GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

$5.95 August 2018/Vol. XXX, No. 8





380 ACP SHOOT-OUT

Two new models take on a concealed-carry veteran. Tested: S&W M&P 380 Shield EZ, Springfield Armory 911, and a Walther Arms PPK/S. Outcome: Two models get Grade A ratings, and the third disappoints. ● Page 5





44 MAGNUM SINGLE-ACTION REVOLVERS

The EAA Bounty Hunter, Cimarron's Bad Boy, and the BFR Short Cylinder compete for honors at the range and in the field. For a carry companion in bear country, go with the Bad Boy. ● Page 16



LADIES' SEMI-AUTOS

When we tested three 20-gauge shotguns from Benelli, Mossberg, and Browning against a 12 gauge from Remington, we wondered which one our female shooters would pick — and why. ● Page 23

DOWNRANGE: 2 ● FIRING LINE: 3 ● CUSTOMER SERVICE: 31 ● COMING UP: 32

DOWNRANGE

GUN NEWS



Todd Woodard

The NRA-ILA website had an interesting news item looking into why it might be that gun owners hesitate to share their status as gun owners in surveys. I have to agree with the sentiment expressed in the NRA item: "It makes perfect sense, particularly in times of heightened concerns that anti-gun politicians are plotting to restrict our 2nd Amendment rights and the routine vilification of law-abiding gun owners by politicians, celebrities, and the media." Okay, that's the why. Here's the what.

Iowa State University political scientist Robert Urbatsch analyzed data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and found that the number of people refusing to answer a question about gun ownership roughly tripled since the year 2000. The increase appears steady from the year 2000 through 2016, and Urbatsch found the increased non-response rate concentrated among Republicans (though the rates among Democrats and Independents also increased). Coincidentally, Pew recently confirmed that gun ownership is far more common among Republicans — meaning, the people driving the increase in the GSS question refusals are also those most likely to own a gun, NRA-ILA reports.

Further, Urbatsch discusses how this increase could be driven by increased polarization, by political elites' and partisan commentators' fear-mongering, or by distrust of government and an institutionalized belief in individual autonomy. For some reason, more people are hesitating to share their gun-owning status with a stranger on the phone conducting a survey for the government.

This isn't new, says NRA-ILA. Similar sharp decreases in disclosure of gun ownership status occurred in Gallup polls in 1993, right around the time Congress was working on the 1994 assault weapons ban. More recently, in October 2013 and October 2014, when anti-gun politicians controlled both the White House and the Senate, disclosure dropped again.

The data go on to show that folks didn't answer questions about gun ownership more freely until 2017. In 2016, there was a concern that a historically anti-gun politician could win the presidency. In 2017, President Trump had secured the White House, so gun owners became more forthcoming. I get that, and it makes sense.

But I personally don't care who's in power — I never answer that question, or answer it truthfully, to anyone I don't know very well. The Gallup organization, Joe Sixpack down the street, Mayor Sylvester Turner, Gov. Greg Abbott, and President Trump don't need to know what guns I own, or what I lost in that horrible canoe accident. Call me paranoid, but don't call me late for dinner. **GT**

GUN TESTS CREDO

REMEMBER: BE SAFE, BE SECURE, BE AWARE

GUN TESTS®
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

Editor.....W. Todd Woodard
Managing Editor..... Tracey Taylor
Contributing Editors.....R.K. Campbell
Roger Eckstine
Robert Sadowski
David Tannahill
Ralph Winingham
Sr. Tech Coordinator ..... John Taylor
Preproduction..... Cara Blake

TO CONTACT THE STAFF:
GunTestsEditor@icloud.com

GUN TESTS ACCEPTS NO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

GUN TESTS ® (ISSN No. 1042-6450) is published monthly by AG Media, Inc.; 111 Corporate Drive, Big Sandy, TX 75755-2446. Periodicals Postage Paid at Big Sandy, TX, and at additional mailing offices.

Copyright © 2018, AG Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is strictly prohibited. Printed in U.S.A.

Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658.

Subscriptions: $49 (U.S.) annually. Outside the U.S. and Canada $72 (U.S.) for one year, $144 (U.S.) for two years. Single copies $7.50 (U.S.). Bulk-rate subscriptions for organizations and educational institutions are available.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to: ***GUN TESTS***, P.O. Box 8535, Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535, or ***GUN TESTS***, P.O. Box 39, Norwich ON, N0J 1P0. **Canada Publishing Agreement** #40016479.

ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:
www.Gun-Tests.com
Click "Contact Us"
Or call toll free (800) 829-9084

BACK ISSUES:
Call (800) 571-1555

Rifles Not Ready for 50 States

Reader Ray worries about coverage of firearms choices in anti-gun states. We are 2nd Amendment absolutists at Gun Tests, but we realize readers in some states have constrained choices.

Re "Rifles Ready for All 50 States: Springfield, Troy, and Uintah," June 2018

Dear Mr. Woodard: I look forward to each issue of your magazine and have just extended my subscription an additional two years. However, I must take exception with your presentation of "Rifles Ready for All 50 States."

Although the article's coverage on the firearms was of its usual quality, your implied acceptance of violations to the Second Amendment in the opening paragraphs was shocking. From the article it can be inferred you have accepted these restrictions as lawful restrictions on our private-sector firearms. At a minimum, an article such as this should have included a position statement.

Please consider the following. The issue of gun control, regardless of degree, is a cultural issue — not a national safety issue. When the Constitution was written, less than 15% of our population lived in urban areas. Today, approximately 80% of our population is urban. However, cities account for only about 5% of the geographical landmass of this country. We now have two opposing gun cultures in this country — with urbans believing guns are only for killing people and rurals viewing them as tools, much as a rod and reel are for fishing.

Unfortunately, this unbalanced distribution in population leads to an inequitable balance of representation in Congress.

The assault on the Second Amendment is perhaps the greatest test of endurance for the Constitution. The 1787 delegates included the Second Amendment for a purpose, as a definitive statement of freedom and individual rights. The 1787 delegates felt strongly enough about the issue to place double protections on the Second Amendment. The "Shall Not" prohibits Congress from passing laws against that right, and the "Infringed" is an absolute, stating Congress cannot make any laws affecting that right. That is not to say unconstitutional cross-laws are not being made.

The government, whether federal, local, or state, has no constitutional power to enact or enforce laws not given it by the Constitution.

Make no mistake, we do have those wishing to impose their will and vision on the rest of us, and the Constitution stands resolute in its protection of us from them. Your opening paragraphs in the "Rifles Ready for All 50 States" may easily be perceived as an endorsement or, at a minimum, acceptance of those states and municipal laws unconstitutionally violating the people's rights as defined under the Second Amendment. I hope you will clarify your position. **— Ray**

Hey Ray: I appreciate you taking the time to write such a thoughtful letter. It's pretty simple: I personally and the magazine do not endorse the 2nd Amendment infringements that have led to the products that we reviewed in "50 States." In fact, we have fought such laws as best we can, remotely, I admit. However, there are several states in which

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.

those products are the best that my subscribers can legally do. I have received dozens of reader letters over the years asking for coverage of firearms legal in their states. I can't just ignore them or tell them to move to a freer state. So we do what we can for gun owners who aren't legally able to buy all the firearms we should be entitled to as citizens of this country. — Todd Woodard

How About the Taurus Spectrum?

Mr. Woodard: Could you do a review of the Taurus Spectrum? The gun is finally available. I bought mine a few months ago, and it is everything I wanted: an easily concealable 380 ACP, an easy-to-rack slide for an old guy like me, fits my hand perfectly, slide stop holds it open after the last shot is fired, disassembles in about two seconds and reassembles in about three seconds. I fired 40 rounds with it right out of the box until my ammo was gone, with no failures of any kind, and it hit where I aimed it. Also there's no sneaky problems or puzzling features that you don't learn about until after you buy it, like with some guns. It's a simple, flawless handgun that works like it should — at least so far. I'm happy with mine, but I respect your opinion and would like to get your comments. I've seen mostly favorable reviews from people who've fired it, but it seems like the major gun publications are not commenting. **—Marshall**

Re "Double Rifle Versus Single Shot," December 2007 (online)

Todd: I've just finished reading your on-line test of the subject rifle in 9.3x74R. I own a Ruger No. 1 Tropical in 375 H&H Mag. My rifle had the same issue with the ejected case catching on the safety button on every shot. I wrote to Ruger asking for a fix for this concern. Ruger replied, indicating that there would be no fix because the rifle was designed that way. I corrected mine by cutting off the front portion of the safety button. It isn't pretty, but it will no longer slow down a quick reload under pressure. I love your magazine. I've recommended it to several friends and family members. **—Jerry**

We appreciate the kind words. — tw

Are You Ready for Some Shotguns?

Todd, I have recently seen articles about the 20-gauge Remington 870 TAC-14 and possibly Mossberg pump-action shotguns. Have you thought about doing a side-by-side test of these two shotguns in 20 gauge? What size shot would be the most effective? No. 4's to "0" size? No. 5's and smaller, not so much, unless you are after snakes in the grass. Mom got pretty good with an old .410-bore bolt-action J.C. Higgins in killing snakes, but that was back in the 1950s. Also, I see shotguns with just a short rear stock to hold on to in 20 gauge. Can you control a 20 gauge with a short rear stock versus a 12 gauge with the same kind of rear stock? Maybe there are other brand-name shotgun makers out there I am not aware of who also make 20-gauge home-defense shotguns that could be included. I like the idea of a magazine on the shotgun. Remington holds six rounds vs. the Mossberg's 10 rounds. Something to consider testing. Keep your powder dry. **— Ken**

Ken, thank you for the suggestions. I agree, these topics are interesting, and we are working up tests on both the magazine shotguns and the shorties.— tw

PRINT SUBSCRIBERS: HOW TO GET WEB ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES

Setting up free electronic access to our website allows you to search the **Gun Tests** archives for specific guns — and you get access to the current issue on the web before it hits your mailbox. Also, you can check the status of your subscription account, update your mailing or email address, pay your subscription invoice or renew your subscription, and communicate with the editorial staff. Current subscribers can begin activating free online access by typing this into your browser: **Gun-Tests.com/activate.**

To create your web-access login, you provide your first and last name, the ZIP/Postal Code, and your account number. That's the first 11 digits found on your magazine's mailing label just above your name. If you can't get the account activated, contact us at **Customer_Service@GunTests.info**, or call 1-800-829-9084.

There are two ways to find guns we've reviewed. The Compare Guns feature (top left corner of the page under the logo) allows you to input several descriptors and narrow the search results. Or you can use the Search function. If you search for a common item, such as "22 LR," you'll get tons of references. Basically, the search function finds every instance of the searched-for topic and lists the accompanying articles the topic appeared in. The more specific and unique the reference, the better the search. We do our best to list the catalog numbers for guns we've tested, so that's usually a good place to start. There's also an "Advanced Search" area to help you narrow the results.

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 other than your name, but we may need to contact you about material in your letter.* **GT**

380 ACP Shootout: New Models Versus a Time-Tested Veteran

Tested: Smith & Wesson M&P 380 Shield EZ, Springfield Armory 911 Bi-Tone, and a Walther Arms PPK/S. Outcome: Two models get Grade A ratings, and the third disappoints our team.

