is basically a clone of the Glock 19 with some of POF’s own custom enhancements. Leahy’s CID is a minimalist pancake belt slide design that provides great retention and holds the gun close to the body for maximum concealability. Its open bottom design is perfect for the guy or gal who owns multiple Glocks with different barrel lengths—like Ed Head’s Glock 19 and Glock 26. It’s good stuff, American made by an American patriot.

DAVE HARTMAN

Dave Hartman is Gunsite’s training director, and I had a chance to sit and visit briefly with him and his pup, Gunner. The former Marine wears a 1911 to work every day in a Davis Leather Liberty 453 holster and a matching double mag pouch. I asked the 27-year veteran of



the Orange County Sheriff’s Department what gun and carry rig he puts on to make a run to the convenience store.

“I carry a S&W M&P

Shield and use an NSR Tactical C-4 IWB holster at the 4-o’clock position (behind his right side hip),” he said. Like many of his contemporaries, Hartman

I CARRY A S&W M&P SHIELD AND USE AN NSR TACTICAL C-4 IWB HOLSTER AT THE 4-O’CLOCK POSITION (BEHIND HIS RIGHT SIDE HIP),”

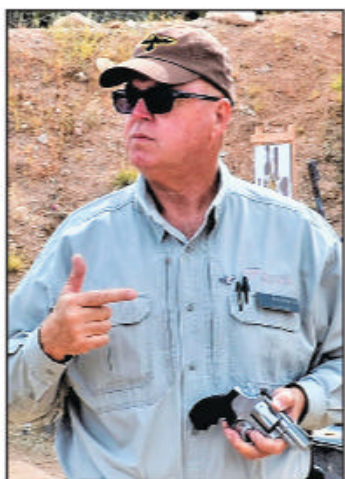
— DAVE HARTMAN

also carries a small J-frame revolver as a back-up to his primary concealed carry gun. He likes to carry his in the appendix position and also uses a Sticky Holster.



← **Gunsite instructor Lew Gosnell prefers to carry a Glock 19 or 17 at 3 o’clock in an OWB holster.**

LEW GOSNELL



One of my other favorite Gunsite instructors is Lew Gosnell, a former Marine MP and career law enforcement officer in southern California.

He's been a firearms instructor for over 20 years and also worked as a gang investigator and detective, as well as leading a high-risk warrant team. Gosnell is a fountain of dry wit and sarcasm, and I'm constantly asking myself, "Did he really just say that?"

Cop humor has a way of lightening what could be very dark and foreboding topics, and Gosnell skates its edges effortlessly, which makes him a very effective instructor.

Not to say he doesn't take shooting seriously. In fact, Gosnell is a Soldier of Fortune 3-gun champion, won the Steel Challenge shotgun championship and was the first End of Trail winner. He's deadly with anything you put in his hand, so I was curious to know what he'd wear for a convenience store run.

"Primary gun would be either a Glock 17 or 19 carried in the 3 o'clock position in an OWB holster from either NSR Tactical or JM Custom Kydex," he said. "I carry my back-up gun in the offside pocket and often use a Glock 26, S&W 442 or Ruger LCP. For pocket carry, I use products from AHolster, DeSantis and Tuff Products."

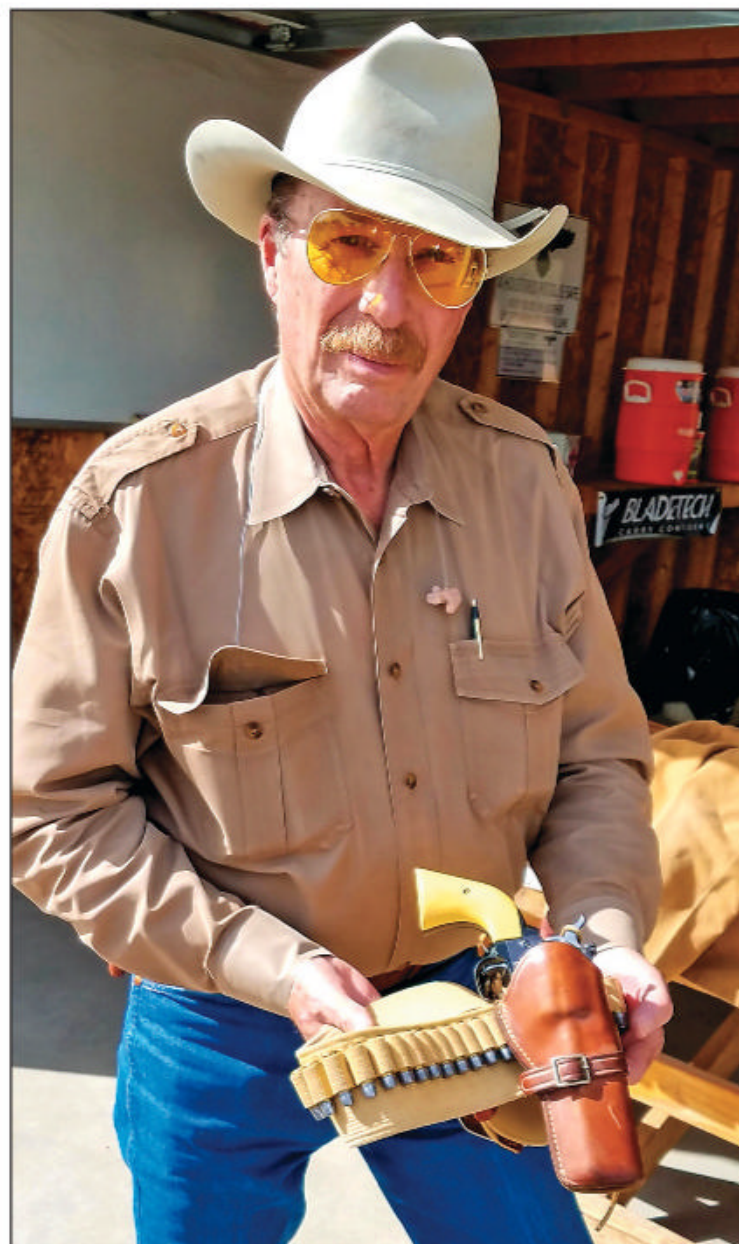
JIM WILSON

I've gotten to know Sheriff Jim Wilson over the years, primarily at Gunsite media events. The Texas lawman is also a renowned country music singer and recently did a brunch show in Tucson. Of course, I had to go and listen to him. His song "West of Somewhere" is one of my favorites, and that alone made the drive worthwhile. When Jim finished his set, he invited me over to his table. Naturally, we talked about gun stuff and he mentioned he was driving up to Gunsite the next day where he was sponsoring a Team Tactics class for


some industry people. I asked Wilson what he'd put on to run out to the grocery store.

"I've got a lot of nice guns but have narrowed my carry guns down to just two," he said. "If I'm not carrying a S&W Model 42 (a lightweight, five-shot .38 Special) I'm carrying my Nighthawk Custom Hi-Power. I almost always wear a vest and often Mexican Carry the little S&W. But I use a Barranti Leather Urban Companion for the Hi-Power. Doc Barranti makes some great stuff, and his Urban Companion looks as good as my Nighthawk pistol!"

I own a lot of nice 1911s and many of them have seen use on the Gunsite ranges. But even my Lightweight



Commander is too big and heavy to wear comfortably all day. So, when I'm out and about running errands I'll almost always have my lightly customized S&W M&P Shield in 9mm. I carry the gun in the appendix position using an IWB Concealment Express holster and cover the gun with a button-down shirt. This set up is comfortable enough for all-day carry and I recently drove from Arizona to Idaho wearing it and never once did I feel the need to take it off—even when I changed a flat on the side of the highway.

One thing I've learned from talking to Gunsite's professionals is that I need to add another gun to my concealed carry mix. I own two S&W J-frames—a Model 36 and a newer Model 642, both in .38 Special. I'll likely be ordering Sticky Holsters for those guns and start carrying one of them, along with my S&W M&P Shield, when I make a milk run. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AHOLSTER COMPANY
aholster.com

BARRANTI LEATHER
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CONCEALMENT EXPRESS
concealmentexpress.com

DAVIS LEATHER COMPANY
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DESANTIS HOLSTERS
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A MODEST 9MM

WHY THE SAR9 IS A GREAT BANG FOR YOUR BUCKS

— | BY TODD BURGREN | —

Personal-defense handguns have certain basic tenets that are simple to list, yet complex and somewhat nebulous in achieving. Such things as trigger pull, ergonomics of operating controls, sights, capacity and “carryability” all contribute to the overall feel of a handgun. One thing that is not negotiable is reliability, no matter the operating conditions. Designs that offer this combination will be rewarded with users willing to adopt them, even if supplanting already established model norms. The relatively quick adoption of striker-fired weapons for law enforcement, personal-defense and military use around the world bears out this truth.

SAR USA is the exclusive U.S. importer for all firearms products produced by Sarsilmaz Silah

Sanayi (SAR) of Istanbul, Turkey. Sarsilmaz is one of the largest firearms manufacturers in the world, founded in 1840, and produces numerous types of firearms while also supplying many NATO countries with military armaments. SAR offers its take on many well-known pistol designs with several CZ75-based models, and the SAR9 is the company’s polymer, striker-fired offering.

Successful handgun designs constantly evolve. This is for a variety of reasons, stemming mainly from market and technological impulses/pressures magnified by the ever-changing mission requirements of end users. While examples of striker-fired handguns predate 1982, this date is critical. Though this is an article on the SAR9, there can be little debate that current semi-automatic handguns were redefined by the 9mm Glock 17 in terms of capacity and polymer construction. Polymer-frame, striker-fired handguns are inherently lighter, thinner and simpler due to fewer parts. There are fewer large steel parts needed, thus there are fewer parts to break. Generally speaking, this makes the guns easier to maintain and more reliable.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

The Athlon Rendezvous is an annual event that gathers together dozens of different manufacturers over multiple days allowing for candid give-and-take sessions in an active range setting. At the most recent Idaho Athlon Rendezvous event, I took note that SAR USA was attending. I had been hearing good things about their SAR9 striker-fired pistol and was eager to get more acquainted with it. Sure, there are plenty of polymer, striker-fired pistols on the market, but that does not stop other companies from introducing their take on the style. All of this leads to productive competition, with the consumers benefiting. Choice is what makes the free market economy so tantalizing.



A MODEST 9MM



← The SAR9's slide mass/shape is engineered to aid in increased muzzle control for double taps or longer strings of fire.

PERFORMANCE: SAR9

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Federal 135 Hydra Shok Deep	1,126	2.25
Hornady 147 XTP	915	1.75
Remington 124 Golden Saber	1,192	2.00
Sig Sauer 124 V Crown	1,164	1.50

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) and accuracy in inches for best five-shot group at 25 yards.



← Press checking the SAR9 is made easier thanks to front slide serrations.

“I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE ATHLON RENDEZVOUS TO SEND A COUPLE HUNDRED ROUNDS OF SOMEONE ELSE’S 9MM DOWNRANGE WITH THE SAR9.”

Initial discussion with SAR USA's COO Todd Pearson was quick to establish that the SAR9 is no “knock-off” clone. The SAR9 features fully ambidextrous controls, well-thought-out ergonomics provide for natural and instinctive aiming, and three interchangeable grip panels allow users to find what fits them best. The SAR9 frame is made of high strength, impact resistant fiberglass-reinforced polymers. SAR has conducted extensive testing to make sure the SAR9 can function and endure in any environment, and the SAR9 was adopted by the Turkish military after a 90,000-round comparison test against guns from manufacturers such as Glock, Sig Sauer, FN, Walther and Smith & Wesson.

I took advantage of the Athlon Rendezvous to send a couple hundred rounds of someone else's 9mm downrange with the SAR9. SAR's Pearson just kept handing me magazines; it would have been rude to refuse. I was impressed enough to acquire a SAR9 for more extensive evaluation upon returning from the Rendezvous.

GUN DETAILS

The SAR9 trigger is set at a 6-pound pull weight. And while trigger snobs might wrinkle their nose at this, the SAR9 is a personal-defense/service weapon, not a competition piece. The SAR9 trigger pull is clean with no crunching or grinding, and a graph of the trigger pull would be interesting as there was something positive about it that resists words. Reset length is minimal with positive tactile feel. This translates into a handgun that can send rounds downrange rapidly and accurately.

The SAR9 arrives with two 17-round metal magazines. Well-done front and rear serrations ensure solid purchase when manipulating the slide, and an ambidextrous frame-mounted safety is present. You can use it or flick it down and leave it down, utilizing the striker-fired SAR9 as most other striker-fired pistols—no manual safety manipulation. The presence of a safety on the SAR9 is surely a result of military trials as well as import regulations.

The SAR9's polymer frame features a MIL-STD 1913 accessory rail for lights/lasers, and the barrel/slide locks up tight when in battery. The SAR9 operates via a modified Browning locked-breech, short-recoil method with a single locking lug milled above the barrel's chamber. The SAR9's

slide mass/shape is engineered to aid in increased muzzle control for double taps or longer strings of fire. A low bore axis relative to the shooter's hand allows for a very stable sight picture no matter how many or how rapidly rounds are fired.

RANGE TIME

After returning from initial exposure with the SAR9 at the Athlon Rendezvous, more in depth evaluation at my home range—Echo Valley Training Center (EVTC)—was desired. Two priorities guided my approach to evaluating the SAR9: that reliability was beyond reproach and that established striker-fired handgun standards were upheld. Firing began with basic drills to get acclimated with the SAR9's trigger, sights and overall feel. A multitude of bullet profiles and weights were worked into the mix to ensure nothing adversely interacted with the SAR9. Finicky is not an endearing trait with a personal-defense handgun. A .50-caliber can full of assorted FMJ & JHP loose ammunition ranging from steel and aluminum to brass was used while evaluating the SAR9. Magazines were loaded with these random loads for much of the range experience. One-handed firing of the SAR9, including use of the non-dominant hand, was performed to verify that the SAR9 was not sensitive to grip in terms of reliability. The SAR9 showed it

SPEC BOX

SAR9

CALIBER:	9mm
BARREL:	4.4 inches
OA LENGTH:	7.5 inches
WEIGHT:	27.1 ounces (empty)
GRIPS:	Polymer
SIGHTS:	Three-dot
ACTION:	Striker-fired
FINISH:	Black or stainless
CAPACITY:	17+1
MSRP:	\$449

could digest anything fed to it. Premium self-defense 9mm loads including 115-, 124- and 147-grain JHP from Black Hills, Sig, Federal, Hornady and Winchester were also proofed in the SAR9.


Several magazines' worth of ammunition were spent engaging plate racks and steel targets. Drills quickly moved past stand and deliver to more dynamic scenarios involving movement, magazine reloads and firing from behind cover. Years of training with various entities provided a background of what is acceptable performance for a defensive handgun. The SAR9's simplicity

of operation and consistent trigger pull allowed for rapid engagement of targets. This is further accentuated with well-laid-out ergonomics ensuring that the hand is near optimum grip position as soon as the SAR9 clears the holster.

After initial reliability and accuracy was verified, I began manipulating the SAR9 from the holster. Yaqui slide general-use holsters allowed for the SAR9 to be tested to its max with more of a point-shooting or flash sight picture utilized along with one-handed firing. I found this to be a more realistic way of analyzing what the SAR9 brings to the table for those considering using it in the role it was designed—a handgun for law enforcement, military or citizens concerned with personal defense.

WITCHES BREW

The SAR9 will be recognized as an amalgamation of features found on striker-fired predecessors. Many might ask what the SAR9 offers to shooters compared to other polymer-framed, striker-fired handguns already on the market. The answer lies more with refining the striker-fired concept started more than 35 years ago than anything revolutionary. The SAR9 benefits from lessons learned combined with a manufacturer intimately familiar with quality weapon production.

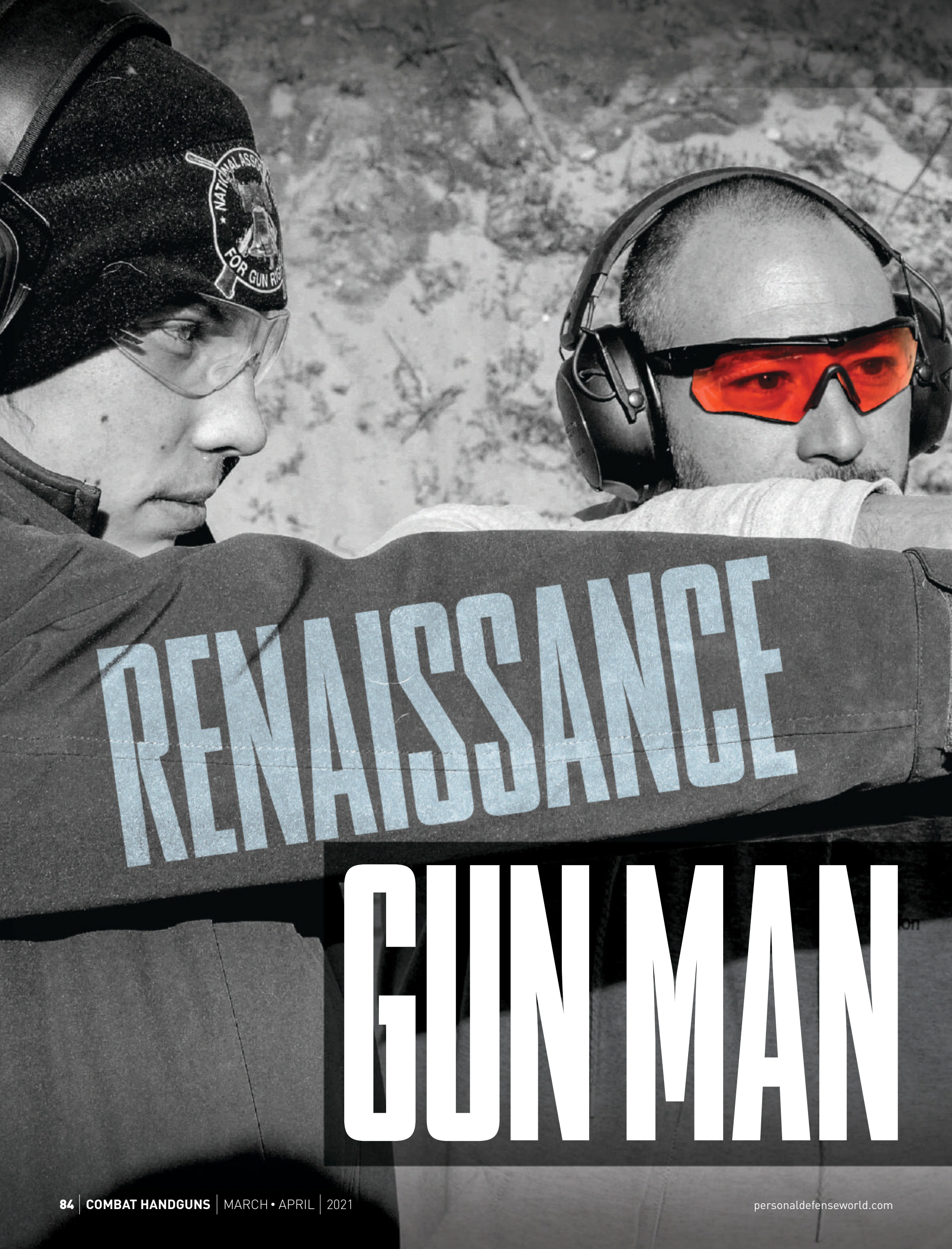
The key point with the SAR9 is that it is eminently adaptable no matter mission or budgetary concerns. Everything from everyday carry, vehicle carry or homeowner nightstand with a light/laser will find the SAR9 worthy of consideration. The buyer is gaining a lot of value for the listed SAR9 purchase price of around \$449. Street prices will be under \$400. The SAR9 is a potent package due to its accuracy, reliability and capacity. For more information, visit sarusa.com. 



Three interchangeable backstraps come stock with the SAR9 and allow the user to obtain an ideal grip on the semi-auto handgun.



Alex Landeen Photo



RENAISSANCE

GUNMAN



FRANK MELLONI SHARES HIS EXPERIENCE ON *TOP SHOT* AND HOW IT LED TO THE CREATION OF RFI

— By *CH* Staff • Samuel Weitzner Photos —

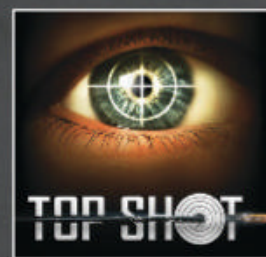
When we think of firearms training, we almost never imagine it occurring in urban or suburban areas like, say, Long Island, New York. But that's exactly where *Top Shot* alum Frank Melloni set his sights in 2012, and today, his company—Renaissance Firearms Instruction—is responsible for training nearly 2,000 students a year in a multitude of skills. We caught up with Frank and spent a day with him on the range so we could ask a few of the deeper questions regarding how he turned 15 minutes of fame into not only a

career but also an outlet for the passions of nearly a dozen of the most brilliant instructors in the firearms industry.

EARLY DAYS

In order to understand Renaissance Firearms Instruction (RFI), we needed to understand the progression of events that put Frank on this path. Prior to *Top Shot*, he was nothing more than an enthusiast with just a few club-level matches under his belt. So, we started by asking him, "What made you try out for *Top Shot*?" Surprisingly, it was done on a whim just three days

before the cutoff. Frank explained that when he received a voicemail from the show producers the very next day, he thought that a friend was messing with him until he realized that nobody had known he'd applied.



"So, obviously, I had to take a shot, and beating out 7,000 other applicants through merit, talent and a shoot-off certainly gave me some bragging rights." Sadly, Frank was the third person eliminated through a highly controversial challenge. Many claimed that freeze-framed footage shows a seventh target was struck but didn't explode, leaving Frank to lose in the tie to a round



A longtime teacher as shown by the one-on-one photo above, Renaissance Firearms Instructor Frank Melloni (above right) goes over the parts of the AR-15 during a class.



needed to know to purchase, sight-in and maintain a rifle.

"I was hooked," he said. "It was instantly successful, and I just wanted to know how we could crank up the volume. Around this time, Groupon was getting rather large, so we created a new course called the two-hour Rifle Shooting and Safety Package and released it in November of the same year. As we all know, the Sandy Hook tragedy took place just a few short weeks later, and the political response generated some interest in introductory firearms training." "Some" was an understatement, as Frank explained that over 1,000 seats were sold in the first month alone.

EXPANSION

"After paying off my mortgage nearly 25 years early, it was clear that this had to keep going," Frank said with a tinge of smugness as he seated a magazine into his Walther PPO. "Rifle marksmanship will always be my specialty, but our students wanted more, and I wanted to give it to them."

As he engaged a plate rack, it was obvious that his pistol shooting had come a long way in the past nine years. "I was disappointed in my handgun performance on the show, so I spent several years with champion pistol shooters and developed myself. My early flaws as a shooter became my greatest asset as an instructor because I can teach shooter error and correction from a position of experience."

In the following years, Frank would become certified to teach not only pistol courses but shotgun courses and even

count. From there, Frank continued to explain: "After the show, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in the firearms industry, but I just didn't know where to start. Finally, I decided to get an instructor credential and hit the SHOT Show floor."

After Frank spent more than \$350 to get that credential and \$1,000 for the week in Las Vegas chasing a dream, he quickly realized that it would be foolish not to actually earn money instructing. "Honestly, I wasn't sure how I felt about teaching," he explained as he started to unpack his range bag. "When I got that first call, I set up the appointment and proceeded to teach my first client introductory rifle marksmanship. Eddie Gonzales was his name," he recalled with a smile. It was obvious that after more than 20,000 students, Frank still remembered every detail of that first two-hour session. "I learned a lot about myself that day," Frank continued. "Although that basement range was barely lit and poorly ventilated, it was the first time in my life

that I actually enjoyed going to work. I also learned that I was pretty good at spotting shooter error and explaining how to correct it. Eddie followed up with me for about three more lessons and eventually got his own rifles."

BIRTH OF A COMPANY

Our next question was, "So, RFI started with just one guy doing one-on-one lessons?" Frank just nodded, so we continued, "Well then, how did you get to training 2,000 students a year?"

"Well, it started with the reoccurring request to hold a full-day course," Frank explained while donning his eye and ear protection. "My rifle instructor credential allowed me to hold the NRA Basic Rifle course, so I scheduled one for June of 2012 and it filled to capacity nearly instantly." As Frank started filling magazines, he explained the rush he felt engaging his first class of 16 students and the feeling of pride that overcame him as he taught them everything they

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reloading, too. “It’s a labor of love, if you ask me. Most instructors don’t get involved with teaching reloading because it requires a large gear investment, a tremendous knowledge base and a lot of time in front of the classroom.” However, through his passion and the sponsorship of companies such as Hornady, RCBS and Lyman, RFI is able to offer an expert-run reloading course from someone who wants to teach it.

While reholstering his pistol, Frank continued, “Sure, reloading is in the top five courses that I love to teach, but at the number-one spot sits our Historic Military Firearms Shoot. Here we take students through an interactive history lesson where they will fire the most influential battle rifles of the last 100 years.

This one would become our second Groupon offering, and we would teach more than 6,000 students in 2013.” Frank went on to state that although their success fills him with pride, nothing was more flattering than holding a private Historic Shoot for a terminally ill client who said that a second run of it was on his bucket list. “That was an amazing feeling—a downright honor, really,” he said, obviously moved as he recounted the story. “His days were numbered, and he wanted to spend one of them with us. God, what a compliment.”

MEET THE SPECIALISTS

Nothing sets RFI apart like the employment of specialists to teach each course. Barbara is always present in the

Advanced Rifle Positions and Shotgun courses, as a childhood spent in rural Indiana lent itself to many field shooting opportunities. RFI’s Defensive Shooting courses are led by Marine combat veterans Sean and Matthew, as the only way to accurately understand what happens in a gunfight is to live through a handful of them firsthand. David and Christopher have a lot of experience working with the Boy Scouts and younger shooters and do amazing work in the courses that generate interest from this age group.

Lastly, Ron, Jeromy, Mat, Keith, Joe and Andrew either live on or are within a stone’s throw from a 1,000-yard range, and I can’t think of a group better qualified to teach the intricate skillset required to connect this far out. “Having people

“OUR CREW ISN’T QUALIFIED TO TEACH WHAT THEY DO BECAUSE THEY READ A WHOLE LOT ABOUT THE SUBJECT OR TOOK A WEEKEND INSTRUCTOR COURSE. THEY TEACH IT SO EASILY BECAUSE THEY LIVE IT DAY-TO-DAY.”





Students and staff of the very first Long Range Shooting Course. They endured extreme heat, humidity and even an unexpected thunderstorm. Notice only a 2:1 ratio of students to instructors.

who are actively engaged in what they teach is critical.” Frank boasts as he resumes his string of fire, “Our crew isn’t qualified to teach what they do because they read a whole lot about the subject or took a weekend instructor course. They teach it so easily because they live it day-to-day.”

IS THIS LEGAL IN NEW YORK?

As we know, New York isn’t the most favorable environment for the firearms industry, but Frank gets pretty irked when the suggestion of leaving is brought up. He’s usually quick to remind those that the founding fathers didn’t leave when they met adversity, and he also believes that the efforts of RFI are making a difference, as the instructors are spreading positive gun culture while others are running to sanctuary.

“The laws in New York are tough but can be navigated around,” Frank began to explain. “For instance, you cannot handle (touch) a handgun without going through the process of obtaining a New York State pistol permit. However, once you receive that permit, you are at a minimum allowed to carry to and from the range and make a number of approved stops, such as going out to dinner.” This keeps concealed-carry training alive and well in the state.

Conversely, while this law restricts adults, it exempts children aged 14 to 21, so RFI routinely holds pistol courses for homeschool groups and youth who


are interested in competition. Even so, Frank shook his head as he went on to tell the tale of having to deny pistol training to a 22-year-old active Army soldier and more than one police cadet. “I don’t know who they think they’re helping,” he said in dismay. “In what world are we safer by limiting the firearms that even individuals with these titles can handle, let alone own?”

PACKING UP

While we broke down our target stands, we asked Frank what he loved most about instructing and running his own company. Unsurprisingly, his answers centered on the people that he works with. “I find different types of reward in the many different types of clientele that we train. Knowing I’ve just helped a police officer or armed service member perfect a skill that they may need one day to save their life has a deep sense of accomplishment to it. However, seeing a new shooter experience their first success is an indescribable feeling. In essence, it’s the closest I can ever get to re-experiencing my own. Even better than that is introducing a new instructor to this phenomenon and showing them that they can relive their first bullseyes or first 1,000-yard hits over again and again.”

As we thanked Frank for his time, we were very happy to hear that RFI carries its message to the masses via its YouTube channel as well as several publications that many of its instructors

write for. Frank also keeps in touch with many of the *Top Shot* alumni; they even get together to teach classes once in a while. It also turns out that Frank handles nearly all of the one-on-one instruction himself. He says that he just enjoys it too much to let it go, and it helps him get out of the office and stay connected with new shooters. The last question before we parted ways with Frank was what he thought the secret to RFI’s success was.

In typical New York fashion, he answered with a question. As he closed his trunk, Frank asked right back, “Do you know what makes Sierra so good? They do one thing and one thing only: make bullets. Renaissance is dedicated to firearms instruction and nothing more. Many instruction companies are just side components of a gun store. In order to satisfy the note on the attached shooting range, they have to sell guns, and it quickly becomes more about selling guns and less about offering quality instruction. That’s the secret to our success: commitment. Compassion goes a long way, too. No matter how deep I’ve gotten into this, I’ve never lost sight of what it was like to be a new shooter—what information is confusing, what information is often mistaken and, most of all, what is fun! If you never allow yourself to forget what firing that first shot was like, you will always be relatable to your students.” For more information, visit renaissancefirearmsinstruction.com. 



.40 S&W STEALS

**THE GOOD OL' "FORTY"
ISN'T DEAD YET, AND BARGAIN
PISTOLS AROUND**



It took me quite a while to warm up to the .40 S&W cartridge when it was introduced. I basically ignored it until I was issued a .40 pistol by my agency. As an experienced shooter, I wasn't intimidated by the added recoil and muzzle flip that it displayed compared to the 9mm, but that didn't hold true for everyone. Lots of qualification scores went down, and remedial training went up. One officer who couldn't qualify became an ex-officer. As bullet technology improved, performance differences between the .40 and the 9mm narrowed, and many agencies, beginning with the FBI, moved back to the 9mm. Does that make the .40 S&W a bad cartridge? No, but it's not for everyone. Given its decline in law enforcement (LE) use and overall popularity, prices for guns and ammo have dropped, so "budget .40s" are out there waiting for consumers. This is not a side-by-side comparison, but an examination of the pluses and minuses each pistol individually possesses.

— By William Bell • Jordan Bell Photos —



The SR40c is well appointed with bilateral safeties and magazine releases, as well as a safe-action type trigger.

RUGER SR40C

This first pistol is almost a case in point. When I received the test gun late in 2018, it was still in the catalog. Now in 2019, it isn't. However, it's still out there in substantial numbers, and "street prices" are running about \$200 below the MSRP of \$525. The "c" is a compact version of the SR40, which was hailed as one of the slimmest and most ergonomic of service-size .40 pistols. It has a high-performance, glass-filled, black nylon frame, with a short trigger reach, ambidextrous controls (sans the slide stop) and a rubber overmolded reversible backstrap, giving you the option of a flat or arched rear surface. My duo-tone pistol has a brushed stainless steel slide and 3.5-inch barrel. The sights are three-dot with a sloping blade in front and an elevation-adjustable rear. Both sights are affixed in dovetails and can be moved laterally for windage. On top of the slide is a very prominent loaded chamber indicator. Serrations are both up front and in back, and the ejection port is quite generous in size, as is the cartridge extractor. This is a striker-fired pistol, with no second-pull capability. Unlike many compact auto-loaders it does have a manual safety, which cannot be used

unless the pistol is "cocked." The grip portion of the frame is checkered on the sides and front, while the backstrap is serrated. The dust cover has an integral rail. Two magazines are provided with the SR40c: a nine-rounder with a finger-rest baseplate and a 15-rounder furnished with a grip extension sleeve.



The largest of the three pistols, the SDV40 VE has very low-profile controls, including the takedown latch, magazine catch and slide stop.

SMITH & WESSON SD40 VE

One of the most economical semi-autos made by S&W, the SR40 VE has an MSRP of \$389 and street pricing as low as \$299. An apparent offspring of the Sigma pistol introduced in 1994, the SD40 VE is striker-fired, with a Self Defense Trigger (SDT) for a consistent pull and no manual safety. It's a medium-sized pistol with a 4-inch barrel and 7.2-inch overall length, but I found it was still fairly concealable. It has a 14+1 capacity, given its rather long double-stacked magazine. Two magazines are provided. The slide is satin-finished stainless steel, with wide front and rear serrations and stylish sculpting on the sides. A D-shaped cavity in the rear of the barrel serves as a loaded chamber indicator, and the gun has a huge ejection port. The three-dot sights are fixed, but mounted in dovetails so they can be moved laterally. The black polymer frame and grip give the SR40 VE a duo-tone look. Just above the front portion of the triggerguard are textured, dished-out ovals where the trigger finger can rest. An accessory rail is built into the dust cover. Controls consist of a slide-stop latch and magazine catch on the left side only. The sides of the grip frame are textured, with

SPEC BOX

»»»»»»»» RUGER SR40c S&W SD40 VE TAURUS G2C

CALIBER:	.40 S&W	.40 S&W	.40 S&W
BARREL:	3.50 inches	4.00 inches	3.20 inches
OA LENGTH:	6.85 inches	7.20 inches	6.30 inches
WEIGHT:	23.4 ounces (empty)	22.4 ounces (empty)	22.0 ounces (empty)
GRIPS:	Black glass-filled nylon	Black polymer	Black polymer
SIGHTS:	3-dot, rear adjustable	3-dot fixed	3-dot rear adjustable
ACTION:	Striker-fired	Striker-fired	Striker-fired
FINISH:	Stainless slide	Stainless slide	Matte black
CAPACITY:	9+1/15+1	14+1	10+1
MSRP:	\$525 (Street: \$305)	\$389 (Street: \$299)	\$317 (Street: \$253)

front- and backstrap areas checkered. Ergonomically, the grip felt good in my hand, with the front somewhat rounded lengthwise and the rear slightly arched.

TAURUS G2C

Smaller than the previous two pistols, the G2C was just recently introduced in the shorty 10mm cartridge. Starting with its most interesting feature, the striker-fired pistol has a safe-action-type trigger with “restrike” capability. In other words, if the trigger is pulled on a loaded chamber and the round doesn’t go off,

you can pull the trigger again. This makes for a very interesting trigger pull feel and audible click as the trigger is pressed to the rear for the first shot. It has the feel of a trigger on toy cap guns I used to play with as a kid, but don’t take this as a put-down. My test pistol had a flat black carbon steel slide and black polymer frame and grip. The smallest of the three test guns, its barrel is 3.2 inches long, and the overall length is only 6.3 inches. On the topside, the slide has three-dot sights, the front fixed, while the rear is fully adjustable, affixed in a dovetail.



UNCLE MIKE'S SUPER BELT SLIDE HOLSTER

FOBUS PADDLE-BACK MAG POUCH



At the rear of the ejection port is a loaded chamber indicator. Serrations are located on the rear of the slide, while the front portion is fluted. A rail is built into the dust cover of the frame, as are oval finger locators. Controls are on the left side and include a slide-stop latch, thumb safety and magazine catch. The grip portion of the frame has textured panels all around, and the base of the 10-round magazine has a finger rest. Two identical blue steel magazines are provided.

AMMO SELECTION

Right now (near 2020 Halloween), there’s a lot of .40 S&W ammo still out there. Many LE agencies haven’t abandoned it yet, nor have lots of armed citizens. Searching the Internet, I find most of the practice cartridges with full metal jacket (FMJ) bullets run 18.3 to 23.2 cents per round. Defense ammo with JHP and other bullet designs can generally be had for around \$20 for a 20- or 25-round box. To shoot in my “budget .40” pistols, I chose five different brands of jacketed hollow-point (JHP) type cartridges. From Black Hills, I obtained their factory new 140-grain Barnes TAC-XP hollow-point cartridges. DoubleTap provided their heavy-duty 200-grain JHP load. Hornady sent their Critical Defense cartridges, which feature a 175-grain FlexLock bullet with a red synthetic “plug” in the hollow nose cavity that makes the bullet “barrier blind” yet allows expansion. Remington supplied their Golden Saber Black Belt 180-grain brass-jacketed HP that has the Mechani-Lokt Belt to secure the lead core within the bullet jacket. Finally, from Speer came their LE G2 cartridges that feature their 180-grain Gold Dot HP, which also has a capped nose cavity.

CARRYING OPTIONS

I went through my holster and accoutrements collection to search for the elusive holster that would satisfactorily fit all three of my “budget .40” handguns. A holster that was inexpensive, would fit well enough to secure the guns, yet allow a smooth presentation and reholstering. As the goal was to find a rig with concealed carry applications, I didn’t necessarily want a scabbard with any kind

.40 S&W STEALS



→ The huge loaded chamber indicator on the SR40C slide warrants very high-sitting front and rear sights.



← Best in overall handling, the SDV40 VE had great ergonomics, and the sights were very easy to acquire.

PERFORMANCE:

	RUGER SR40c		S&W SD40 VE		TAURUS G2C	
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY	VELOCITY	ACCURACY	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 140 TAC-XP	1,071	2.19	1,081	2.79	1,057	2.22
DoubleTap 200 JHP	945	2.23	1,004	2.59	971	2.48
Hornady CD 175 Flexlock	928	2.91	952	2.77	925	2.51
Remington BB 180 GSHP	909	2.36	955	2.76	916	1.91
Speer LE G2 180 GDHP	907	2.81	926	2.61	901	2.01



Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) and accuracy in inches for best five-shot group from 15 yards.

of retention safety strap or other such device, just a high-ride, open-top shuck. The holster that ended up fulfilling these requirements was a well-used Uncle Mike's Super Belt Slide in black nylon. I also wanted a single magazine pouch that would work with all the various magazines, and the one I picked was a paddle-back, black synthetic belt model from Fobus. It has a friction retention device inside that provided a secure hold for all the magazines. These were all threaded onto a Nexbelt "no holes" black ballistic nylon, 1.25-inch-wide tactical belt.

DOWNRANGE

Range day started out with firing all the test loads through the three test pistols to get velocity readings. Given the barrel lengths and bullet weights, I wasn't expecting too many four-figure measurements. Naturally, the 4-inch barrel of the S&W pistol got the high marks.

Accuracy potential was evaluated by shooting three five-shot groups at 15 yards using the three "budget .40" pistols. This distance was chosen due to barrel length, trigger action and sight considerations. A sandbag rest was used on a solid bench, and yours truly did all the shooting, my 64-year-old eyes assisted by some bifocal shooting glasses. Shots were fired one after the other, with no long waits between shots, for what I consider a more realistic assessment. The best groups and even average groups were pretty darn good, with none making it over the 3-inch line. Point of aim/point of impact was adjusted for each gun considering the barrel length, sights and bullet weight.

All three test guns were shot using a 30-round combat qualification course that I once used as a federal LEO. All five of the .40 S&W test cartridges were randomly mixed in the magazines. The

pistols were all shot until empty and a magazine change was required. To keep old habits fresh, between stages or before the guns were reholstered, I did a 360-degree threat assessment, working the gun slowly back into the holster.

Before beginning, I added the Uncle Mike's holster and Fobus mag pouch onto my Nexbelt tactical belt. The shooting always commenced after the gun was presented from the holster. As with the accuracy testing, I basically shot the guns in alphabetical order. Shooting began at 3 yards, single-hand-only, first right, then left, point-shoulder shooting, six rounds with each hand. Moving back to 7 yards, a series of three double-taps were fired, using the sights and a two-handed hold. Also at 7 yards, I shot a failure drill: two shots center mass and one to the head. This was done twice. At 15 yards, I shot behind a barricade, two shots left side standing, two shots



← The best feature of the Taurus was the trigger. Although it had a “sloppy” feel, it proved to be very accurate indeed.



right side standing and two shots right side kneeling.

THE NITTY GRITTY

The Ruger SR40c scored 282/300 (4Xs) points, with most of the shots going into the upper region of the scoring rings and to the right. This was pretty much the same point of aim/impact as when shooting for accuracy. The ergonomics on this pistol are very good, and the shot grouping on the B-27 target was the smallest of the three guns. It handled the recoil and muzzle flip well. The sights came up on target fast and were easy to see during bullseye-type shooting. There were zero malfunctions, but the full-sized magazine with the grip extension sleeve sometimes wanted to catch on the heel of my shooting hand when ejecting the mag. The slide on this gun just looks oversized, and it's actually the heaviest of the three pistols. The shark fin-shaped front sight is high, perhaps so the shooter can see over the humongous loaded chamber indicator. The rear sight is also too high and too big, in my opinion. I'd rather have more low-profile, fixed sights. I never used the tiny manual safety, preferring to forget it was there.

The S&W SD40 VE came up with 284/300 (6Xs) points on the B-27 target. This gun, of course, had the longest barrel, sighting radius and grip frame. The shots were well dispersed in the central area of the target, but both head

shots were low and to the left, and one center-mass shot landed at 7 o'clock in the 8-ring. The S&W tended to shoot slightly left of center during the accuracy test, but elevation was okay. The S&W was not the accuracy winner of the three guns, and the reason was the SDT trigger. The pull was consistently heavy, and at times I wondered when the sear was going to release. This was not so noticeable when combat shooting. The gun had great, easy-to-see sights, had zero malfunctions during the entire test and dropped the empty magazines just fine. The few controls were easy to manipulate. Its size and grip configuration guaranteed that it was most controllable in rapid-fire shooting. Its about the same size as the Glock 19/23, which I have never found difficult to carry and conceal.

The **Taurus G2C** won the B-27 shooting contest with 290/300 (12Xs) points. None of the shots escaped out into the 8-ring; the 9s and 10/Xs were all well centered. The Taurus has a slight leg up on the other two .40s in the accuracy department, despite its 3.2-inch barrel and shorter sighting radius. I mentioned the strange two-stage, restrike trigger earlier. But when it came down to brass tacks, it really didn't hamper

my shooting. Unfortunately, the not-so-liked aspects of this pistol included some feed ramp jams during the accuracy test. However, it was only with one brand of cartridges, which is an easy fix. The front sight is a Bill Bell no-no: plastic. The rear sight had tiny white dots, and I'd trade the adjustment feature for something fixed, maybe Novak-style. I found the magazine catch too small for positive manipulation, translating into the magazine not always dropping out when it was pressed. It was the only one of the three pistols that wouldn't allow the slide to come forward with an empty magazine in place. Like the Ruger, the Taurus had a thumb safety, which I also ignored, but it was bigger and easier to flip on and off.

So, there you have it, gentle readers: three of the most economically priced handguns on today's market, in the effective but increasingly unpopular .40 S&W cartridge. The results are what they are, with each handgun showing certain strengths and weaknesses. Any will serve as a good everyday carry (EDC) pistol. You just have to pick the combination of size, weight and configuration that is most compatible with your individual wants and needs. **GD**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

RUGER FIREARMS
ruger.com

SMITH & WESSON
smith-wesson.com

TAURUS USA
taurususa.com

UNCLE MIKE'S
unclemikes.com

NEXBELT
nexusbelt.com

FOBUSHOLSTERS
fobusholster.com

LOOSE ROUNDS

STRAIGHT TALK ON CURRENT EVENTS, POLITICS AND MORE



PA GUN FIGHT

How crazy would it be if you were able to serve in the U.S. military and carry a gun all over the world at 18 years of age, but were forbidden by the law in your state to vote until you were 21? That'd be crazy, right?

Same goes for state laws that prevent 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds from carrying firearms, and three Pennsylvanians are doing something about it. With help from the Second Amendment Foundation and the Firearms Policy Coalition, Madison Lara, Logan Miller and Sophia Knepley have filed a lawsuit against the state seeking for statutes preventing those under 21 from obtaining a license to carry a firearm be declared unconstitutional.

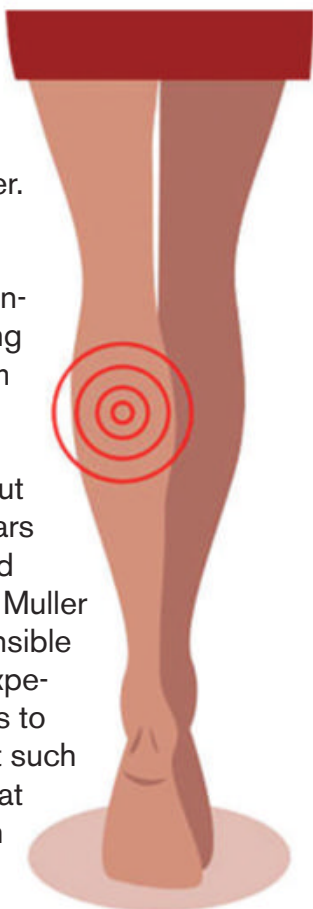
SAF Executive Vice President Alan Gottlieb put it best when he said, "Young adults can join the military, where they might be assigned to carry firearms all over the world. They can get married, start businesses, enter into contracts and yet they are not considered mature enough to exercise their Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. That's nonsense."

IN THE LEG

No matter who won the November election, hopefully we'll never again hear Joe Biden utter the words that police officers should shoot armed, violent attackers "in the leg."

Biden, who quietly supported the "defund police" movement during the campaign, made the statement twice during the weeks leading up to the election, causing law enforcement and self-defense experts to cringe.

One such was Dianna Muller, head of the D.C. Project and a retired Tulsa police officer. "Biden has had a history of saying things that are contrary to any training I've received, from the first time my father started talking to me about firearms to 22 years of police work and firearms training," Muller said. "It's irresponsible for untrained, inexperienced politicians to give advice about such a serious topic that has life and death consequences."



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NATIONAL RECIPROCITY?



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Speaking of concealed carry, President Donald Trump said just

three weeks before the November election that he would sign a national concealed carry reciprocity bill if one ever reached his desk.

While you are reading this column well after the election, at this writing the results were still up in the air. If Trump won, it's time to hold pro-gun legislators' feet to the fire and demand they pass a reciprocity bill during Trump's second term. If Biden won, the fight for national reciprocity will be at least four more years down the road as gun-rights activists gird for a first term of anti-gun legislation like we've never seen before.

BESPOKEN SPIRITS

For all you custom whiskey fanciers who believe that your favorite spirit must be aged just the exact right amount of

years in a very particular oak barrel, the time's might be changing.

The owners of a new California startup called Bespoken Spirits say they can use their proprietary technology to extract the key elements of the barrel that enhance aroma, color and taste in a matter of days, not years. The process also enables them to customize different flavor profiles for their whiskeys.

Whether true or not, some people are believers, as baseball legend Derek Jeter and semiconductor mogul T.J. Rodgers recently dumped \$2.6 million in seed funding into the venture.



IOS

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INTERCHANGEABLE OPTIC SYSTEM

The IOS is the most adaptable optic system on the market today. Switch from iron sights to a red dot optic in less than 30 seconds. With the dovetail cut in the slide, each plate will return to zero every time, removing the need to sight your pistol back in again. The Nighthawk Custom IOS is everything you want in an optic solution.



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