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Lovin' the LDA

I read with interest Bob Campbell's piece on the ParaOrd LDA. After I tried the action on one at an NRA annual exhibit years ago, I bought one as soon as I got home. Mine is the full-size 7.45. Except for the trigger, it looks like a 1911, right down to the for-cosmetic-purposes-only spurred hammer. I don't know why the LDA didn't take off. I love it. If you find one and pull the trigger, I bet you'll buy it.

JOHN SCHROEDER, WISCONSIN

Another Big-Person Tip

There was one item missing from the article on carry for large folks (April/May): suspenders. In my advancing age I have taken on an additional 20 pounds that makes it difficult to keep a pair of pants on my hips. The weight of a gun and spare magazines only adds to this problem. I have found suspenders that attach to the belt to be a good solution. I don't have to cinch my belt as tight, and my pants stay in place.

ERNIE GARLAND, FLORIDA

Choose Your Critter

I suppose it's true that in the animal kingdom mongooses do eat certain types of snakes. But be assured that in the world of revolvers, I'll match my Colt Python against the Korth Mongoose any day of the week! At less than half the price, the Python looks twice as good and shoots just as accurately.

HARVEY MAIZELS



Keep those letters coming! Our contact information is at right. And since we and your fellow readers love to know where you're writing from, please include your state or foreign country and state/province.

Not Exactly

I enjoyed J. Scott Rupp's review of the Ruger GP100 .22 (February/March), as it was most thorough. However, he writes "The fluted cylinder showed .008 inch of end shake, which is good..." On any high-end, well-built revolver, .008 of end shake would certainly not pass final inspection. Now, an .008 barrel/cylinder gap would be acceptable.



The second discrepancy is where he refers to Ruger's cylinder-locking mechanism as "Triple Lock." A "triple lock" system had been used on early S&W double-action revolvers, but Rugers don't have a locking device at the front of the ejector rod. Otherwise the article did a good job of covering every aspect of a truly fine gun.

DAVE SMITH, ARIZONA

Mr. Smith: You are correct. It was the cylinder gap that was .008. I neglected to finish the calculation. As to the cylinder lockup, "Triple Lock" should have been lower-cased or been expressed "triple-locking cylinder," but Ruger does indeed describe its design as such.—Scott.

Industry Notes

WALTHER'S PDP Compact and PDP F-Series have been chosen as official duty pistols for the Pennsylvania State Police. According to the company, the PDPs were selected not just for their features but also for the "increased proficiency" they deliver for officers. The guns will be direct-milled for the **AIMPOINT** ACRO P-2 red dot.

SIG SAUER is expanding its professional program, which offers discounts to qualifying military, retired military, law enforcement and security professionals. Now veterans are eligible as well, and SIG is increasing the product choices. For more info, visit SIGSAUER.COM/SIG-PROFESSIONAL-PROGRAM.

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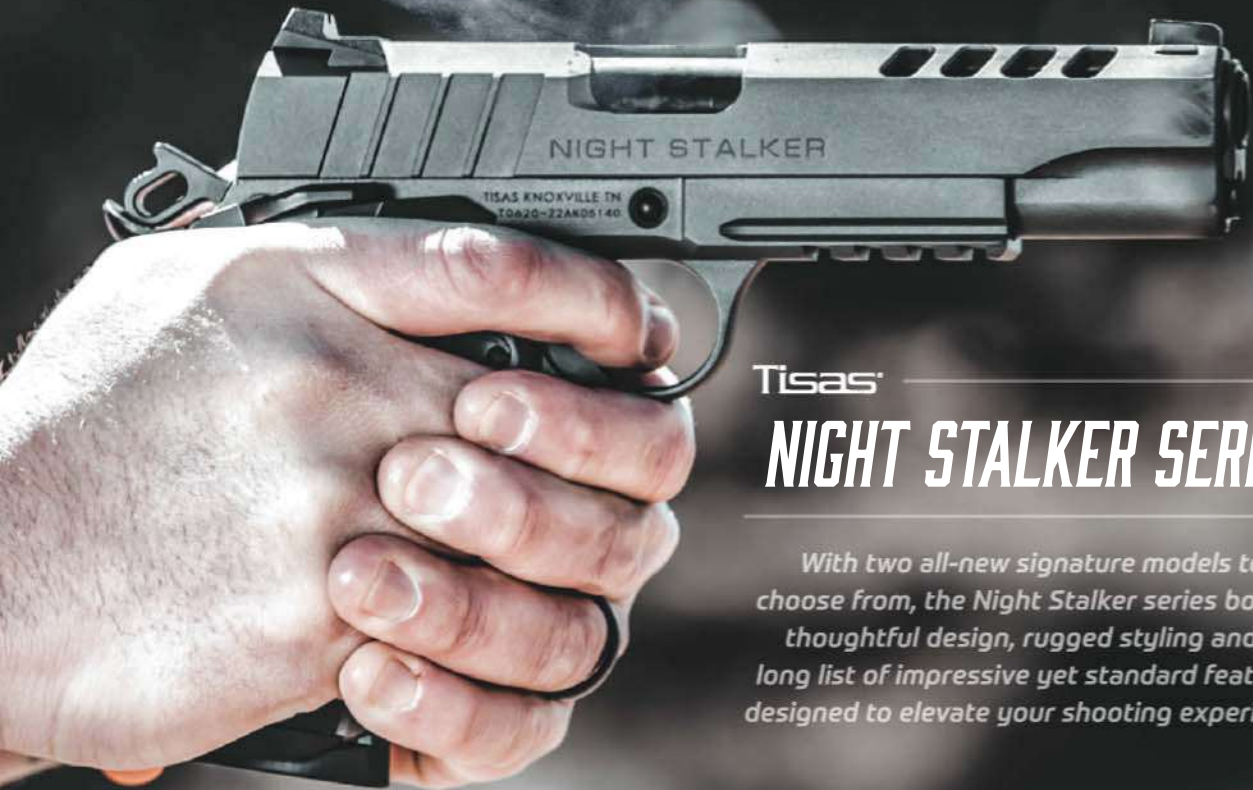
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GOING FOR THE GOLD

CHECKING OUT FEDERAL'S NEW GOLD MEDAL ACTION PISTOL.

By J. Scott Rupp

FEDERAL IS COMMITTED TO THE ACTION-pistol community, and for proof of that you don't have to look any further than the new Gold Medal Action Pistol offering. Available in 9mm and .40 S&W, it's the second action-pistol-specific load from Federal, following by several years the groundbreaking Syntech Action Pistol ammo.

Federal's entire Gold Medal line includes rifle and shotgun ammunition as well as pistol. At least on the pistol side, the ammo is loaded on the same production line as the company's standard fare. So what's the difference?

I checked with product development engineer Casey Reed—a

top-flight action-pistol shooter in his own right—and he said that while the machinery is the same, the specifications are different. Simply put, Gold Medal Action Pistol is loaded to the tightest accuracy specification requirement the company tests for in any of its handgun ammo.

Accuracy is always important, but unlike in Bullseye competition, action-pistol shooters need more than just accuracy. In both U.S. Practical Shooting Association (USPSA) and International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA) matches, ammunition has to meet a certain Power Factor—bullet weight in grains multiplied by velocity, with the zeroes at the end dropped off for simplicity.

Without going into the weeds on Power Factor, the importance of this comes down to recoil. Since speed is a big aspect of action pistol, Power Factor thresholds keep competitors on a level playing field—preventing shooters from using “poofy” loads that let them shoot super fast.

Gold Medal Action Pistol, like Syntech Action Pistol, is USPSA certified. This means that while a competitor's ammo will still be tested with a chronograph, if Gold Medal should come up short, that competitor can't be disqualified—and a little peace of mind going into a big match never hurts.

This kind of velocity control doesn't happen by accident.

“The propellant was chosen with a priority to hit target velocities with the Gold Medal projectile, with an added benefit of being a clean-burning powder,” Reed said. “The cleanliness is especially important to shooters who shoot high volumes.”

The Gold Medal bullet is a fully encapsulated full metal jacket, which means no exposed lead at the base. That, along with the Catalyst lead-free primer, makes it cleaner in the gun and an option at indoor ranges that have clean-ammo requirements.

Instead of the usual rounded nose, the Gold Medal Action Pistol bullet has a flat meplat. On many action-pistol stages, shooters encounter reactive targets. There’s nothing worse than knowing you hit one of these steel plates and seeing it still standing. The flat meplat on this bullet increases your knock-down potential.

I wasn’t able to shoot a match with the ammo to test that aspect specifically, but it did smack my plate-rack plates with authority. In doing so, I also found the Gold Medal to be soft-shooting, which is a big help in such competitions, and completely reliable.

For accuracy, I benched it through my Smith & Wesson M&P9 Competition with iron sights and Walther Q5 Match Steel Frame with the Trijicon RCR enclosed red dot. The 25-yard results in the accompanying chart are solid and a cut above how these pistols typically perform.

It’s interesting to note the difference in velocity between the two five-inch barrels. Rifle shooters like to talk about fast barrels versus slow barrels, and here’s your evidence that this exists in handguns as well—and can influence Power



A The bullet in Gold Medal Action Pistol (L.) has a flat meplat for better knockdown on reactive steel targets than a standard full metal jacket. The load features the high-performance Catalyst lead-free primer and specially formulated propellant, and it’s held to Federal’s tightest accuracy specs.

PERFORMANCE RESULTS | FEDERAL GOLD MEDAL ACTION PISTOL

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)	Power Factor
Smith & Wesson M&P9 Competitor					
FEFMJ	147	936	11	2.7	138
Walther Q5 Match Steel Frame					
FEFMJ	147	903	12	2.0	133

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest. Walther fired with Trijicon RCR red dot; Smith & Wesson fired with open sights. Velocities are averages of 20 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. Temperature: 30 degrees. Abbreviation: FEFMJ, fully encapsulated full metal jacket

Factor for a particular gun/load combination.


USPSA and IDPA handle Power Factor a little differently. USPSA does it as Minor and Major, with scoring differences between the two classifications. IDPA has Power Factor requirements for specific gun classes. But either way, for 9mm you’re looking at a Power Factor of 125, and both loads made that with ease in these guns.

The .40 S&W load is intended for USPSA’s Limited and Limited 10 division, and it’s loaded to Major.

For guys and gals who shoot a lot, price is always a consideration. The 9mm has a suggested retail price of \$31 per box of 50; the .40’s suggested retail is \$43.

“It has the tightest specs, and therefore will command the highest price among our handgun target loads,” Reed said, adding that it’s more attractively priced than some competitors’ match-grade ammo.

“We were conscious of the greater consumption in a sport like action pistol compared to something like Bullseye, which our old Gold Medal .45 and .38 loads were designed for,” he said. “As such, the premium over conventional loads is not quite as significant as those traditional Gold Medal products.”

I’ll let you go down the price comparison rabbit hole, but the bottom line is that Gold Medal Action Pistol might just be the ammo to help you bring home the gold. 

OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB CAMPBELL

ASTRA CUB

AS I LOOK OVER THE GREAT GUNS OF THE past, I realize that the majority of them have always been cheap. Some are as well made as possible for the price point; others are ironmongery. A very few, such as the Astra Cub—also known as the Astra 2000—are well made of good material but not top tier by any means.

When I first became interested in handguns, the Astra Cub was a pistol everyone seemed to own. It is a tiny blowback-operated single action, measuring 4.4 inches long with a 2.2-inch barrel. While tiny, the pistol weighs a sturdy 13 ounces due to its all-steel construction. A single-column magazine holds six .22 Short cartridges.

The Cub was manufactured from 1954 to 1998 but became scarce here after the 1968 Gun Control Act. The pistol was also offered by Colt as the Colt Junior with a nice blue finish and improved grips. The FIE A27 was a cheapened version.

The Cub is loosely based on Browning-designed self-loading pistols. It features a frame-mounted combination safety/slide lock. You can remove the barrel for cleaning without fully field-stripping the pistol. With the slide locked back and the magazine removed, the barrel is twisted to release the mating of locking lugs and frame mortise. The slide can then be removed by releasing the slide lock.

The firing mechanism is a typical single-lever trigger bar as used on larger Star and Llama handguns. My example features a push-button magazine release, but some versions have a heel-type release. The Cub has a magazine safety. A button on



A The tiny Astra Cub was a six-shot .22 Short with rudimentary sights. At some point in its life a previous owner swapped the hard plastic grips for clear Lexan-type grips.

the magazine allows depressing the follower for loading the magazine.

It isn't recommended to carry this pistol with the chamber loaded. I confirmed this many years ago by testing a Colt Junior used by a cop friend for backup. In my shop, I placed the muzzle nearly touching a phonebook (remember those?) and used a blackjack to lightly tap the hammer. The pistol fired. But then this handgun should be at the end of the queue for defensive use anyway.

My Cub was a pawn-shop find at a fair price. It was glued shut with accumulated crud, but I took my time, and the pistol cleaned up well.

The grips are clear Lexan or something similar. They are well cut and fit the frame nicely. I suppose at some point the owner may have channeled the World War II fashion of using clear grips with a girlfriend's photo placed inside.


The sights are just a half oval on the end of the slide and a bump on the rear of the slide that sports a

tiny groove. They provide a reference for aiming but not an actual sight picture.

The pistol permits a decent hold, although the pinky finger hangs off the grip. The trigger on this one breaks cleanly at 5.7 pounds.