As our ammunition-selling retail sources tell us, 380 ACP pistols are increasingly popular, and because of that interest, new handguns for the chambering are being introduced at a steady pace. While we have serious reservations concerning the stopping potential of the 380 ACP round, there are some loads that are better than others, and we included these in the test program that follows. Regarding the handguns themselves, here we test three, two that are new variants by respected makers and a third that is a veteran name in the 380 ACP field, despite its being marketed for slim guys who often wear tuxedos.

The first of these handguns is the *Smith & Wesson M&P 380 Shield EZ 180023, $384*, an important step toward offering a handgun that is well suited to those with lowered hand strength and dexterity. The new Shield isn't a micro-compact pistol but is instead a nice-sized 380 that is all about easy shooting. The "EZ" part of the name refers to an easy cocking system Smith & Wesson claims will make the pistol better for those with limited hand strength to fire and use. If it works as advertised, Smith & Wesson will have provided a handgun that fills a real need. In initial handling, we found the Shield is easier to use than a revolver and most double-action-first-shot pistols because the other types may stress the trigger finger of elderly or female shooters. Likewise, double-action-only or striker-fired safe-action pistols may also present a problem with trigger strength with some shooters. For perspective, we also touched upon the Colt 1903, which, surprisingly, has much in common with the Smith & Wesson Military & Police 380 EZ.

Next up is the *Springfield Armory 911 Bi-Tone PG9109S, $516.* The Springfield 911 (nine-one-one) is a small 380 ACP that is adorned from the factory with night sights and a set of custom-grade grips. The 911 name was chosen for those who may have to be their own first responder. If you get in a tussle, the thinking goes, police are minutes away if you call 9-1-1, while danger is only seconds away. So, carry the Springfield 911 and be ready at the ready. There are four different 911 models. The PG9109 has a black nitride slide and lists for $599 (see page 16). Two models come with Viridian Green Grip Lasers, the PG9109VG with a black nitride, $789; and the PG9109SVG with a brushed stainless-steel slide, also $789. Our test gun, the PG9109S, has a brushed stainless-steel slide and lists for $599.



Top is the Smith & Wesson M&P 380 Shield EZ 180023, $384, a nice-sized 380 ACP. The "EZ" refers to an easy cocking system which we found could make the pistol better for those with limited hand strength. The Springfield Armory 911 Bi-Tone PG9109S, $516, bottom, is a small 380 ACP whose "911" name was chosen for those who may have to be their own first responder in case of a confrontation.

RANGE DATA

380 ACP Black Hills 60-gr. HoneyBadger	**Smith & Wesson Shield EZ**	**Walther PPK/S**	**Springfield Armory 911**
Average Velocity	1180 fps	1167 fps	1155 fps
Muzzle Energy	185 ft.-lbs.	181 ft.-lbs.	177 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.0 in.	2.4 in.	1.9 in.
Average Group	2.4 in.	3.0 in.	2.7 in.
380 ACP Fiocchi 90-gr. JHP 380APHP	**Smith & Wesson Shield EZ**	**Walther PPK/S**	**Springfield Armory 911**
Average Velocity	985 fps	970 fps	923 fps
Muzzle Energy	193 ft.-lbs.	187 ft.-lbs.	170 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.7 in.	2.4 in.	2.0 in.
Average Group	2.5 in.	3.3 in.	3.0 in.
380 ACP Federal Premium HST 99-gr. JHP P380HST1S	**Smith & Wesson Shield EZ**	**Walther PPK/S**	**Springfield Armory 911**
Average Velocity	1024 fps	990 fps	970 fps
Muzzle Energy	230 ft.-lbs.	215 ft.-lbs.	206 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.7 in.	2.6 in.	2.7 in.
Average Group	2.2 in.	3.5 in.	3.4 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired three five-shot groups with each load from a Brownells.com Bullshooter shooting rest and a solid benchrest. Distance 15 yards. We recorded velocities for each load with a Competition Electronics Pro Chrony 15 feet from the muzzle. ***Ammo sources:*** *Fiocchi Shooting Dynamics 380 ACP 90-grain Jacketed Hollow Points 380APHP ($18/50 rounds from LuckyGunner.com), the Black Hills HoneyBadger 60-grain 380 ACP ($25.57/20 rounds from Brownells.com), and the Federal Premium 99-grain HST Jacketed Hollow Point P380HST1S ($19/20 rounds from LuckyGunner.com).*



The current Walther Arms PPK/S, top left, runs $700 new from Cabelas.com. A more affordable solution is a used $400 PPK/S, bottom. Both blued-steel PPK/S pistols use all-steel fabrication and feed from a single-column magazine, giving them a maximum capacity of 7+1 rounds.

The Springfield 911 380 Auto is designed to be more comfortable to fire and use than other small pistols. Unfortunately, many buyers purchase a handgun based on size alone and do not consider how uncomfortable the handgun may be to fire. During prep handling, our shooters found the pistol is indeed easily concealed and offers good features.

We matched the pistols against a classic *Walther Arms PPK/S, $700*, as a counterpoint. The last time we reviewed a Walther PPK/S was in the November 2002 issue. That variant was actually the stainless PPK/S-1 in 380 Auto, which at the time was made by Smith & Wesson under license from Walther. We suspect the S-1 designation meant Smith & Wesson's first model. The PPK/S-1 test gun was easily distinguished from a European Walther by clear, workmanlike graphics that read "Smith & Wesson, Houlton, ME USA" underneath the Walther logo on the right-hand side of the slide. On the left side the words "Under License of" was added above the traditional Carl Walther marking. We thought the frame of the S-1 felt flatter and sharper and the machining appeared to be more austere than the German models, but to be sure of origin, the serial number of the pistol appeared plainly just behind the trigger guard, complete with PPK/S-1 designation.

Our blued-steel test PPK/S-1 used all-steel fabrication and fed from a single-column magazine, meaning that its maximum capacity then and now was 7+1 rounds. Anyway, the Walther was not famous for its low weight,

but instead for its thin profile. Also, the Walther doesn't have a great reputation for reliability, and this test confirmed that. As we said then, it was easy to complain about the PPK/S's inherent faults. As you will find out below, not much has changed in 16 years.

The result is a comprehensive test of popular handguns that ended up creating two distinct preferences among our raters: one preferring the Shield and the other the 911. We really liked the Smith & Wesson Military & Police 380 EZ. There is simply no fault with the handgun, save for its chambering, which we understood from the get-go. The Springfield 911 is the better concealed-carry handgun, we feel. The Shield, however, is the friendliest handgun we have tested in some time. It is accurate, reliable, and recoils little. It is easy to rack the slide and easy to load. The Springfield 911 is a good handgun as well, perhaps better suited to a more experienced shooter. The Shield is larger and a bit more difficult to conceal, but it is easier to carry than the handguns the raters have chosen for themselves, at this time in their carry careers. As one rater noted, "When I am much older, I think this might be my gun."

Test Ammunition

Firing for accuracy was also combined with a test of reliability with combat loads. We tested the pistols for accuracy at 15 yards. Loading the pistol for combat testing, we first used the Federal American Eagle 95-grain full-metal-jacket rounds ($12.49 per 50 from TargetSportsUSA.com). We used several loads that have proven to be good performers in the past. These included the Fiocchi 90-grain JHP ($18/50 rounds from LuckyGunner.com), the Black Hills 60-grain Honey Badger ($25.57/20 rounds from Brownells.com), and the Federal Premium 99-grain HST ($19/20 rounds from LuckyGunner.com).

Recoil was stiffest with the Federal HST loading, as might be expected of a loading that reaches over 1,000 fps in this size handgun. Reliability could not be faulted with these loads. The Walther did not function with the heavy Federal load. Recoil was heavier in the Springfield by a noticeable margin. The best groups (1.7 inches) came with the Shield EZ shooting the Fiocchi 90-grain JHP and the Federal HST 99-grain loads.

Here are more details about how the guns performed.

Smith & Wesson M&P 380 Shield EZ 180023 380 ACP, $384

This was the price for this gun at BudsGunShop.com. The Shield EZ pistol capitalizes on Smith & Wesson's successful 9mm, 40- and 45-caliber defense pistols. The 380 ACP Shield, however, is only similar in appearance. The Smith & Wesson Shield 380 EZ is a single-action pistol with a fixed barrel.

Racking the slide is also a concern. So, Smith & Wesson designed the Shield 380 EZ as a single-action type. While the single action makes sense, there are drawbacks to be addressed as well. This isn't a striker-fired pistol, but it features an internal hammer. As such, when the slide is racked, the hammer is cocked. To make the pistol safe to carry, the Shield features a positive firing-pin block and also a grip safety that blocks the trigger. This grip



Top to bottom are our accuracy and chronograph test rounds in ascending weight order: The Black Hills 60-grain HoneyBadger, Fiocchi 90-grain JHPs, and Federal's 99-grain HST load. We also function-fired with a standard full-metal-jacket bullet, Federal's American Eagle 95-grain load, bottom. Second from top, the Black Hills HoneyBadger ammunition is loaded with a bullet engineered by Lehigh Defense. The HoneyBadger bullet is solid copper with three deep scallops around the circumference. At the bullet nose, these cuts create a sharp three-edge point. The Fiocchi ammunition has provided consistent expansion in past ammunition tests.

SMITH & WESSON M&P 380 SHIELD EZ
180023 380 ACP, $384
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The Shield is EZ-ily among the most useful and attractive 380 ACP pistols we have tested. The Shield is a good choice for home defense for those who cannot handle a caliber larger than the 380 ACP. As a carry gun, it isn't smaller than some 9mm Luger handguns, but it is much easier to fire well. The barrel length at 3.65 inches is the longest of the pistols tested and afforded the highest velocity and energy.



Action	Single action; internal hammer fired
Weight Unloaded	18.5 oz.
Weight Loaded	21.0 oz.
Overall Length	6.7 in.
Barrel	3.675 in. long; stainless steel; Armornite finish; tactile loaded-chamber indicator.
Overall Height	4.85 in.
Magazines	(2) 8-round detachable boxes
Front Strap Height	2.15 in.
Back Strap Height	2.95 in.
Maximum Width	1.0 in.
Grip Thickness (Max.)	1.0 in.
Grip Circumference (Max.)	5.1 in.
Slide	Armornite-finished stainless steel; 9.5 lbs. racking effort
Frame	Black polymer; 3-slot rail; 18-degree grip angle
Grip Material	Textured black polymer
Trigger Pull (Single Action)	4.75 lbs.; tactile & audible reset
Trigger Span (Single Action)	2.6 in.
Safety	Grip
Front Sight	Fixed post, white dot
Rear Sight	Windage adj.; white dot
Warranty	Limited lifetime
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Made In	Springfield, MA



Only the S&W was capable of mounting a combat light on its three-slot accessory rail (inset).



The Shield field-strips easily into the major components of slide, frame, and magazine. The Shield EZ requires only 9 pounds of effort to rack the slide, which is lighter than the other pistols in the test.



Right, note the Shield's hidden hammer (arrow).

safety is very easy to use. Simply grasp the pistol as you draw, and as you line up the target, completely depress the grip safety. The result is a nice single-action trigger press in a natural motion. Smith & Wesson offers also offers a version with a manual safety (No. 11663). The type with a manual safety was subject to a safety recall. We cannot comment on function of the No. 11663 model, but be certain to listen when a company makes a safety recall.

Fortunately, our pistol was not affected; it is only the handguns with a manual safety that were recalled. Pity, because our main rater stated that he would prefer a pistol with a frame-mounted safety because the action to put it on Fire is natural during the draw. Some prefer a manual safety, some do not. Smith & Wesson offers each. The current trend is toward pistols that are simple to use, point and shoot, but this line gives shooters the choice.

