# GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

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## A QUARTET OF 380 ACP POCKET PISTOLS

***Tested: Colt Mustang XSP Pocketlite Polymer, SIG Sauer P238, Glock 42 Subcompact Slimline, and Kahr's CW 380.*** ● Page 6



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# DOWNRANGE

## WORRISOME FORM 4473 CHANGE



*Todd Woodard*

GUN TESTS wants to give our readers some background information on changes the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives made to Form 4473 in April 2012. You may have noticed the changes yourself and wondered why the new questions suddenly appeared.

On the form, two questions added in 2012 break down the buyer's ethnicity and race in parts 10a and 10b. First, in 10.a., buyers must identify themselves as "Hispanic or Latino" or "Not Hispanic or Latino." Then, in 10.b., the buyer is directed to check one or more boxes, with the choices being: "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," "Black or African American," "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander," or "White."

| 10.a. Ethnicity | 10.b. Race *(Check one or more boxes.)* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ Hispanic or Latino | ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native | ☐ Black or African American | ☐ White |
| ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino | ☐ Asian | ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | |

We're told many applicants skip over the Hispanic/Latino box and only check their race — a natural mistake, if our reading of the form is a gauge.

However, both questions must be filled out, or the dealer can be cited for serious paperwork violations by the agency. If a pattern of the questions not being answered by the buyer appears, the seller could lose his FFL.

The ATF's justification for this requirement stems from a "race and ethnicity standard" devised by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) almost 20 years ago. According to the OMB, the 4473 Form was to be updated by ATF by 2003; however, there is no federal law requiring this administrative directive.

On Sept. 20, Reps. Diane Black (R-TN-06) and Ted Poe (R-TX-02) introduced the FIREARM (Freedom From Intrusive Regulatory Enforcement of Arbitrary Registration Mandates) Act, legislation to prohibit the federal government from requiring race or ethnicity to be disclosed in connection with the purchase of a firearm.

"This requirement by the ATF is highly intrusive and unnecessary," said Congressman Black. "Failing to adhere to this requirement by not checking all of the correct boxes on the 4473 Form is considered an ATF violation that can be so severe as to result in the gun dealer being shut down for having incomplete purchaser forms. This is causing a headache for many firearms retailers and this commonsense legislation would simply stop the federal government from requiring businesses and consumers to comply with this 'race and ethnicity standard.'"

"Washington bureaucrats have no business requiring citizens who are lawfully purchasing firearms to disclose their race or ethnicity," said Congressman Poe. "Under this rule, both gun dealers and purchasers face the threat of federal prosecution for not disclosing race or ethnicity on a form. This is an intrusive and unnecessary requirement. As long as the gun is purchased lawfully, race or ethnicity should be irrelevant." **GT**


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# Whither Kel-Tec's RFB Review?

*Readers Schick, Marcus, and Katz ask about the status of this evaluation. Reader Gerstner opines about the reliability of pistols versus revolvers. And what did Campbell mean by "rail gun?"*



### Kel-Tec RFB's Status

For several months, GUN TESTS magazine advertised in the "Coming Up In GUN TESTS" column an upcoming test on the Kel-Tec RFB 7.62x51 NATO bullpup rifle. I now notice that gun test is no longer listed. Are you ever going to perform a test on the Kel-Tec RFB?

**— Milton Schick**

*Readers Russell Marcus and Bruce Katz also inquired about this. Contributing Editor Austin Miller performed initial testing on the RFB and encountered significant malfunctions with the rifle, which should be covered by the warranty. So we've returned the gun for warranty work, and will report on all of the problems prior to and after it comes back from the factory. Sorry for the delay. — Todd Woodard*

### Re "Gauging 380 ACP Loads: FMJ May Be the Only Way to Go," October 2010

Hello Gents: My wife moved from a Kimber Ultra 45 ACP to a SIG Sauer 380 ACP. Your last evaluation of 380 ammo was in 2010, as near as I can tell. Since the 380 ACP is growing in popularity, and far more ammo choices are available today, are you guys thinking of a 380 bake-off any time soon? SIG touts new SIG ammo on its site, but nothing in the SIG products section shows how to actually buy it.

**— Wayne Kilburn**

*Hey Wayne: I've got a lot of ammunition-story inventory already in house, so it will be a while. But I have forwarded your note to Bob Campbell for development. Meanwhile, the winners of the October 2010 380 ACP test, Fiocchi FMJ 95-grain No. 380FMJB (a full-metal-jacket bullet) and Speer Gold Dot 90-gr. No. 23606 (jacketed hollowpoint), remain our top picks for self-defense 380 ammo. Thanks for writing. — tw*



***Speer Gold Dot 90-gr. No. 23606 Jacketed Hollowpoint***

### Re "Which Is Better: 9mm Luger or 45 ACP? Answer: It Depends," October 2014

Thanks for the great publication as always. I really liked the scientific way you approached the story on ballistic performance of the various 9mm and .45 ACP defense rounds. I'm a reloader and I love this nerdy stuff. However, the muzzle energy numbers are wrong on the 40 S&W and 44 Mag loads you listed. If the bullet weight and velocities are correct, the .40 is actually 581.5 foot-pounds and the .44 Mag is a whopping 899.1

### GUN TESTS REPORT CARD GRADING

**Gun Tests Grade: A**
A gun with this rating functions perfectly, shoots accurately, and exhibits comfortable, easy use for its owner. We may prefer one gun over others based on its unusual accuracy, superior performance, unusual features, or nice cosmetics. We recognize such a gun for these traits without regard to its cost.

**Gun Tests Grade: B**
We give this ranking to a gun that functions appropriately for its category, but which might not do as well in major areas as an **A**-ranked gun.

**Gun Tests Grade: C**
We may have reservations about some aspect of a gun's performance or pricing. We express those reservations so the reader can balance our concerns with his or her needs.

**Gun Tests Grade: D**
Some aspect of a gun's performance — in particular, safety, function, or accuracy — doesn't meet our standards and isn't easily resolved.

**Gun Tests Grade: F**
Some aspect of a gun's performance is dangerous, inappropriate for the category, or is likely to fail.

| Figure 8: Cartridge Comparisons | Muzzle Velocity | Muzzle Energy |
|---|---|---|
| 38 Special Hornady CD 90-gr. JHP | 1200 fps | 288 ft.-lbs. |
| 38 Super Buffalo Bore 147-gr. +P JHP | 1100 fps | 395 ft.-lbs. |
| 9mm Luger Cor-Bon 115-gr. +P JHP | 1301 fps | 432 ft.-lbs. |
| 45 ACP Cor-Bon 185-gr. +P JHP | 1096 fps | 493 ft.-lbs. |
| 357 SIG Federal Prem. 125-gr. JHP | 1367 fps | 519 ft.-lbs. |
| 357 Magnum Hornady 158-gr. JHP | 1250 fps | 548 ft.-lbs. |
| 40 S&W Buffalo Bore 155-gr. +P JHP | 1300 fps | 581 ft.-lbs. |
| 400 Cor-Bon SD 165-gr. JHP | 1300 fps | 619 ft.-lbs. |
| 460 Rowland Cor-Bon Hunter 230-gr. JHP | 1124 fps | 645 ft.-lbs. |
| 10mm Buffalo Bore 155-gr. JHP | 1500 fps | 774 ft.-lbs. |
| 44 Rem. Mag. Buffalo Bore 180-gr. JHP | 1500 fps | 899 ft.-lbs. |

foot-pounds. Also, I shoot and reload a lot of 10mm (which I love) and am familiar with the 460 Rowland, though I don't have one. You mention at the end of the article that 10mm eclipses 460 Rowland, depending on loads and I don't think that's correct. Some of the hottest commercially available ammo that I'm aware of is from Underwood, and his highest-energy 10mm is 767 foot-pounds (135 grains @ 1600 fps) while even his mildest 460 Rowland comes in at 957 foot-pounds, and the hottest at 1019 foot-pounds (185 grains @ 1575 fps). Don't get me wrong, I'm a 10mm fan, but the 460 Rowland is capable of a lot more energy. **— Art Tyszka**

*The calculation errors were mine, not Mr. Ervin's. The corrected table appears above. — tw*

As one with some experience with (and affection for) 10mm and 460 Rowland handguns, I must disagree with one of your implicit conclusions in the ammunition comparison article. You compared muzzle velocity and energy of a "hot" 10mm load sold by Buffalo Bore with those of a relatively modest 460 Rowland load offered by Cor-Bon, and implied that, in general, the 10mm cartridge has a higher muzzle energy than the 460 Rowland. Comparing, however, 155-grain 10mm and 230-grain 460 Rowland cartridges produced by Underwood Ammo, which manufactures loads comparable to those of Buffalo Bore, and using Underwood's approximate velocities, the muzzle energy of the 460 Rowland load is more than 200 foot-pounds greater than that of the 10mm equivalent. The difference is significantly greater for 180- to 185-grain loads for the two cartridges. To quibble a bit more, the widely praised 460 Rowland conversion units sold by several companies include a required compensator, which reduces perceived recoil to roughly that of a 1911 45 ACP (albeit at the cost of an inch and a half greater barrel length). And the significant recoil of 10mm handguns can be reduced by Mag-na-porting. As a practical consideration, 10mm and 460 Rowland handguns excel (assuming appropriate bullets) in reliably penetrating automobile bodies, windshields, and other similar barriers, while still retaining effective velocities and bullet form. Indeed, the smaller diameter of the 10mm round improves penetration over that of larger 45-caliber bullets, other matters being equivalent.

**— Don Noble**

**Re "Firing Line," October 2014**

The good news for you is that I received the October issue yesterday, and I've already read it cover to cover. Of course, that's bad news for me since I'd like another 32 pages! For Mr. Campbell: I enjoyed the Kimber Tactical Pro v. SIG Scorpion article, but have a question about "The Scorpion is a rail gun" sentence which begins the "Our Team Said:" section. Google was not helpful directing me to articles about the larger artillery of WWI, atomic cannons, and next-generation naval rifles. What is a rail gun? I have Glocks, a SIG 220, traditional 1911s, and an S&W M&P 45. Are any of these a rail gun? I assume that traditional 1911s are not rail guns. Thanks for the help.

**— Ron Hunsicker**

*A "rail gun" was just Bob's shorthand way of saying a "railed gun" or "a gun with a rail," that is, a handgun with an accessory rail molded into the front of the slide, most often found on polymer-frame handguns, but not always. The rail is usually just a cross-slot for a Picatinny rail mount on an accessory, most often a lightweight flashlight, but lasers, too. Sorry that wasn't clear in the story. — tw*

In response to Howard Born's comments and questions about the SIG P938, I have an answer for his trigger problems. I purchased a SIG P938 about nine months ago, and when I got it home, I discovered the safety would not work and it had a difficult trigger press. I emailed SIG Sauer about the problems and received a response within hours to ship my pistol to SIG for repairs. I received my pistol from SIG eight days later. They had replaced the safety, upgraded the ejector, and worked on the trigger. The trigger press is very much improved, up to what one would expect from a single-action pistol. I would suggest Mr. Born email SIG Sauer with his complaint and send it back to them for trigger repair. Admittedly, one would expect a new SIG to come out of the box ready to run, but if that's not case, at least they seem willing to make it right without charge and within a reasonable amount of time.

**— Gary Matney**

*We appreciate your insights on this. We're pretty hard on products because we expect them to run correctly, but we realize that any business can make a mistake on the millions of operations it takes to manufacture products accurately. So we agree with you Gary, the willingness to make something*

*right "without charge and within a reasonable amount of time" is vital to a company's goodwill. — tw*

I wish to add some perspective to Mr. Joseph Dickens' comment regarding the reliability of revolvers versus semi-autos in your October 2014 edition.

My first duty auto was a U.S. Army Colt Government Model made pre-WWII and rebuilt in an armory, acquired with pre-1960s magazines. It never missed a beat. I still have magazines from the early years of the Vietnam War, with the springs and followers that were in them then, and none has ever malfunctioned. My second was a Browning Hi-Power, circa 1971, and it never missed a beat.

Between 1984 and 2008, I was issued or bought myself SIG 228s, 226s, 229/357 SIGs, 220s, and a 239/357 SIG. My employer bought cheaper and lighter Bersa Thunder autos to replace totally reliable Walther PP and PPKs. None ever malfunctioned. I did see one magazine bottom pop out during training.

In addition to the SIGs, I owned a number of 1911-pattern handguns (mostly Colts), a few early-model Glocks, some S&W and other semi-autos, none of which ever suffered a mechanical malfunction. One nearly-new Springfield magazine failed due to soft lips, but that was it. I owned, used or observed dozens of Beretta 92s, only one of which malfunctioned. For perspective, our professional-military son has been shooting Berettas since he was 12, and observed malfunctions in "the desert," due, he felt, to abysmal care.

For Cowboy shooting I had a pair of 44 Magnum Ruger Vaqueros. On one the hammer would jam as it was cocked, causing me to forfeit the stage. To date, we don't know why it does that. I have two Colt SAAs that, despite shooting black-power cartridges, have never hiccupped.

I had an S&W 327 in which the barrel separated from the frame. An S&W 329 crane broke while I was ejecting shells.

Four Taurus 941 revolvers chambered in 22 Magnum I bought for our children bound up so hard the cylinders would not rotate after 18 rounds. Two keyholed and one pitched the rear sight the first time it went to the range. I was given a Taurus 431 in 44 Special. The trigger pull was so gritty and stacked so hard it was impossible to hold the gun on target while pulling. The cylinder of a Taurus 44 Mag. would not lock into the frame. The metal of the frame lug was so soft it eroded away, internal parts looked as though they had been worked with a grinding wheel, and the cylinder bolt spring was too weak to function.

A Colt Anaconda I had would bind up as the trigger was pulled and could not be fired double-action. Back to the Colt factory for a tune-up, after which it worked fine.