I was curious to fire the Astra. I had on hand a few Remington cartridges and managed to locate a box of CCI .22 Short. Each 29-grain load averaged just under 700 fps in the Cub's truncated barrel.

Surprisingly, the pistol was fairly reliable. The magazine fed the first five cartridges well, while the last cartridge popped into the ejection port at an angle. Recoil is practically absent. I put five holes into the X-ring of a B27 target, about a three-inch group, at five yards.

This is a well made, interesting and amusing piece of history. You can buy average examples of the Astra Cub for around \$250, but I was surprised to find some really nice ones coming in just under \$500. 

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YOUR GRIP ON THE PISTOL IS ONE OF

the most significant factors in determining accuracy. Experts may disagree on the best method—from one hand relaxed to both hands crushing the pistol—but regardless of how you grip your handgun, you need to have enough forearm and hand strength to control the repeated small explosions out in front of you.

I've been an avid shooter for the past six years, and through my Results Personal Training business and REVERSINGTHETREND.NET website, I work with middle-aged men and competitive shooters who want to get in better shape. Here are three essential grip and forearm strengthening exercises I like to give to my shooting clients.

First, pinch-grip reverse barbell curls, a simple movement that pays big dividends. Many of us shoot with a relaxed dominant thumb and actively crush our support fingers around the gun. This movement improves that ability.

Everyone has done barbell curls, but for these you grip the bar with your palms down and thumbs over the top. With the bar held straight down in front of you, curl it up, keeping your wrists locked in place.

This movement works the side of your biceps, the brachialis and the meaty front of your forearms, and since your thumbs are over the top instead of wrapped around the bar, your fingers are pinching hard to hold the bar.

Second, extensor training. Simply put, this strengthens your hand to open. Why would you train your hand to open when the primary act of shooting a gun involves closing



▲ Devices like the Captains of Crush are easy to use but pay big dividends in terms of strength and endurance. ▼ Pinch-grip reverse curls (l.) work the arms and fingers, while extensor training (r.) enhances overall hand strength.



your hand as tightly as possible? By strengthening the flexors and extensors, you achieve a more stable and resilient grip, reducing the risk of overuse injuries.

The easiest way to do this exercise is to take a big, thick rubber band and put it around your fingertips, then open your hand all the way. Exercises like this provide complete development of hand and wrist muscles, ultimately enhancing overall hand performance.

Third, get some Captains of Crush hand grippers from IronMind. These are simple little metal grippers that can be purchased on Amazon. They come in 11 different sizes. I recom-

mend purchasing an easy one and a difficult one. All you do is squeeze it shut until the metal ends touch. Work the light one with higher reps, like 15 to 25, to build endurance. Work the heavier one with fewer reps, like five, to develop maximum strength.

Everyone has a theory on proper pistol grip. [Ed. note: Richard Nance covered this very topic in our October/November 2022 issue, and you can read it at HANDGUNS.COM.] However, I can guarantee that if you can get stronger from your upper arms to your hands, you'll be able to control the gun better, regardless of your technique.—Corey Howard

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and shooting, the My Outdoor TV (MOTV) app is a resource like no other, a curated treasure trove of firearms- and outdoor-oriented television shows and videos.

For example, MOTV offers nine seasons—102 episodes—of “Handguns” (formerly “Handguns & Defensive Weapons”) alone. The show focuses primarily on personal protection and includes plenty of recreational shooting activities such as plinking and action-shooting competitions.

It features reviews of the latest firearms, ammunition and shooting accessories, as well as advice on marksmanship, gun handling, self-defense techniques and a host of

other handgun-related topics.

But wait, there’s more! There are 10-plus seasons of the popular “Guns & Ammo” television shows, encompassing more than 200 episodes available on the app. You can also check out past episodes of shows like “Gun Stories,” “The Gunfather,” “Hollywood Weapons” and “Shootout Lane.”

In addition to the HD episodes, there are short-form videos encompassing how-to instructional and gun history topics you can watch anytime, anywhere.

I think *Handguns* readers will really appreciate MOTV’s short-form HD videos covering a wide variety of self-defense topics. These videos are perfect for sharing with family mem-

bers to reinforce the finer points of keeping yourself safe. Like the show episodes, the videos are true HD quality for the ultimate viewing experience.

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MULTIFLEX OFFERS VERSATILITY THAT FAR EXCEEDS THE COMPETITION.

MILLIONS OF AMERICANS CARRY CONCEALED firearms every day, and this has prompted holster manufacturers to offer innovative and effective new products. Few of these offer the level of versatility found on the new N8 Tactical MultiFlex Holster.

Since it is convertible to inside-the-waistband or outside-the-waistband configurations and functions with multiple firearm models, the N8 Tactical MultiFlex serves double duty as a range/training and carry holster. Constructed for durability with quality components, it's an outstanding value at just \$50.

I've developed a system for evaluating holsters based on what I believe to be the five key components of their design and construction: versatility, comfort, durability, security and firearm accessibility. Here's how the N8 Tactical MultiFlex performs in each of those categories.

The biggest thing that sets the N8 Tactical MultiFlex apart from the competition is versatility. There are only two sizes of MultiFlex holster available: compact and full size. If you rolled your eyes at the one-size-fits-all sales pitch, that's understandable; some past holster designs promising to fit "a multitude" of guns really didn't fit any firearm particularly well.

The secret to the MultiFlex's success is a holster pocket that is almost infinitely adjustable for a just-right fit. There are screws that adjust for slide width and trigger guard width—the retention anchor point on this holster—and additional screws that tighten or loosen retention sliders to control side-to-side movement of the firearm.



▲ The MultiFlex is a convertible IWB/OWB holster that fits multiple handguns and offers a variety of retention adjustments.

The test holster fit a Shadow Systems MR920 and Glock G19, which are dimensional doppelgangers, but it also fit my FN FNS-9—a holster that can be hard to find at your local gunshop. Now I have one holster that works for all those guns.

The MultiFlex doesn't require an engineering degree to get the most from its design. While I did stumble on some of the steps listed in the directions, it didn't take long to figure it out.

Making adjustments to the holster requires a Phillips screwdriver, and if you aren't skilled at estimating sizes then a ruler might be handy because most accessories are labeled by length (1/2-inch screws, 3/8-inch barrels, 3/4-inch screws, etc.).

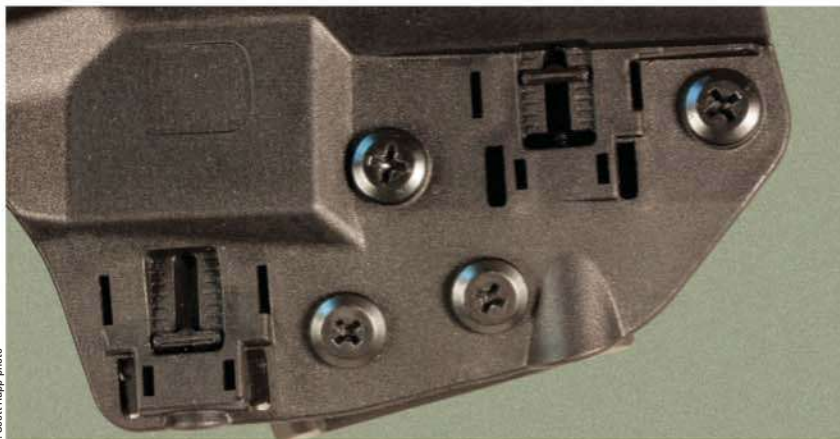
So long as you keep the included hardware and the directions, reconfiguring the holster for IWB or OWB carry isn't difficult. Run through the steps a handful of times and you'll have memorized the basic procedures and will be able to swap from OWB to IWB and back without your

cheat sheet. But if you do happen to lose the instructions, there are helpful videos on the N8 Tactical website.

If you run suppressor-height sights and optics on your pistol, you'll be happy to hear there's ample room for large optics to fit in this holster, and the sight channel is plenty large for even the tallest iron sights.

The holster will also function with any 1.5-inch paddle, adding another carry option. Many holsters offer two carry styles, but very few offer three, so even the pickiest gun owner will find a method that suits them. Last but not least, the MultiFlex is available in left-hand versions too.

Comfort is a huge factor because you won't carry a holster that's uncomfortable. In OWB guise, the MultiFlex features two large polymer belt loops that attach to belts up to 1.5 inches wide, and when the holster is mounted on the belt the smooth polypropylene holster shell rides close to the body but doesn't



A Four Phillips screws control width adjustment and retention on the gun's trigger guard. The two sliders, accessed from underneath with a No. 1 Phillips, eliminate any side-to-side play.

jab into the waist and is free of sharp edges.

After converting the holster to an IWB configuration, I carried the Shadow Systems MR920 in the appendix position for the better part of a week. I paired the holster with a CrossBreed Minimalist nylon carry belt, and the combination worked very well to securely hold the firearm close to the body without jabbing or poking.

Appendix carry isn't always a comfortable position, especially for those who've notched few extra holes in our belts, but the smooth backing of the full-size MultiFlex makes it ride close to the body without causing pain. The curved contour keeps the gun close but doesn't interfere with normal activity.

The MultiFlex can also be rotated to wear in other IWB positions such as strong-side hip carry, which is generally more comfortable for larger gun owners. Regardless of the position, this holster carries comfortably enough for daily carry.

A holster isn't worth much if it falls apart on you, and the MultiFlex gets high scores in durability. Polypropylene holds shape and functions normally in temperatures

ranging from -20 to 180 degrees, and since polypropylene is resistant to moisture you won't need to worry that the holster body will be damaged by prolonged daily exposure to the cocktail of salts and lipids in human sweat.

The metal screws and washers earn a high score, too. The threads and screw heads are clean and sturdy enough for multiple conversions, and the rubber "barrels" don't seem brittle and hold up well to heavy torque.

The metal clips for IWB carry are sturdy and offer just the right amount of flex to install/remove the holster. I suppose with enough swap-outs between IWB and OWB you could eventually wear out the hardware, but I think that would require hundreds of changes.

I'm skeptical when anyone tells me that a multi-fit holster is secure, but the MultiFlex's varied adjustment points mean you can effectively customize the holster to that just-right retention. Loosen the rear screw a half-turn and you'll be able to draw with less effort on range days. Afterwards, tighten the screws for daily IWB carry.

It doesn't offer multi-step reten-

N8 TACTICAL MULTIFLEX

DESIGN: OWB/IWB convertible open-top

CONSTRUCTION: black polypropylene

RETENTION: adjustable trigger guard

CANT: 12 degrees

MAXIMUM BELT SIZE (OWB): 1.5 in.

WEIGHT: 5 oz.

PRICE: \$50


MANUFACTURER: N8 Holsters,

N8.CROSSBREED.COM

tion devices like some duty holsters, but the MultiFlex will hold your gun in place with an appropriate level of retention.

The MultiFlex features a 12-degree cant that angles the gun for an optimum draw stroke while remaining concealable. The summers in Ohio are usually hot and always humid, so light cover garments are the order of the day. Holsters that allow any part of the gun to ride away from the body not only cause printing but also result in hang-ups while drawing because the gun can grab the hem of your clothing. The MultiFlex keeps the gun close to the body, and even under light clothing the holster was easy to conceal and access.

My final concerns when selecting a holster are aesthetics and value. Like Mr. Ford's revolutionary Model T, the MultiFlex is available in black and black alone, so if you're searching for an electric green snakeskin print on your holster, then you'll have to shop elsewhere. Actually, the MultiFlex looks very good compared to most other multi-fit holsters, which can look and feel like a brick strapped to your belt.

Value is excellent. \$50 for a stylish multi-fit holster that actually works? That's money well spent. N8 Tactical has done an excellent job creating a sleek multi-fit holster, a goal I wasn't certain could be achieved. 

CRISSCROSS

HOW TO DEAL WITH CROSS-EYE DOMINANCE.

WITH YOUR PALMS FACING AWAY, RAISE

your hands to eye level and extend your arms. Rotate your wrists inward, allowing the fingers of one hand to overlap the other, stacking your thumbs to form the base of a hollow triangle. Peer through the triangular void between your hands at a nearby object. Now, close one eye. If the object is still visible, the eye that's open is your dominant eye. If you close the other eye, you'll notice the object you were looking at appears to move outside the triangle.

If your dominant eye does not correspond with your dominant hand, you're considered cross-eye dominant. For a handgun shooter, this can be troublesome, but you do have options.

Many handgun shooters with this affliction compensate by tilting their head to better align their dominant eye with the gun's sights. The "head tilt" technique works for some people. But it certainly doesn't seem comfortable, especially to maintain for an extended period.

Another option for cross-eye-dominant handgunners is to tilt the gun rather than their head. This accomplishes the same goal of getting the sights in front of the dominant eye but keeps you from having to crane your neck. Of course, aligning sights and shooting with the handgun tilted presents its own challenges and is bound to take some getting used to.

For some, the solution may involve splitting the difference by tilting their head toward the gun and the gun toward their head. While this may seem like a good idea, the more



A To test eye dominance, cross your hands to form a triangle. Close one eye and focus on an object through the triangle, then try the other eye. Whichever eye leaves the object visible in the triangle is your dominant eye.

variables introduced, the harder it will be to aim consistently.