Let's address how Smith & Wesson handled the issue of racking a slide with less effort than is usually needed. After all, no matter how easy to fire and use, a pistol at some point must be loaded and unloaded. The Shield EZ requires about 9 pounds of effort to rack the slide, which is light by any standard. The Springfield slide was slightly more difficult to rack at 9.7 pounds, but both were much easier to operate than the PPK/S at 12.5 pounds.

With the leverage and balance in length between the slide and handle, this pistol is quite easy to handle well. S&W also went to a lighter recoil spring and a lighter hammer spring. This is possible because the pistol is chambered in 380 ACP. There isn't a lot of pressure required to contain the energy of the 380 ACP, which typically pushes 95-grain bullets at 950 fps. The recoil spring may be lighter, and the hammer spring may be light as well because the slide doesn't need much energy to cock the hammer. A 9mm could not be this light and easy to manipulate.

We found the Smith & Wesson Shield 380 EZ to be a remarkably

easy handgun to manipulate and use. There is more to it than that, however, because the pistol also features magazines that are easily loaded. The pistol is supplied with two magazines. A special extension on the all-steel magazines gives the shooter plenty of leverage to push down the magazine spring.

If we were picking a handgun for an accomplished shooter, we might choose another handgun, but the Smith & Wesson 380 Shield EZ is appealing to the shooter who needs a little help. Many people will have difficulty shooting and handling a full-size 9mm because the recoil spring must be rated to handle the heaviest loads. The recoil spring is compressed as the slide is racked. A weak spring may invite short cycles. So, the 380 ACP seems ideal for the person who has difficulty racking a slide. Just the same, we wanted to be certain that the Smith & Wesson Shield 380 EZ is reliable with all loads, so we used one of the heaviest 380 auto loads we know. The Federal 99-grain HST worked just fine in the Smith & Wesson, but not in the Walther. When firing the Shield with this heavy load, recoil was little different than with standard loads, which is something of a feat to accomplish. Some gun-shop salesmen cannot seem to understand that everyone isn't the same. A shooter needs a handgun that will suit his or her physical needs and strengths. The pistol should be tailor made for them, and they should not have to step up and handle a handgun that is too difficult for them to manipulate. Otherwise, they might not be armed at all.

Smith & Wesson did not have to design this piece from scratch. The Smith & Wesson Military & Police Shield 380 EZ is based on the Smith & Wesson Military & Police 22-caliber pistol. The barrel and other key parts differ, but the outside dimensions are very similar. However, there are certain additions, including what Smith & Wesson calls the 2.0 improvements. The cocking serrations are well done and make racking the slide easier. The pistol

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY 911 BI-TONE PG9109S
380 ACP, $559
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

We liked the Springfield 911. Unlike the full-size 1911 it mimics, the Springfield is suited to carrying hammer down instead of cocked and locked, an important consideration for pocket carry. This is because the small size, light weight, and good handling make for a different geometry than full-size pistols.



Action	Semi-auto single action; internal hammer fired
Weight Unloaded	12.5 oz.
Weight Loaded	15 oz.
Overall Length	5.5 in.
Barrel	2.7 in. long; 1:16 twist; 416R stainless steel
Overall Height	3.9 in.
Magazines	(1) 6-round flush, (1) 7-round extended. stainless-steel boxes
Front Strap Height	1.75 in., Octo-Grip texturing
Back Strap Height	2.25 in., Octo-Grip texturing
Maximum Width	1.1 in.
Grip Thickness (Max.)	0.85 in.
Grip Circumference (Max.)	4.6 in.
Slide	Brushed stainless steel; full-length guide rod w/flat-wire spring; loaded chamber indicator
Frame	Anodized 7075 T6 aluminum;
Grip Material	G10 Thin Line
Trigger Pull (Single Action)	5.0 lbs.; Hogue G10 trigger shoe
Trigger Span (Single Action)	2.5 in.
Safety	Extended ambidextrous frame-mounted lever
Front Sight	Ameriglo Pro-Glo tritium green/yellow
Rear Sight	Tritium green/white
Warranty	Limited lifetime
Website	Springfield-Armory.com
Telephone	(309) 944-5631
Made In	Geneseo, IL



Compact and reliable, the Springfield 911 pistol is a good pocket handgun. On the combat course, the Springfield pistol demonstrated the most felt recoil in the test.



We had good results in the past with the Rock Island 380 ACP pistol, left. Shown side by side with the 911, it's easy to see how much smaller the Springfield is. It features G10 grips and an excellent front-strap treatment.



Left: The 911's mainspring housing offers an excellent grip surface when firing.

features both forward and rear cocking serrations. The frame is nicely textured for fit and feel and gets high ratings on both adhesion and abrasion. The treatment doesn't abrade the hand, but it provides good purchase. The frame is slanted at the backstrap at an 18-degree angle. This provides a good fit for almost any hand size. The human engineering of the pistol is excellent. When grasping the pistol to fire, our shooters expended no noticeable effort to close the grip safety and keep it closed. Yet as soon as you relax the grip, the pistol-grip safety returns to the Safe position. This is a good design.

The all-steel magazines feature an extension of the follower that is manipulated to move the follower to the bottom of the magazine and load the magazine. While all pistol magazines are more difficult to load toward the last of the cartridge load, the Shield 380 ACP magazines were never difficult to load, our shooters said.

When addressing the trigger, you will note that it doesn't have the familiar trigger-safety lever inset into the trigger face as in Glock and Smith & Wesson Military & Police Shield fashion. The Shield EZ features a solid trigger for single-action fire. Other new designs, such as the Hudson H9, are single-action pistols without a safety, but they use the trigger-lever system in a modified manner. The Shield 380 does not need this trigger lever, thanks to the grip safety. When first measured at the beginning of the test and the pistol was straight from the box, the trigger broke at 5.0 pounds and felt clean. Take up was modest and the reset crisp. After firing more than 300 cartridges during the course, the trigger grooved in a bit lighter, as many single-action triggers will do, and it stayed at 4.8 pounds.

The pistol is similar in many ways to the Colt 1903 Pocket Hammerless. No, this isn't a stretch of the imagination. The Colt 1903 features a single-action trigger with grip safety and a true slide-lock safety, which the Smith & Wesson doesn't have, but each handgun features a hidden hammer. Both are well sized for the cartridge they fire, and each is very easy to fire well. Interestingly, John Moses Browning tried to convince FN that his 1910 Browning pocket pistol did not need the manual safety, only a grip safety. We fired a Colt 1903 side by side with the Shield and came away liking the Colt much better than the Walther and felt it was more comfortable than the Springfield as well. The Colt was chambered in 32 ACP, however, as the later 1908 model chambered the 380 ACP. They are identical otherwise. The Colt 1903 pistol fired 50 rounds of 32 ACP CCI Blazer without incident and it offered good combat accuracy. The Smith & Wesson Shield 380 EZ is more accurate, and even though it is chambered for the 380 ACP and weighs less than the Colt 32 ACP, the EZ was more comfortable to fire. Also, the Smith & Wesson sights are much better, and the pistol was slightly more accurate. As a side topic, this was very interesting to our shooters, who were surprised at how good the old Colt really was. But the Smith & Wesson Shield has every modern advantage over the Colt 1903 or 1908 in price, accuracy, and handling.

Loading the pistol for combat testing, we first used the Federal American Eagle 95-grain FMJs. The magazine was very easy to load, just as it was designed to be. We fired 100 rounds in each pistol at 5, 7, 10, and 15 yards. The raters added ammunition on their own time and dime as well because the pistol was so interesting. Hence, we had a higher-than-normal round count. In fairness, the Springfield got the same treatment. We also fired a magazine in each pistol of the Federal 99-grain HST in offhand fire. Because there were only two magazines, we took turns loading and never had any difficulty or stubbed a finger. We really like the grip angle, the white outline sights, and the trigger. A small handgun sometimes needs good sights more so than a full-size handgun because a shorter sight radius works against accuracy. We thought the Shield's sights work well for combat shooting and for precise shooting. During the test, we racked the slide with only two fingers from time to time. The pistol works as designed. This is the only handgun tested that features a rail for a combat light, making it more useful for home defense.

Our Team Said: We like the Smith & Wesson Shield. We are generally not comfortable with the power level and wound ballistics of the 380 ACP; however, loads like the Black Hills Ammunition Honey Badger and the Federal HST make the cartridge much more attractive than the previous choice of ball ammunition or a JHP that underpenetrates. The pistol is a joy to fire and use. It is more than accurate enough for personal defense. In fact, while we are not concerned with field and trail use, one of the raters noted it is accurate enough for small game as well, and the centerfire cartridge is far more reliable than rimfire ammunition, making the Shield a better choice for personal defense than any 22 LR rimfire pistol. We like the concept of the Shield and the pistol itself and give it a solid A rating.

Springfield Armory 911 Bi-Tone PG9109S 380 ACP, $516

This was a recent price for the handgun listed at TombstoneTactical.com. Our seasoned raters discovered that with the heavy HST load, the little 911 pistol kicked. Recoil was greater than standard charge in the Fiocchi load. There is nothing wrong with these rounds, but a load like the HST that jolts the 99-grain bullet to 950 fps from the 2.6-inch Springfield barrel is to be respected.

Elsewhere, embryonic sights, heavy triggers, and short grips make for terrible results on the range. The 911 is a counterpoint to pocket handguns so fitted. The 911 pistol combines ergonomic design with small size and weight. The pistol is smaller than the Shield and easier to conceal, but it isn't as easy to use well.

The Springfield is only 4 inches tall, and the length is just 5.5 inches, so this is a concealable handgun. Weight empty is 12.5 ounces. This isn't a vest-pocket pistol, but it is a pocket pistol that will disappear into crew pockets and hide easily in others. The pistol features an

elongated backstrap tang commonly referred to as a beavertail. This is to prevent the all-too-common problem of the slide biting into the web of the hand. Sometimes called hammer bite, the slide or sharp edges of the tang are more often to blame for these cuts. Springfield adds a custom touch with a front strap that is finished in an Octo-Grip pattern to match the Hogue mainspring housing. The grips are manufactured for Springfield by Hogue and provide the same pattern. Adhesion and abrasion are excellent. When measuring the grips and the safety, we found the pistol is just short of an inch wide at the widest point. The slide, however, is only 0.81 inch wide. This is a truly compact pistol.

At this juncture, we should point out that the Springfield 911 380 isn't a downsized 1911, save in appearance. It is a single-action handgun with a thumb safety, but it isn't a true 1911 as the Baby Rock 1911 380 is, as an example. There is no grip safety. As for the safety, it isn't a slide-lock safety. The safety is applied and does not stop the slide from moving. While we may prefer a slide-lock safety that locks the slide in place when we are using a tightly fitted holster, the ability to load the pistol while it is on Safe is an advantage of the Springfield system. The magazine release, location of the safety, slide stop, and general appearance are 1911-like. Another significant departure from the 1911 design is in the 911's lock up, which does away with both the barrel bushing and the swinging link of the full-size 1911. The pistol unlocks and locks by a cut out in the lower barrel.