The most common mechanical malfunction I've seen with semi-autos is the failure of the slide to lock back after the last round. To me, this is not a failure to shoot, and is no more dangerous than shooting a revolver empty. In both cases, the shooter has to notice and then reload. I have seen some failures to feed, extract or eject, and, after break-in, most were ammo or operator caused. A couple were due to "butchersmithing."

Most semi-auto malfunctions I saw were due to faulty ammo or poor shooter technique — not mechanical problems. An equivalent ammo issue I've seen in revolvers is when the bullets slip forward out of the shell and lock up the cylinder.

I've owned or been loaned almost 100 revolvers and, with the exceptions noted, they were completely reliable. I know this because I kept records.

So long as I have vetted the gun, I feel safe with either type.

**— Jan Gerstner**
**Delafield, Wisconsin**

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*We welcome mail from our readers. To send us comments or questions about previous articles in the magazine, email us at:* **GunTestsEditor@icloud.com.** *If you'll include the month and year of the article you're writing about, it's a big help. Also, please include your name, address, and phone number. We won't publish your personal information without your permission, but we may need to contact you.* **GT**

# A Quartet of Pocket Pistols from SIG Sauer, Glock, Kahr, and Colt

*We're not against the 380 ACP on principle — we just weren't that impressed with these small guns. But all four do one thing well that may sell you on them nonetheless: They can hide.*

Many concealed-carry customers pooh-pooh pistols chambered in 380 ACP as being underpowered for self defense, but they may well be in the vocal minority, because sales of 380-chambered handguns and ammunition continues apace, with more of the smallish sidearms finding their way into pockets and purses than ever before. It can be argued, in fact, that Glock kept seeing its rivals sell so many inexpensive-to-make pocket pistols that the Austrians were forced into the U.S. 380 ACP market with the G42 just so they could grab a slice of the ever-growing pocket-pistol pie.

At Gun Tests, we have mined this lode plenty ourselves, finding quite a few worthy pocketguns and pocketguns-plus over the years. We have previously given A grades to a new CZ USA Model 83 No. 91302, a Bersa Firestorm, a Colt Mustang Pocketlite, and a Kel-Tec P3AT. A half-grade down at A- grades have been the Ruger LCP-CT, a used Beretta Model 84 and CZ Model 83, a Ruger LC380 No. 3219, and a Taurus 738B No. 1-73803. Our new e-book on 380s, available on the Gun-Tests.com website, recaps those guns and six more B+ or B pistols, or you can search for "380 ACP" in the archives and





***Above: For purse or pocket carry, we think there are better choices than the pricey Colt XSP 380 ACP. At left, clockwise from left, are the Colt Mustang XSP Pocketlite Polymer O6790, SIG Sauer P238 No. 238-380-NBS12, the Glock 42 Subcompact Slimline, and Kahr's CW 380 No. 3833. Of the four, we might buy the Glock if it were fitted with a green laser from Viridian.***

## RANGE DATA

| **Winchester USA 380 ACP 95-Grain FMJ USA380VP** | **Glock G42** | **SIG Sauer P238 TL** | **Kahr Arms CW 380** | **Colt Mustang Pocketlite Polymer** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Muzzle Velocity | 920 fps | 923 fps | 889 fps | 910 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 178 ft.-lbs. | 180 ft.-lbs. | 167 ft.-lbs. | 175 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group Size | 1.7 in. | 3.0 in. | 1.8 in. | 2.2 in. |
| Average Group Size w/Laser | 1.2 in. | 1.8 in. | | |

| **Prvi Partizan 380 ACP 94 Grain FMJ #PPR3.2** | **Glock G42** | **SIG Sauer P238 TL** | **Kahr Arms CW 380** | **Colt Mustang Pocketlite Polymer** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Muzzle Velocity | 886 fps | 887 fps | 861 fps | 823 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 164 ft.-lbs. | 164 ft.-lbs. | 155 ft.-lbs. | 141 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group Size | 3.7 in. | 4.0 in. | 2.3 in. | 2.5 in. |
| Average Group Size w/Laser | 1.2 in. | 1.8 in. | | |

| **Hornady Critical Defense 380 ACP 90 Grain FTE #90080** | **Glock G42** | **SIG Sauer P238 TL** | **Kahr Arms CW 380** | **Colt Mustang Pocketlite Polymer** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Muzzle Velocity | 901 fps | 943 fps | 901 fps | 883 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 162 ft.-lbs. | 178 ft.-lbs. | 162 ft.-lbs. | 156 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group Size | 3.3 in. | 2.8 in. | 2.5 in. | 3.7 in. |
| Average Group Size w/Laser | 1.7 in. | 1.6 in. | | |

*To collect chronograph data, we set up at Tactical Firearms in Katy, Texas (TacticalFirearms.us). We recorded velocities using a CED M2 Chronograph with Infrared Screen Set ($290, Brownells #399-000-012WB and #399-100-002WB) with the first screen set 10 feet from the muzzle. Velocities were recorded with an indoor air temperature of 70 degrees. For bench-accuracy shooting at 10 yards, we fired the pistols off a Caldwell Shooting Supplies Matrix Rest ($50, #100-012-210WB). Accuracy is the average group size for five five-shot groups, measured center-to-center of the widest-apart bullet holes in each group. To measure the group sizes, we scanned the targets into PhotoShop CS6, then used the Ruler tool to measure and round the results to the nearest tenth of an inch.*



***Ammunition Notes:*** *Hornady Critical Defense Ammunition 380 ACP 90-Grain Flex Tip eXpanding #90080, $19.50/25 (MidwayUSA.com #352263). Prvi Partizan Ammunition 380 ACP 94-Grain Full Metal Jacket #PPR3.2, $17/50 (MidwayUSA.com #283576). Winchester USA Ammunition 380 ACP 95-Grain Full Metal Jacket #USA380VP, $40/100 (MidwayUSA.com #965139). FMJ = Full Metal Jacket. FTE = Flex Tip eXpanding.*

pull up the entire list of such firearms we've evaluated over the years.

We think many consumers like these pistols because most of them are easy to carry and conceal, and they're willing to trade off the "carry everywhere" portability for slightly less power than some 38 Specials, for example. Our tests of several 380 ACP self-defense loads had three (Federal 90-gr. Hydra-Shok JHP, Speer 90-gr. Gold Dot JHP, and Fiocchi 95-gr. FMJ) that penetrated at least 13.5+ inches in water, very close to what a Remington 125-gr. JHP 38 Sp. +P did as a control — and not too many experts say the 38 Special is "too little" gun.

This round, we tested three brand-new models and one variation of a previously tested model as a reference point. The first of the new models was the Colt Mustang XSP Pocketlite Polymer O6790, MSRP $649, but which we found at ImpactGuns.com for $565 and $572 at BudsGunShop.com. Or Bud's would sell it for a cash price of $555. Next up was the Glock 42 Subcompact Slimline, MSRP $480, which SlickGuns.com had for sale at $490 plus free shipping. Bud's listed it for $437 or $424 cash. Kahr's CW 380 No. 3833, $419 MSRP, comes in at a $322 retail price at Bud's or a $313 cash discount price. At GeorgiaGunStore.com, the price was $312. The fourth entry was a P238 from SIG Sauer, No. 238-380-NBS12, with a hefty MSRP of $710 and a retail price of $498 from Bud's Gun Shop (but listed as out of stock the last time we checked), or $583 from TombstoneTactical.com or $520 from JoeBobOutfitters.com.

In more detail, the polymer Colt XSP is one of two Mustangs in the company's 380 line. Colt ceased production of the Mustangs in 2000 then reintroduced

the line in 2011. The new guns are designed to accept original parts. Both have stainless-steel slides, measure 5.5 inches in length, have 2.75-inch barrels, and operate with short single-action trigger function, or like miniature 1911s. The Mustang Pocketlite has an aluminum frame, while the XSP, introduced in 2013, has a lightweight polymer skin. According to company specs, the polymer XSP is about an ounce lighter than the Pocketlite.

The new Glock 42, made in Georgia, is a slimline subcompact pistol and is the smallest pistol Glock has ever introduced, but it's not the company's first 380 Auto. The Glock 25 was introduced in 1995 in Germany as a small-dimension firearm for markets where civilian personnel are not allowed to possess handguns featuring military calibers. In the USA, the G25 is reserved for law-enforcement agencies only. Like the G25, the Glock 28 is reserved for LE. The G25 is 7.36 inches long, 5 inches tall, and has a capacity of 15+1. The G28 is 6.41 inches long, 4.7 inches tall, and has a capacity of 10+1. Both are noticeably larger than our tested G42, which was 5.94 inches long, 4.13 inches tall, and has a capacity of 6+1. Marketed for pocket carry and to shooters with smaller hands, the single-stack G42 lacks the interchangeable backstraps of other Glocks, but field-strips the same way as other larger Glocks.

Introduced in 2014, the Kahr CW 380 No. 3833 is one of a line of "value" pistols, as opposed to the P Series pistols, which are Kahr's premium polymer pistol with match-grade polygonal barrels, machined slide stops, dovetailed front sights, and slides with engraved markings and extensive cosmetic rounding. Also, P Series pistols are provided with three magazines. CW-Series pistols have Kahr's set features but reduce production cost by using barrels with conventional rifling, making fewer operations on the slide exterior (simple roll markings and pinned front sights), and CW Series pistols use a metal-injection-molded slide

## COLT MUSTANG XSP POCKETLITE POLYMER 06790
## 380 ACP, $649
## GUN TESTS GRADE: C+

**In our view, this costs a lot of money, and there are many pistols that work better for less money.**







**Even smallish hands fall off the bottom of the Colt's grip when the hand is in firing position.**



**Bigger hands swallow up the Colt. The small pistol isn't that much fun to shoot.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Single Action Semi-Auto, Commander-Style Hammer |
| Overall Length | 5.5 in. |
| Overall Height | 3.75 in. |
| Maximum Width | 1.18 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 12.8 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 15.4 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/o mag) | 4.0 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/mag) | 5.4 oz. |
| Weight, Slide Only | 7.4 oz. |
| Capacity | 6+1 Rounds |
| Barrel | 2.75 in., Stainless Steel, Ramped |
| Slide | Black Diamond-Like Carbon Stainless Steel, 7 Rear Serrations |
| Slide Retraction Effort | 14 lbs. |
| Frame | Black Polymer |
| Grips | Textured Black Polymer |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 1.04 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 4.6 in. |
| Grip Frontstrap | 1.3 in. Tall, Coarse Checkering |
| Grip Backstrap | 2.0 in. Tall, Coarse Checkering |
| Sight, Front | Black Steel Front Blade, Dovetailed |
| Sight, Rear | Black, Square Notch, Drift Adjustable |
| Sight Radius | 3.64 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight (Single Action) | 7.5 lbs. |
| Trigger Span (Single Action) | 2.35 in. |
| Safety | Frame-Mounted Ambi Lever |
| Magazines | (1) 6-Round Stainless Steel |
| Accessories | Plastic Pistol Case, Lock, Manual, Pistol Plug |
| Warranty | Limited Lifetime |
| Telephone | (800) 962-2658 |
| Website | Colt.com |
| Made In | Hartford, CT |



**Takedown doesn't get much simpler than this.**





**Far left and left: The Colt's sights are rudimentary and hard to see, in our view. That doesn't help its accuracy.**

## GLOCK 42 SUBCOMPACT SLIMLINE 380 ACP, $480

## GUN TESTS GRADE: B

**Worries about this Glock being too big just weren't supported in our daily carry experiences. It is bigger than the Kahr, sure, but it's also easier to shoot. With a Viridian green laser on it, we'd bump up the grade to an A- and probably buy it.**







**Above: The thumb of this woman's hand is elevated here to show contouring on the grip — this isn't a firing grip. But you can see how the slightly taller frame accommodates about two-and-a-half fingers. Also, notice the Viridian Green Laser on the front. It took about 5 minutes to install and vastly improved accuracy. Below, if you install a $10 Pearce Grip extension, three fingers can hold the gun.**



| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Single Action Semi-Auto, Striker Fired, Locked Breech |
| Overall Length | 5.94 in. |
| Overall Height | 4.13 in. |
| Maximum Width | 0.94 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 14.0 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 16.6 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/o mag) | 3.2 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/mag) | 4.8 oz. |
| Weight, Slide Only | 9.8 oz. |
| Capacity | 6+1 Rounds |
| Barrel | 3.25 in., Stainless Steel, Ramped; Hexagonal Rifling, 1:9.84 RH |
| Slide | Black Stainless Steel, 6 Rear Serrations |
| Slide Retraction Effort | 15 lbs. |
| Frame | Black Polymer |
| Grips | Textured Black Polymer |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 0.9 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 4.9 in. |
| Grip Frontstrap | 1.55 in. Tall, Gen4 Texture |
| Grip Backstrap | 2.1 in. Tall, Gen4 Texture |
| Sight, Front | Black Polymer Front Blade |
| Sight, Rear | Black Polymer, Drift Adjustable; White Outline Square Notch |
| Sight Radius | 4.90 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight (Single Action) | 7.9 lbs. |
| Trigger Span (Single Action) | 2.61 in. |
| Safety | Safe Action Trigger; Firing Pin Safety; Drop Safety |
| Magazines | (2) 6-Round Polymer; |
| Accessories | Plastic Pistol Case, Cable Lock, Manual, Brush, Patch |
| Warranty | Limited One Year |
| Telephone | (770) 432-1202 |
| Website | GlockUS.com |
| Made In | USA |



**Takedown is the standard Glock process. All three guns were easy to field strip, but the Glock was probably the easiest.**

stop. The CWs are shipped with one six-round steel magazine with flush baseplate. Like other Kahrs, the owner's manual provided with the CW 380 recommends a 200-round break-in.

The P238 was introduced in 2009, and No. 238-380-NBS12 will be our third test of SIG Sauer's small 380, but there's plenty more where that one comes from. The company lists 18 P238s in a range of finishes and colors, and we have previously tried the 238-380-TL Tactical Laser and the No. 238-380-TSS Two Tone. Though the P238 mimics 1911 controls — slide stop, thumb safety, magazine release, SA trigger, and exposed hammer — the mechanism is quite different. We expected this one and the Colt to be the easiest to shoot well because of their single-action triggers, and we also liked the SIG's large night sights. But because of the sights, the P238 needs to be carried in a holster or a large pocket, we found. The laser for the P238 was nicely integrated on the P238's frame/receiver under the barrel and around the trigger guard.

### How We Tested

To collect chronograph data, we set up at Tactical Firearms in Katy, Texas (TacticalFirearms.us). For bench-accuracy shooting at 10 yards, we fired the pistols off a Caldwell Shooting Supplies Matrix Rest ($50, #100-012-210WB) onto Birchwood-Casey BB-SI single-bull targets.

We fired two ball ammos and one jacketed hollowpoint, all purchased from MidwayUSA.com. The first was Prvi Partizan Ammunition 94-Grain Full Metal Jacket #PPR3.2, which were $17 per 50 rounds. This was the round we used for break-in of all the guns, which we ran to 200 shots on all four, since the Kahr manual specified that number. We also shot Winchester USA 95-grain Full Metal Jacket #USA380VP, which were $40 per 100 in the well-known white box. We fired the Hornady Critical Defense #90080 as an example of a self-defense round many shooters would prefer. Loaded with 90-grain Flex

Tip eXpanding bullets, the Critical Defense rounds were a pricey $19.50 per 25 count, or 78 cents per bang.

We also had a variety of women from 21 to 60 years of age handle the pistols and comment on the slide-retraction effort needed to operate each one. And we pocket-carried each one for a week in a variety of clothing, including pants pockets, cargo-shorts pockets, workout shorts, and purses. Here's how they performed:

### Features

The Glock 42 came in a plastic pistol case that contained a cable lock, manual, cleaning brush, and Glock patch and window sticker. In the case were two 6-round polymer magazines. The front sight was a black polymer front blade screwed into the top of the slide. The rear sight was also black polymer with a white squared U-shape framing the front-sight white dot. The rear sight was drift adjustable for windage. The frame and slide had marks designating that the gun was made in Georgia. Safeties include a firing pin safety and drop safety, as well as the lever in the Safe Action Trigger, but no conventional safety as on the Colt and SIG. The G42 is a single-action semi-auto that's striker fired. The extractor serves as a loaded-chamber indicator. When the chamber is loaded, the extractor pivots out from the slide. The slide is black stainless steel with six rear serrations. The frame is, of course, black polymer, and the grip had a Gen4-like texture, but not as aggressive as on other Glocks. Warranty is a limited one-year agreement.

Made in Hartford, Connecticut, the Colt Mustang Pocketlite Polymer O6790 is a single-action semi-auto with a Commander-style hammer. It came with one six-round stainless-steel magazine, a plastic pistol case, a lock, manual, and chamber plug. While some basic features of the Mustang Pocketlite, such as size, magazine and slide, continue in the Mustang XSP, the polymer gun has some differences. The front blade is a

## KAHR CW 380 NO. 3833 380 ACP, $419

## GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

**We admit being conflicted by this gun. We didn't like the sights, the short grip, or the long DAO trigger pull. But if you want to buy this as a hideout piece, you'll look past those issues.**







**Again, this isn't a firing grip. We're just demonstrating how a woman's hand fits on the Kahr. You can see how the trigger finger wraps around the trigger shoe, highlighting how short the 2.33-inch trigger span is. Also, the ring finger is nearly off the gun. The thumb can reach the slide-release lever, but most women couldn't pull the slide back enough to release the catch and let the slide advance, even when holding the gun at chest level and pushing the hands together. That factor alone is enough for many people with diminished grip strength to pass on this one. It's something you have to check for yourself.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Trigger-Cocking DAO Semi-Auto, Striker Fired, Locked Breech |
| Overall Length | 4.8 in. |
| Overall Height | 3.9 in. |
| Maximum Width | 0.92 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 11.8 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 14.4 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/o mag) | 2.8 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/mag) | 4.8 oz. |
| Weight, Slide Only | 7.0 oz. |
| Capacity | 6+1 Rounds |
| Barrel | 2.58 in., Stainless Steel; 1:16 RH Twist Rifling, Ramped |
| Slide | Matte 416R Stainless Steel, 8 Rear Serrations |
| Slide Retraction Effort | 19 lbs. |
| Frame | Black Polymer |
| Grips | Textured Black Polymer |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 0.8 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 4.5 in. |
| Grip Frontstrap | 1.28 in. Tall, Checkered |
| Grip Backstrap | 1.85 in. Tall, Checkered |
| Sight, Front | Pinned-In Polymer Bar, White Dot |
| Sight, Rear | Black Polymer, Drift Adjustable; White Bar in Notch |
| Sight Radius | 3.80 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight (Double Action) | 6.4 lbs. |
| Trigger Span (Double Action) | 2.33 in. |
| Trigger Travel to Break | 0.65 in. |
| Safety | Passive Striker Block; No Mag Disconnect |
| Magazines | (1) 6-Round Stainless Steel; Flush Baseplate |
| Accessories | Padded Pistol Box, Lock, Manual |
| Warranty | Limited Five Year |
| Telephone | (508) 795-3919 |
| Website | Kahr.com |
| Made In | Worcester, MA |



**Like the others, the Kahr is easy to get to this point. Reassembly is likewise not a problem.**

black steel bar dovetailed into the slide. At the rear, the metal sight has a shallow, square notch. The rear sight was drift adjustable in a dovetail. The slide serrations on the XSP have been enhanced to offer an improved grip when working the slide. The XSP also features ambidextrous safeties, rather than the typical single-sided safety. An integral ⅜-inch accessory rail sits below the dust cover for easy mounting of lasers and lights, and a squared-off trigger guard allows those devices to be fitted more securely. A molded thumb perch sits under the XSP's safeties, and a cut behind the trigger guard helps the gun sit lower in the user's hand. The safety and slidestop profiles have been blended to reduce the gun's profile. The slide and barrel are machined from stainless steel bar stock, and the slide has a blackened finish. The black polymer frame had a light texture on the sides of the grip and a checkered backstrap that was more aggressive than the Glock, we thought. Warranty is limited lifetime.

The SIG Sauer P238 came in a padded box, with a cable lock, manual, leather holster, and one 7-round stainless-steel magazine. It has been referred to as a Colt Mustang clone, but we would dispute that characterization. The P238's single-action operation was described in the owner's manual as a hammer-fired mechanically locked, short-recoil-operation blowback pistol with semi-automatic reloading. Our gun was built on an alloy frame with a Nitron-finished stainless-steel slide. The slide featured seven cocking serrations to the rear and SIGLite night sights dovetailed in front and back. The black anodized aluminum frame with beavertail was fitted with a one-piece black-rubber finger-groove grip held in place by Allen-head screws. The left side of the gun featured a grooved magazine button, slide stop and thumb safety each matching the slide. The thumb safety was left side only, and the right side of the pistol was accented with stainless steel pins. The backstrap was flat with vertical lines capping the mainspring housing and the surface along the front strap. The distance from the bottom of the trigger guard to the magazine well held two fingers comfortably in the grooves, with the pinkie wrapping underneath. A single flush-fit six-round magazine was supplied. As well as the night sights, this pistol came with a red SIG Sauer laser with ambidextrous push-button activation. The dot size was rated at 0.5 inch at 50 feet and allowed windage and elevation sight adjustments. It is powered by (1) CR1/3N lithium battery. There was no written warranty.



***Here's a visual comparison of how the Viridian laser improved the Glock's accuracy. The group at left is open sights.***



***Here's a representative target shot by the Kahr at 10 yards — about 2.5 inches and slightly high with a 6 o'clock hold. Frankly, we were surprised it shot this well because of the DA trigger's length of pull and the minimalist sights. But the paper doesn't lie.***

The Kahr CW 380 is a trigger-cocking DAO semi-auto that's striker fired from a locked breech. Made in Worcester, Massachusetts, it came with one six-round stainless steel magazine with flush baseplate, a padded pistol box, lock, and manual. The slide is matte 416R stainless steel with eight rear serrations. The black-polymer frame has textured grip panels with a finish on par with the roughness of the Colt. The front sight is a pinned-in polymer bar with white dot. The rear sight is also made of black polymer, with a white bar below a notch. It's drift adjustable in a dovetail. The safety is a passive striker block — there's no external trigger safety or frame-mounted safety and no mag disconnect. Warranty is a limited five-year agreement.

**Our Team Said: The Glock's accessory package was the best, in our view, if we set aside the SIG's laser for now and deal with it in the sights section. However, the SIG was a close second for the excellent holster that allowed open, load, and carry use out of the box. Only the Glock came with more than one magazine.**

### Dimensions and Weights

The Kahr CW 380 had an overall length of only 4.8 inches compared to the Colt XSP and SIG P238 (5.5 inches) and Glock 42 (5.94 inches). However, the Colt at 3.75 inches was the shortest in overall height, nudging out the Kahr (3.9), Glock (4.13), and SIG (4.3). The Kahr (0.92 inches) and the Glock (0.94) were noticeably thinner than the Colt (1.18) and SIG (1.22).

The Kahr was a featherweight in the pocket, weighing only 11.8 ounces unloaded and 14.4 ounces loaded. But Colt wasn't far behind (12.8 and 15.4 ounces), followed by the G42 (14.0 and 16.6 ounces), and the P238 (17.0 and 20.0 ounces). Some of that was due to capacity, with the Kahr, Colt, and Glock at 6+1 and the P238 at 7+1. And some was due to barrel length, with the shortest tube belonging to the Kahr (2.58 inches), followed by the SIG (2.7 inches), Colt (2.75 inches), and Glock (3.25 inches).

The grips were more complicated to assess. The Kahr was certainly the smallest in the areas that count most: maximum grip thickness was 0.8 inches; grip circumference was 4.5 inches, the checkered frontstrap offered 1.28 inches of gripping surface and the checkered backstrap at 1.85 inches. The Colt, likewise, had a tiny grip, with a maximum grip thickness of 1.04 inches;

### SIG SAUER P238 238-380-NBS12 380 ACP, $710

## GUN TESTS GRADE: C

**Based on our history with this line, this gun was a disappointment. Its control set should have produced a 1911-like functional experience, but the inconsistent trigger pull affected accuracy. We loved the feel of it, but the rubber grips would affect the draw if it's not in a holster. The laser is included in the price, and that optic helped accuracy.**



**The SIG comes with a nice leather holster. That would be our preferred carry method.**



**This is where the rubber meets the road, or the hand. We loved the feel of the pebbled rubber grip with finger grooves. The magazine basepad provided purchase for a third finger.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Single Action Semi-Auto, Hammer Fired, Blowback |
| Overall Length | 5.5 in. |
| Overall Height | 4.3 in. |
| Maximum Width | 1.22 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 17.0 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 20.0 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/o mag) | 6.2 oz. |
| Weight, Frame Only (w/mag) | 7.8 oz. |
| Weight, Slide Only | 8.8 oz. |
| Capacity | 7+1 Rounds |
| Barrel | 2.7 in., Stainless Steel, Ramped; 1:16 Twist |
| Slide | Nitron Stainless Steel; 7 Rear Serrations |
| Slide Retraction Effort | 9 lbs. |
| Frame | Black Anodized Alum. w/Beavertail |
| Grips | Textured Black Rubber; Finger Grooves |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 1.22 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 5.3 in. |
| Grip Frontstrap | 1.93 in. |
| Grip Backstrap | 2.38 in., Grooved |
| Sight, Front | SIGLite Blade; Dovetailed |
| Sight, Rear | Steel SIGLite Two-Dot; Drift Adjustable |
| Sight Radius | 3.66 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight (Single Action) | 8.0 lbs. |
| Trigger Span (Single Action) | 2.38 in. |
| Safety | Frame-Mounted Thumb |
| Magazines | (1) 7-Round Stainless Steel; |
| Accessories | Padded Box, Cable Lock, Manual, Leather Holster |
| Warranty | None Written |
| Telephone | (603) 772-2302 |
| Website | SIGSauer.com |
| Made In | USA |
| Laser Brand | SIG Sauer |
| One-Hand/Ambi Activation | Yes/Yes |
| Beam Color | Red |
| Beam Modes | Steady Beam |
| Beam Intensity | 5mw, 633nm |
| Dot Size | 0.5 in. @ 50 ft. |
| Sight Adjustments | Windage, Elevation |
| Battery | (1) CR1/3N Lithium |

grip circumference of 4.6 inches, a checkered frontstrap at 1.3 inches of gripping surface and the checkered backstrap at 2.0 inches. But that was too short for some men, who could only get about a finger and a half on the grip, which hurt controllability and accuracy. The Glock was slightly better at a maximum grip thickness of 0.9 inches, grip circumference of 4.9 inches, a frontstrap at 1.55 inches, and the checkered backstrap at 2.1 inches. In the hand, our shooters preferred the feel of the P238's grip, with a 1.22-inch grip thickness, 5.3-inch grip circumference, 1.93-inch frontstrap, and 2.38-inch backstrap, along with the rubber finger grooves and magazine extension. Adding Pearce Grip extensions (PG-42, $10) to the Glock magazines brings that gun alongside the P238 in grip comfort, our shooters said.

**Our Team Said: The Kahr was easily the (small) size winner. When we placed it in pants or jacket pockets, it would disappear. The Colt was likewise easy to hide, with the Glock and SIG less so. Because of the SIG's rubber grips, we wouldn't want to carry it outside its holster because the rubber can grab material and impede a speedy draw.**

### Operation

Our shooters had some disagreements about the operations of the tested guns. In early handling, women and men with compromised grip strength vetoed the Kahr, grading its 19-pound slide retraction effort as an F. (Basically, this is a measure of the recoil spring strength, along with the slide's slickness, texture, and slide height.) The Glock at 15 pounds bothered some women, and the Colt was stiff as well, but not as bad at 14 pounds. The SIG at 9 pounds of slide retraction effort with broad, easy-to-grasp serrations was the winner in this crucial area.

Assessing the controls was next, and our testers agreed that the Kahr and the Glock were brain-dead simple to operate. Neither had external controls other than the magazine release to fuss with, a marked contrast from the single-action SIG and Colt pistols with one-side and



***Here we're chronographing the SIG with Winchester ball ammo. Gloves helped with the grip on these short-frame pistols.***

ambi safety levers, respectively.

We expected the single-action handguns to easily beat the DAs, but that wasn't the case. The SIG's single-action break weight averaged out to be 8.0 pounds, but its break range was from 6.8 pounds to 8.8 pounds, depending on where the trigger finger met the shoe. At the bottom of the shoe, where the finger dragged on the guard, the break weight was lower. In the middle of the shoe, the break weight was higher. The inconsistency was irritating, of course. The Colt's trigger-pull weight was marginally lighter at 7.5 pounds, but it had a spongy and indistinct break point. Still, they were better than the Kahr's double-action break, which came at 6.4 pounds. Trigger travel to break on the Kahr was 0.65 inches, a long, gooey mess wherein the initial pull on the trigger didn't require much effort, but then a second stage readying the action to fire occurred near the back of the trigger guard. The Glock likewise had its trademark take-up, but it broke consistently at 7.9 pounds.

The magazine releases on all four dumped the mags with little effort. The safeties on the Colt and SIG operated as we expected. The P238 and Colt's thumb safeties can be left on while their slides are racked, unlike a standard 1911 and the SIG P938

**Our Team Said: We had some early malfunctions with all four, mainly failures to feed the blockish Winchester rounds, but those issues worked themselves out. The Glock could be used and understood by most shooters immediately, and it had the best trigger in this test. Before buying one, however, all women and many men should check to see if they can operate its slide.**

## Sights & Accuracy

This was another area in which our testers disagreed. The function of these firearms are as portable, carry-anywhere self-defense guns, and their sights aren't made to win matches. How much aiming does a concealed-carrier have to do with a bad guy 15 feet away? Still, the sights on the Colt and the Kahr were abysmal, hard to see and regulate on a silhouette. The Glock and SIG sights were much better, in our opinion, and the lasers made us able to shoot them on par with much bigger guns. We mentioned the SIG's red laser before, but we also added a Viridian Green Laser, just announced for the Glock 42, to our test gun. Viridian's R5-G42 Reactor is the first green laser for the G42, and this model automatically ignites instantly when drawn from a supplied leather and polymer holster. Additional holster options are available from many holster manufacturers.

Unquestionably, the lasers helped our shooters' accuracy. Shooting Winchester 95-grain FMJs, the average group size with a laser was 1.2 inches for the Glock and 1.8 inches for the SIG, noticeably better than we could do with the open sights (1.7 and 3.0 inches, respectively.) We saw the same group-size decrease with the Prvi Partizan 94-grain FMJs, with the Glock at a laser-aided 1.2 inches compared to open sights at 3.7 inches, and on the SIG, 1.8 inches with the factory laser and a whopping 4.0 inches with open sights. The trend continued with Hornady Critical Defense 90-grain FTEs, with the Glock and laser/open sights at 1.7/3.3 inches and the SIG at 1.6/2.8 inches.

Looking at only the open-sights results, the Glock was the most accurate with the Winchester fodder, 1.7 inches, followed by the Kahr (1.8), Colt (2.2) and SIG (3.0). With the Partizan, the Kahr led at 2.3 inches, followed by the Colt (2.5), Glock (3.7), and SIG (4.0). With Hornady rounds, the Kahr was again most accurate at 2.5 inches, followed by the SIG (2.8), Glock (3.3), and Colt (3.7). The SIG's night sights didn't seem to contribute much in getting rounds on target.

**Our Team Said: The paper doesn't lie — the Kahr was the most accurate pistol in the test when using open sights. But with a laser, the Glock easily beat the field.**

## Our Team Said

**We probably wouldn't buy any of these guns if we could find a used, good-condition CZ 83. If we were looking for a pocket gun, we'd choose the Kel-Tec P3AT ahead of these. However, if you've got money burning a hole in your pocket, here's what we recommend:**

**For a retail price at or below $440, we'd buy a Glock 42 Subcompact Slimline and add the Viridian R5-G42 Reactor Green Laser, $239. The G42 was big enough to shoot well and small enough to hide well. With the laser, it was very accurate. The controls, takedown, and maintenance are so easy an Austrian could do it. Would we buy the G42 by itself? Probably not.**

**The P238 from SIG Sauer, No. 238-380-NBS12, with a hefty $550-ish retail price that includes a laser and night sights, is a set of contradictions. It feels great in the hand, which makes it tougher to conceal. The single-action operation should have paid dividends in accuracy, but it didn't. The trigger should have been noticeably better than a DAO gun, but it wasn't.**

**We just can't get excited about the Mustang XSP Pocketlite Polymer O6790 for around $570 — we get that some folks are Colt fanboys, but it's too much money for too little performance, in our opinion.**

**There's a lot not to like about the Kahr CW 380 No. 3833, which can probably be had for about $320. We hated its sights and its loooong DA trigger. It has a tiny grip that makes shooting it at the range not too much fun. And some folks will simply not be able to rack the slide, even using the proper technique. Yet this affordable gun shot more accurately than the others, can certainly hide better than the others, is simple to use (pull trigger, bang), and is easy to take apart for maintenance. So if you're looking for a little gun to slip into your pants pocket for a midnight taquito run, you could do worse than the Kahr CW 380.**

*Written and photographed by* Gun Tests *staff, using evaluations from* Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

# Two Old Surplus Mausers: Swedish vs. Brazilian Bolt Guns

*Come along with us as we take a hard look at Mauser rifles in military configurations, one a Swede M38 in 6.5x55mm Swedish and the other a Brazilian 1908 DWM M98 in 7x57mm Mauser.*

Older Mauser rifles are getting scarce. We used to be able to pick them up for a song, well under $100 in recent memory, but no more. Our Idaho test team recently had a chance to examine and shoot two old surplus Mauser rifles in standard military configuration, one a Swede M38 bearing the Husqvarna stamp on its ring (about $500), and the other a Brazilian 1908 DWM M98 in 7x57 (about $450) — or about five times what they used to cost — and these were far from perfect.

The 1908 DWM M98 was one of the longest rifles we've tested, with its 29.2-inch barrel. The Swede, in 6.5x55mm Swedish, had a decent birch stock and a more reasonable barrel length. We shot them with Remington ammo (both calibers) and a variety of other types. A reader suggested we be sure to try non-U.S. ammo in the Swede. We had some Swedish surplus on hand, so we were able to do that. Here's what we found.



***This shows the much greater length of the 1908 Brazilian DWM Mauser with its 29-inch barrel. Though the Swede was shorter and lighter, we preferred the balance and feel of the other rifle.***

### Husqvarna Mauser Model 38 6.5x55mm Swedish, $500

One of the first Mausers adopted by Sweden was called the Model 96, which later got truncated and lightened into our test rifle, which was then renamed the Model 38. Considered a small-ring Mauser, the Swede has an extended cocking piece with checkering on top. In front of that is the standard turn-over, wing-type safety. The Swedish Mauser cocks on closing, which means the





***Left: The ring of the Swedish Mauser had the Husqvarna factory name and a date of 1942. Right: The top of the 1908 action's ring had a fine, entirely legible crest of the Brazilian states, dating from 1889.***

final inch of closing the bolt is done against spring pressure. The follower of our test rifle had not been altered, so the bolt would not slip closed on an empty chamber. That's of course a wartime expedient to make sure the soldier knows when to reload in the heat of battle. The wood of our test rifle was birch, and in very good condition. The grooves in the forend and a few other places on the stock were dark, indicating the wood had been at some time refinished, leaving behind some of the old dirt. There were no significant markings on the stock save for a "T" on the left side of the stock near the finger groove for stripper-clip loading. There was also an insert on the right butt-side, which indicated barrel and throat wear. This barrel was marked a "3" and should be replaced.

The metal was mostly in the white, which means there was severe bluing wear throughout. Actually, some of the parts looked like they had never been blued, while others clearly had bluing worn extremely thin. The white metal showed signs of incipient rust in many places. The floorplate was particularly bad. The barrel was tapped on its end for a flash hider, but was missing any sort of protective cap. The action ring had the Husqvarna name and a date of 1942.

The rifle was relatively clean outside, but its barrel was a mess. We cleaned it as well as we could, but had no great hopes for its accuracy. The trigger was a common military two-stage item, with a clean break on the final part, though a touch heavy. The sights consisted of a rear U-notch adjustable to 600 yards, and it had a clever idea incorporated. If you flipped it up 90 degrees, you can see the yardage markings repeated on the bottom, so the soldier could make adjustments without taking the rifle down from the shooting position, or without exposing his head to look at the top of the sight. The front blade was in a dovetail and was essentially unprotected. It had a flat top, which was an improvement over the common German pointed-top

## HUSQVARNA MAUSER MODEL 38
## 6.5X55MM SWEDISH, $500
## GUN TESTS GRADE: C

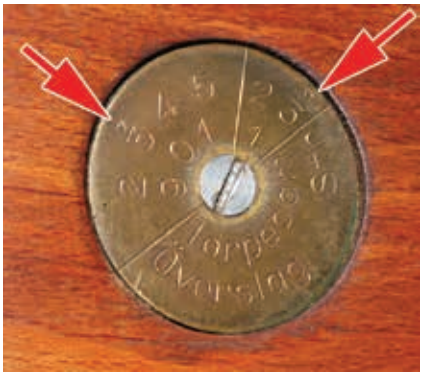
**Not alluring with its straight stock of plain birch, the Swede at least made reasonable groups with its neglected barrel. Its muzzle was tapped for a flash suppressor.**



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Length | 44 in. | Action Finish | Blued |
| Barrel Length | 24 in. | Action Type | Bolt |
| Sight Radius | 20.2 in. | Barrel Finish | None |
| Overall Height | 7.0 in. | Magazine Type | Box |
| Length of Pull | 14 in. | Stock | Birch |
| Weight Unloaded | 8.7 lbs. | Trigger Pull Weight | 6.0 lbs. |
| Weight Loaded | 9.0 lbs. | Warranty | n/a |
| Capacity | 5 Rounds | Made In | Sweden |



**Both the turn-over safety and the extension on the cocking piece were nicely checkered. All the metal and wood on this rifle was sound, but the bore looked worse than it shot.**



**This round brass disk on the bolt side of the stock indicates bore diameter and throat wear. No triangle mark represents a new barrel. Top right, the 1 designates slight wear, 2 more wear, and 3 is the most wear permitted before barrel replacement, as the triangle designates for this rifle.**



**The stock appeared to have been refinished. Note the darker, older finish within the finger groove on the forend. We liked the turned-down bolt, but didn't much care for the cock-on-closing feature. This is a small-ring Mauser. The 6.5 caliber is still popular today, and ammo is no problem.**



front sight for determining elevation.

All in all we thought this rifle needed a thorough disassembly and cleaning to make all its parts work better, especially the sight adjustments. We left that for the owner, who kindly loaned this to us as soon as he got it. All the numbers we found matched on this rifle, so it would be a good representative of the type if it were fully cleaned up. Many collectors have no interest in shooting their collectibles, so they tend to ignore the condition of the inside of the barrel. We think that's a mistake, because the heart of any rifle is its barrel. If that's neglected and generally in poor condition, we would not rate the rifle highly even though the outside looked like new. That's our two cents.

As for ammo, there is no shortage of it available for this caliber, and we had Remington, Hornady, and some Swedish surplus with steel-jacket bullets. This latter ammo looked quite nasty in the box. As it turned out, it gave reasonable groups, but bolt lift was hard, most likely from the poor condition of the cases. The hot Hornady ammo got much higher velocity and gave zero sticky bolt lift, and also gave us the best accuracy. Smallest group was 1.1 inches, and average was 1.6. There were no problems with the rifle, though ejection was generally not very strong, no matter how hard we worked the bolt.

**Our Team Said: Overall, the rifle had little to recommend it, though accuracy was acceptable with the Hornady ammo. It worked all right and the stock condition was somewhat above average, but the overall condition of the rifle was certainly not outstanding. We thought this rifle deserved a C grade.**

### Brazilian 1908 Mauser 98 7x57 Mauser, about $450

This was one long rifle, yet it had a balance that was entirely missing from the Swedish Mauser. Despite its length and weight, it felt handy, and was easy to hold for offhand work. The exterior of the rifle was in great shape. The bluing was mostly intact, though worn thin on the action. On the barrel, the bluing looked entirely undamaged, and was nearly as good on the floorplate and trigger guard. Once again, all the numbers we found were matching. The action ring had a five-pointed star and the full name of Brazil in a very decorative, clean stamping. Down on the right side of the front ring was "Mod. 1908." The

### BRAZILIAN 1908 MAUSER 98 7X57 MAUSER, ~$450

### GUN TESTS GRADE: D

**Fitted with a nearly broken sling, the Brazilian "1908" Mauser looked like a great rifle. It had fine balance despite its over-four-foot length, and the bluing was intact in most places. We thought we had a winner, but then we shot it and it was a loser.**



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Length | 49 in. | Action Finish | Blued |
| Barrel Length | 29 in. | Action Type | Bolt |
| Sight Radius | 25.7 in. | Barrel Finish | Blued |
| Overall Height | 7.0 in. | Magazine Type | Box |
| Length of Pull | 13.0 in. | Stock | Walnut |
| Weight Unloaded | 9.3 lbs. | Trigger Pull Weight | 7.8 lbs. |
| Weight Loaded | 9.6 lbs. | Warranty | n/a |
| Capacity | 5 Rounds | Made In | Germany |



**Here's a look at the front of the nearly dead leather of the sling. A good pull and it's done for.**



**The button of the quick-detach sling mount was badly bent so it would not work. We chose not to try to straighten it.**



**The straight bolt handle was easy to use. The sling's rear attachment was bent, but was a good idea in that it could detach and the shooter could use the sling as it was intended to be used, as a shooting aid. This rifle was made by DWM in Berlin, and had a decent exterior that many collectors would cherish. But for us it was doomed because it had a lousy bore with zero accuracy.**

## RANGE DATA

| | |
|---|---|
| **Remington 140-grain Core-Lokt PSP** | **Swedish Mauser M38 6.5x55mm Swedish** |
| Average Velocity | 2410 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 1804 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group @ 50 yards | 2.9 in. |
| **Hornady 129-grain Light Magnum SP** | **Swedish Mauser M38 6.5x55mm Swedish** |
| Average Velocity | 2645 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 2002 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group @ 50 yards | 1.6 in. |
| **Swedish 139-grain Mil-Spec Steel Boattail FMJ** | **Swedish Mauser M38 6.5x55mm Swedish** |
| Average Velocity | 2485 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 1904 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group @ 50 yards | 3.0 in. |
| **Remington 140-grain Core-Lokt PSP** | **Brazilian 1908 Mauser 7x57mm Mauser** |
| Average Velocity | 2595 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 2091 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group @ 25 yards | 9.0 in. |
| **Federal 175-grain Power-Shok RNSP** | **Brazilian 1908 Mauser 7x57mm Mauser** |
| Average Velocity | 2230 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 1930 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group @ 25 yards | 6.5 in. |

*Velocity was recorded using an Oehler 35P chronograph with proof channel, with the middle screen 10 feet from the muzzle. Groups were three shots fired from a machine rest.*

left side of the action identified this as a DWM Mauser action. The overall workmanship, wood and metal, appeared to be far superior to that of the Swedish rifle. The sights were normal mil-spec Mauser, with a V-notch rear and pointed front, with the rear sight regulated from 300 out to 2000 yards. The straight-handle bolt closed even with the action empty, the result of someone knocking off the rear of the follower. The work appeared to have been professionally done, and may have been part of the Brazilian specifications.

The wood was dark walnut, not at all dented or badly scratched. It had some decent grain that many a sporting rifle would have liked to have. There was a numeral 22 painted on the left side of the butt, and the right had not only a metal escutcheon inletted, but also a six-pointed star within a circle stamped into the wood. The center of the star had the letter "B." A thick, wide, leather sling came on the rifle. It had seen better days. It was rough,





***Top: The Brazilian Model 1908 Mauser shows lots of bluing left on it. The Swede has no apparent finish on its barrel at all. The tapped muzzle is for a flash suppressor, not a silencer. Both rifles have stubby screw-in cleaning rods. Bottom: The floorplates show the amount of remaining bluing. The Brazilian 7x57 on top has a bunch, but the Swede seems to have been wiped clean, or never blued.***

stiff, rubbed and raw, and was about ready to break. We'd zing it if we owned this one. The only interest there was in the rear attachment point, which appeared to be some sort of quick-removal mechanism. Unfortunately, it was bent beyond use.

We thought we had a real winner here. Then we looked through the barrel. It was like looking through a dark, dirty stovepipe. What a pity. A diligent cleaning did very little good for the barrel. Again we wondered why so many caretakers of this rifle over the years never gave a thought to the barrel innards.

We took the rifle to the range, and as always, shot one from 25 yards to make sure the rifle was on the paper. The round struck 2 inches low, so we considered it okay to try from 50 yards off our machine rest. We had two types of ammo. One was Remington 140-grain Core-Lokt, the other, Federal 175-grain soft points. We fired a round of the Remington and looked long and hard at the target through our old Bushnell Sentry 20x spotting scope for the hole. Nothing. Okay, we thought, it struck low on the 25-yard target, so we'll try another shot a bit higher on the paper.

Our target was about 2 feet square or a bit more. The second shot again produced no bullet hole. Somewhat dismayed, we went to the 25-yard line on a bigger paper target and fired three shots. We got a 9-inch group at 25 yards. We then tried the heavier bullet load and got a group of 7 inches. We concluded this rifle was a total loss for shooting, and never fired another shot, except to get chronograph results. Feed, function, and ejection, for what it's worth, were all excellent and the trigger was very much acceptable.

**Our Team Said: Here's a perfect example of a "collector-grade" firearm with generally excellent cosmetics, but with a completely useless barrel. If some poor soul has the time and interest to grind away at the barrel with mild abrasives to get the soot and other crud out of it, this rifle might be made to deliver some of its shots onto the paper at 50 yards. But if you find one in similar condition, we'd just walk away.**

*Written and photographed by Ray Ordorica, using evaluations from* Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

# 9mms: New Beretta 92 Compact Versus Used SIG Sauer P228

*Should you chase after a used gun with a high and increasing price, or an uncommon factory model? We like Beretta's compact production gun, which you might not have seen before.*

Two pistol makers that have knocked heads in police and military competitions for more than 30 years are SIG Sauer and Beretta. The Beretta 92 and the SIG P226 engaged in a hotly contested and much debated U.S. Military trial. After the dust settled, Beretta won that lucrative contract. However, the Navy did not accept the Beretta and instead adopted the SIG. American police agencies have used both in large numbers, with the SIG often hampered by a higher price. Recently, the French Army and police forces gave SIG the largest single peacetime order for handguns in history. Certainly, both makes enjoy enviable reputations. But at Gun Tests, all makers start on the same footing, reputation or not.

The raters were led toward this test by external factors. In one case, a family member was looking for a good, clean SIG P228 as a carry gun. Since the P228 is out of production, replaced by the heavier P229 or M11 A1, the SIG P228 would have to be a used gun. (Occasionally, a new-in-the-box P228 is seen at a premium.) The other instigator was an e-mail from Afghanistan. A young soldier told her father-in-law, "I want a Beretta for my own when I get home!" After two tours in Iraq and the tour in Afghanistan, this well-trained soldier had great respect for the Beretta. However, she did ask if there were a shorter, lighter version of the pistol. There is a compact version of the 92FS, but it is seldom seen. The question was, would the self-defense shooter be better off with the new Beretta or the used SIG, if each could be found within a few dollars of the other?



***No, we are not re-shooting the U.S. Military trials. We are stacking up a brand-new Beretta 92 Compact, shown with Bob Campbell at left and at right, against a used SIG P228 9mm compact pistol.***

This would be a tough contest. Among our raters, one has over 20 years of police experience, including training several agencies on the SIG. Another is a military intelligence officer who has deployed the Beretta from Europe to the Pacific and just returned from 14 months with the Beretta as a daily companion. Other raters had experience with both pistols. So the deck wasn't stacked in favor of either handgun.

Common aspects of the guns include aluminum frames and steel slides. Each features a double-action first-shot trigger. Each features a 13-round magazine. Beyond those areas, lock-up differs. The SIG uses angled camming surfaces to unlock, and the barrel hood butts into the slide. The Beretta locks and unlocks via an oscillating wedge. There are differences in the decockers, and handling feels very different. Here's how our shooters rated them when the pistols were shot head to head:

**Beretta 92A1 Compact Inox**
**J90C9F20 9mm Luger, $650**

CheaperthanDirt.com lists this pistol at $591.76, so we include it as a national pricing source, but we paid $650 and tax for the Beretta at a local shop in South Carolina. The Beretta 92C is a much less common pistol than the SIG compact. The 92FS Inox compact version features a stainless-steel slide. The slide closely matches the anodizing of the aluminum frame. The loaded-chamber indicator, extractor, trigger, hammer, takedown lever, magazine-release button, and safety levers are finished in a contrasting black color.



When we first handled the pistol, we noticed the slide-to-frame fit was tight with virtually no lateral play. The rear sight was black. The stainless front sight was an integral part of the slide. The three-dot sight arrangement was bright red, a good choice for this finish.

The double-action trigger was smooth but heavy at about 14 pounds. The single-action trigger broke cleanly at 5.1 pounds. The distance from the face of the trigger to the inside of the trigger guard was about 1.125 inch, compared to 1 inch in the SIG, and the curve of the Beretta's trigger allowed easier gloved-hand use, our testers said.

Moving to the frame, Beretta has done a credible job in downsizing the grip frame. The raters familiar with each felt that the 92C is more comfortable than the full-size Beretta. It fit most hands well. A female rater felt trigger reach was improved. The plastic checkered grips were thinner than in on the service-size handgun. (Beretta ads advertise rubber grips, but ours were hard plastic.) The grips were secured with hex-head screws. The rear strap and front strap were each checkered in a similar fashion. This checkering was given high grades by every rater. The grip abrasion and adhesion were excellent, we thought, offering excellent control of the pistol even with sweaty or cold hands.

The slide-mounted decocker of the Beretta wasn't as ergonomic as the SIG's, we thought. However, the Beretta featured a manual safety. The pistol is decocked, and if desired, the lever is left in the down position for on Safe carry. Using a strong straight-thumb technique, the shooter may switch the Beretta to Fire and Safe relatively quickly. So, if you prefer a manual safety, then the Beretta is the top pick. If you wish to use only the decocker, the safety may be ignored. Those who prefer the simplicity expressed by the original German police trials will find the SIG more attractive.

During the firing test, the Beretta

## BERETTA 92A1 COMPACT INOX WITH RAIL J90C9F20 9MM LUGER, $650

## GUN TESTS GRADE: A

**While the trigger action is not as smooth as the P228's, the Beretta's stainless-steel construction, manual safety, light rail, and excellent accuracy added up to high marks.**







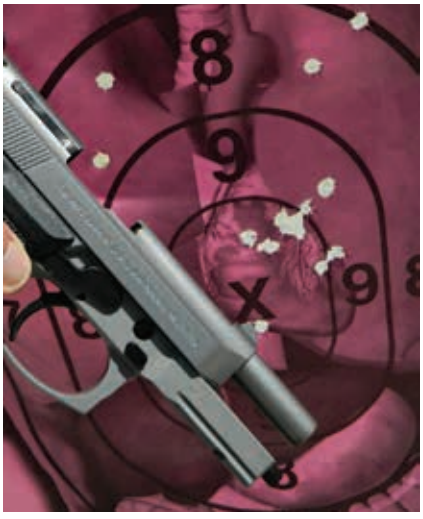
**The Beretta is already back on target, with a spent case to the right of the shooter. It exhibited excellent control.**



**The option of mounting a combat light such as the Viridian here proved to be another advantage. Modern shooters want these options.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Locked Breech Double Action First Shot |
| Overall Length | 7.5 in. |
| Overall Height | 5.25 in. |
| Barrel Length | 4.25 in. |
| Sight Radius | 5.7 in. |
| Front Strap Height | 1.75 in. |
| Front Strap Height w/Extension | 2.25 in. |
| Rear Strap Height | 3.1 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 31.5 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 39.6 oz. |
| Capacity | 13 Rounds |
| Maximum Width | 1.5 in. |
| Grip Thickness | 1.2 in. |
| Grip Circumference | 5.5 in. |
| Frame | Aluminum |
| Barrel | Stainless Steel |
| Slide | Stainless Steel |
| Grip | Checkered Plastic |
| Magazine | 13-Rd. Detachable Box |
| Trigger Pull Weight Double Action | 12 lbs. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Single Action | 5.1 lbs. |
| Trigger Span Double Action | 2.6 in. |
| Warranty | 1 Year |
| Telephone | (800) Beretta |
| Website | BerettaUSA.com |
| Made In | USA |

**The Beretta's combination of offhand accuracy and bench rest accuracy made it a winner.**



## SIG SAUER P228 9MM LUGER, $600 (USED)

### GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

**The SIG is a good handgun. A combination of the ideal size and weight make the P228 among the most popular SIG pistols. However, the new-in-the-box Beretta offered comparable performance, a better warranty, and corrosion resistance.**





| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Locked Breech Semi-Auto DA First Shot |
| Overall Length | 7.0 in. |
| Overall Height | 5.4 in. |
| Barrel Length | 3.8 in. |
| Sight Radius | 5.5 in. |
| Front Strap Height | 2.2 in. |
| Front Strap Height w/Mag Extension | 2.5 in. |
| Rear Strap Height | 3.3 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 28 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 36.1 oz. |
| Capacity | 13 oz. |
| Maximum Width | 1.5 in. |
| Grip Thickness | 1.2 in. |
| Grip Circumference | 5.5 in. |
| Frame | Aluminum |
| Barrel | Steel |
| Slide | Steel |
| Grip | Pebbled Plastic |
| Magazine | 13-Rd. Detachable Box |
| Trigger Pull Weight Double Action | 10 lbs. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Single Action | 4.5 lbs. |
| Trigger Span Double Action | 2.7 in. |
| Warranty | None, Used |
| Telephone | (603) 610-3000 |
| Website | SIGSauer.com |
| Made In | Germany |



**The SIG was purchased used at a fair price. Extra magazines were a bonus. We have no idea what the round count is on this handgun, but it was in good condition with little wear.**



**The SIG's bad experience with perspiration resulted in another vote in favor of stainless construction.**



**Left: In hostage-rescue drills and rapid-fire combat shooting, the SIG P228 gave good results.**

was drawn from concealed carry and fired at man-sized targets at 5, 7, and 10 yards. We fired 100 rounds of Black Hills 115-grain remanufactured loads during this test. The pistol was new out of the box. There were no malfunctions of any type during the combat-type firing. Both pistols are 9mm handguns weighing about 30 ounces, so recoil was never uncomfortable. The Beretta is slightly longer than the SIG but shorter in height. We found the long double-action trigger of the Beretta limited first-shot hits. Some raters, such as our military officer, did much better than others. He achieved speedy center hits at 15 yards on demand. Once the first shot was broken, the Beretta showed excellent control. Rapid-fire accuracy was deemed better than the SIG due to the Italian's longer barrel, slightly heavier weight, and longer sight radius. The SIG had the advantage in a smoother first shot, however.

In bench accuracy, the Beretta showed good results. The best single effort was a 1.5-inch group at 25 yards with the Black Hills 124-grain JHP, with the average for this load 2.0 inches. This is excellent for a compact 9mm handgun. The Beretta also showed approximately a 45-fps average lead in velocity for every load we shot.

The Beretta takes down with a lever on the left side of the frame. A plunger on the right side of the frame is pressed to allow the lever to move. The slide is taken off the frame, the recoil spring and guide lifted out, and the barrel removed. Care must be taken to reposition the locking wedge if it is allowed to move out of battery during disassembly. The SIG's disassembly is slightly easier and faster. The SIG requires only that the lever be rotated, and the simpler angled camming surfaces do not require repositioning upon reassembly. The SIG is perhaps 5 seconds faster in assembly.

**Our Team Said: While the SIG is a good combat gun, the Beretta's stainless-steel finish and the ability to mount a combat light give it greater utility as a carry gun**

**and home-defense pistol. We feel that the Beretta is the better buy based on its accuracy, efficiency, and combat ability.**

### SIG Sauer P228 9mm Luger, $600 (used)

The P228 was purchased by one of the raters at his local pawn shop. While he first thought he was paying top dollar for a used pistol, a search of various gun websites shows most are asking more for the P228. Just the same, the P228 came with a total of six magazines, although two were the older 10-round types.

The pistol was in good shape and showed little in the way of finish wear. The pistol slide serrations were rated superior to the Beretta, as noted when loading the handguns. The handy frame-mounted decocker was also easier to use well. The sights were good, with white-bar-dot von Stavenhagen outlines. The front strap was striated, and the rear portion of the wraparound grip was nicely pebbled. While not as aggressive as the Beretta, the SIG's pattern abrasion was fine.

The greatest advantage of the SIG over the Beretta was the trigger action. The double-action trigger press was smooth at about 10 pounds. The single-action press of the SIG was a smooth 4.5 pounds. The difference in the smoothness of the trigger was apparent in rapid-fire drills. The SIG was faster to an accurate first-shot hit than the Beretta. The P228 was also controllable in rapid fire, but the heavier, longer Beretta simply had the advantage in mass. One rater, a former police instructor, noted that recruits often rode the thumb on the SIG slide release and caused the slide to fail to lock open on the last shot. With the grip design of the P228, this practically never occurs and did not occur during our testing. In firing 100 rounds of Black Hills 115-grain FMJ remanufactured loads, the pistol never failed to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. Any function concerns relating to this used gun were swept away with this firing test.

The SIG pistol proved to be accurate. The single best group was a 1.7-inch cluster with the Fiocchi 147-grain JHPs, with the average 2.1 inches. The Beretta slightly edged the SIG on accuracy overall; however, the SIG beat the Beretta with the 147-grain load. The Beretta also delivered greater energy (Black Hills 124-grain JHPs) at 338 foot-pounds, with the SIG behind at 321 foot-pounds. To further proof the handguns, we fired a single 50-round box of +P ammunition through each — Winchester 124-grain JHP +P loads. The increased slide velocity of +P loads may result in an inability of the magazine to keep up with slide velocity. Both pistols performed as reliably as with any other load. The Beretta was the more comfortable handgun to fire with this heavy load, which generated 1210 fps from the Beretta and 1179 fps from the SIG.

On another note, one of the raters carried the SIG between range trips as his sidearm. Since we did not have a custom holster on hand at the time, a fabric holster with a spring-steel metal belt clip — but no sweatguard — was used. The test was conducted in July, and perspiration took its toll. When the SIG was unholstered for range work, it was rusted! It cleaned up, but there is a lesson here. The obvious one is that a sweat guard is needed on a holster. However, many of us make do with an inexpensive holster until we decide we are keeping the gun. As far as corrosion resistance, stainless steel is superior to blued steel.

**Our Team Said: In this head to head, we thought the SIG P228 was a good handgun — reliable, controllable, and accurate. Range performance is important, and the SIG left little to be desired in that area. But practical considerations, including exposure to the elements, day-to-day carry, practical accuracy, and a warranty are important advantages of the Beretta. Also, the raters felt that a handgun left at home ready with a manual safety is a plus, and the presence of a light rail on the 92C helped it, too.**

*Written and photographed by Bob Campbell, using evaluations from* Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

#### RANGE DATA

| **Black Hills 124-gr. JHP** | **SIG Sauer P228** | **Beretta 92 Compact Inox** |
|---|---|---|
| Average Velocity | 1080 fps | 1109 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 321 ft.-lbs. | 338 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group | 2.4 in. | 2.0 in. |
| **SIG Sauer 124-gr. JHP** | **SIG Sauer P228** | **Beretta 92 Compact Inox** |
| Average Velocity | 1046 fps | 1102 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 301 ft.-lbs. | 334 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group | 2.3 in. | 2.1 in. |
| **Fiocchi 147-gr. JHP** | **SIG Sauer P228** | **Beretta 92 Compact Inox** |
| Average Velocity | 866 fps | 911 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 244 ft.-lbs. | 270 ft.-lbs. |
| Average Group | 2.1 in. | 2.25 in. |

*To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups over a solid benchrest. Distance: 15 yards. We recorded velocity with a Shooting Chrony Master Chronograph. The first sky screen was set 10 feet from the muzzle.*



***The SIG P228 was light, accurate, and reliable.***

# Big-Bore Snubnose Revolvers In 44 Magnum and 41 Magnum

*For carry, we looked at four juiced-up S&Ws: A 329PD Alaska Backpacker IV and three from the company's Performance Center: a Model 629-8, a Model 657-5, and a Model 629-6.*

**To make** an S&W N-Frame revolver into a compact carry gun means reducing the revolver's barrel length and grip. What's left is still a large frame and cylinder that holds six cartridges. It is big metal, compared to an S&W J-frame, Ruger, or Taurus compact revolver normally used for concealed carry. The N-frame is renowned for its strength and has three safety features built into the mechanism: a hammer block, rebounding hammer, and hammer stop. All three safety features work unseen inside the frame and under the sideplate and make the revolvers very safe, guarding against accidental discharge from being dropped on a hard surface or a hammer slipping out from under a thumb. All of the N-frames tested were derived from the classic S&W Model 29.



***These revolvers offer plenty of horsepower in relatively small, compact packages. They are not for the inexperienced shooter due to their recoil. Those shooters accustomed to recoil might find these small brutes a worthwhile conceal-carry option. In the big woods, they are best suited for defense at close quarters. The four S&W snubnose revolvers we reviewed, starting from the bottom right and going clockwise, are a LNIB S&W Model 329PD Alaska Backpacker IV ($750-$900), new S&W Performance Center Model 629-8 ($900-$1000), new S&W Performance Center Model 657-5 ($750-$850), and a new S&W Performance Center Model 629-6 ($1079). The 657-5 is chambered in 41 Magnum and the other three are chambered in 44 Magnum. The target shown is the type of accuracy we got from these wrist-crackers.***

The Model 29, along with the 44 Magnum cartridge, debuted in 1955 due to Elmer Keith arm twisting and convincing Smith & Wesson that shooters needed a more powerful revolver cartridge. Keith was a gun writer, outdoorsman, and big-bore revolver aficionado who hand-loaded the 44 Special to its maximum potential. His theory was to push heavy bullets at high velocity. Bullets designed by Keith, often referred to as Keith-style semi-wadcutters, feature a wide nose and convex sides. They also allow more powder to be loaded into the case. These bullets, when loaded properly, are a benchmark in power and penetration. We actually tested some Keith-style bullets loaded by Buffalo Bore for this report.

Keith had tremendous input on developing magnum cartridges for revolvers and also had his hands in the development of the 41 Magnum, which was introduced in 1963 as a cartridge to bridge the gap between the 357 Magnum and 44 Magnum. The 41 Magnum has more power than the 357 and less recoil than the 44 and was designed with law enforcement in mind, though it did not have a big impact on the LE market. Hunters, however, found the cartridge was plenty powerful for medium-size game, including black bear. The 41 Magnum is similar to the 16-gauge shotgun in terms of compromising power and recoil as well as popularity. Both have strong but small followings, and in the 41 Magnum we can see why from our range sessions.

Since its introduction, the Model 29 has gone through

numerous design changes that are reflected in the "-" model names found in these variants' model numbers. Stainless-steel models have a "6" prefix in the model number; those built from scandium alloy have a "3" prefix in the model number.

If carrying around a huge revolver for everyday concealed carry literally sounds like a pain in the hip, consider this: For everyday carry, Keith wore a Model 29 with a 4- or 5-inch barrel. He was a man of small stature but great influence. Before Hollywood discovered the Model 29 and made Clint Eastwood's "Dirty Harry" character synonymous with the big bore, long barrel revolver, Keith lived it. Eastwood played it.

To live it means to carry it, and that is what we did with the four revolvers in this test. They are all six-shooters, have 2- or 3-inch barrels, small compact grips — except for one model — and are chambered in bone-bashing 44 Magnum or 41 Magnum. Real power, real recoil. Not for the faint of heart nor faint of recoil. If Elmer and Harry can carry around long-barrel variants, we figured these compact versions would be easier and more convenient for concealed carry. After shooting, with hand palms aching and lots of big holes in the targets, the team felt one model would really make your day, offering a good combination of features in a big-bore compact revolver for daily concealed carry.

Prior to testing, we ran Brownells revolver range rods (080-617-044WB, Rod Combo for .44/44 Mag., $40; 080-617-041WB, Rod Combo for .41, $40) down the bore of each revolver to check chamber alignment. We checked the gap between rear of cylinder with Brownells' Go/No Go 60/68 Cylinder Gauge (080-633-668WB, $36). We assumed that since these were new or LNIB, they would pass and they did.

### S&W Performance Center Model 629-6 170135 44 Magnum, $1079

The Model 629-6 comes from S&W's Performance Center constructed of

## S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 629-6 170135 44 MAGNUM, $1079

## GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

**The 629 is a brute of a revolver that is made to withstand the pounding of magnum ammo. The grip is an excellent choice for conceal carry.**





| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Double Action |
| Overall Length | 7.6 in. |
| Overall Height | 5.5 in. |
| Maximum Width (Cylinder) | 1.7 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 39.6 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 42.7 oz. |
| Barrel Length | 2.6 in. |
| Capacity | 6 Rounds |
| Frame Material/Size | Stainless Steel, Large N-frame |
| Cylinder Material | Stainless Steel, Non-fluted |
| Frame Front Strap Height | 1.8 in. |
| Frame Back Strap Height | 3.9 in. |
| Grips | Checkered Walnut/Finger Groove |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 1.1 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 5.2 in. |
| Front Sight | Serrated Red Ramp |
| Rear Sight | Adjustable White Outline |
| Sight Radius | 4.5 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Single Action | 4.3 lbs. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Double Action | 11.3 lbs. |
| Trigger Span Single Action | 2.8 in. |
| Trigger Span Double Action | 3.3 in. |
| Safety | None |
| Warranty | Lifetime |
| Telephone | (800) 331-0852 |
| Website | Smith-Wesson.com |
| Made In | Springfield, Mass. |

**The front sight is dovetailed into the barrel, so swapping for another type of front sight is straightforward.**





**Note how the edges of the Secret Service grips are blended smoothly into the frame so there is no abrading the web of the user's hand.**



**The ball detent inset into the front of the crane locks into a V-shaped groove in the frame.**

**An adjustable trigger stop was built into the trigger, so overtravel is reduced.**



## RANGE DATA

| Blacks Hills (new) 44 Magnum 240-gr. JHP | Smith & Wesson Model 629-8 | Smith & Wesson Model 629-6 | Smith & Wesson Model 329PD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average Velocity | 955 fps | 894 fps | 921 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 486 ft.-lbs. | 426 ft.-lbs. | 452 ft.-lbs. |
| Smallest Group (open sights) | 1.4 in. | 1.2 in. | 1.1 in. |
| Average Group (open sights) | 1.8 in. | 1.8 in. | 1.7 in. |
| **Hornady Custom 44 Magnum 240-gr. XTP** | **Smith & Wesson Model 629-8** | **Smith & Wesson Model 629-6** | **Smith & Wesson Model 329PD** |
| Average Velocity | 1172 fps | 1088 fps | 1095 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 732 ft.-lbs. | 631 ft.-lbs. | 639 ft.-lbs. |
| Smallest Group (open sights) | 1.1 in. | 1.5 in. | 0.6 in. |
| Average Group (open sights) | 1.4 in. | 1.8 in. | 1.2 in. |
| **Sellier & Bellot 44 Magnum 240-gr. JHP** | **Smith & Wesson Model 629-8** | **Smith & Wesson Model 629-6** | **Smith & Wesson Model 329PD** |
| Average Velocity | 1075 fps | 1045 fps | 982 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 616 ft.-lbs. | 582 ft.-lbs. | 514 ft.-lbs. |
| Smallest Group (open sights) | 1.0 in. | 1.3 in. | 1.6 in. |
| Average Group (open sights) | 1.3 in. | 1.6 in. | 1.9 in. |
| **Smith & Wesson Model 657-5** | **Winchester Super X 41 Magnum 175-gr. JHP** | **Buffalo Bore 41 Magnum 230-gr. Keith** | **Federal Power Shok 41 Magnum 210-gr. JHP** |
| Average Velocity | 1155 fps | 1226 fps | 1110 fps |
| Muzzle Energy | 519 ft.-lbs. | 768 ft.-lbs. | 558 ft-lbs. |
| Smallest Group (open sights) | 1.0 in. | 1.0 in. | 1.0 in. |
| Average Group (open sights) | 1.2 in. | 1.0 in. | 1.2 in. |

*To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a bench using a rest at a distance of 15 yards with open sights. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle.*



**The ejector rod on the 629-6 was a good length to punch the long empties out of the chambers.**



**Serrations ran along the top half of the 629-6's frame and barrel.**

***In the hand, the 657-5 felt good, with a trigger span in double action that was comfortable.***



stainless steel, a non-fluted cylinder, and quite usable sights. The 629-6 and 657-5 are identical in appearance, except the 629-6 is chambered in 44 Magnum and the 657-5 is chambered in 41 Magnum. The matte-stainless finish on the frame and cylinder was well executed, and the chrome-flashed finish of the trigger and hammer matched nicely. With the non-fluted cylinder and wood grip, the revolver looks rugged yet refined.

The slab-sided 2.6-inch-long barrel gave the revolver less bulk there compared to the 629-8's round barrel. The crowned muzzle was nicely done. We did not like the sharp edges of the barrel, as it required more effort reholstering. We feel a carry revolver should have all the sharp exterior edges broken to make it snag free. A cut-out in the ejector shroud allowed dirt or sand to be removed easily or fall out on its own. Serrations were machined in the top of the barrel, and a ramp front sight with red insert was

dovetailed into the barrel. It could be easily swapped, if a user so desired. The rear sight was fully adjustable and matte black, with the base of the sight serrated to reduce glare — a small detail but very useful. The rear blade's notch had a white outline and the top corners were rounded — another nice touch to reduce the possibility of snagging on draw. We liked the sights as they were since they were fast on target, especially when using the red insert to aim at a dark target. These taller sights made the outside more snag prone, but when the sights came up on target, they let the user know exactly where this big bore was pointed.

The weight of the 629-6 was in the middle of all the revolvers tested at about 42.7 ounces loaded. When the shooter gripped the 629-6, the checkered wood Eagle Secret Service grips fit most hands very well. Before actual firing, many testers felt the grip seemed too small compared to the revolver's bulk. The compromise was more concealable grips for less shooting comfort. The grips were slim with finger grooves and nice friction to the checkering. They were mated well to the frame. Where the frame's grip butt ended so did the grips, and some users curled their small fingers under the grip. The left grip panel allowed use of a speedloader.

The smooth-face trigger had a stop built in, and it offered a smooth pull in DA mode that felt less than the 11.3 pounds measured. Since three out of the four revolvers tested had the Secret Service–style grips, the DA trigger span was the same on those revolvers. The hammer was compact, with a teardrop shape. Though smaller than a full-size hammer spur, it offered plenty of toothy texture for cocking. The small cylinder latch allowed use of speedloaders; we used Tuff Products Quickstrip, which is a flexible polymer that silently holds six rounds in line and allows users to load two rounds at a time. We also used HKS speedloaders that allow loading of all chambers at the same time. The chambers were chamfered to assist reloading,

## S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 657-5
## 41 MAGNUM, $750-$850
## GUN TESTS GRADE: B

**The Model 657-5 was a snappy shooter in 41 Magnum, with less recoil than the 44 Magnum. Ammo is plentiful, but does not offer as much variety as the 44 Magnum/44 Special duo.**







**Stacked on top of each other, you can see how much bigger a rubber grip is compared to the Secret Service grip.**



**The Eagle Secret Service grips (left and right) are thin and tapered, well suited for conceal carry.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Double Action |
| Overall Length | 7.6 in. |
| Overall Height | 5.5 in. |
| Maximum Width (Cylinder) | 1.7 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 39.6 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 42.7 oz. |
| Barrel Length | 2.6 in. |
| Capacity | 6 Rounds |
| Frame Material/Size | Stainless Steel, Large N-frame |
| Cylinder Material | Stainless Steel, Non-Fluted |
| Frame Front Strap Height | 1.8 in. |
| Frame Back Strap Height | 3.9 in. |
| Grips | Checkered Walnut |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 1.1 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 5.2 in. |
| Front Sight | Serrated Ramp |
| Rear Sight | Adjustable White Outline |
| Sight Radius | 4.5 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Single Action | 4.3 lbs. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Double Action | 11.3 lbs. |
| Trigger Span Single Action | 2.8 in. |
| Trigger Span Double Action | 3.3 in. |
| Safety | None |
| Warranty | Lifetime |
| Telephone | (800) 331-0852 |
| Website | Smith-Wesson.com |
| Made In | Springfield, Mass. |



**Note how tall the 657-5 sits in the user's hand, just like the 629-6. Those sights are tall.**

another appreciated feature. The ejector rod was long enough to get the empties started, but as always, gravity is an asset when unloading and reloading revolvers.

The Performance Center uses a ball detent built into the front of the 629-6's crane that snaps into a V-shaped groove in the frame, enabling the 629-6's cylinder to lock up tight. No wiggle. That's an important feature if you are going to run hot loads or a lot of rounds through a revolver.

We range-tested at 15 yards and found that all four revolvers grouped five shots in less than 2 inches when we used a rest and fired in single-action mode. Firing in double action, we found we shot these revolvers slower due the muzzle flip and recoil. It took more time to get back on target than, say, with a similar revolver configuration in 357 Magnum. Recoil was stout, requiring testers to rest their hands between sessions. The 629-6 felt tall in hand due to the high sights. It is a big gun with a little grip.

**Our Team Said: The 629-6 is serious steel to carry concealed, and testers thought it had the features to make a good, but big, concealed-carry revolver. All agreed they would carry 44 Magnum loads if they carried the revolver. They liked that with all of the 44 Magnum revolvers, there is a variety of ammo to choose from. The ability to run 44 Special in the 44 Magnums was a plus. This would make a good defense weapon for dangerous game, as well as against wolves of the four-leg and two-leg variety.**

### S&W Performance Center Model 657-5 41 Magnum, $750-$850

The Model 657-5 is aesthetically and mechanically the same as the 629-6 except it is chambered in 41 Magnum. The fit and finish were well executed and were a good example of Performance Center craftsmanship. Instead of rehashing the features, we concentrated on this revolver's cartridge. This 41 Magnum wheelgun is not catalogued by S&W any more because it was not a big seller, though a small, but passionate, group of shooters like the cartridge. One team

### S&W MODEL 329PD ALASKA BACKPACKER IV150545 44 MAGNUM, $750-$900

## GUN TESTS GRADE: B

**The 329PD was the most pleasant of the 44 Magnums to shoot; it's a nice compromise of weight versus firepower.**







| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Double Action |
| Overall Length | 7.75 in. |
| Overall Height | 6.2 in. |
| Maximum Width (Cylinder) | 1.7 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 29.7 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 32.8 oz. |
| Barrel Length | 2.5 in. |
| Capacity | 6 Rounds |
| Frame Material/Size | Scandium Alloy, Large N-frame |
| Cylinder Material | Stainless Steel, Fluted |
| Frame Front Strap Height | 2.2 in. |
| Frame Back Strap Height | 4.3 in. |
| Grips | Textured Synthetic, Finger Grooves |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 1.2 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 5.3 in. |
| Front Sight | Gold Bead |
| Rear Sight | Adjustable V-notch |
| Sight Radius | 4.5 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Single Action | 4.1 lbs. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Double Action | 11.1 lbs. |
| Trigger Span Single Action | 2.6 in. |
| Trigger Span Double Action | 3.1 in. |
| Safety | None |
| Warranty | Lifetime |
| Telephone | (800) 331-0852 |
| Website | Smith-Wesson.com |
| Made In | Springfield, Mass |

**The stainless-steel barrel is surrounded by a scandium barrel shroud.**



**The front sight uses a gold bead; the blade is pinned into the barrel shroud.**



**The 329PD used a V-shaped notch in the rear sight; it was fast on target.**



**The rubber grip fit the frame of 329PD well and was well blended into the frame. It gave the 329PD the feel of a full-size revolver.**



**The detent in the ejector shroud locks up in a hole at the end of the ejector rod like standard S&W revolvers.**

member was included in that group.

The 41 Magnum was designed to bridge the gap between the 357 Magnum and 44 Magnum and does it well. As we stated, Keith had a hand in the 41 Magnum, as did former Border Patrol officer turned gun writer and fast-draw shooter, Bill Jordan, and the legendary gun writer Skeeter Skelton. The round debuted in 1963 along with the S&W Model 57, another N-frame. The 41 Magnum cartridge really performs with 180- to 210-grain bullets. Many testers assumed finding 41 Magnum ammo would be a difficult quest, but they found out there are many big-factory offerings and smaller niche-ammo companies that loaded ammo. We gathered two big-factory loads — Winchester Super X 175-grain JHPs and Federal Power Shok 210-grain JHPs. From a niche ammo loader we grabbed Buffalo Bore loaded with a 230-grain Keith-style bullet. We saw immediately the faster velocity from the 657-5 compared to the other 44 Magnums. The 41 Magnum Buffalo Bore 230-grain clocked at 1226 fps compared to the fastest bullet out of the 629-6, which was the Hornady Custom 240-grain at 1107 fps. The muzzle energy difference between these two cartridges was very different, with the Buffalo Bore having more than 136 foot-pounds more energy in some cases.

Team members felt the difference in recoil between the two calibers: The 41 Magnum had a quick snap to it, while the 44 Magnum had a big wallop. Controlling that snap took effort in the 657-5. There was muzzle flip, and getting back on target took slightly longer. Have no doubt, there is significant recoil with the 41 Magnum; though some thought that recoil felt less severe in the 657-5 compared to the recoil from any of the 44 Magnums tested.

Concealed-carrying the 657-5 was similar to the 629-6. The thickness of the revolvers is 1.7 inches, which is big. We used an OWB holster and a heavy belt to tote these two hefty six shooters. You can't go cheap with a belt unsuited for carrying these

## S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 629-8
## 44 MAGNUM, $900-$1000
## GUN TESTS GRADE: A

**The ported 3-inch barrel, low fixed sights, and compact grip made this a concealable N-frame that was easy to shoot well.**







**The oblong port helps tame recoil; testers noted recoil was slightly less from the 629-8.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Action | Double Action |
| Overall Length | 8.3 in. |
| Overall Height | 5.1 in. |
| Maximum Width (Cylinder) | 1.7 in. |
| Weight Unloaded | 40.6 oz. |
| Weight Loaded | 43.7 oz. |
| Barrel Length | 3.0 in. |
| Capacity | 6 Rounds |
| Frame Material/Size | Stainless Steel, Large N-frame |
| Cylinder Material | Stainless Steel, Fluted |
| Frame Front Strap Height | 1.8 in. |
| Frame Back Strap Height | 3.9 in. |
| Grips | Checkered Walnut/Finger Grooves |
| Grip Thickness (Max) | 1.1 in. |
| Grip Circumference (Max) | 5.2 in. |
| Front Sight | Serrated Red Ramp |
| Rear Sight | Fixed Groove |
| Sight Radius | 5.4 in. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Single Action | 4.0 lbs. |
| Trigger Pull Weight Double Action | 11.0 lbs. |
| Trigger Span Single Action | 2.8 in. |
| Trigger Span Double Action | 3.3 in. |
| Safety | None |
| Warranty | Lifetime |
| Telephone | (800) 331-0852 |
| Website | Smith-Wesson.com |
| Made In | Springfield, Mass. |



**We would put a dab of matte-black paint in the semi-circular cutout under the groove to kill glare. Note how the sights are lower to the barrel and the frame of the 629-8, making it feel shorter in hand than the other revolvers.**



**Note the chamfered chambers; they allow easier and faster reloading of the fat 44 Magnum 44 Special cartridges.**



**The ball detent snaps into that V-shaped groove in the frame, locking the cylinder in place.**



**In hand, the 629-8 felt comfortable; the silky DA-mode trigger pull made this a smooth operator.**



**The 329PD's ejector rod pushed the empty 44 Magnum cartridges out, but not all the way.**

revolvers, so make note that an investment in gun leather is needed to carry concealed properly. One should also consider training. Team members felt that the 44 Magnums, due to their compatibility with the softer recoiling 44 Special ammo, made them a better candidate for concealed carry. The testers felt they would train with 44 Special and carry 44 Magnum. The 41 Magnum did not offer that factory-ammo option.

**Our Team Said: The correct holster and belt are required for any of these revolvers. The 657-5 fell out of favor with testers in part due to the availability of more 44 Magnum and 44 Special ammo. The gun was well made and filled with great features, but the 44 Magnum chambering offered more for the investment.**

### S&W Model 329PD Alaska Backpacker IV 150545 44 Magnum, $750-$900

The 329PD is a departure from the stainless-steel revolvers tested as it is constructed with a matte-black scandium-alloy frame and a brightly finished stainless-steel cylinder. It is the lightest of all three tested at 32.8 ounces loaded. A grizzly bear and "Alaska Backpacker IV" are engraved on the right side of the frame. A slab-sided scandium barrel shroud is fitted over a stainless-steel barrel. Above the barrel in the scandium frame is a steel heat shield that protects the scandium from hot gases that escape between the barrel and cylinder gap. The steel barrel liner is crowned and slightly protrudes from the shroud. The muzzle is rounded off to assist in reholstering, and the edges of the barrel shroud are slightly chamfered.

The front-sight blade is pinned in the shroud and uses a gold bead. Serrations run on the top side of barrel frame. The rear sight is fully adjustable and finished matte black, with the rear-sight base serrated to reduce glare. The notch is shaped in a V on the Backpacker. These sights were quicker to align that the 657-5's or 629-6's ramp and square notch, our shooters said. With the 329PD, just drop the gold bead in the shallow of the V; it is fast, though testers felt these sights were also high, making the revolver feel tall in the hand.

The trigger was smooth but not as smooth as the PC-produced revolvers, nor did it have a trigger stop. The hammer had a larger hammer spur that was plenty toothy. The small-style cylinder latch wore a nice, fine checkering, and like the trigger and hammer, was finished in matte black. The cylinder is built from stainless steel and brightly polished. We liked the chamfering on the front edge of the cylinder. Unlike the other three revolvers, the cylinder of the 329PD locks via a detent in the elector rod shroud; it snaps into a hole at the end of the ejector rod. The ejector rod was a good length and pushed out empties about three-quarters of the way. Again, use gravity to help this process.

The 329PD is marketed as an Alaska Backpacker to provide defense against dangerous beasts. The big bore and light weight are well suited for that role, carried on a belt in the open with a knapsack, but with a backcountry pack with hip belt, that might be an issue.

For concealed carry, we had problems with the full-size grip. The hard-rubber grip had a pebble texture and pronounced finger grooves; it reminded us of a Hogue-style grip, though the 329PD's grip wore the S&W logo. The left panel was scooped out to allow use of a HKS-type speedloader. This was a full-size grip, and though it felt good in hand for most testers, it was much too large to carry concealed. We might trade the rubber grip with a set of the wood Secret Service grips or a compact set of rubber grips.

At the range we feared that this revolver would brutalize our shooting hand. We have fired 329PDs with the titanium cylinder and prefer to carry those guns a lot and shoot them very little. The added heft of the stainless-steel cylinder in this 329PD Backpacker gave the revolver weight and was the most pleasant of the revolvers to shoot, we thought. On average, the 329PD gave slightly more velocity than the other 2.6-inch-barreled revolvers. Accuracy with the Hornady Custom ammo was exceptional, with a best five-shot group just over a half an inch at 15 yards using a rest. We surprised ourselves at how accurately we could shoot this revolver and feel it was due to the larger grip.

Looking at the data we discovered that the muzzle velocity from the Hornady Custom ammo was the most consistent across all three 44 Magnums. The 329PD also had the lowest velocity and worst accuracy with the Sellier & Bellot ammo.

**Our Team Said: The 329PD made a good compromise of weight using the stainless steel cylinder and scandium frame. It was light but not so light that it stung the web of our shooting hand. The grip worked well to mitigate recoil, but it was too large for concealed carry. The sights were fast on target but plenty tall.**

### S&W Performance Center Model 629-8 44 Magnum, $900-$1000

The 629-8 came out of S&W's Performance Center a few years back and is not currently catalogued. Testers felt that the 629-8 got concealed carry right for a big-bore revolver. At first glance, the 629-8 looked like a traditional revolver, but the features are what pushed this revolver ahead of the others. The frame, barrel, and cylinder wore a matte-stainless finish while the trigger and hammer had a chrome-flashed finish. It also wore a set of the Secret Service–style grips that



**The 629-8's ejector easily pushed empties free of the chambers. Always use gravity to help unload.**

we grew to appreciate. The grips were fitted well to the frame and allowed use of a speedloader. The 629-8, unlike the other revolvers, had a longer 3-inch barrel that was ported and equipped with fixed sights that were large and serviceable.

The round barrel was longer than the other revolvers, but it featured an oblong port between the muzzle and front sight. This helped tame felt recoil. The team said the 629-8 came in right behind the 329PD in terms of felt recoil. On average, the longer barrel gave slightly more muzzle velocity even with the port. With the Sellier & Bellot load, the 629-8 had a muzzle velocity almost 100 fps more than the other revolvers.

The front ramp sight with red insert was dovetailed into the barrel, allowing the user to swap out the front sight to sync up point of aim with the ammo used. This is important since the rear sight was a groove machined in the frame's top strap and was not adjustable.

The surface of the trigger was smooth and made DA mode feel less than it actually measured. A trigger stop was built into the trigger, which is a nice feature to reduce rear movement of the trigger to the barest minimum. The teardrop-shaped hammer spur added to concealability and usability. The cylinder latch was similar to the other revolvers: Small, well checkered, and worked precisely. The front edge of the cylinder wore a nice chamfer, and all the chambers were chamfered for ease in reloading. The crane also had a ball detent that locked into the frame rock solid. The ejector rod was housed in an enclosed shroud under the barrel and was more streamlined than any of the other revolvers. The ejector-rod length was similar to the other revolvers and performed similarly. Yes, use gravity. The barrel was longer yet slender compared to the other revolvers.

The 629-8 was the heaviest of the four tested revolvers, weighing 43.7 ounces loaded. What we felt was the added weight, along with the porting and longer barrel, made this revolver easy to shoot. The 629-8 also had a slightly longer sight radius, which also made the revolver easier to aim. At 15 yards, we were able to consistently shoot five-shot groups at one inch. The sights on the 629-8 were not made for accuracy work and were less refined than the sights on the other models, but the 629-8's sights were designed for concealed carry, and they performed. They were smaller than the other sights, yet very usable and since we are looking for a concealed-carry revolver to be used at spitting distance, the 629-8 meets that spec. It also felt shorter when shooting and less bulky compared to the others. This revolver, like the rest, is a brute in recoil, but we felt it was easier to manage compared to the 629-6 and 657-5.

When carrying it around town, the extra barrel length made little difference. Drawing the 629-8 from concealed carry, the outside of the revolver was smoother and more snag free than the other revolvers.

**Our Team Said: The 629-8 was a serviceable concealed carry big bore, but finding one may be difficult since it is no longer produced. The porting, longer sight radius, and lower sights exclusive to this model, along with the other features that were on some of the other models (trigger stop, grip, trigger pull, chamfered chambers) made this revolver a better choice for our shooters to carry concealed.**

*Written and photographed by Robert Sadowski, using evaluations from* Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**


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# Ruger's Been Very Busy

*The company has rolled out a quartet of midyear introductions.*

**Sturm,** Ruger & Co. has been busy in the middle of 2014, introducing an inexpensive AR, a new 10-22, a new 9mm LCR, and a Scout Rifle in 5.56 NATO.

● The new AR-556 semi-automatic M4-style, direct impingement Modern Sporting Rifle, $749 MSRP, is the company's first model with all major components machined at Ruger's Mayodan, NC facility.

The AR-556 includes forged 7075-T6 aluminum upper and lower receivers and a cold hammer-forged chrome-moly steel barrel with M4 feed ramp cuts. Chambered in 5.56 NATO, the AR-556's carbine-length, flat-top, M4 design is configured with a Ruger Rapid Deploy folding rear sight, milled F-height gas block with post front sight, forward assist, dust cover, and brass deflector.

Other features include a telescoping six-position stock, improved trigger-reach grip, enlarged trigger guard and one 30-round Magpul PMag. Standardized M4/AR components are utilized throughout.



● Now in production for 50 years, the Ruger 10/22 has become America's favorite .22 rifle, and the company is celebrating that milestone with a $329 Collector's Series 10/22 Carbine Rifle — of which 25,000 will be made.

The Collector's Series 10/22 features a limited-time, 50th Anniversary bolt marking, commemorative 50th Anniversary box with an exclusive Collector's Series box decal, and "The Ruger 10/22 Rifle 22 LR — Fifty Years 1964-2014" special receiver marking. Also included are a Collector's Series pin, a 10/22 50th Anniversary bumper sticker, a replica of the original 1964 10/22 ad, and a limited edition Ruger Collector's Series street sign.

The Collector's Series 10/22 Carbine Rifle is Model Number 21104. It has a fiber optic front sight and adjustable fiber-optic rear sight, an 18.5-inch barrel, is 37 inches long, and weighs 5 pounds.




● The $599 9mm LCR, is the newest variation of the Lightweight Compact Revolver (LCR). The 9mm LCR is Model Number 5456. It has a stainless-steel barrel length of 1.875 inches with 1:16 right-hand rifling and six grooves. Overall, it measures 6.5 inches in length, 4.5 inches in height, and is 1.28 inches wide. It holds five rounds in the Ionbond Diamondblack-finished cylinder and weighs 17.2 oz. It is not currently approved and certified in Massachusetts or California. The newest LCR retains the original LCR's a double-action-only trigger pull using the friction-reducing-cam fire-control system. The 9mm LCR ships with three moon clips and a soft case.



● Shooters who have contemplated adding a turnbolt action to their 5.56/223 Rem. rifle lineup should know that four new versions of the Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle are now chambered in 5.56 NATO. This newest version of the Gunsite Scout Rifle features a hybrid chamber that shoots both 5.56 NATO and 223 Rem. accurately and safely. The rifle weighs about 7.1 pounds, features a 16.1-inch-long barrel with a 1:8 twist rate and 1/2-28 threads at the muzzle, offers controlled-round feeding and is shipped with a 10-round detachable box magazine. The cold hammer-forged, medium contour, alloy-steel barrel and receiver feature a matte-black-oxide finish. The 1/2-28 right-hand threaded barrel comes with a Ruger flash suppressor, which can be removed to attach other threaded-barrel accessories, such as suppressors. The rifle's trigger guard and magazine well are formed of

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glass-reinforced nylon. The magazine release is a push-forward Mini-14 paddle just ahead of the trigger guard. A Mini-14–style protected, non-glare, post front sight and receiver-mounted, adjustable, ghost ring rear sight serve as sights, and a forward-mounted Picatinny rail offers options in mounting an assortment of optics, such as scout scopes from Burris and Leupold that allow "both eyes open" target acquisition. The rifle also features Ruger M77 integral scope mounts and comes with Ruger scope rings for conventional scope mounting. The rifles come in four variations. Model Number 6824 has a right-hand action and an alloy steel barrel. The 6825 has a stainless-steel tube. The 6827 and 6828 models are left-hand actions with alloy steel and stainless steel barrels, respectively. The alloy-steel models both MSRP for $1039. The stainless versions have $1099 MSRPs.

### Adams Arms Announces New AR Pistols

AR pistols are becoming increasingly popular since the ATF ruled that SIG Sauer's arm brace does not make an AR-design pistol into a rifle with an NFA short barrel. In that vein, Adams Arms is offering two AR Pistols in 7.5-inch and 11.5-inch-barrel configurations with MSRPs of $1099, which includes a Samson Evolution rail. Other components include a JP Enterprises match-grade-trigger fire-control group, anti-walk pins, and an ambidextrous safety. Also included are a set of Samson fixed front and rear sights that can be used as a primary sighting system or provide a rugged backup to the optic of your choice.



### ArmaLite Adds Three Rifles

ArmaLite has added the Defensive Sporting Rifle Series to its extensive line of rifles. This series includes three different models: Defensive Sporting Rifle 15, Defensive Sporting Rifle 15F, and Defensive Sporting Rifle 10.

The Defensive Sporting Rifle 15 ($699) and 15F ($699) are chambered in 5.56×45 mm NATO and feature a 16-inch double-lapped, chrome-lined, chrome-moly vanadium MIL-B 11595 E barrels with M203 step down and 1/2×28 threads. Rifling twists are 1:7 RH suitable for shooting 52- to 69-grain ammo. The DEF15 has a gas block with a Picatinny rail. The DEF15F model comes with an A2 front sight base.

The Defensive Sporting Rifle 10 is chambered in 7.62×51mm NATO and features a 16-inch double-lapped, melonite-treated barrel with 5/8×24 threads.

All upper and lower receivers are made of 7075-T6 aluminum, with the uppers consisting of a flat-top MIL-STD 1913 rail for mounting sights and optics. The rifles also come with adjustable stocks and single-stage triggers.



***Top to bottom: ArmaLite's Defensive Sporting Rifle 10 in 7.62×51mm NATO and the Defensive Sporting Rifle 15 and Defensive Sporting Rifle 15F in 5.56×45 mm NATO.***

### SIG Sauer Imports Swiss Arms SG 553 Pistols

SIG Sauer, Inc. has imported a limited number of the famed Swiss Arms SG 553 pistols to the U.S.



market. Built around the SG 551/552 series gas-piston actions, the SG 553 features a two-position gas valve, ambidextrous controls, polymer handguard, and hooded front sight. The SG 553 is chambered in 5.56x45mm NATO, and has a Nitride-treated finish. The SG 553 is available with either the Swiss Rotary Diopter Sight welded to the receiver or with an M1913 rail, for mounting any number of optics or accessories. Flip-up sights are standard on the railed models. Swiss 30-round translucent polymer magazines and a three-prong flash hider complete the package. MSRP $3792. A parallel offer for the SG 553 SBR, MSRP $4194, has already sold out.

### Browning Adds 725-Model Trap and Skeet Shotguns

Browning has expanded the Citori 725 line of over and under shotguns by adding new Trap and Skeet models in 12 gauge this year.

Both Trap and Skeet versions of the Citori 725 will be available in standard-stock and adjustable-comb models. Like other Citori 725 models, the Trap and Skeet models include the Fire Lite Mechanical Trigger System and full-width hinge pin and tapered-locking-bolt receiver design.

To help reduce felt recoil, the Trap and Skeet Citori 725 models use Browning's Inflex recoil pad. This Browning-designed recoil pad diverts recoil down and away from the shooters face.

Browning's Back Bored Technology barrels with Vector Pro lengthened forcing cones and the new Invector-DS choke tube system are included, and both models use Grade III/IV walnut for the stock.

Trap guns have a gloss finish, and Skeet models feature a gloss varnish finish. Both guns have a close radius pistol grip and semi-beaver tail

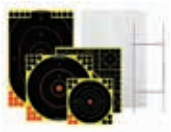
*— continued from page 31*

forearm with finger grips. Each Citori 725 also comes with three Invector-DS chokes, Hi-Viz Pro-Comp sight with ivory mid bead, and the Triple Trigger System that allows users to fine-tune finger-to-trigger length of pull. The 725 Trap will be offered with 30- and 32-inch barrel lengths with high post rib. Available with standard or adjustable comb stock options. Suggested retail ranges from $3,339 to $3,740. The new 725 Skeet will be offered in 28- and 30-inch barrel lengths with standard or adjustable comb stock. Suggested retails run from $3,140 to $3,530.



**Sharpshooter Stand Kit**

Birchwood Casey's Sharpshooter Stand and Target Kit gives shooters a quick and easy way to set up an informal range in any safe location.



The Sharpshooter Stand and Target Kit includes a heavy-gauge wire stand and a 12x18-inch corrugated backer board that will absorb hundreds of shots. It comes with four Shoot-N-C targets, including one 12x18 Silhouette, one 12-inch Bull's Eye, one 12-inch Sight-In, and one 8-inch Bull's Eye. Also included are 54 pasters that can be placed over bullet holes to increase the life of the target. The stand also works great with 12x18 Birchwood Casey Dirty Bird Silhouette and Darkotic Targets. The Sharpshooter Stand and Target Kit sells for a suggested retail price of $12.70.

*Compiled by* Gun Tests *staff.* **GT**

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