If, for instance, you don't move your head as much or you move your gun too much, there will be a delay as you make the necessary corrections. This may not be a big deal at the range, but in a self-defense situation a delay in aiming could carry dire consequences. And if ever there was a time when you would be apt to miscalculate the degree to which your head or gun must tilt, it would be during the stress of a deadly-force encounter.

An alternative aiming solution for the cross-eye-dominant handgunner is to simply stage the gun under the dominant eye as part of the draw stroke. Then you can drive the gun to the target, with the sights in front of your dominant eye.

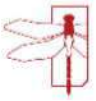
This will probably feel more natural than tilting your head or the gun, or both, and driving the gun out from below your dominant eye is

more efficient and faster. Here's how it works.

Regardless of eye dominance, your draw stroke should involve bringing the gun up from the holster to your chest as you orient the muzzle to the threat. The only tweak for the cross-eye-dominant shooter is to move the pistol across the body's centerline about six inches or so until it's below the dominant eye. From there, drive the gun to the target, aligning the sights as your arms extend.

While shooting with both eyes open affords you a better field of view, enhanced depth perception and aids in situational awareness, shooters may benefit from closing or at least squinting their non-dominant eye to better focus on the sights, particularly the front sight.

Whether or not squinting or even closing an eye is required depends on the proximity and immediacy of the threat as well as the degree →



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HANDGUNS | EN GARDE

← of precision required. Inside 10 yards or so, when targeting the chest, you probably won't need to squint. But making a head shot at 15 yards may require it. If you must squint or close your non-dominant eye to shoot, open it back up as soon as possible.

I've heard instructors flippantly suggest cross-eye-dominant shooters learn to shoot the pistol with the hand that corresponds to their dominant eye, as if it were an easy task. Learning to shoot a handgun is challenging enough without having to control it primarily with your less-coordinated hand. And if you're a left-eye-dominant, right-handed shooter gripping primarily with the left hand, the magazine release and slide catch will be on the "wrong" side with most pistols.

Of course, rather than change the hand that holds the gun, you could change the eye you aim with. Occluded-eye drills like shooting with your dominant shooting glasses' lens covered with tape can force your non-dominant eye to take over. With considerable practice, this may work, but I'm not sure how feasible it is for the average shooter to change eye dominance. I also don't know whether such a retraining of eye dominance would hold up under the duress of an attack or if you would revert to your body's naturally dominant eye to aim.

Another consideration for cross-eye-dominant shooters is to use a red-dot sight. Since a red dot places the aiming point and the target on the same visual plane, it's easier to use than traditional sights, which must be aligned vertically and horizontally. For the cross-eye-dominant shooter, a red-dot sight provides a wider margin of error than traditional sights, which must be directly in front of your dominant eye to be effective.



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- Barrel Length: 5 Inches
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- United States Property marked
- Manganese Phosphate Slide, Frame & small parts
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▲ (From top): all-black TRP, TRP Classic, TRP Classic 4.25, TRP 4.25 CC

Michael Anichewitz photo

A TACTICAL RESPONSE

BY KEITH WOOD

SPRINGFIELD UPDATES ITS ICONIC TRP 1911 TO SUIT THE MODERN HANDGUNNER.

In the 1990s, the FBI's elite Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) went looking for a new handgun. By 1998 its search led the agency to a full-size 1911 built by the Springfield Armory Custom Shop, known as the Professional Model. Later, a similar model was chosen to equip the bureau's regional SWAT teams.

The development of those handguns led Springfield Armory to offer a production handgun for the civilian market based on the pistols developed for the FBI. The result was the Tactical Response Pistol (TRP), an enhanced 1911 with many of the bells and whistles that, in those days, you'd expect to see only on a custom pistol.

The 1911 TRP has remained a mainstay of the Springfield catalog ever since, but for 2024 the company has revamped the entire lineup with new features, finishes and configurations.

Two decades ago, my brother and I chipped in and bought my father a

stainless steel Springfield Armory TRP for Father's Day. At the time, the TRP had graced the covers of all the great firearms titles, and we had to have one. He has a decent supply of 1911s, but this gun became his go-to. That TRP has remained accurate, reliable and trouble-free ever since.

I've owned other Springfield 1911s along the way and, needless to say, I am a fan. Things change, though, and some of the design elements that made the TRP a cutting-edge pistol at its release had been surpassed by industry competitors. Thus, the refresh.

For 2024, the 1911 TRP lineup consists of four basic models. For starters, there is the TRP, a full-size pistol with a five-inch barrel and an accessory rail forged into the frame. There is also the TRP Classic, another full-size model but with the traditional non-railed dust cover.

Moving to the more compact variants, there is a Commander-size

TRP Classic 4.25 as well as a TRP 4.25 CC (Carry Contour) with a rail. Included in the complete lineup are California-compliant models as well as optional guns finished in Coyote Brown Cerakote. I received samples of the four primary guns and tested them extensively.

The 1911 TRPs are built from forged frames and slides that are then machined to spec. These handguns are constructed using a combination of forged/machined, cast and metal-injection-molded parts. I love an all-billet gun as much as the next guy, but this construction can drive up production prices considerably. Springfield Armory produces a lot of 1911s, and it has a handle on building these guns efficiently and meeting a price point while maintaining accuracy and reliability.

The slides are cut with angled cocking serrations at both the front and rear. Ejection ports are lowered and flared back for maximum clearance of spent cases. The Classic models have traditional stirrup cuts on the slide that taper down to meet the frame, but the railed versions have ball-end mill cuts that radius to meet the angled frame rails.

The tops of the slides are machined flat and serrated the full length. Dovetails are cut securing both the front and rear sights. It bears noting that Springfield Armory 1911s use a proprietary front sight dovetail, so only aftermarket sights designed for them are compatible.

The TRPs come equipped with Heinie-style Tactical Rack three-dot tritium sights with serrated blade surfaces. These high-quality sights provide a classic square-notch sight picture but with the low-light capabilities of tritium.

TRPs are fitted with hammer-forged 1:16 twist stainless steel match barrels that use a traditional 1911 front bushing. The barrels taper down approximately 0.005 →

A TACTICAL RESPONSE

← inch behind the muzzle section that engages with the bushing, which should aid reliability.

The five-inch TRP and TRP Classic models use the standard ramped frame while the 4.25-inch guns are fitted with ramped barrels with fully supported chambers. Depending on the model, the barrels are left raw or nitrided black. A small notch where the barrel hood meets the slide serves as a loaded-chamber indicator. Each of the barrels on my test samples locked up tightly with no sign of barrel squat or other undesired play.

The five-inch guns use a two-

piece guide rod recoil system with a 17-pound recoil spring. This requires a 5/32-inch hex wrench for disassembly.

The TRP 4.25 Classic and TRP 4.25 CC use a traditional GI-style recoil spring plug and short guide rod. I prefer the simplicity of the latter system, and with a few inexpensive parts you can easily convert the five-inch models to this simple arrangement.

All four 1911 TRP models are built on full-size forged carbon steel frames. Unlike some of the radically high-cut frontstraps we are seeing nowadays, the frame maintains

the basic Government model grip dimensions.

The frontstraps are machined with 20 lines-per-inch checkering that is sharp and even. Combined with the checkering on the mainspring housing and the VZ G-10 Hydra grips, the surfaces are extremely aggressive. There's no need to worry about these guns slipping out of your hands, but they can be hard on skin over time. Bear in mind that these guns were designed to be used by SWAT officers, who are likely to be wearing gloves.

With the exception of the 4.25 CC, the 1911 TRPs use a two-piece mainspring housing with an extended magazine well. The CC is cut with a bobtail-style Carry Contour grip to make it more concealable.

The controls are a mix of GI-style and enhanced parts. The MIM slide stop and magazine release are more or less standard GI. The cast grip safety is a high beavertail style with a memory bump that contours nicely with the frame. The ambidextrous thumb safety, which has extended and serrated paddles, is also cast.

The trigger shoes are skeletonized with serrated faces. The trigger pulls on each of the 1911 TRPs that I tested were very good, with clean, creep-free breaks. They did vary a bit in weight, as follows: TRP, 5.0 pounds; TRP Classic, 4.8 pounds; TRP Classic 4.25, 4.5 pounds; and TRP 4.25 CC, 4.0 pounds. →



▲ The TRP Classics—both five- and 4.25-inch versions—feature black Cerakote frames, triggers in the white and stainless finish barrels. All the TRPs have G-10 grips and ambidextrous thumb safeties.

SPECIFICATIONS | SPRINGFIELD ARMOY 1911 TRP

	TRP	TRP Classic	TRP Classic 4.25	TRP 4.25 CC
Caliber	.45 ACP	.45 ACP	.45 ACP	.45 ACP
Capacity	8+1	8+1	8+1	7+1
Barrel Length (in.)	5	5	4.25	4.25
Length/Height (in.)	8.6/5.5	8.6/5.5	7.9/5.5	7.9/5.25
Weight	39.2	39.2	35.5	27.3
Construction	forged carbon steel slide and frame; G-10 Hydra grips			
Accessory Rail	yes	no	no	yes
Finish	black Cerakote/black or Coyote Brown Cerakote/black	black Cerakote/stainless	black Cerakote/stainless	Coyote Brown Cerakote/black or black Cerakote/black
Sights	Tactical Rack 3-dot tritium			
Price	\$1,999	\$1,899	\$1,899	\$1,999
Manufacturer	Springfield Armory, SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM			

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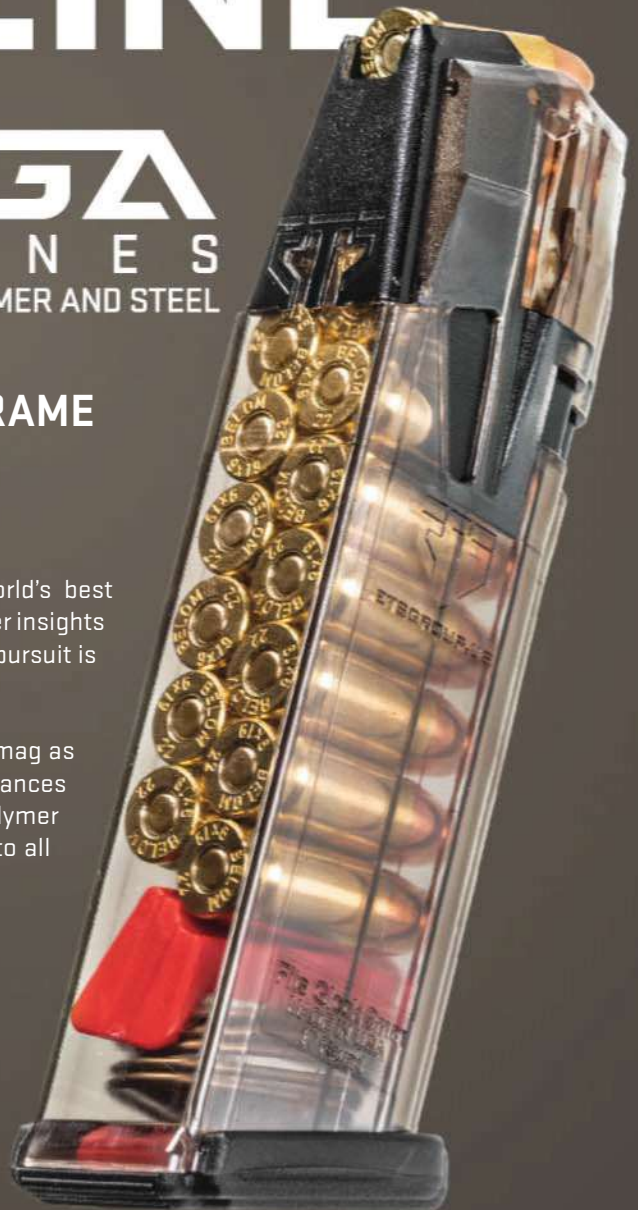
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A TACTICAL RESPONSE

← In terms of fire-control parts, the 1911 TRPs use a blend of construction methods. The firing pins are made from titanium, with extra-powerful springs. The firing pin stop is MIM, as are the Delta-style hammer, sear and disconnect. While not an ignition component, the extractor is one of the most critical components on the handgun, and on TRPs they are machined.

Each TRP ships with three Mec-Gar steel-bodied magazines with extended polymer base pads. The exception is the 4.25 CC, which uses standard GI-style seven-round mags that fit flush with the frame.

The finishes on the 1911 TRPs vary by model. The TRP is completely blacked-out with Cerakote and a nitrided barrel while the Classics combine black Cerakote with raw stainless accents. The 4.25 CC combines a Coyote Brown Cerakote frame and slide with black accents. The TRP railed gun is also available in this brown/black color scheme. Overall, the fit and finish on these guns are held to a high standard as factory guns go.

I function-tested all four pistols, but chose just two of them—the TRP and the TRP Classic 4.25—for bench testing. Ordinarily, I would pick a mix of target and defensive loads for such an evaluation but, given the “tactical” theme of the TRP series, I decided to do all of the testing with full-power duty/defensive ammunition. These various bullet styles and high-pressure loads really put these guns, and me, to the test.

For starters, I experienced zero malfunctions with any of the handguns during my extensive live-fire testing. Federal Premium’s Train + Protect 230-grain VHP load uses a jacketed hollowpoint with a fairly large cavity. A high-dollar custom 1911 that I took to the range with me on the same day absolutely would not feed this ammunition, but the 1911 TRPs swallowed it with ease.

All-steel 1911 .45s are pretty pleasant to shoot with hardball-style

ammunition, but putting this volume of full-power defensive loads down-range was different, especially from the bench. When it came to controlling recoil and muzzle rise, I really came to appreciate the checkered frame and mainspring housing along with the highly textured VZ Grips.

With the TRP, accuracy was exceptional with two of the three loads I sampled. The TRP Classic 4.25 shot well also, although admittedly recoil likely became a factor when it came to my ability to shoot consistently great groups.

I’ve been shooting 1911s longer than I’ve been driving, so making fast hits on practical steel targets came naturally with each of the guns. The excellent sights and clean trigger pulls were certainly part

of the equation, and the secure gripping surfaces made the TRPs controllable and helped speed up follow-on shots.

In terms of handling recoil away from the bench rest, the two five-inch guns were identical. Mounting a light to the rail-equipped model would no doubt mitigate muzzle rise a bit, but I did not add one. →



▲ All but the 4.25 CC have extended magazine wells and come with eight-round mags. The 7+1 4.25 CC sports a bobtail-style cut in the frame for improved concealment.

ACCURACY RESULTS | SPRINGFIELD TRP

.45 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
TRP				
Lehigh Defense XD	135	1,266	20	2.7
Hornady American Gunner XTP	185	924	16	1.4
Federal Premium Train+ Protect HP	230	811	15	1.3
TRP CLASSIC 4.25				
Lehigh Defense XD	135	1,262	18	2.9
Hornady Critical Duty +P	220	968	18	2.6
Federal Premium Train+ Protect HP	230	813	10	2.3

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a Target Shooting, Inc. Model 1500 rest. Velocities averages of 10 shots using a Garmin Xero C1 Chronograph placed adjacent to the muzzle.

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A TACTICAL RESPONSE

← The Classic 4.25 had a bit more recoil, thanks to a few ounces less mass near the muzzle, but the aggressive gripping surfaces really helped me keep things under control. I've primarily been shooting Commander-length 9mms lately and the difference in recoil is significant, especially with full-power ammunition.

With its rounded tail, the 4.25 CC version had the sharpest felt recoil and muzzle rise. Even so, for those looking to maximize concealability, this gun might be a reasonable compromise.

These handguns are worthy of the TRP name—continuing the accuracy, shootability and reliability that the line is known for. In terms of price and quality, they sit comfortably between run-of-the-mill factory 1911s and high-end customs. Twenty years ago, the 1911 TRP's suggested retail price was around \$1,600, which means that, adjusted for infla-



A The TRPs feature the excellent Tactical Rack sights with three tritium dots. The rear sight can be used to rack the slide in an emergency.

tion, the reintroduced handguns are significantly less expensive than they were back then. In terms of

performance, today's 1911 TRPs are every bit as good as the one I bought in 2005.



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BY BRAD FITZPATRICK



THE NEWEST M&P FUELED PISTOL FROM ED BROWN FEATURES AN ALUMINUM FRAME AND SHIFTS THE STRIKER-FIRED GUN INTO OVERDRIVE.



One of the most popular trends in handguns is dressing up striker-fired pistols to create a new look on a traditional firearm design. But, more often than not, many of these upgrades are cosmetic or parts swap-outs that the owner could accomplish with a stock pistol. However, Ed Brown's M&P Fueled series handguns do far more than simply improve aesthetics. This is truly the Ed Brown of striker-fired handguns.

There are four Fueled-series striker-fired models available through Ed Brown's custom shop in Perry, Missouri. The M&P F1, F3 and F4 models all use polymer-frame Smith & Wesson M&P 9mm pistols as their building blocks. The new MP-Metal-F1 tested here utilizes an M&P9 M2.0 Metal pistol by Smith & Wesson as the base gun.

Before I begin listing the MP-Metal-F1 9mm's various cosmetic and materials upgrades—of which there are many—it's worth examining the substantive upgrades that are standard with these Ed Brown guns.

It starts with the Custom Accuracy Rail. Most dolled-up striker-fired guns use the same front rail block—usually a metal-injection-molded (MIM) component—found on stock factory pistols. There are still methods to improve accuracy like adding better barrels and triggers, but the gun's performance will be limited by the slop in the slide/barrel lockup and fit.

The Fueled guns replace the MIM factory front rail block with Ed Brown's Custom Accuracy Rail, each of which is custom-fitted in the gun's frame. The Ed Brown rail offers machined surfaces that mate up perfectly with the barrel and slide, and each is hand-fitted by the team at Ed Brown. The result is a vastly more consistent slide/barrel orientation. This consistency results in substantially improved accuracy potential.

"The secret to the M&P Fueled series pistols' accuracy is this →

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← accuracy rail,” says Ed Brown’s Dave Biggers. “There’s a hand-fitted connection between the frame and slide.”

Biggers said customers have asked if the accuracy rail is available as an aftermarket part, and the answer is no. The reasoning behind this, he says, is that hand-fitting the rail requires an in-depth understanding of the process. When

properly installed and fitted, the rail provides custom-gun accuracy levels, but improper fitting could ruin a firearm. It’s best to leave this step to the pros at Ed Brown.

The accuracy rail is the heart of the Fueled series, and it truly takes striker-fired pistols to the next level. However, it’s just one of the many upgrades that make this M&P a masterpiece.

While the S&W frame remains largely the same, the slide is completely custom machined from 17-4 stainless steel. The slides are dehorned and feature custom slide cuts and windows that are designed for optimum performance. A quality nitride finish protects the metal, and the interior metalwork on this pistol is an improvement over the exterior surface treatments and machining of many factory guns.

The factory extractor has also been dropped in favor of a custom extractor designed specifically for the Fueled guns. The beefy extractor is machined from premium steel and features crisp edge cuts to take a solid bite on the cartridge case.

The slide is cut to accept Trijicon RMR-footprint optics, and a matching sight plate is included. The iron sights co-witness with the red dot. The black steel rear sight is dovetailed into the slide and features serrations to cut glare; the rear sight is paired with an AmeriGlo ProGlo tritium front.

The irons are suitable for accurate shooting and self-defense applications, and when these are paired with the Trijicon RMR—which is an optional upgrade—the shooter has a fail-safe sighting system suitable for any lighting conditions. →



▲ The control layout on the Ed Brown Fueled series is standard S&W M&P9. There’s an ambidextrous slide stop, an oval magazine release and a rotating takedown lever.



▲ The MP-Metal-F1 version comes with an Overwatch Precision trigger. Trigger pull is excellent, with an average pull of three pounds.

ED BROWN MP-METAL-F1

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 17, 19

BARREL: 4.6 in., black nitride finish, 1:10 twist; threaded 1/2x28 w/thread protector

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.5/5.5/1.3 in.

WEIGHT: 31 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: Tungsten Gray Cerakote-finished aluminum frame, black nitride-finished stainless steel slide

TRIGGER: Overwatch Precision, 3 lb. pull (as measured)

SIGHTS: black tactical notch rear, AmeriGlo ProGlo front; slide cut for Trijicon RMR footprint

PRICE: \$2,795 (as tested), \$2,295 (no optic)

MANUFACTURER: Ed Brown Products, EdBrown.com

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- ✓ Skeletonized Hammer
- ✓ Forward Serrations
- ✓ Gen 2 Trigger
- ✓ Hydra VZ Grips
- ✓ Tritium Three-Dot



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← Fueled pistols have 4.6-inch 416 stainless button-rifled match barrels with a 1:10 twist. They feature Ed Brown's unique "tread" fluting pattern, a series of angular cuts that run the length of the barrel and offer an aesthetic upgrade when viewed through the slide ports. The barrels have a black nitride finish and feature an 11-degree target crown.

Barrels are threaded 1/2x28 so they are ready to accept aftermarket muzzle devices, and Ed Brown supplies a matching thread protector. Viewed from certain angles, the shape of the protector looks like a gear to me. I don't know if that was intentional in keeping with the "fueled" theme or not, but it's a small touch that verifies what most shooters already know: Every component of an Ed Brown gun gets special attention.

This attention extends to the frame pins, all of which are turned on Swiss-type machines and come with a black nitride finish.

The metal frame of the original M&P pistol remains, and that's not a bad thing. Biggers told me that when the team at Ed Brown began this project years ago they wanted to base their custom striker-fired guns on a pistol that has a similar grip angle to the 1911, and that was the Smith & Wesson M&P.

As I mentioned, the original Fueled guns released three years ago used S&W polymer frames, but the MP-Metal-F1 borrows the aluminum frame from the M&P M2.0 Metal factory pistol. It features an extended beavertail and comes with textured interchangeable backstraps that allow you to further customize the fit.

Texturing wraps around the front-strap, and it uses the same aggressive pattern as other M&P pistols. The metal grip frame is finished in Tungsten Gray Cerakote.

While the polymer-frame Fueled pistols have an Apex trigger, the Metal version is outfitted with an Overwatch Precision bladed flat-face

trigger with a pull weight of three pounds. That's light for a striker-fired gun, and it's an extremely smooth and crisp trigger with minimal take-up that's certainly worthy of a custom pistol.

The MP-Metal-F1 sports a custom Ed Brown mag well—the first for the S&W M&P9 M2.0 Metal pistol—with indentations in the side for stripping magazines. Two magazines are included. There's a 17-round magazine and a 19-round magazine with an extended base plate that's an Ed Brown creation.

The aluminum frame adds about an ounce of heft compared to the polymer Fueled guns—31 and 30 ounces, respectively. Overall length of the gun is 7.5 inches while overall height is 5.5 inches and maximum width is 1.3 inches.

This is indeed a full-size pistol, but while the MP-Metal-F1 weighs

a half-pound more than a similar-size production gun of this type, it's still about eight ounces lighter than a metal-frame full-size 1911. You can carry this gun concealed if you dress around it, although I doubt many shooters will be wearing one in an appendix holster under a light T-shirt.

The controls on the MP-Metal-F1 mimic those of a Smith & Wesson M&P M2.0 and include an ambidextrous slide stop, a rotating takedown lever and an oval reversible mag release located just aft of the trigger. The slide stops are relatively small but functional, and the takedown design is simple and easy for shooters of any experience level to master. There's also a three-slot rail on the dust cover to accommodate lights and lasers.

Biggers told me the MP-Metal-F1 is a gun that must be shot to →



A The precision-machined, hand-fitted accuracy rail provides a consistent barrel/slide lockup, a big reason these guns shoot so well.

ACCURACY RESULTS | ED BROWN MP-METAL-F1

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,195	11	1.5
Nosler ASP JHP	115	1,154	13	2.0
Fiocchi FMJ	115	1,120	27	2.6
Remington Golden Saber BJHP	124	1,126	21	2.2
Federal HST JHP	147	1,024	6	1.6

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are ten-shot averages recorded on a Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph at the muzzle. Abbreviations: BJHP, brass-jacketed hollowpoint; FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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← appreciate, and I agree. This is a gun that impresses on and off the bench. From a fixed rest at 25 yards the gun grouped five shots under 1.5 inches with a couple loads and offered up a test-best group in the 1.2-inch range. That's exceptional accuracy and better than I've seen from any striker-fired polymer-frame gun.

The most obvious feature leading to this accuracy is the excellent trigger, which feels far closer to what you'll find in a precision rifle than the comparatively sloppy trigger found in many factory pistols.

But what might not be initially obvious to the shooter is the work of the accuracy rail, the driving force behind the MP-Metal-F1's performance. What you will notice is that, when shaken, this gun is as silent as a tomb. There's no rattling of parts, a direct byproduct of the hand-fitting that ensures all the parts fit together so nicely.



▲ The MP-Metal-F1 is threaded 1/2x28, and the gear-shaped thread protector boasts clean machining and an excellent finish.

Not surprisingly, the slide operation is extremely smooth. It's not as slick as the ball-bearing feel of an Ed Brown 1911 slide, but by striker-fired gun standards it's orders of magnitude above factory pistols.

The dramatic slide cuts give the

gun a unique and stylish aesthetic, but they're functional as well. The wraparound front texturing makes press checks easy, and if you happen to find yourself shooting with just one hand, there are plenty of flat surfaces to rack the slide—including →

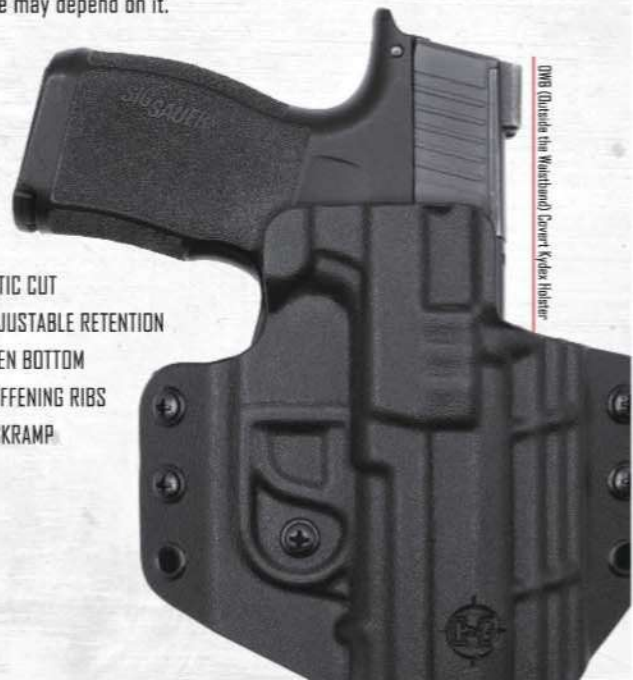


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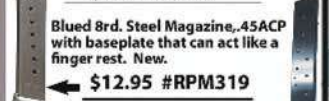
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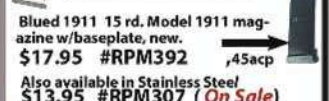
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← the rear sight or, if you have a red dot in place, the front surface of the optic. I'm not keen on operating my slide on the optic, but in an emergency it's a nice option to have.

Now to the part of the review that you've been skimming along to find: off-the-bench testing results. How does the Ed Brown shoot? It's the pinnacle of striker-fired gun performance. Shoot most other tricked-out striker-fired 9mms and you'll find things to like—perhaps cool slide cuts or a nice trigger.

But the MP-Metal-F1 doesn't just offer a few niceties. Rather, it changes the entire shooting dynamic. The gun is perfectly balanced, and the recoil impulse seems to vanish into the ether. Because the Ed Brown shoots so flat and so softly and has such an outstanding trigger, you can push your speed and accuracy limits because the gun is so accommodating.

If it sounds like I'm gushing on

the MP-Metal-F1, I am. I test a lot of striker-fired guns. Most are reliable, most are fairly accurate, but many are also uninspiring. For most shooters that's just fine, but if you consider yourself an enthusiast, this is the gun you want.

"I shoot one of the M&P Fueled Metal pistols in competitions," says Biggers. "I can do things with that gun that I can't with other pistols."

I agree. There's a lot to love about this gun, but there are a couple things I'd change. There's nothing wrong with the M&P grip texture, but I'd like to see a signature Ed Brown texture to further separate these guns from factory pistols.

Also, the slide stop could occupy a bit more real estate, and that goes for factory Smith & Wesson M&P pistols as well. It's easier to operate the slide stop on the smooth-operating Ed Brown, and I wouldn't ask for much—maybe a few hundredths of an inch more purchase.

Yes, \$2,300 is certainly a steep price for a striker-fired gun (\$2,795 with Trijicon RMR red dot pre-installed), but this is no ordinary striker-fired pistol. Ed Brown has been customizing handguns for more than 50 years, and the attention to detail that the company he founded brings to the table is embedded in the MP-Metal-F1.

One noteworthy aspect of all Ed Brown guns is that each of them has been personally handled by a member of the Brown family, whether during machining or quality control. This family commitment to producing high-performance pistols is part of what you're paying for.

"You can take your car into the garage and switch out the tires and rims, but you can't change the design of the motor yourself," Biggers said.

Indeed, the Ed Brown MP-Metal-F1 pistol is in a class by itself, and it's enough to get any handgun fan's engine revving.

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MATCHED PAIR



WALTHER ARMS OFFERS UP BOTH STEEL- AND POLYMER-FRAME VERSIONS OF THE NEW PDP MATCH.

BY KEITH WOOD

A handful of years ago, steel-frame guns were relics of the past. Polymer-frame, striker-fired handguns reigned supreme, and no design dared challenge that fact. Walther's PDP (Performance Duty Pistol) was on the short-list of quality handguns in this category.

Polymer-frame guns are great tools for lots of uses, but for certain roles their weight can be more a liability than an asset. Physics matter, and today we are seeing a steady stream of new steel-frame guns designed with competition in mind.

The added weight cuts felt recoil and can be a huge advantage in a world where fractions of a second count. To that end, Walther Arms is now offering the PDP Match in both polymer- and steel-frame versions, giving its customers maximum flexibility.

Competitors are going to use every potential advantage to win, often pushing the boundaries of equipment restrictions. Rob Leatham changed the shooting game when he used a compensated Wilson Combat Accu-Comp to win the IPSC World Shoot in 1983. From that day forward, compensators and, later, red-dot optics became must-haves to win matches.

This led to the creation of more-restrictive divisions and even alternative organizations such as IDPA. Gunmakers have met that demand by creating production handguns that are legal for those

divisions, yet give the shooter every possible advantage. The Walther PDP Match is just such a handgun.

The Walther PDP Match is a big pistol, the largest in the PDP lineup. With its five-inch barrel it is 8.5 inches long and 5.7 inches high. While both the steel- and polymer-frame versions are identical in size, the steel variant is of course quite a bit heavier—weighing in at 41 ounces versus 26.9 ounces for the polymer-frame gun.

This weight wouldn't be advantageous for a carry gun, but for competition use it provides a significant benefit. With all other factors, including ammunition, being equal, a shooter using the steel-frame PDP Match should experience 53 percent less recoil energy thanks to its greater mass.

At first glance, the most distinctive feature of the PDP series is the frame. The grip sits forward of the rear of the slide, so the slide reciprocates well over the top of the shooter's hand. Unless the shooter has freakishly large hands, I can't envision a scenario where the slide would bite.

According to Walther, the PDP's ergonomics were specifically engineered to favor the use of red-dot sights, which, given the popularity of handgun optics, is a good thing.

The steel frame on the PDP Match is fully machined. The frontstrap is checkered, as is the front surface of the trigger guard. An accessory rail is integral to the frame's dust cover, allowing for easy mounting of a light or laser.

The actual gripping surface is a polymer wraparound panel that is secured on either side of the frame using a pair of small hex screws. The structure of the backstrap is part of the grip itself; the frame underneath is actually hollow at that position. The grip is secure without being abrasive.

The polymer-frame PDP Match has a grip with a similar pro-



MATCHED PAIR

← file, with the same texturing found on the steel gun's wrap-around grip. Likewise, the front-strap and trigger guard have checkering molded in. However, the polymer-frame gun uses a series of user-interchangeable backstraps that allow for individualization of the grip. If more weight is desired, Walther sells a brass backstrap on its website that adds three ounces of weight to the frame.

The steel-frame version does not

use this system but, because of the way that the back of the frame is machined, different grip profiles could feasibly be offered in the future.

Both versions of the PDP Match come with a large aluminum magazine well installed. The mag well not only aids in fast reloads under stress but also adds additional weight to the frame. The PDP Match ships with three steel-bodied 18-round magazines, and

20-round magazines are available as well.

If you keep the extended magazine well on the gun, only magazines with the aluminum base pads will be compatible. However, in order for the PDP Match to qualify for USPSA's Production division, the mag well will have to be removed.

In terms of controls, the PDP Match is straightforward. There is no manual safety. The slide stop is ambidextrous and extends rearward so it can be manipulated without shifting one's hand on the grip. That makes it easy to actuate, but with a high-hand grip on the pistol, it is easy to let the strong-hand thumb ride on the stop. This could inadvertently prevent the slide from locking to the rear on an empty magazine.

The magazine release catch is round and checkered, and I found it easy to reach for fast reloads. On the steel-frame gun there is a takedown lever on the left side of the frame that my weak-hand thumb used as a natural rest. The polymer-frame gun's setup is a little different, which I'll explain in a minute.

The PDP Match features Wal- →



▲ Both guns have Walther's Performance Duty Trigger, an extended ambidextrous slide stop and oversize magazine release. The steel-frame version has a rotating takedown lever while the polymer gun has pull-down tabs.



▲ Aggressive slide cuts reduce reciprocating weight and provide a positive grip for manipulating the slide, while on the steel gun the heavier accessory rail adds weight out front to help combat muzzle rise.

WALTHER PDP MATCH

TYPE: striker-fired semiautomatic

CALIBER: 9mm Luger

CAPACITY: 18+1, 20+1 available

BARREL: 5 in., polygonal rifling

WEIGHT: 2 lb. 8.9 oz. (steel); 1 lb. 10.9 oz. (polymer)

CONSTRUCTION: machined steel slide; steel frame or polymer frame

GRIPS: wraparound polymer (steel); polymer w/interchangeable backstraps (polymer)

SIGHTS: 3-dot adjustable; optic-ready

SAFETIES: passive trigger

TRIGGER: Performance Duty: 3 lb., 14 oz. (steel); 4 lb. 4 oz. (polymer)

PRICE: \$1,899 (steel); \$1,099 (polymer)

MANUFACTURER: Walther Arms,

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ther's Performance Duty trigger, a flat-face aluminum lever with an inset trigger safety. The trigger pull on the PDP Match is superb, certainly as good or better than any striker-fired handgun I've tried.

My steel-frame sample's trigger broke at 3.9 pounds while the polymer-frame version had a 4.25-pound release. Both triggers broke right at the point where the lever reached the vertical position after a short first stage. There was no discernible creep with either trigger, and resets were extremely short.

The slides on both the steel- and polymer-frame versions of the PDP Match are identical. Both use Walther's SuperTerrain serrations. The slide actually flares outward at the front and rear serration points so that, assisted by the deep cuts, the cocking surfaces offer the shooter an extremely positive grip. The front serrations are cut completely through the slide, and the barrel is visible beneath them.

The barrel is integrally ramped with a fully supported chamber. A notch milled into the barrel hood serves as a loaded-chamber indicator. The barrel is polygonally rifled, with a right-hand 1:9 twist. There is an external extractor and a frame-mounted steel ejector.

The sights on the PDP Match are polymer with three white dots. The rear sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation using a tool that is included with the pistol. A small, flat screwdriver works as well.

Many users will choose to mount a red-dot sight on the PDP Match, and the slide is machined to be optic-ready. A polymer slide cover plate is included.

Many older handgun designs have had to engineer their way around existing features, usually extractors, to accommodate optics, which can result in an optic that sits high on the slide. Walther was able to bury the sight deep within

the slide with an aggressive mounting cut. Because of this, with most optics the factory sights can still be used with a one-third co-witness—so there's no need for taller, suppressor-height sights.

Walther offers mounting solutions for all the popular red-dot optic footprints on the market. A credit for one adapter plate comes with the purchase of the PDP Match, and additional plates can be ordered for \$40 each.

Disassembling the steel-frame PDP Match is part SIG and part

Glock. Lock back the slide, ensure the pistol is unloaded and rotate the frame-mounted takedown lever upward. The handgun must then be dry-fired, which allows the slide assembly to be removed. There is a full-length steel guide rod with a captive flat recoil spring. Once it has been removed, the barrel comes next.

The polymer-frame disassembly is similar but it lacks the takedown lever. Instead, the pistol is dry-fired and the slide is partially retracted. With the slide held in that



A The polymer-frame pistol includes three interchangeable backstraps to customize the grip. A heavier brass backstrap is available from Walther.

ACCURACY RESULTS | WALTHER PDP MATCH STEEL FRAME

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	115	1,200	6	2.7
Sierra THD JHP	124	1,159	7	2.2
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,238	9	2.3
Wilson Remanufactured HBFN	135	810	15	1.6

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a Target Shooting, Inc. Model 1500 rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots using a Garmin Xero C1 placed adjacent to the muzzle. Abbreviations: HBFN, hollow-base flatnose; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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MATCHED PAIR



A The wraparound grip on the steel frame PDP Match acts as the backstrap, leaving the door open to different-size grip options.



A The PDP Match's 18-round magazines ship with aluminum base pads designed specifically to work with the extended magazine well that comes installed. The mag well is removable for divisions that don't permit them.

← position, the takedown tabs on both sides of the frame are pulled downward, which allows the slide assembly to release. The remainder of the process is identical.

The steel parts on the PDP Match are finished in Tenifer. The machining and polishing of the components—as well as the overall fit and finish—are excellent. It is obvious at first glance that these are well-made handguns.

I test-fired both versions for function testing but used the steel-frame PDP Match for ac-

curacy testing. As you can see in the accompanying chart, accuracy was good, with the Wilson Combat 135-grain load producing the tightest groups. But for a couple of fliers, those groups would have been even tighter. Reliability was 100 percent with both examples using a variety of ammunition types.

Both handguns were very shootable, although thanks to the steel-frame pistol's significantly greater weight, recoil and muzzle rise were far less pronounced. Needless to say, shooting a 41-ounce 9mm is an

BECOME PART OF THE LEGEND

extremely pleasant experience, especially when the gun has a trigger as good as this one.

I found the position of the slide stop to be a bit annoying, but other shooters with different-size hands might not share that sentiment.

For existing fans of the PDP who are looking for a competition-ready pistol, the PDP Match is a no-brainer. But which one? As always, it depends on what you want and how much money you want to spend.

Steel-frame guns shoot flatter and therefore tend to be faster in competition. That's why you've seen guns such as CZ's Shadow 2 return with a vengeance. Given that reality, I would lean heavily toward the steel-frame PDP Match if it came to shooting competitively.

However, the polymer-frame gun offers a number of advantages, depending on your situation. For starters, it's a less expensive path to competition, as the \$800 difference between the two PDP Match guns is significant.

And if the steel-frame gun doesn't fit you...well, as currently configured it doesn't fit you. That's not the case with the polymer-frame PDP Match, thanks to its interchangeable backstraps. Plus, if you want to get some of the weight advantage of the steel-frame gun, Walther sells the optional weighted backstrap.

Last but not least, if your goal is to compete with a gun that is closer to what you might actually carry on the street, the polymer-frame PDP Match would have the edge here as well.

Even if you're not in the market for a competition pistol but are looking for a full-size, optic-ready handgun with a trigger that will make most striker-fired handgun owners green with envy, the PDP Match is still worth considering. Both the polymer- and steel-frame models are well-built, reliable and accurate handguns with fantastic triggers. These are great guns, worthy of Walther's historic name.



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Model 1873,
.45 LC, 5½"

Hardin
1875 Top-Break,
.45 LC, 7"

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READY FOR A TUSSELE

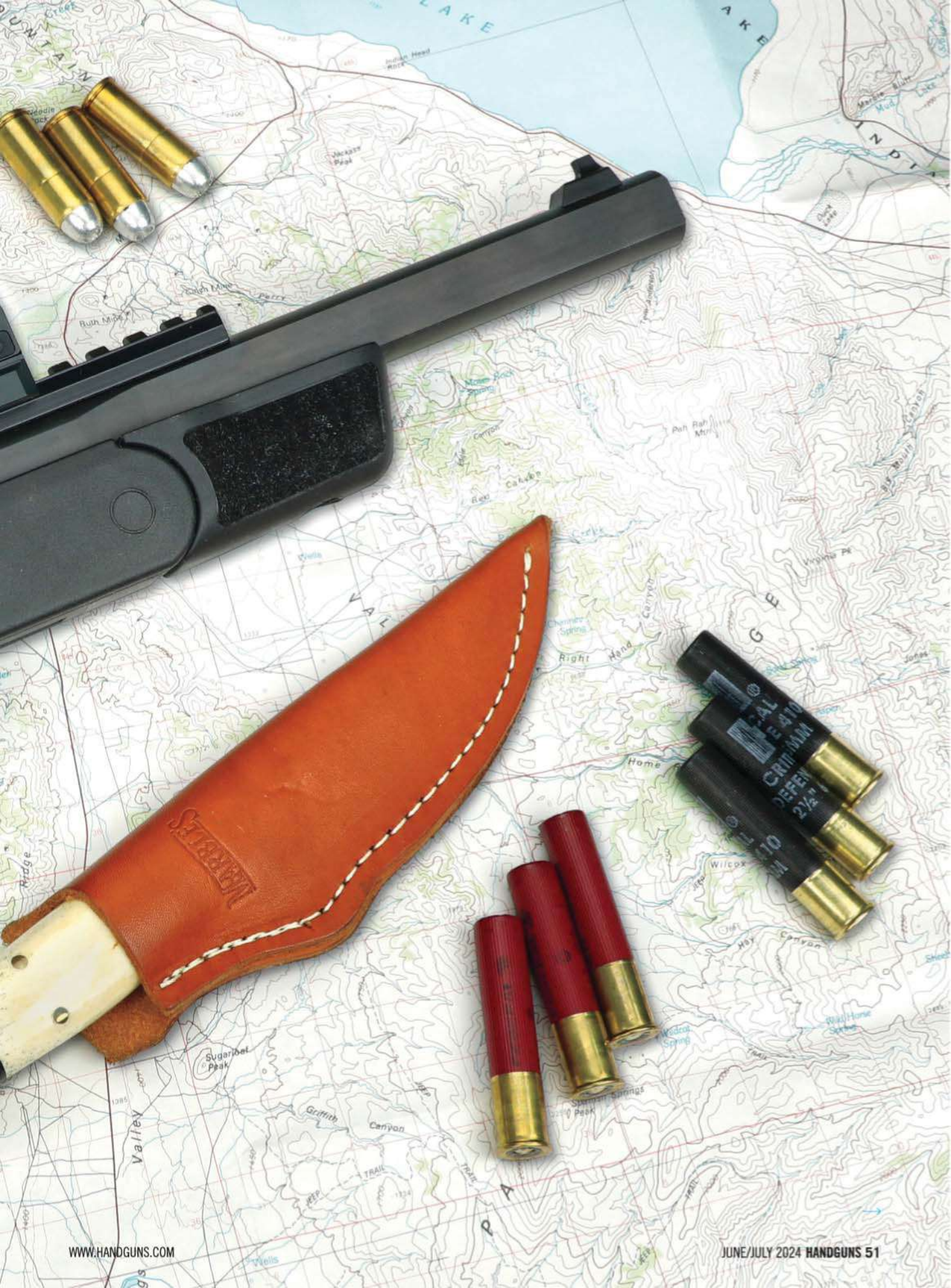
BY JEFF JOHN

**THE ROSSI BRAWLER IS A
VERSATILE SINGLE-SHOT
PISTOL IN .45 COLT/.410.**

In these days of high-capacity handguns, the Rossi Brawler single-shot pistol shooting .45 Colt or .410 shotshell seems anomalous, but such a gun simply solves many situations more easily than a large or average-size revolver.

I once shot a snake with a three-inch .44 Special using CCI Shotshells, only to need a second shot. That second shot didn't come off since a shot capsule walked out and prevented the cylinder from turning. Once I figured out the problem, the capsule was easily pushed back into place to finish the snake. I considered myself lucky it was anchored by the first shot, although it was still close, uncomfortably alive and very angry. The Brawler loaded with a .410 shotshell and No. 6 shot would have finished the business at once.

Survival is another aspect. →



READY FOR A TUSSELE

← Outdoorsmen often need simplicity, and the Brawler offers that in a flat, easy-to-pack pistol. While it's not rated for .45 Colt +P, standard-pressure loads from Hornady or Winchester should bring down a deer-size animal if you can work your way in close or hunt from a blind, and the .410 is equally at home dispatching small game.

The Brawler comes in at an affordable \$240 with a useful barrel length of nine inches that delivers better ballistics than a short-barreled wheelgun but at a weight of 36 ounces. If that seems heavy for a polymer-frame handgun, there is plenty of steel inside spread across an overall length of 14+ inches.

The manual of arms is quite simple. With the hammer down and crossbolt safety in the Safe position, press the release button on the top right near the hammer to break open the pistol for loading or unloading.

The ejector is automatic and tosses empties or loaded ammo free (spent .45 Colt casings went 15 feet over my shoulder) but also makes a loud "click." There is a loud "click"

when closing the action, too. You can minimize noise by carefully breaking open the action far enough to insert a cartridge without activating the ejector, then depressing the barrel release button while closing the barrel. Release the button while pulling up on the barrel to ensure the action is locked.

In addition to the crossbolt safety, the Brawler has a transfer bar. The hammer rests on a steel shelf and never contacts the firing pin until the hammer is cocked and trigger pressed, which then raises the transfer bar into position for ignition.

The crossbolt safety is within reach of the forefinger and can be applied whether the hammer is cocked or uncocked. If the pistol is cocked and the safety pushed to Safe, pulling the trigger will drop the hammer about a quarter-inch and lock it in place. You will need to recock the hammer and push the safety off to fire the pistol, decock or even break it open. Safety on or off, you cannot open the action if the hammer is cocked.

This crossbolt safety is pretty

noisy, with an audible click going on or off. You can operate the safety quietly by squeezing both sides of the button between thumb and forefinger, then easing it on or off.

Although the Brawler has the transfer bar, it would be best to get used to using the crossbolt safety. On Safe, the button sits in a recess in the frame and won't be disengaged accidentally. When in the Fire position, the button is proud of the frame on the left side and could be accidentally applied during carry. If you practice always pushing it to the Fire position, it's pretty easy to apply or disengage the safety with the shooting hand.

The owner's manual has a confusing passage regarding decocking the Brawler. It says to apply the crossbolt safety, squeeze the trigger with the hammer securely under the control of your thumb and lower it a half-inch—then release the trigger and lower the hammer to rest. However, as I mentioned, when the crossbolt is on Safe, you won't be able to lower the hammer more than about a quarter-inch.

Here's how I recommend decocking the pistol. With the safety off, make sure you're pointing it in a safe direction, squeeze the trigger with the hammer securely under the control of your thumb and lower it halfway. Releasing the trigger at this point allows the transfer bar to →



A The Brawler incorporates a crossbolt safety above the trigger that locks the action. The integral Picatiny rail allows easy mounting of optical sights.

ROSSI USA BRAWLER

TYPE: hammer-fired break-open single-shot

CALIBER: .45 Colt/.410 3 in. shotshell

CAPACITY: 1

BARREL: 9 in.

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 14.1/5.9/1.4 in.

WEIGHT: 36 oz.

CONSTRUCTION: steel barrel and receiver; polymer fore-end and grip

SIGHTS: fixed Patridge front, square notch rear; optics rail

TRIGGER: 5 lb. pull (measured)

SAFETY: transfer bar, crossbolt

PRICE: \$240

MANUFACTURER: Rossi, RossiUSA.com



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READY FOR A TUSSLE

← drop away from contact with the firing pin, so the hammer comes to rest on the frame. This is nothing new to users of single-action revolvers having a transfer bar.

Speaking of the trigger, it breaks at a crisp five pounds, measured at the middle. The trigger is smooth faced and very comfortable to use.

I like to do a basic fieldstrip on a new gun to better understand it, clean off the factory preservative and lubricate with a better quality oil or grease, but there were no disassembly instructions in the manual. The Rossi rep informed me that the company doesn't expect anyone will ever need to disassemble the gun, thus the lack of disassembly instructions.

The fixed iron sights are very small and fine, and they sit low in the Picatinny rail. You can't see them until the hammer is cocked. They're hard to pick up in a hurry, because the tall, wide parts of the Pic rail on either side create an exceptionally busy sight picture.

The good news is the rear sight is mounted between the rails and allows an optic to be mounted very low. I suspect Rossi figures almost everyone using this pistol will fit a red dot or pistol scope. Those using it primarily with shot loads will likely point-shoot the Brawler over the irons, but an optic adds versatility.

The grip angle is steeper than I normally like, and the pistol pointed low for me. Overall, recoil was a little stouter than I expected with all the loads tested. I've long enjoyed shooting the .45 Colt in single- and double-action revolvers, which weigh about as much as the Brawler, so that was a bit of a surprise.

The grip is wide and comfortable, though, with a rubberized texture giving an iron-clad hold even in the 90-degree heat of the Nevada desert. I suspect the recoil feeling stouter is partly due to the height of the bore over the grip, as well as the grip's non-slip design.

With a Viridian RFX15 mounted on the rail, I tested three .45 Colt →



▲ The minimal sights are fine, but a red dot makes a great companion for the Brawler, especially when shooting .45 Colt loads.

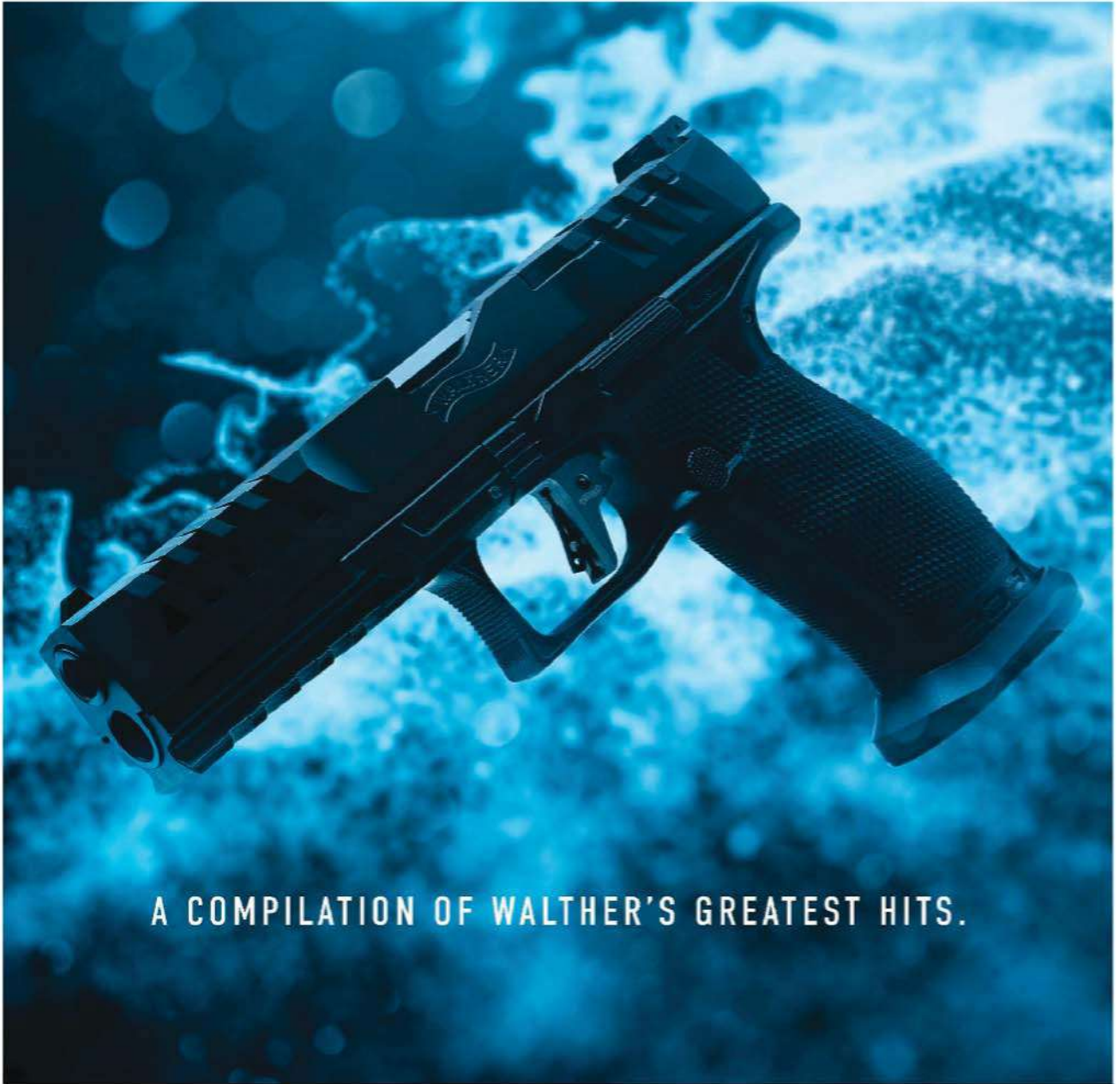


▲ The action kicks out empties with vigor, and the grip is wide and comfortable, with a rubberized texture for a sure hold.

ACCURACY RESULTS | ROSSI BRAWLER

.45 Colt	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense	185	1,044	17	2.5
Winchester Silvertip	225	892	20	1.9
Hornady LeverEvolution	225	916	5	4.5

Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are the averages of 10 shots fired over a Competition Electronics ProChrono 10 yards from the muzzle.



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READY FOR A TUSSLE



▲ This Federal 2.5-inch No. 6 shot load at 15 feet shows how the Brawler could be a good short-range game or pest gun.

← loads, two from Hornady and one from Winchester. Results are shown in the accompanying table. The showstopper was Winchester 225-grain Silvertips. The best group with them was an even one inch, and the average of all groups was just under two inches.

I also shot the Brawler with just the irons at 25 yards with Hornady 185-grain Critical Defense. The first shot was low left, which I attributed to my struggling with the sight picture. The next four went into a three-inch group, and three of those were just under two inches. The entire group was 3.5 inches left and 2.5 inches higher than point of aim. My point: If you decide not to use an optic, be sure to test the regulation of the irons.

For the shot load test, I stuck with the irons. Rifling in a barrel tends to

open up shot columns a lot faster than if fired from a choked smoothbore, so I set up a Birchwood Casey 12x18-inch Splatter target at 15 feet for use with Federal .410 2.5-inch loads with No. 6 shot.

I figured any snake farther away than that could probably be retreated from, and anything closer would just get minced a little finer. When I aimed at the red center of the target, enough heavy No. 6 shot clouded up the nine-ring area sufficiently.

A warning in the owner's manual indicated that shooting slugs is unsafe in the Brawler, and they should not be used in the gun. This seemed odd, since there are a few personal defense loads in .410 with one or more projectiles, so I contacted Rossi.

The reply from Rossi noted that a .410 slug is actually a .40 caliber pro-



▲ The button that allows the action to be opened is to the right of the hammer. The rear sight is set deeply within the Picatinny rail itself and is not adjustable.

jectile packed in a sabot. In a rifled barrel, which the Brawler has, the sabot is too undersize to properly engage the rifling, so it could destabilize in the barrel and have an extremely unpredictable exit direction.

The Rossi spokesperson added that the terminal ballistics of .410 slugs are such that you're better off using a .45 Colt round.

Overall, the Rossi Brawler proved a fun gun to shoot, and it would make a great companion out on a preseason scouting trip for big game. Adding a red-dot sight doesn't increase the weight appreciably, and such an optic allows for accuracy far beyond what the vestigial iron sights will provide.

Even without the sight, though, you'll not be handicapped with a shotshell for snakes, and it would prove itself on small game using ball or shot.

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<https://tisasusa.com/tisas-safety-recall-2024-0001/>

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1911 DUTY NIGHTSTALKER 45

SKU 10100512 - UPC 723551443293

1911 DUTY NIGHT STALKER 10MM

SKU 10100537 - UPC 723551444283

1911 DUTY ENHANCED 45

SKU 10100551 - UPC 723551443972

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PUTTING IT ALL IN FOCUS

BY RICHARD NANCE

IN SELF-DEFENSE, KNOWING WHAT TO WATCH FOR CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

The word focus has several meanings. Merriam-Webster defines it as “directed attention” and “adjustment for distinct vision,” among other things. Both interpretations of the word are important in self-defense. The former addresses what you should pay attention to, while the latter deals with how to look at whatever it is that demands your attention. While no two self-defense scenarios are identical, the following guidelines will help you focus on what matters and increase your odds of prevailing.

Situational awareness is one of the most important aspects of self-defense. After all, you can’t respond to a threat you haven’t perceived. To detect danger, you must be aware of your surroundings—to include people and objects in the vicinity.

We’ll get to the people problem in a minute, but first let’s address your physical environment. Are there tripping hazards? Are there objects that could shield you from incoming bullets or at least create a buffer between you and an assailant armed with a contact distance weapon like a knife or a pipe wrench? This information would be good to know ahead of time.

When you’re situationally aware, your senses are fully engaged. For most of us, vision is our primary means of processing information in our environment, but hearing is also important; to a lesser extent, touch, smell and taste can be as well.

As you go about your daily activities, you should strive to be aware, letting your body’s natural radar alert you to potential trouble. Pull your eyes away from your phone’s screen and pay attention to what’s happening around you. While you’re at it, take the ear buds out. Being able to see and hear what’s going on will help you detect danger sooner, affording you more time to respond.

General awareness constitutes a broad, generalized focus. In this state, you can direct your attention to a particular person display- →

PUTTING IT ALL IN FOCUS

← ing suspicious behavior—but you must know what to look for.

Pay attention to behavior that seems out of place. Anomalies like someone wearing a heavy coat on a warm day, or someone starting to do something or stopping what they are doing because of your presence are red flags.

Neither action means an assault is imminent, but your intuition should kick in as you prepare to respond if needed. If the little hairs on the back of your neck are standing up, your subconscious could be trying to tell you something like: “Hey, I think something is about to go down. Watch this guy!” Ignore that little voice at your own peril.

When you sense potential danger, like someone rapidly approaching from behind, you have a head start in determining whether that person poses a threat. You may not see the person initially, but you may hear him—assuming you’re not depriving yourself of your sense of hearing by wearing ear buds or headphones. Shoes pounding the pavement could alert you to potential danger before it is upon you. This would grant you more time and distance to respond appropriately.

Once your attention is directed toward a potential threat, then what? Before you draw your gun, you must decide whether your new acquaintance means you harm or if he’s perhaps overly aggressive in his quest for spare change.

This assessment is time sensitive, and the penalty for being wrong may be severe. Bringing your gun into play when it’s not warranted would be problematic on many levels, but not drawing your gun when you should could be much worse.

How you decide what to do next requires that you tighten your focus. Every cop has heard the maxim, “Hands kill.” While bare hands may not necessarily present a deadly threat, hands hold weapons, which is why they require your undivided attention. While focusing too intently

THE KEYS TO HANDGUN SIGHT FOCUS

Aiming a handgun starts with body alignment, squaring yourself to the target as much as possible before driving the gun out and picking up the sights. With traditional sights, you need to ensure the front sight is centered vertically and horizontally in the rear sight notch. Then, prior to pressing the trigger, you should narrow your focus to the tip of the front sight, which will cause the rear sight and the target to blur. In close quarters, you might get away with a coarse sight alignment, but at distance or when there is no margin for error, front-sight focus is critical.

You may even find it helpful to close your non-dominant eye to better focus on the front sight. If you do this, open that eye as soon as you can. Fighting with one eye closed robs you of half your vision, which is akin to fighting with one hand tied behind your back.

Shooting with both eyes open is easier if you’re using a red-dot sight. With a red dot, you don’t need to shift your focus from the threat to your sights. Since the dot is superimposed on the threat, you have only one focal plane to deal with. Being able to aim while focused on the threat is advantageous because that’s what you will tend to do instinctively. Only with considerable training will you develop the presence of mind to focus on traditional sights when someone on the other side of those little nubs is trying to kill you.

Regardless, make sure your sights are aligned before pressing the trigger. You are accountable for every round that leaves the muzzle of your gun. Not only will a miss fail to stop the threat, but it can also endanger uninvolved people in the vicinity.—RN



A Once you’ve confirmed an imminent deadly threat, your focus should shift to your gun’s sights.

on the hands—or anything else—can be detrimental, you need to know to the extent possible if a potential assailant is clutching a weapon. Unless you see two empty hands, don’t rule out the presence of a weapon.

When you’ve visually cleared the hands, it’s time to see if there are any obvious indicators of a weapon. Since the waist is the most common concealed-carry location, it deserves your attention. Bulges, as well as disruptions to a garment’s pattern or the way it covers the waist, could be caused by a weapon stuffed inside the waistband. Furtive movements toward the waist could indicate the

person you’re dealing with is accessing a weapon.

Once the hands and waist have been visually searched, it’s time to focus on the person’s body language and overall demeanor. Is he sweating profusely despite a cool temperature? Is he clenching his fists? Yelling? Threatening? Advancing?


In close quarters, you may not have the luxury of focusing on hands, then waist, then body language and demeanor. The closer you are to a person, the harder it is to monitor him because you can’t easily see what’s happening below your line of vision. To make mat- →



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PUTTING IT ALL IN FOCUS

← ters worse, the closer the threat, the less time you'll have to respond. In such a case, creating distance is usually a sound tactic. With a little distance between you and the potential threat, your focus can zoom out enough to see what's important.

If you can't tell whether the person you're dealing with is armed, remain vigilant. Don't assume he's unarmed just because you haven't seen a weapon. He may intend to give you a close-up of the weapon if he senses your guard is down.

If your assessment leads you to believe the person does not pose an imminent threat, distance and assertiveness may be all you need to stave him off. But keep in mind that the assailant may be masking his intent in order to lull you into a false sense of security. Also, drug or alcohol influence, mental health issues and any number of other factors could cause someone's behavior to change in an instant, escalating what's little more



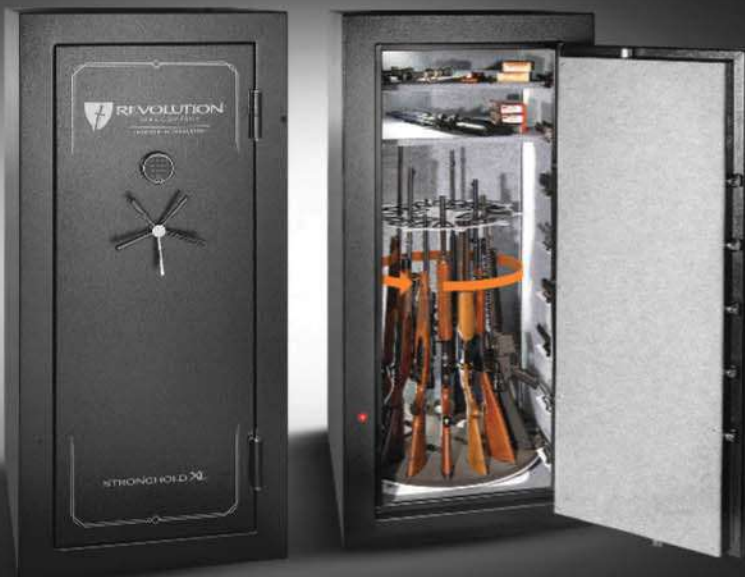
▲ Awareness is key to perceiving a threat. Being distracted by your phone can prevent you from picking up on cues that could signal a potential problem.

than an annoyance to a full-fledged emergency.

If you deem the person who's approached to pose an imminent deadly threat, drawing your gun and getting the muzzle between you and him is paramount, but that may be

easier said than done. Depending on the proximity of the assailant and the type of weapon he's clutching, closing the distance to address the assailant's weapon, disengaging or seeking cover may be appropriate.

If you need to fire your handgun in



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defense of yourself or others, you'll need to shift your focus from the bad guy to the sights. But this doesn't always happen, and it's common to see bullet holes in the weapon or weapon-bearing hand or arm of paper bad-guy targets that are engaged hurriedly—like when navigating a shoot house. Why? You'll naturally tend to focus on what you perceive to be the greatest threat: the weapon.

This phenomenon plays out in force-on-force training as well. If you've ever trained with airsoft or marking cartridges like Simunition, you know how often participants are shot in the hands and arms.

To counteract this inclination to focus on the bad guy's weapon, you'll need to direct your attention to the sights, making sure they are properly aligned and overlaid on a vital target such as the upper chest.

Just as you must confirm an imminent deadly threat exists before firing your handgun, you must con-



▲ When you're confronted by a stranger, your focus needs to move to trying to determine whether he's actually a threat and what level of response is appropriate.

tinually assess an assailant's actions. This requires a broader focus than your front sight. With a wider field of view, you can more easily determine if your rounds were effective in stopping the threat. If not, get back on the sights, then the trigger.

If the assailant crumples, drops his weapon and lies motionless, it's time to shift your focus to other potential threats. This should entail diverting the muzzle of your gun and turning your head and body to get a 360-degree snapshot of your →



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PUTTING IT ALL IN FOCUS

← environment. This helps break up tunnel vision, which is common in high-stress encounters. Remember, bad guys often travel in pairs or even in packs, and if you don't scan, you can become so hyper-focused on the known assailant that you fail to see an accomplice who's about to blind-side you.

Although there are several different scanning techniques, the goal is the same. Systematically look in every direction to ensure there aren't additional threats. Here, you're looking for people, then hands, then actions. Is this person advancing? If so, that's a red flag because running or hiding would be more typical responses to witnessing a gunfight.

Still, just because someone is approaching doesn't mean he poses a threat. Have you considered that the approaching stranger might be an off-duty or plainclothes cop or a legally armed private citizen who has chosen to intervene but



A If a hand is hidden from view or you see someone reaching for his waist, you must consider the possibility he's armed.

doesn't know you're the good guy? By looking at the hands and the waist, you may notice a badge that you wouldn't have otherwise. The last thing you need on the heels of a defensive shooting is to unknowingly engage in a gunfight with another good guy.

In self-defense, focus is impor-

tant. By paying attention to what's going on around you, your senses can do their job—detecting danger while there's still enough time to respond. When a potential threat is identified, tighten your focus to better assess the situation. Then be prepared to zoom in or out to see what's most important.

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COLT KING COBRA TARGET .22

FOR A LONG TIME, WHEN IT CAME TO revolvers Colt was the undisputed king. You could argue Smith & Wesson dominated for longer, and Ruger has certainly been a player in more recent decades, but when you consider Samuel Colt and the iconic Single Action Army, there's little question that guns from this legendary company have been well regarded and sought after.

Colt faded from the wheelgun market in the latter part of the previous century, but in the past five years or so it has gotten back in the game. The return of the Python .357 Magnum made a big splash a couple of years ago, and I was very impressed by the Anaconda .44 Magnum I reviewed in 2023. And there's one more model in Colt's snake lineup worth checking out: the King Cobra.

The King Cobra line includes .357s in Target, DAO and Carry models, but the subject of this review is the 10-shot .22 version. It's built on a medium frame,

and weight is two pounds, two ounces. The King Cobras have a heavy barrel with full-length underlug, and the .22 version is no exception.

The 4.25-inch barrel is one piece, the classic style of manufacturing, and there's a target-style crown at the muzzle. Unique to the King Cobra line, the .22 model boasts a ventilated rib, and the top of the rib and the flat frontstrap are matte-finished for no-glare sighting.

The rear sight is pinned and fully adjustable, and the front sight is a red fiber optic with an ample "cage" to protect the rod. The front sight can be removed by turning out a tiny screw in front of the rib.

Finish on the barrel and frame is a bright stainless, and the polishing was well done except for two missed spots at the front of the rib and the front of the ejector shroud. "King Cobra" and ".22 LR," along with a cobra emblem, are engraved on the left side of the bar-

COLT KING COBRA TARGET .22

TYPE: SA/DA rimfire revolver

CALIBER: .22 Long Rifle

CAPACITY: 10

BARREL: 4.25 in., vent rib, target crown

OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 9.25/5.0/1.4 in.

WEIGHT: 2 lb., 2 oz.

FINISH: bright stainless

GRIPS: pebbled rubber

TRIGGER: DA pull: 9 lb., 5 oz.; SA pull: 3 lb., 8 oz. (measured)

SAFETY: none

PRICE: \$999

MANUFACTURER: Colt, COLT.COM

rel. Colt's info—still proudly located in Hartford, Connecticut—is inscribed on the right side.

The rampant colt symbol is engraved on the frame on the left, below the cylinder latch. The serial number is on the opposite side, and toward the front of the frame on that side is one of

those goofy-looking QR manufacturing codes—although mercifully there are no legalese warnings anywhere on the revolver.

The cylinder release latch is Colt's pull-style, and the cylinder bolt on this gun was extremely well timed. Even after dozens of rounds there was nary a mark on the fluted cylinder.

The hammer spur is standard width and serrated. The double-action trigger pull on this sample averaged nine pounds, five ounces, while the single-action pull measured three pounds, eight ounces. The double-action pull exhibited noticeable stacking at the end of the pull, but the weight was super consistent. There was a slight hitch in the single-action pull when I first started shooting the gun from the bench, but in time it smoothed out and eventually disappeared.

The King Cobra Target .22 lived up to its name from the bench, as you can see in the accompanying chart. That's great 25-yard accuracy with iron sights. It didn't care for the Magtech load, but it's common for individual rimfires to show preferences or dislikes. Similarly, while the Federal Punch self-defense load notched the top accuracy average among the loads tested, it also had sticky extraction of fired cases.

This is such a fun gun to shoot, as you would expect from a full-lug .22 weighing what it does. The balance is terrific, and the rubber grips with their finger grooves fit my hand well.

The sights are great, with a rear notch/front blade combination that allows for real precision; there's minimal light on either side of the 0.016-inch blade. While there are no click-direction arrows on the sight, there's a handy three-dot indicator on the top of the sight so you know which way, and how much, you've moved the notch for windage.

My only complaint is the double-action stacking. It's hardly a deal-breaker, but after working with the Anaconda



A The barrel has a full-length underlug for great balance. Unlike other guns in the line, the .22 has a ventilated rib. The top of the rib and frontstrap are matte-finished to eliminate glare.



A The fluted cylinder holds 10 rounds, and timing of the cylinder bolt was excellent. Accuracy was terrific as well.



A The pebbled rubber grips have finger grooves, and they make the light-recoiling revolver even more comfortable to shoot.

ACCURACY RESULTS | COLT KING COBRA TARGET .22

.22 Long Rifle	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Federal Punch HP	29	1,275	25	1.8
Remington Golden Bullet BPHP	36	931	22	2.4
Fiocchi Range Dynamics LRN	40	847	13	2.1
Magtech LRN	40	785	49	3.3

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. Abbreviations: BPHP, brass-plated hollowpoint; HP, hollowpoint; LRN, lead roundnose

last year I expected better from a Colt revolver. However, the nice thing about revolvers is if a trigger isn't exactly what you hoped for, it's easily cured with an aftermarket spring kit—if I can install one, so can you—or a gunsmith tune-up.

Everyone should have a .22 revolver, and you're not going to find a better example of the breed than the King Cobra

Target .22. As my experience showed, it's a fantastic plinker—accurate and fun to shoot. It would ride really nicely in a belt holster as a trail companion, and while I've never tried my hand at rimfire competitions with a revolver, I would expect this gun would make a great choice. It can do all these things—and do it with a level of class few wheelguns today can match.



**SMITH & WESSON
SD9 2.0**

TYPE: striker-fired semiauto
CALIBER: 9mm Luger
CAPACITY: 16+1, 10+1 (tested)
BARREL: 4 in.
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 7.2/5.5/1.3 in.
WEIGHT: 22.7 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: stainless slide, black polymer frame
SIGHTS: 3-dot; steel front, polymer rear
SAFETY: trigger lever
PRICE: \$349
MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson, SMITH-WESSON.COM

SMITH & WESSON SD9 2.0

MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD OF SMITH & WESSON'S SD or Self Defense pistol. The original SD was the successor to the Sigma, which was the company's initial foray into the polymer-frame, striker-fired category. The affordable SD made its debut in 2010, and it continued largely unchanged for many years—save for the SDVE (for value enhanced) models and the more recent gray and flat dark earth versions. Those are still in the S&W catalog, although the original SD is available in .40 S&W only.

But with the sometimes challenging economic climate faced by people across the country, Smith & Wesson decided it was time to refresh the SD. The company is fond of the "2.0" nomenclature to indicate an upgraded

platform. In the case of the SD, while the 2.0 upgrades aren't earth-shattering, they are functional and practical—while still keeping the price tag low.

The SD9 2.0 has a four-inch barrel, and the slide on this version is stainless steel for a two-tone look. One of the big changes involves the slide serrations. The SD always had fore and aft slide cuts, but on the 2.0 they're deeper, slightly angled and oblong in shape. They do a great job of providing a secure grip for general manipulation and press checks.

The slide is also serrated across its top to defeat glare, and there's a small half-moon viewing port machined behind the ejection port for determining if a round is chambered. The 2.0 has

a steel white-dot front and a polymer two-dot rear, both of which are set in dovetails. Unlike many of the newest pistols on the market, there's no optics cut in the slide.

Perhaps the most significant change involves the trigger. It's still the Self Defense trigger design that made its debut with the SD gun, but in the 2.0 it features a flat face and a trigger safety lever. Flat triggers really help in achieving a trigger press that goes straight to the rear, and they offer more mechanical advantage, making the pull easier for a given weight.

With my particular sample, take-up was fairly long, nearly half an inch, and the reset was almost that long. However, the break was a nice, crisp →

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← five pounds, 12 ounces. While some rave about super-light pulls and short resets, when you come right down to it, the SD 2.0 has just the kind of trigger you want in a defensive pistol.

Controls include a slide-lock lever that's an inch long and surrounded by a small molded ridge to keep the lever from catching on clothing. While the lever is fairly tight to the frame, thanks to its length and leverage it's easy to use as a slide release if that's your method.

The magazine release is oblong and checkered, and it's protected from accidental activation by a wedge-shaped molded projection behind it. Because of the projection and the fact that the release doesn't protrude much, you may find you need to shift your grip slightly to activate it.

The SD9 2.0 is available with 16- or 10-round magazines, and the pistol



A The SD trigger on the 2.0 version has a flat face for an improved pull. The slide-release lever and magazine release are both protected from accidental activation but easy to operate.

ships with a single mag. Magazines from the old Sigma and original SD series guns will fit the 2.0, as will holsters.

The grip portion of the frame sports stippling on the sides and nicely sharp, diamond-style checkering on the frontstrap and backstrap. The checkering is fairly aggressive, and I did notice



A The new slide serrations on the 2.0 offer good purchase for racking and press checks, and the slide top is serrated to combat glare.

some mild abrasion on my keyboard-commando hands after putting about 150 rounds through the gun.

However, the SD 2.0 stays locked in your hands like it was super-glued there, and you'll definitely appreciate the aggressiveness if you're wearing gloves, which tends to allow guns to

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A The grip is textured on the sides and aggressively checked on the frontstrap and backstrap for great control.

shift around. A slight bevel in the magazine well makes for easy reloads.

I think four-inch 9mms are the sweet spot for all-around defense guns, and the SD9 2.0 is a really shootable pistol—more so than today’s popular micro compacts. Besides the controllability offered by the size and the grip

ACCURACY RESULTS | SMITH & WESSON SD9 2.0

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
Hornady Critical Defense	115	1,109	17	2.7
Fiocchi FMJ	115	1,052	21	3.3
Sierra THD JHP	124	1,040	12	2.2
Federal Punch JHP	124	1,111	24	2.8

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest. Velocities are averages of 15 shots recorded 10 feet from the muzzle with a ProChrono DLX. FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

texturing, the rear-sight notch and the front-sight blade have a just-right relationship that allows quick acquisition and alignment. Rapid-fire Bill Drills were a breeze with this pistol.

At a recent meeting with S&W executives, they said there’s “not a better entry-level defense gun” on the market. I think it would be hard to argue with that. Some might point to the lack of red-dot capability, but adding a slide

cut would increase cost, and the \$349 suggested retail on the SD9 2.0—figure \$300 or less street price—is going to appeal to a lot of folks.

As well it should. The SD9 2.0 is a great-handling pistol with a decent trigger. Not only is it easy to shoot, it’s small and light enough for concealed carry, and if you throw a light or laser on the accessory rail, you’ve got a solid home-defense gun as well.



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KIMBER RAPIDE HEAT

NOW INTO ITS SECOND CENTURY OF POP-ularity, it seems like 1911 models, variations and even materials have no end. One look at the Kimber Rapide Heat is proof of that. Chambered for the 9mm and .45 ACP, the gun is impressive, with a Kimber KimPro II black finish applied over a well-prepared and polished stainless steel slide and frame, the latter incorporating a Picatinny rail.

The slide features lightening cuts, with the detailing of a recessed frame around each one, on the top and sides. According to Kimber, a lighter slide provides for a faster return to battery, plus the cuts look great.

The slide has stepped cocking serrations cut in front and back. At the rear, the tall rear sight has twin white dots and is attached to a removable rear optical cover plate. The top of this sight is canted rearward slightly to defeat glare, and the

well-cut notch matches up perfectly with the tall white-dot front sight.

A top rib runs from the ejection port to the base of the front sight. The port is lowered and flared, and there's a cut that allows you to see if there's a round in the chamber.

The stainless steel barrel has a 1:16 twist and is finished in black DLC (diamond-like carbon). The muzzle is threaded for a suppressor—not a common 1911 feature. The Heat uses a match-grade barrel bushing, and the recoil system is a standard guide rod with a 16-pound recoil spring.

The trigger is Kimber's new V-Cut match, which on this sample broke at a crisp four pounds with just a bare hint of creep—finishing off with a short reset. The Heat has extended, serrated ambidextrous safety levers, and the beavertail grip has a comfortable upward sweep and includes a memory bump.

The frontstrap features Kimber's Stiplex pattern, and the flat main-spring housing has texturing that mimics the slide's lightening cuts. That design is repeated on the red/black G10 grip panels, complementing the red trigger. The grip offers a good purchase without any abrasion to the hand.

Years back, if you wanted a mag well attachment you had to go after-market, but today makers like Kimber are offering them as standard. The well on the Heat is flush-fitted, streamlined and hardly noticeable. The gun ships with one eight-round polished stainless Tac-Mag magazine with an extended bumper.

For those desiring a top-end defensive handgun or who just want the ultimate in a Model 1911, the Kimber offers all that at a reasonable price. For \$1,918 it's an investment in a quality firearm that will offer years of service.

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