As for fit and finish, the total verdict was that the pistol is faultless in execution. The little 911 rivals or equals top-end Springfield, Kimber, or Colt 1911 handguns for fit and finish. The controls are positive and work as designed. The trigger is good to excellent, breaking at a crisp 4.9 pounds with little take up and no creep. Reset is good and sharp. Pulling a heavy trigger against a lightweight handgun is a chore,

WALTHER PPK/S 4796006 380 ACP, $700

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

The Walther features excellent machine work. The action was heavy and made getting good hits very difficult in the double-action mode. The pistol was not reliable with a modern load designed to maximize the 380 ACP cartridge. We would not buy the Walther PPK/S.



Action	Semi-auto single/double action; external hammer fired
Weight Unloaded	23.6 oz.
Weight Loaded	26.2 oz.
Overall Length	6.3 in.
Barrel	3.3 in. long; blued steel
Overall Height	4.75 in.
Magazines	(1) 7-round extended, blued-steel box
Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Back Strap Height	2.4 in.
Maximum Width	1.1 in.
Grip Thickness (Max.)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (Max.)	4.9 in.
Slide	Blued steel; rear serrations; wavy top-strap serrations
Frame	Blued steel
Grip Material	Black plastic, checkered
Trigger Pull Single	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Double	14.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single	2.9 in.
Trigger Span Double	3.3 in.
Safety	Left-side lever, firing pin block
Front Sight	Fixed blade
Rear Sight	Fixed notch
Warranty	Limited lifetime (new); none (used)
Website	WaltherArms.com
Telephone	(479) 242-8500
Made In	Fort Smith, AR (new); Germany (used)



We used the Galco Stinger holster during the combat firing course. This is a good holster that makes for a very fast draw with the PPK/S handgun.



The pistol isn't difficult to field strip. The Walther is a classic firearm in many ways, but it is better suited to collectors than personal-defense shooters, we believe. The PPK design dates to 1931; the PPK/S ("Sport") dates to 1968.



We found the Walther to be unreliable with the high output Federal HST loading.

VALUE GUIDE: 380 ACP SEMI-AUTO PISTOLS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Rock Island Armory Baby Rock 51912 380 ACP, $356	Aug. 2016	A	Combat shooting gave good results. Accuracy was excellent for a pistol this size.
Ruger LCP 3701 380 ACP, $229	Aug. 2016	B+	We would pay more for the LCP Custom, which has better sights and trigger.
Remington RM380 Micro 96454 380 ACP, $341	Aug. 2016	B-	Heavy stacking of the trigger led to poor accuracy. Sight regulation was also badly off.
Ruger LCP-C Custom No. 3740 380 ACP, $419	Oct. 2015	A	The sights and trigger are great improvements over previous versions of the LCP.
Taurus Curve 180CRVL #1-180031L 380 ACP, $380	Oct. 2015	C	The bottom line is that a pistol without sights isn't useful, in our opinion.
Kimber Micro Carry Advocate Brown 380 ACP, $796	Sept. 2015	A-	The Kimber was well finished and demonstrated excellent reliability and accuracy.
Browning Black Label 1911-380 051904492 380 ACP, $620	Sept. 2015	B	The Browning is a reliable handgun with familiar operation. Less accurate than the smaller Kimber.
Glock 42 380 ACP Subcompact Slimline, $480	Nov. 2014	B	With a Viridian green laser on it, we'd bump up the grade to an A- and probably buy it.
Kahr CW 380 No. 3833 380 ACP, $419	Nov. 2014	B-	We didn't like the sights, the short grip, or the long DAO trigger pull.
Colt Mustang XSP Pocketlite O6790 380 ACP, $649	Nov. 2014	C+	This costs a lot of money, and there are many pistols that work better for less money.
SIG Sauer P238 238-380-NBS12 380 ACP, $710	Nov. 2014	C	Its controls should have produced a 1911-like feel, but the inconsistent trigger pull affected accuracy.
Ruger LCP-CT 380 ACP, $559	Jan. 2014	A-	Ramp-up time was nil, but to fire the pistol without using the laser was a feat.
S&W Bodyguard 380 109380 380 ACP, $419	Sept. 2013	B	The Bodyguard had the best integrated laser sight of all the models tested, easy to turn on.
Ruger LCP 380 ACP, $379	July 2013	B+	The LCP performed with any ammo we loaded into it. The sights are minimal.
Ruger LC380 No. 3219 380 ACP, $450	June 2013	A-	The LC380 offers better ergonomics than many smaller 380s.
Ruger LCP-LM No. 3718 380 ACP, $443	Feb. 2013	B+	The LCP-LM was an easily concealed pistol; we couldn't operate the laser switch with one hand.
SIG Sauer P238 Tactical Laser No. 238-380-TL 380 ACP, $829	Feb. 2013	B-	1911 aficionados liked the P238 for its trigger, and laser activation was easy to perform.

Log on to **Gun-Tests.com** to read complete reviews of these products in the designated months. Highly-ranked products from older reviews are often available used at substantial discounts.

and the Springfield trigger is an aid in controlling this light handgun.

There are many small pistols with very poor sights. While the Walther PPK/S 380 has relatively small sights, the Colt 1903 we examined was even smaller, and some designed for pocket carry have nothing more than a nub on top of the slide. We feel that this is a mistake. A small handgun has a short sight radius already, so poor sights limit accuracy even further. Shot placement is everything with every handgun caliber, and particularly so with a lower-power round. The Springfield features some of the best sights we have examined on a pocket pistol and were easily the best of the three handguns tested here. These sights are excellent for all purposes. The Ameriglo Pro-Glo front sight features a brilliant green tritium insert surrounded by a yellow circle. The yellow component is luminescent and useful in all lighting conditions. The front sight gets your attention quickly and allows very fast and accurate shooting at 3 to 7 yards using only the front sight. The rear sight features an open U notch commonly referred to as the "old man's sight," and the name fits even for those who are quite young and wish to use this sight.

The pistol isn't difficult to disassemble, but it isn't as easily broken down as the Shield. The Smith & Wesson Shield 380 EZ is unloaded and the slide locked to the rear to disassemble, same as the 911, but the Shield is then field stripped by rotating a lever and running the slide forward. With the 911, the pistol is unloaded (never forget that), and then the shooter retracts the slide enough for the cut out on the slide to allow the slide lock to be pressed from left to right to remove. The slide is then run forward. The recoil-spring guide is removed, and the barrel is removed. When the pistol is reassembled, the ejector must be pressed downward to reassemble the pistol. The Shield is easier to field strip and put back together.

The Walther PPK features a hinged trigger guard that is pressed downward to release the slide. With the trigger guard popped out of place, the slide is pulled to the rear and off the fixed barrel for field stripping. The recoil spring is wrapped around the barrel rather than under the barrel with the Walther design. The Walther is reassembled by pressing the slide back over the barrel and then snapping the trigger guard in place. We rated the Shield to be the easiest to maintain and field-strip and lube. The Walther and the 911 are different, but each is old school and require about the same time and effort to be field-stripped.

Firing the pistol for combat accuracy, we found the Springfield 911 exhibited the most recoil of any of the pistols tested, due to its light weight, but it wasn't uncomfortable to fire. The grip is well shaped to fit most hand sizes, and the trigger action is smooth, the sights are excellent, and results on target satisfied us. We also fired a full magazine off hand using the Federal 99-grain HST loading, learning that recoil was noticeably heavier than the other loads. However, unlike the Walther, function was flawless. The recoil isn't harsh like firing a 45 ACP +P; the pistol simply kicks more. There were no malfunctions of any type firing the Springfield 911. Accuracy off the bench rest firing position was acceptable, but not as nice as the groups fired with the Smith & Wesson Military & Police 380 EZ, which delivered groups of 2.2 inches to 2.5 inches at 15 yards — good groups for such a light handgun and in line with the results posted by the much heavier Walther PPK/S.

A big plus, in our opinion, is the carrying case provided with the Springfield 911. The cardboard box the pistol is delivered in features a carrying handle, and the box is more robust than most, suitable for storage. Inside is a carrying pouch for the pistol and its lock and spare magazine. Inside the carrying pouch is a pocket holster secured to the carrying pouch. This holster works as well as most; we liked it for carrying the 911 in a jacket pocket or trousers.

The user must make the choice of carrying the piece with either a 7-round magazine with a finger extension or a flush-fit 6-round magazine. The 7-round magazine is easier to get a good grasp on. There was a slight difference in the firing results, with the extended magazine offering greater comfort and leverage in firing. The rule we came up with is, that if the pistol is carried in the pocket, the flush-fit magazine is the better choice. If carried in a holster, the finger extension magazine isn't a problem. When the magazine is carried in the back pocket or jacket pocket, for a fast reload the finger-extension magazine is the easiest to quickly grasp.

Our Team Said: We liked the Springfield 911. It is a reliable handgun, which is the most important consideration. It is useful in personal-defense scenarios, and it exhibited enough control and accuracy that we would be comfortable carrying it. We were most impressed by the sights. While more expensive than the Smith & Wesson Shield, it is smaller and more suited to pocket carry.

Walther PPK/S 4796006 380 ACP, $700

This was a recent price listed on Cabelas.com. Cabela's notes that delivery on the PPK/S to your local FFL takes five to eight business days. We also fired a used Walther PPK/S, $400, to get a better price match up to the others. The Walther's used price was in the range of handguns of the type in the condition exhibited, solid mechanically but with finish wear. The finish was not perfect, but it was very good save for a mar across the slide. The pistol functioned well as far as the action goes, and it was purchased with a single magazine. Most listing for new guns usually come with a single magazine as well. Additional magazines are available on the WaltherArms.com website.

The pistol is the PPK/S version, or the short-slide PPK with the long PP-type grip. The single magazine featured a finger rest. We noted the rear sight was pressed to the left, and found the pistol was sighted in properly when fired. The Walther isn't difficult to rack to load, but it was





Top right: The used Walther's rear sight was cocked to one side but proved to be properly sighted in. Walther lists on its website a replacement front and rear sight (bottom right) from XS Sight Systems, the $104 DXW Big Dot for the 380 models. The item (WT-0001P-3) offers a front blade with a white-outline dot and a green tritium center dot, which can be placed over a rear blade with white vertical bar. If you have to buy the PPK/S, you probably will need this replacement sight.



Right, top to bottom: For comparative sizing with some common handguns, clockwise left to right are the Springfield 911 380 ACP, the Ruger EC9s 9mm, a Rock Island 380 ACP pistol, and a Smith & Wesson Model 649 357 Magnum. Below: Here's the shooter's view of the 911. We liked those sights.



more difficult than the Shield or the 911 handguns and might give elderly shooters a problem. The pistol has attractive features, such as a serrated top rib between the sights. The markings are nicely engraved.

The PPK/S is a double-action-first-shot pistol. A long press of the trigger both cocks and drops the hammer. The slide then cocks the hammer for subsequent single-action shots. A slide-mounted decocker safely lowers the hammer from the cocked position. This lever also acts as a safety. When manipulating the safety, it wasn't difficult to reach the lever to move it to the Safe position, and it wasn't difficult to use the decocker to lower the hammer. The grips gave adequate purchase. Earlier PPK pistols had a reputation for the slide cutting into the palm of the hand. We did not experience this. The double-action first shot of the pistol was heavy at 16 pounds, normal for the Walther PPK series. The single-action press was crisp enough at 6 pounds. The sights are smaller than the other pistols, which is a drawback. Walther lists an XS replacement sight set on its website, which would likely improve this pistol's overall grade a full notch if installed.

At the range, our shooters lubricated the Walther and loaded a magazine with the American Eagle FMJs. We immediately noticed it was very difficult to get good hits with it in double action. The heavy double-action-first-shot trigger and the pistol's high bore axis made for poor results. At 7 yards, hits were difficult to get but possible, but at 10 yards the PPK/S was very difficult to shoot accurately. In single action, the results were different; we got good hits out to 15 yards. Still, the results were not as good as the Shield by a wide margin. The pistol did not malfunction with the Eagles during this combat shooting period.

Firing from the bench, we used the same loads as the Shield. Results with the Fiocchi 90-grain JHP were best, with the high velocity Black Hills Ammunition also giving good results. The pistol refused to function with the powerful Federal HST loading. (It had also failed with this load during the single magazine attempted during the combat course.) Short cycles were common, and no more than three rounds were fired without a malfunction. The slide's momentum was too much for the Walther.

Our Team Said: This handgun isn't as easy to use well, nor is it as accurate or reliable as the other pistols tested. In our view, it is more of a collector's item than a personal-defense handgun, at least when compared to the other pistols in this test. We rated the pistol down a full grade on failures to function and another grade on combat accuracy. Even had the pistol been reliable with the HST loading, accuracy performance was far less than the level exhibited by the Smith & Wesson Shield, and even the lightweight Springfield 911 performed better. At $700 new and $400 used, we just can't see a reason to buy a PPK/S.

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

SHORT SHOTS

Performance Center Introduces New Performance Center SW22 Victory Target Pistols. Smith & Wesson Corp. has announced four new Performance Center SW22 Victory Target pistols. The Performance Center SW22 Victory Target pistols are chambered in 22 LR and are designed specifically for target shooting competitions. These pistols feature 6-inch target barrels, muzzle brakes, and Tandemkross hiveGrips, and other high-performance features. Tony Miele, general manager of the Performance Center, said, "The Performance Center SW22 Victory Target pistols are competition-ready and have been designed for the serious target shooter. These pistols have all of the upgrades needed to make them competition-ready, including adjustable target triggers, specialty target barrels, and grips. The Performance Center SW22 Victory Target pistols have custom features available right out of the box from the Performance Center."The Performance Center SW22 Victory Target pistols ship with two 10-round magazines and are available with either a 6-inch Fluted or 6-inch Carbon Fiber barrel. Each Performance Center SW22 Victory Target pistol ships with a Picatinny-style rail for the quick mounting of an optic and is available with and without a Vortex Viper Red Dot Sight. Other Performance Center SW22 Victory features include custom muzzle brakes, extended magazine-release buttons, custom polished feed ramps, beveled magazine wells, flat-face target triggers that are also adjustable for take-up and overtravel, and Tandemkross "hiveGrips" with target thumbrest grips. Performance Center SW22 Victory Target Model 6-inch Carbon-Fiber-Target-Barrel Red-Dot Sight is Model No. 12081 and lists for $868. The same gun without an optic (No. 12080) has an MSRP of $672. The fluted-barrel model with a red-dot sight (No. 12079) is $868. The fluted-barrel model without the red dot (No. 12078) is $672.



SIG Sauer Launches Components Line for Handloaders. SIG is now manufacturing premium pistol and rifle ammunition components for precision handloaders at its ammunition facility in Jacksonville, Arkansas. Elite Performance Ammunition shell cases are available for multiple pistol calibers (primed or unprimed) and rifle calibers (unprimed). The geometric consistency of these premium brass cases ensures each primer is held tightly in its pocket. The company says flash holes are precise, with no burrs, and the cases withstand repeated reloading. All Elite Performance rifle shell cases are induction annealed for consistent bullet retention. "Each brass case undergoes rigorous in-line and post-production quality assurance testing to ensure a flawless casing," said Brad Criner, senior director of brand management and business development for SIG Sauer ammunition. Pistol component cases are available, primed or unprimed, in bags of 100 in the following calibers: 380 Auto, 9mm Luger, 357 SIG, 38 Special, 357 Magnum, 40 S&W, 10mm, and 45 Auto. Rifle component cases are unprimed and available in bags of 50 in the following calibers: 223 Rem., 22-250 Rem., 243 Win., 300 BLK, 300 Win. Mag., 308 Win., and 6.5 Creedmoor. Coming soon are cases for 270 Win. and 30-06 Springfield.



Springfield Armory 911 380 Pistol Now Available in Black Nitride. On June 15, Springfield Armory announced that it had shipped the 911 380 ACP with a black-nitride finish (see page 6 for a list of models). Black nitride is a high-grade corrosion- and abrasion-resistant finish while maintaining its function and accuracy in extreme conditions. Through the process of nitriding, the outermost layer of the stainless-steel frame is hardened, making it more resilient to use and weather. The Black Nitride finish is available on Model No. PG9109.



Big-Bore Single-Action Revolvers From EAA, BFR, and Cimarron

The EAA Bounty Hunter, Cimarron's Bad Boy, and the BFR Short Cylinder compete for honors at the range and in the field. Outcome: For a carry companion in bear country, go Bad Boy.

While the 45 Long Colt could be considered big medicine in a single-action revolver, single-action revolvers chambered in 44 Magnum really up the ante. The 44 Magnum is a substantial cartridge, so a substantial and strong revolver is required to fire that round. We took a look at three single-action revolvers chambered in 44 Magnum — the EAA Bounty Hunter, Cimarron's Bad Boy, and the BFR Short Cylinder housed under the Magnum Research (Kahr) name — and found all three of these powerful revolvers had good attributes, managed recoil well without causing carpal-tunnel syndrome, and were accurate.







Left, top to bottom, are Cimarron's Bad Boy, which was announced on the barrel (inset); the stainless BFR Short Cylinder from Magnum Research, and the EAA Bounty Hunter. Though chambered for 44 Magnum, these relatively heavy wheelguns didn't pound our shooters like you might expect. The EAA was the handiest overall because it didn't weigh as much as the others, and its slightly shorter barrel allowed more holstering options in the field.

How We Tested

Prior to testing, we ran range rods down the barrel to check chamber and bore alignment and found everything was in spec on all three revolvers. Because the 44 Special cartridge can be fired in revolvers chambered in 44 Magnum, we tested all three with Hornady's Critical Defense 44 Special ammo loaded with a 165-grain FTX bullet. For 44 Magnum loads, we chose one of our long stand-by rounds from Black Hills loaded with a 240-grain JHP and a newer load from SIG loaded with a 240-grain V-Crown JHP. All rounds provided excellent accuracy. Because the EAA had fixed sights and the BFR and Cimarron had adjustable sights, we leveled the playing field and tested the EAA at 15 yards and the BFR and Cimarron at 25 yards. The sight picture with the adjustable-sight revolvers was far superior than the sight picture with the fixed sights, though the fixed sights of EAA were a modern take on the classic fixed sights. The EAA and BFR were also drilled and tapped to mount a scope. Here's what we found out about each handgun:

BFR Short Cylinder BFR44MAG7 44 Magnum, $1184

Out of the box, we could tell the BFR was a well-made revolver. It was tight with no wiggle. BFR revolvers come in two model types, a Long Cylinder model for rifle cartridges and .410 shells, and a Short Cylinder model for pistol calibers. BFR revolvers are part of the Magnum Research brand, which is owned by Kahr. This heavy, stainless steel five-shooter wore a bright stainless finish and a large rubber grip manufactured by Hogue. The grip slips over the grip frame and offers a secure hold and helped absorb recoil, since it covers the steel back strap. The side panels had texture, and the grip flared like a typical single action at the butt. We

liked the grip. Our test sample sported a 7.5-inch barrel. The front sight is screwed onto the barrel and can be replaced with other blades, a feature we liked. The rear sight was adjustable for windage and elevation, and the adjustment screws were clearly marked. The back side of the rear sight was serrated to cut glare. Sights were a matte-black finish.

The top strap was also drilled and tapped so a scope mount could be added. We expected this feature to appear because other big-bore single actions, such as the Ruger Super Blackhawk, offer this feature. We think the BFR would do well set up with a scope for hunting. You will need a shoulder holster to tote this heavy hitter around since it is a large revolver.

The Big Frame Revolver mechanism is quite different from the traditional single-action works. The BFR's hammer has two positions: full forward and full rear. To load the BFR, the hammer must be fully to the rear so the loading gate can be opened. We found the loading gate required a bit more strength to open compared to a traditional single action, but this was no deal breaker. We liked the reverse indexing cylinder, which allows the user to rotate the cylinder both ways. If you rotate too much and miss the chamber, you can just turn the cylinder backward instead of rotating it all the way around. A transfer bar is incorporated into the mechanism, which allows the user to carry the single action fully loaded.

Field-stripping requires a flat-blade screwdriver. First, make sure the hammer is not cocked and is in the fully forward position, then open the loading gate. Use the screwdriver to unscrew the cylinder-pin screw four turns and withdraw the cylinder pin. The cylinder can then be removed from loading gate side of frame. We found the BFR to have a tight fit, and the cylinder-barrel tolerance was 0.003 inch, which is tight. We also discovered the BFR had higher velocities than the Cimarron, which sports an 8-inch barrel. In some cases, the muzzle velocity was 100 fps higher.

The BFR is equipped with a coiled spring mainspring, similar to a Ruger single action. The trigger was nice and crisp at 3.2 pounds, which helped us shoot some tight groups. The trigger was wider than a typical single action, more like a Ruger trigger. The edges and shape of the trigger were a bit sharp, but that is a small complaint.

We expected the heft of this revolver and grip to help mitigate recoil, and they did. Shooting 44 Special loads caused mild recoil, and one tester was able to shoot a 1.2-inch 5-shot group. Moving up to 44 Magnum ammo, we found recoil was tolerable because the gun curled back in the shooter's hand after firing and was so positioned that it was easy to recock the hammer to fire the next round. We did notice that it was best to grip the BFR with the support hand under the trigger guard. If we did not grip it this way, our knuckles were rapped by the sharp edges of the trigger guard during recoil. Average groups with 44 Magnum ammo measured

RANGE DATA

44 Special Hornady Critical Defense 165-gr. FTX	**EAA Bounty Hunter**	**BFR Short Cylinder**	**Cimarron Bad Boy**
Average Velocity	960 fps	1183 fps	1143 fps
Muzzle Energy	338 ft.-lbs.	513 ft.-lbs.	479 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.0 in.	1.2 in.	0.9 in.
Average Group	2.0 in.	2.2 in.	2.4 in.

44 Magnum Black Hills 240-gr. JHP	**EAA Bounty Hunter**	**BFR Short Cylinder**	**Cimarron Bad Boy**
Average Velocity	961 fps	1239 fps	1084 fps
Muzzle Energy	492 ft.-lbs.	818 ft.-lbs.	626 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	2.1 in.	1.5 in.	1.8 in.
Average Group	2.2 in.	2.1 in.	2.1 in.

44 Magnum SIG Sauer V-Crown 240-gr. JHP	**EAA Bounty Hunter**	**BFR Short Cylinder**	**Cimarron Bad Boy**
Average Velocity	1267 fps	1465 fps	1354 fps
Muzzle Energy	856 ft.-lbs.	1144 ft.-lbs.	977 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.0 in.	1.8 in.	2.0 in.
Average Group	1.7 in.	2.0 in.	2.6 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 15 yards for EAA, 25 yards for BFR and Cimarron. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle.

BFR SHORT CYLINDER BFR44MAG7
44 MAGNUM, $1184
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The BFR is a well made, heavy revolver that we found to be accurate, has manageable recoil, and can mount a scope.



Action Type	Single, hammer cocked
Overall Length	13.75 in.
Barrel Length	7.5 in.
Sight Radius	10.25 in.
Overall Height	6 in.
Maximum Width	1.75 in.
Weight Unloaded	4.8 lbs.
Weight Loaded	5 lbs.
Cylinder Gap	0.003 in.
Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Bright stainless
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Bright stainless
Frame Front Strap Height	3 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.25 in.
Grip	textured rubber
Grip Thickness (max)	1.4 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.75 in.
Front Sight	Ramped blade
Rear Sight	Adj. rear
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	3.2 lbs.
Safety	Transfer bar
Warranty	Limited one year
Telephone	(218) 746-3459
Website	MagnumResearch.com
Made In	U.S.A.

The back side of the BFR's matte-black rear sight was serrated to reduce glare. The rear sight was adjustable for windage and elevation, and the adjustment screws were clearly marked. The top strap was also drilled and tapped so a scope mount could be added.



The BFR's front sight is screwed onto the barrel and can be replaced with other blades of different heights. If you plan to shoot a lot of different bullet weights whose points of impact may vary, the BFR's sight set up can help you easily adust.



BFR's Short Cylinder model accommodates pistol cartridges. This heavy, stainless steel five-shooter wore a bright stainless finish. The reverse indexing cylinder allows the user to rotate the cylinder both ways. If you rotate too much and miss the chamber, just turn the cylinder backward.



2 inches. We attribute that to the nice trigger and large sights. We think highly of this BFR, especially after calling our shots at clumps of dirt in the berm at 50 yards.

Most empties fell free using a gravity assist, but some needed to be shucked using the ejector rod, which worked as designed.

Our Team Said: The BFR is hefty, and that, we felt, was an asset toward mitigating recoil compared to lighter revolvers. Accuracy was good. We would add a scope and mount and set this revolver up for whitetail deer and boar hunting without a second thought.

EAA Bounty Hunter 770080
44 Magnum, $520

The Bounty Hunter is a German-made six-shooter that takes design cues from classic Colt single action. EAA Corp. imports these six-shooters from Weihrauch, which has been making revolvers more than 20 years. We found the Bounty Hunter to have classic Western looks with fixed sights, classic grip and finish, plus with added safety features built in. It uses a transfer bar system that keeps the hammer from striking the firing pin except when the hammer is fully cocked and the trigger is pulled completely to the rear. You can load all six chambers and safely carry the gun. No need to rest the hammer on an empty chamber. It also comes with a safe-storage security option consisting of an odd hole in the trigger guard. When used with a small padlock, it securely disables the revolver. The traditionalists did not like the transfer bar safety system, but the realists in the test group appreciated the safe-carry characteristics.

The Bounty Hunter is equipped with a traditional flat mainspring. The trigger was a bit heavy at 7 pounds, but it was serviceable. The edges and shape of the trigger were not exactly like a Colt-style single action, so some of us had to get used to the trigger. The trigger is slightly wider than on a traditional single action.

Our sample Bounty Hunter had a 4.75-inch barrel, which we thought was the perfect size for toting in the

backcountry or for cowboy-action shooting. Built with a heavy steel frame, the Bounty Hunter is designed to tolerate the substantial recoil generated by the 44 Magnum. At 38.4 ounces, the revolver has plenty of heft, plus the shape of the classic Colt single-action grip makes the revolver curl up in your hand when fired.

The barrel, ejector rod housing, cylinder, and trigger have a blued finish, while the back strap and trigger guard have a slightly blacker finish. The frame is a dark case hardening with hints of blue, bronze, and purple. The sides of the hammer are left in the white, and the spur was checkered for a sure thumb grip when cocking. Overall, the revolver has a smart look, if not exactly traditional. The smooth satin-finish walnut grip could have been fitted to the grip frame better, as there was a slight overlap on the interior front strap.

The Bounty Hunter loads similarly to a classic single action. First, cock the hammer halfway back, then open the loading gate to rotate the cylinder and load cartridges. The chambers are recessed in the cylinder, so you can't see the cartridge rim like on a traditional single action, but there is no need since the Bounty Hunter can be fully loaded. Markings on the barrel are discreetly hidden on the underside along with the chambering. The sights are fixed with a blade front and groove milled in the top of the frame — pure cowboy style. The serial number is stamped on the frame next to the trigger guard like on traditional single-action revolvers. The cylinder also is marked with the caliber and the manufacturer's initials: HWM. The ejector-rod head is crescent shaped, and it pivots away from the barrel when in use, so your fingertip does not get burned from a hot barrel.

It disassembles by placing the revolver on half cock, opening the loading gate, pressing the base pin, and pulling cylinder pin. The cylinder can then be removed from the loading side of the revolver.

For leather, we used a Hunter Leather (HunterCompany.com)

EAA BOUNTY HUNTER 770080 44 MAGNUM, $520

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The Bounty Hunter had good accuracy and easy recoil management. The shorter barrel meant the Bounty Hunter could be carried with ease and serve double duty in Cowboy Action Shooting. The trigger was too heavy, in our opinion, and it did not shoot to point of aim, so Kentucky windage was required.



Action Type	Single, hammer cocked
Overall Length	10.0 in.
Barrel Length	4.5 in.
Sight Radius	5.6 in.
Overall Height	5.3 in.
Maximum Width	1.7 in.
Weight Unloaded	38.4 oz.
Weight Loaded	42.6 oz.
Cylinder Gap	0.004 in.

Capacity	6
Frame Finish	Blued
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Blued
Frame Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grip	Smooth wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.6 in.
Front Sight	Fixed blade
Rear Sight	Fixed groove
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	7.0 lbs.
Safety	Internal transfer bar
Warranty	Lifetime Limited
Telephone	(321) 639-4842
Website	EAACorp.com
Made In	Germany

The EAA's grip was not as flared as a traditional single action.







Above left: Field-stripping the Bounty Hunter was similar to a traditional single action. Above right: A bushing in the EAA ensures the cylinder won't bind even if the revolver becomes excessively fouled. Right: A traditional-style flat mainspring is used in the Bounty Hunter, and it offered smooth cocking.



Here's the traditional sight picture of a top-groove receiver and front blade. Our gun shot to the left, so we held off to center shots on the target.



CIMARRON BAD BOY MODEL CA360-BAD BOY 44 MAGNUM, $687

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The Bad Boy offers a classic single action with a modern twist by using a Colt 1860 Army-style grip and octagonal barrel.



Action Type	Single, hammer cocked
Overall Length	13.75 in.
Barrel Length	8.0 in.
Sight Radius	9.5 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.6 in.
Weight Unloaded	2.75 lbs.
Weight Loaded	2.97 lbs.
Cylinder Gap	0.005 in.
Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Blue
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Blue
Frame Front Strap Height	2.37 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.5 in.
Grip	Smooth wood
Grip Thickness (max)	1.45 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.0 in.
Front Sight	Ramped blade
Rear Sight	Adj. rear
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	3.0 lbs.
Safety	none
Warranty	5-year limited
Telephone	(800) 264-4962
Website	Cimarron-Firearms.com
Made In	Italy

The Cimarron's front sight was serrated and screwed and dovetailed into the octagonal barrel. This echoed the treatment on the BFR and was vastly superior to the EAA's fixed front blade.



The Bad Boy's rear sight is adjustable, and the flat top frame was drilled and tapped for mounting a scope. So equipped, the Bad Boy would make a great hunting handgun.



The Cimarron's hammer spur had a lot of texture for no-slip cocking.



The Bad Boy's two-piece walnut grip is smooth and well fitted to the frame.



classic double-loop holster ($109.45) and matching belt ($101.45). The holster is based on authentic Old West designs and is made from a single piece of leather and hand formed to fit large-caliber single-action revolvers. A rawhide hammer thong keeps it in place. The matching drop belt features a nickel-plated buckle and loops for 45-caliber cartridges, which also fit 44 Special and 44 Magnum rounds.

You can dry-fire the Bounty Hunter, and we did that to work out the initial stiffness in the action. The flat top of the front sight made shooting the Bounty Hunter easier and the flat thickness and the groove were big and bold. The 44 Special loads were pleasant to shoot in the six-shooter, and as anticipated, the 44 Magnum loads had plenty of recoil that was tolerable as the revolver curled in the hand. One tester could get 5-shot groups just under 2 inches. We had to use a bit of Kentucky windage to zero it, but it was a good shooter, with most 5-shot groups at 15 yards measuring on average about 2 inches using a rest. Offhand groups opened up, mainly due to the heavy trigger. Most cases fell free from the chambers when unloading, but a few times the ejector rod was needed to push out a stuck one.

What our shooters liked about the Bounty Hunter is the ability to use it in cowboy-action shooting, plinking, short-range hunting, bear defense, and open or concealed carry. It is a nice, handy size, at an affordable price and you can shoot it loaded up or down.

Our Team Said: The Bounty Hunter is a smart looking, affordable single action in a potent caliber. The trigger could have been better, and we did have to use Kentucky windage. Still, it's not bad for a 44 Magnum revolver with a retail price of about $500.

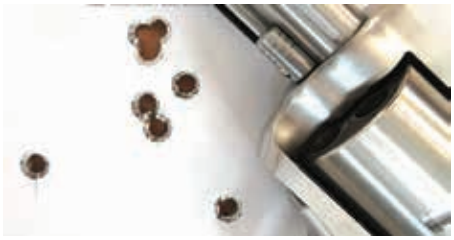
Cimarron Bad Boy
Model CA360-Bad Boy
44 Magnum, $687

While the EAA and BFR featured modern mechanisms, the Cimarron Bad Boy used a traditional single-action mechanism. The firing pin is

VALUE GUIDE: SINGLE-ACTION REVOLVERS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Colt Single Action Army Second Generation 45 Colt, $1240	July 2018	A	Our Pick. The Colt was well finished, felt good in the hand, and was quite accurate.
Uberti 1873 Cattleman Old West No. 355131 45 Colt, $400	July 2018	B+	Best Buy. Though it lagged a step in accuracy, the Uberti exhibited the best trigger of the test.
Ruger Vaquero Bisley No. 5129 45 Colt, $550	July 2018	B	The grip frame and trigger helped in deliberate fire. The Ruger was the most accurate revolver tested.
Heritage Mfg. Small Bore Revolver RR22B4 22 LR, $195	May 2018	A-	The Heritage Mfg. functioned fine, offered a manual thumb safety, and shot to point of aim.
Chiappa 1873 SAA 22 Buntline, Model: SAA1873-22, 22 LR, $339	Sept. 2017	A	The Buntline offered all we expected in a rimfire Buntline, plus it came with a reasonable price.
Ruger Bisley Vaquero, Model No. 5130 38 Sp./357 Magnum, $835	Jan. 2016	A-	The more modern Bisley-esque grip made the Ruger more popular. Stainless construction.
Uberti Cattleman Bisley 346040 38 Special/357 Magnum, $609	Jan. 2016	B+	It was well made, had a beautiful finish, and furnished good accuracy.
Ruger New Model Blackhawk No. 5242 45 Colt/45 ACP, $650	June 2015	A	This flattop had a smaller grip frame, an indexing pawl, a transfer-bar safety, and a reasonable cost.
Colt New Frontier Model P4840 45 Colt/45 ACP, $1818	June 2015	A-	The New Frontier was traditionally operated SAA revolver with a very crisp trigger — and a high price.
Ruger New Model Single-Six #0624 22 LR/22 WMR, $569	Sept. 2014	A-	The Ruger had excellent sights. Loading and unloading were tedious.
Heritage Mfg. Rough Rider RR22MB9, 22 LR/22 WMR, $230	Sept. 2014	C	We did see some of the bluing start to wear on the butt, and the front blade sight loosened.
Traditions Frontier Series 1873 SAT73-126 38 Sp/357 Mag, $609	May 2014	A-	The Frontier was favored by testers who preferred traditional SAAs. Low price is appealing.
Ruger New Vaquero No. 5108 38 Sp/357 Magnum, $739	May 2014	A-	The Ruger would get the nod if high-volume CAS-style shooting was on the agenda.
Colt 2nd-Generation Second Dragoon, 44 Cal., $800	Aug. 2013	A	On the range the big gun did excellent work for our testers. Accurate and powerful.
Colt 2nd-Generation 1860 Army, 44 Cal, $650	Aug. 2013	A	We would be happy to own two of these and would even use them for home protection, if needed.
Colt 2nd-Generation 1851 Navy 36 Cal., $650	Aug. 2013	A	We were mighty pleased with the feel of this gun, with its balance like that of the 1873 Colt.
Cimarron Evil Roy ER4104 357 Mag, $770	Aug. 2012	A	The Evil Roy was our favorite because of the smooth function of the action and accuracy.

Log on to **Gun-Tests.com** to read complete reviews of these products in the designated months.
Highly-ranked products from older reviews are often available used at substantial discounts.



This BFR shot this group using the Black Hills 240-grain JHP bullets.



The BFR is fitted with a large rubber grip manufactured by Hogue. The grip slips over the grip frame and covers the steel back strap. The side panels had texture, and the grip flared like a typical single action at the butt. The heft of this revolver and grip mitigated recoil.



The BFR is equipped with a coiled spring mainspring, similar to a Ruger single action. The trigger was nice and crisp at 3.2 pounds, which helped us shoot some tight groups.



The Bad Boy's skinny trigger had some sharp edges, and the pull weight was a bit heavy, in our opinion. Still, we had good results shooting the Cimarron.



The Bounty Hunter's hammer could pinch a hefty-handed shooter.



Here's a closer look at the octagonal muzzle treatment on the Cimarron Bad Boy. The replaceable front sight offered a lot of options when pairing the Bad Boy to a particular 44 Special or 44 Magnum load.

located in the hammer, and to safely carry the Bad Boy, you need to rest the hammer on an empty camber. It also loaded like a traditional single action. The hammer needed to be at half cock, open the loading gate, and insert rounds into the chamber. If you rotated the chamber too much, you needed to rotate the cylinder around to get back to that chamber. The Bad Boy is made by Uberti to Cimarron's specifications.

The blued finish was well executed, and there were not sharp edges on the trigger guard. The trigger was skinny like a traditional single action. The trigger broke just under 3 pounds, and that helped with accuracy testing. The Bad Boy is built on a pre-war frame with an 1860 Army-style grip that is longer and thinner than a traditional single action. The two-piece walnut grip is smooth and well fitted to the frame. An 8-inch octagonal barrel and non-fluted cylinder give the Bad Boy a distinct look. The ejector rod uses a crescent-style head that tilts away from the barrel so your fingers don't get burned from a hot barrel. The name Bad Boy is etched in the side of the barrel as if someone scratched it into the steel. Luckily, it is hard to see. The frame is a flat-top style with a ramped front sight that is screwed and dovetailed into the barrel. The ramp is serrated, so there is no sun glare with sights. The rear sight is adjustable for windage and elevation. We like the rear sight on the BFR better, but the Cimarron rear sight was good, and our groups proved that.

The Cimarron is drilled and tapped for a scope, and we were sure it would make a good hunting revolver. We tended to like the BFR better for hunting because of its extra weight, better muzzle velocity, and safety features, which allowed it to be safely carried fully loaded.

Compared to the BFR, the Cimarron was a lightweight, and we anticipated felt recoil to increase. What we found is the Cimarron curled in our grip and the recoil was quite manageable. With the Hornady Critical Defense 44 Special ammo, one team member was able to shoot a 0.9-inch 5-shot group.

With all three revolvers, we were able to cluster holes. It was easier to shoot those tight groups with the BFR and Cimarron due to the sights and nice triggers. We liked this revolver, and with 44 Magnum ammo, it was easy to average a little over 2-inch groups. With the Cimarron, we didn't need arm muscles like a Navy SEAL like we did with the BFR.

Our Team Said: There is a lot to like about the Bad Boy, including its accuracy, light weight, and manageable recoil. The longer grip made shooting 44 Magnum rounds pleasant. If we were trekking in bear country, we'd opt for the Bad Boy over the BFR due to former's lighter weight.

Special thanks to Eastern Outfitters (EasternOutfitters.com) of Hampstead, NC, for their assistance.

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

Semi-Autos for the Ladies: Comparing 20 and 12 Gauges

We tested three 20-gauge shotguns from Benelli, Mossberg, and Browning against a similarly-configured 12 gauge from Remington. Which one will our female shooters pick?

In this test we will evaluate three 20-gauge semi-automatic shotguns and one 12-gauge semi-auto with an eye toward finding a scattergun that our female test shooters would like to buy. We included the 12 gauge because of the vastly larger selection of shotshell loads for the 12 gauge versus the 20. If our distaff shooters took a liking to it, a 12 would be a far easier and cheaper way to stay on the range or in the field than the 20 gauges, and we could choose light loads for the 12 that could make the bigger gauge shoot like the 20 in terms of recoil. We could further mitigate recoil by choosing semi-automatic operation, which uses energy from the ammunition to cycle the bolt, so these choices would reduce recoil to some degree over a fixed-breech over/under. Also, to boot, they'd be lighter than a stackbarrel, a test parameter our female shooters put a premium on when we were shopping.









Our first test gun was the *Benelli Montefeltro No. 10865 20 Gauge, $1000*, the online price at BassPro.com. The Montefeltro line is fairly extensive in the Benelli stable. There are six 12 gauges and five 20 gauges in the current product list, all with 3-inch chambers (which also chamber 2¾-inch shells, of course). The 12 gauges come in 26- and 28-inch-barrel models with satin walnut finishes (Nos. 10861 and 10860, respectively for right-hand models; Nos. 10863 and 10864 in left-hand models) and black-synthetic stocks (Nos. 10869 and 10870 in 26- and 28-inch barrels, respectively). The left-hand models command a $100 premium above the $1129 list price. The 20-gauge models all have satin-finished walnut stocks. In the case of the Compact offerings, the Montefeltros mirror the Browning Micro Midas described below in offering shorter stock lengths of pull for the 24-inch barrel (No. 10868, which is 43.6 inches long and weighs 5.3 pounds) and the 26-inch barrel (No. 10866, whose OAL is 45.6 inches and dry weight is 5.4 pounds). Compare those dimensions to the full-length stock No. 10867 (which has a 24-inch barrel, a 45.5-inch OAL, and an empty weight of 5.5 pounds) and our test shotgun, the Montefeltro No. 10865 (26-inch barrel, 47.5-inch overall length, and an empty weight of 5.6 pounds). All list at $1,129. In 2012, we evaluated the Montefeltro Combo unit (No. 10832), which comes only with the 26-inch barrel but adds both stock lengths for a list price of $1299. As we mentioned, our female shooters

From top are our test 20-gauge shotguns, the Benelli Montefeltro, Browning Silver Field Micro Midas 011412605, and the Mossberg SA-20 All Purpose Field 75789. Bottom is a 12-gauge semi-auto, Remington's V3 Field Sport Black Synthetic 83401. We included the bigger gauge as an option for our female test team because of load availability. Big factors in their preference for the Benelli were the gun's light weight and easy action manipulation.

wanted to keep the weight down on their shotguns, so it's interesting to compare the 20-gauge 26-inch barrel in our test with a similarly configured 12-gauge model. Both have 47.5-inch overall lengths, but the 12-gauge walnut-stocked No. 10861 weighs a factory list 6.9 pounds, 1.3 pounds more than the factory specs on our test 20-gauge shotgun — making the 12 gauge 23% heavier than the 20 gauge. (Our measured weight for the 20 gauge was slightly higher at 5.8 pounds).

Our second 20 gauge was the *Browning Silver Field Micro Midas 011412605, $1030* at BudsGunShop.com. It, too, is part of a deep line of shotguns with the Silver appellation. The Silver Field Composite is new for 2018. It's a matte-black 12-gauge field-style shotgun (011417305, 3-inch chamber, 26-inch barrel, $1000) like the Remington V3 covered later. Other units in the Silver line include the 3.5-inch 12-gauge Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Blades field shotgun (011418205, 26-inch barrel, $1140), the 3-inch 12-gauge Black Lightning (011415305, 26-inch barrel, $1140), the Silver Field in 12 and 20 gauge (discussed later), the Silver Rifled Deer model in 12 and 20 gauge (011411321 in 3-inch 20 gauge, $1140), and the Silver Rifled Deer Matte, a 3-inch 20 gauge (011414621, $1200). The Silver Field Micro Midas tested here also has two larger stablemates, the 3-inch 12-gauge version (24-inch barrel 011412306; 26-inch barrel 011412305, both $1070 list), and a 20-gauge 24-inch brother (011412606, $1140 list). We should disclose here that we chose the Micro Midas specifically for its shorter 13-inch length-of-pull stock so our female shooters had one of that length to compare. It turns out they didn't like it, but more on that later.

Our third 20 gauge was the *Mossberg International SA-20 All Purpose Field 75789, $441* at BudsGunShop.com. There are several variations of the SA-20, made in Turkey by Armsan (Armsan.com), a collaboration of Kayhan Armsan and ATA Arms. It strongly resembles the A620W by Armsan. Mossberg offers the APF shotgun in three barrel lengths: The 28-inch No. 75771 synthetic stock, the 26-inch synthetic stock No. 75772, and our test gun, the 26-inch walnut stock No. 75789. There are also four specialized turkey guns in the line. The SA-20 in this test has a couple of major advantages: It has a five-round magazine capacity (or 5+1) and it costs hundreds of dollars less than the guns reviewed above it. But it doesn't give up features to the Benelli or the Browning. It has a 3-inch chamber, ventilated rib, a bead front sight, a selection of chokes, a matte-finish walnut stock (presumably Turkish), and a standard length of pull at 14.5 inches. It weighs 6.5 pounds.

We included a *Remington V3 Field Sport Black Synthetic 83401 12 Gauge, $670*, knowing it was an



On Hunter John Shotgun Pattern Target and Charts, we fired three shots each of 1-ounce No. 8 loads in all four guns, so the number of pellets was the same for the three 20 gauges and the 12 gauge.









Our 20-gauge ammos included three 2¾-inch choices: Remington Game Loads ⅞-ounce lead No. 6s, Winchester Xpert Game/Target load ¾-ounce No. 7s, and Winchester AA Super Sport Sporting Clays 1-ounce No. 8s. We also fired a 3-inch load, bottom right, the Federal Speed-Shok Waterfowl steel-shot rounds, which carried ⅞ ounce of No. 2 shot. The 3-inch load pounded our shooters pretty hard.







The 12-gauge loads we used included, from top, 2¾-inch Winchester Super X Xpert shotshells with 1⅛ ounces of No. 6 steel shot and Remington Gun Club Target Loads with 1-ounce of No. 8 shot and 2¾-dram equivalent powder charge. The Gun Club load had the same number of pellets per shell, 410, as the 1-ounce 20-gauge Winchester load. Bottom is the 3-inch Federal Premium Black Cloud steel-shot load with 1¼ ounces of No. 2 shot.

BENELLI MONTEFELTRO NO. 10865 20 GAUGE, $1000

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (OUR PICK)

Excellent patterns from a full set of chokes and drop-and-cast versatility means this 20 gauge can do a lot of work.



Action	Semi-auto Inertia Driven
Chamber Length	3 in.
Overall Length	47.5 in.
Barrel	26.0 in., gloss-blued steel
Receiver	Matte-anodized-black aluminum alloy; grooved topstrap
Bolt-Retraction Effort	5.5 lbs.
Ventilated Rib	0.281 in. wide; grooved
Sights	Red-bar front, silver bead middle
Choke Tubes	IC, Mod, F (Crio)
Magazine Type	Tubular
Magazine Capacity (Plugged)	2
Magazine Capacity (Unplugged)	4
Weight Unloaded	5.8 lbs.
Weight Loaded (3)	6.1 lbs.
Weight Loaded (5)	6.25 lbs.
Buttstock	Satin-finish walnut, checkering
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.4 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in., adj.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.25 in., adj.
Buttstock Pitch	4.0 in., adj.
Buttstock Cast (Off)	0.1875 in., adj.
Buttpad	Rubber, 0.5 inch thick
Forend	1.57 in. thick, checkered walnut
Trigger Pull Weight	6.0 lbs.
Warranty	5-year limited
Telephone	(800) 264-4962
Website	BenelliUSA.com



The Benelli Inertia Driven system rotated the bolt in and out of the barrel lugs. With few components to hide underneath, the forend was slender, the thinnest in the test at 1.57 inches wide.





Far left: Benelli provided three-screw-in flush-fitting choke tubes and a wrench. Left: The ventilated rib is stepped and a red-filament bar provides a front sighting element our shooters preferred over the other guns.



Our female testers appreciated how their hands fit in the groove in the top of the forend and the Benelli's light weight.



The angle of the Benelli's stock in relation to the bore line can be dropped or cast to the left or right to improve individual fit. The mounting stud is shown locating the stock downward and cast to the right. Rotating and flipping the plate over provided four different positions the shooter could use.

orange amongst apples. But a trusted female shooter told us that she never recommended that other women get 20 gauges if they intended to shoot well or a lot. She advised us that women could handle a bigger gun, and the availability of more 12-gauge loads were a better deal for them in terms of performance and price. The V3 Field Sport comes in four models; a walnut stock (No. 83420), the black synthetic, our test gun, and two camo units. We wondered if the stock material would make any difference to our lady shooters, who have been offended in the past that manufacturers think that pink in a handgun interests them. No, they say polymer is fine in a concealed-carry handgun, and basic black is suitable for almost any event, during the day or the night. So as well as gauge and frame size, we also were able to get a read on wood versus polymer by including the V3.

How We Tested

Our test rounds for the 20 gauges were 2¾-inch Remington Game Loads ⅞-ounce lead-shot No. 6s GL206 (($7.29/25 @ MidwayUSA.com); 2¾-inch Winchester Xpert Game/Target load with a ¾-ounce payload of #7 steel shot rated at 1325 fps ($8.19/25 @ MidwayUSA.com); and 2¾-inch Winchester AA Super Sport Sporting Clays 1-ounce No. 8s rated at 1165 fps ($8.99/25 @ MidwayUSA.com). We also fired 3-inch Federal Speed-Shok Waterfowl Load steel shot, with ⅞-ounce No. 2 WF207 2 rated at 1300 fps ($8.99/25 @ MidwayUSA.com). For the 12-gauge, we used 2¾-inch Winchester Super X Xpert shotshells with 1⅛ ounces of No. 6 steel shot WEX12H6 (1400 fps rating; $15/25 @ CheaperThanDirt.com); 2¾-inch Remington Gun Club Target Loads with 1-ounce of No. 8 shot and 2¾-dram equivalent powder charge GC1218 ($5.99/25 @ Academy.com); and 3-inch Federal Premium Black Cloud steel-shot load with 1¼ ounces of No. 2 shot PWBX142 2 (rated at 1450 fps, $21.99/25 @ Academy.com).

On Hunter John Shotgun Pattern Target and Charts, we fired three

BROWNING SILVER FIELD MICRO MIDAS NO. 011412605 20 GAUGE, $1030

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

A relatively heavy bolt-retraction effort and a too-short stock didn't meet the expectations of our testers. There is a full-size-stock version in the Silver line that adult women might prefer.



Action	Gas-operated Active Valve System
Chamber Length	3 in.
Overall Length	45.75 in.
Barrel	26.0 in. long matte-blued steel, chrome-plated chamber, back bored
Receiver	Matte-anodized silver/black aluminum alloy; grooved topstrap, semi-humpback
Bolt-Retraction Effort	19.0 lbs.
Ventilated Rib	0.25 in. wide; grooved
Sights	Brass bead front
Choke Tubes	IC, Mod, F (Invector Plus)
Magazine Type	Tubular
Magazine Capacity (Plugged)	2
Magazine Capacity (Unplugged)	4
Weight Unloaded	6.7 lbs.
Weight Loaded (3)	6.98 lbs.
Weight Loaded (5)	7.16 lbs.
Buttstock	Satin-finish Turkish walnut, Grade 1 wrist checkering, 18 lpi
Buttstock Length of Pull	13.0 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	1.75 in.
Buttstock Pitch	1.875 in.
Buttstock Cast	None
Buttpad	Rubber Inflex 1, 0.834 inch thick, hard heel insert
Forend	1.82 in. thick, 18-lpi checkered walnut
Trigger Pull Weight	7.3 lbs.
Warranty	None written
Telephone	(800) 333-3288
Website	Browning.com



It's hard to fault the Browning on cosmetics or fit and finish. The wood-to-metal fit was nice all over the gun; the checkering was deep and sharp, and the two-tone anodized finish on the receiver was well executed.





The choke package mirrored the Benelli's selection, with IC, Modified, and Full flush-fit tube Invector Plus tubes, along with a choke key (not pictured).



Here's one of the two problems with the Browning: The shorter Micro stock didn't fit our female shooters. You can see here how the shooter's face is forward toward the receiver. To shoot comfortably, they had to add a slip-on rubber buttpad. Also, the bolt-retraction effort was too high — 19 pounds, almost four times the Benelli's effort.

shots of 1-ounce No. 8 loads in all four guns, so the number of pellets was the same for the three 20 gauges from Browning, Benelli, and Mossberg and the 12-gauge Remington. We prefer to shoot three rounds per target rather than one shell in three targets because it's easier to see the shape of the pattern with higher pellet density. To count the pellet impacts inside a 30-inch circle at 40 yards, we quartered the circle and highlighted holes with a marker in one hand and a manual clicker in the other, then record the impacts per quarter on the target and total the whole mess. The lead shot nominal pellet count table on the Hunter John target lists 410 pellets per charge, so our target maximum would be 1230 hits per sheet.

The Remington 12-gauge IC choke patterned 52%, in between the top of the IC pattern percentage (45%) and the Modified pattern density (55% to 60%) listed on the Hunter John target for that choke. It had a high bias in the pattern, putting 61% of the shot in the pattern above the midline and 39% below. We didn't see any holes in the pattern.

The Browning 20-gauge IC choke patterned 44%, also near the top of the IC pattern percentage. It likewise had a high bias in the pattern, putting 70% of the shot in the pattern above the target midline. As you might expect, it had several holes in the bottom of its pattern, mainly in the lower right quadrant. Using a light-red secondary 30-inch circle around the pattern edge and estimating the center, we'd say the gun shot 6 inches high and left.

The Benelli 20-gauge IC choke patterned 60%, or the top of the Modified pattern percentage. It was more balanced, putting 54% of the shot charge above the midline.

The Mossberg 20-gauge IC choke patterned 49%, or somewhere between the IC and Modified pattern percentages. It, too, shot high, putting 80% of the shot charge above the midline. It also had holes in the pattern and shot high and to the left.

Because we had to adapt to the

guns rather than fitting them, we'd attribute the pattern-location problems to the shotguns' fit.

Shotgun Fit

Because shotguns don't have sights, it's important to make the stock fit the shooter, which means when you bring the gun's stock to your face, you consistently see the top of the receiver and the top of the rib the same way each time. Variations in the mount location will cause misses high and low mainly, but bad mounts can also throw the shot charge left and right. To fit yourself with a shotgun like the Benelli Montefeltro, use the provided shims and spacers to change the drop, cast, and stock length. It helps to have a friend help out.

Check around and see if a local range has a 4-foot-square steel plate or other patterning location. At American Shooting Centers in Houston, there are two target frames on Field 1 where we hang the Hunter John paper targets. Using a tight choke from 16 yards away, the shooter fires at a 2-inch aiming mark in the center of the plate or paper. With the gun down, the shooter raises the shotgun and fires as soon as the target touches her cheek. Repeat this process until a hole appears in the target.

If the shooter is high or low, alter the drop of the stock. If the center is left or right, adjust the cast. To decide how much to change the shims, dial in 1/16 inch of change for every inch off center the group is at 16 yards. Generally, most right-handed shooters can use some cast off, or a stock-offset to the right. Lefties need cast on.

Here's more about the individual shotguns and what our shooters liked, and didn't like, about them.

Benelli Montefeltro
No. 10865 20 Gauge, $1000

This was a recent price at BassProShops.com. This shotgun holds up to five rounds unplugged and is delivered with three Crio choke tubes in IC, Modified, and Full constrictions. Length of pull as delivered was 14.4 inches, with a 1.5-inch drop at the comb and a 2.25-inch drop at the heel.

The minimum recommended load is a 2.5-dram 7/8-ounce load, so naturally we wanted to see if the gun failed to cycle a light load. The Inertia Driven system handled light loads to 3-inch magnums without a hitch. We function-fired some 20-gauge Winchester AA Low Recoil Low Noise Target Loads (minimum dram equivalent, 7/8 ounce, No. 8 lead shot) through the Benelli, Browning, and Mossberg, and saw the Browning choke on the load, where the other two functioned with it. (Directions on the box specifically say not to use it in semi-autos because it "may not function the firearm's action.")

The stock on this shotgun was shaped from handsome walnut to match the forend, and our female shooters praised the checkering on the wrist and forend for helping grip the shotgun during hot Houston days. In fact, they preferred the Benelli's treatment and feel better than the synthetic-stocked Remington, whose surface had a lot more visible texture than the V3 12 gauge. They said the Mossberg's grip surfaces were likewise the right feel, with the Browning close behind.

Length of pull was 14.4 inches. Our test shooters liked the longer stocks on the Benelli, Remington, and Mossberg better than the 13-inch length of pull on the Micro Midas. This depends on the size of the shooter, of course, and shooters on this particular team of women were taller than most men.

Still, they credited the Micro Midas with offering a full-size buttpad, a problem for them in the past. Many shorter, or youth, stocks have a downsized contact area at the butt pad as well, the result of simply cutting off a full-length stock, in which the height of the buttpad gets proportionally trimmed. But in the case of the Micro, the actual dimensions of width, height, and thickness were nearly the same as found on the adult length stocks. It was 4.875 inches tall, compared to five inches on the others. This is important because someone requiring a shorter length of pull may not necessarily be a small person. