



.480 Ruger, Why?

Q: Over the years I have read your work on the big .475 revolvers and really wanted one. I eagerly awaited the release of the new .480 Ruger. At last there was going to be an affordable, big-bore hunting revolver. Then, to my great disappointment, I realized it would only be available in the huge, and to me ugly, Super Redhawk.

My question is, why didn't Ruger make a gun like we want? That is a five-shot Bisley like you guys have been using for years. At least according to you, they are very strong, powerful, easy on the hand and accurate. It seems strange that Ruger would not pay attention to the work of oth-

ers before they made a gun. Don't you have any influence?!?

— P.L., Texas

A: Your question is one asked by many. I do not have an absolute answer, but there are a few reasons, in my opinion, why Ruger chambered the “heavy” calibers only in its Super Redhawk and not the fine Bisley. At very least we share the same opinion of the Super Redhawk.

First is one of skill, money, effort and mechanics. Converting an existing Bisley into a fine five-shot revolver for the .475 cartridge requires a skilled pistolsmith. The “window” opening in the frame where the cylinder goes is a bit too small. It must be enlarged, and at times the metal in the bottom becomes very or

even too thin to be successful. Yes, Ruger could make the frame just a little larger, but that would require new moulds and a basic re-engineering of the frame. This would be expensive and take much effort. The easy way out was to use the big Super Redhawk and hope we would buy them.

I am surprised they stuck with a six-shot cylinder. I suppose I am used to the massive walls of the five-shot cylinders, but the contrast makes the webs (between the chambers) in the six-shot .480 cylinder appear very thin to my eyes. I am sure Ruger engineered it carefully, but I like big meat in a big gun.

An alternative to the Super Redhawk would have been to make a five-shot Redhawk. This is again proven technology that is relatively simple to complete and results in a far more pleasing revolver, of more normal proportions.

By the way, the design and performance of the Hornady .480 ammunition seems quite good. To me it looks as if the .480 can essentially duplicate the power of the existing .475 that is based on the .45-70 case.

When you ask if I have any influence at Ruger, the answer is no. They have never asked my opinion on this or any other project, at least not since the great loss of Tom Ruger. One thing you should realize about big companies is there is a syndrome called “not invented here.” They take great proprietary pride in coming up with their own ideas. To use something like the five-shot Bisley, or even the five-shot Redhawk, would be clearly following the blueprint of outside gunsmiths and shooters. Whether or not the outsiders had good ideas that worked does not matter. A big company often must use only its own plans.

So in a nutshell there it is. Perhaps if sales are slow and knowledgeable shooters like you continue to request

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the “real thing,” one day Ruger will turn out our dream revolver. Until then, custom makers will remain the source of highly refined, big-bore hunting revolvers.

Ah, there is another alternative. This will not get you a big single action, but it does result in a refined, double-action big bore. The Taurus Raging Bull is available in both .454 and .480 caliber. They feature heavy, ribbed 5-, 6½- and 8-inch barrels and massive five-shot cylinders. The retail price is about \$850. Not a bad way to go!
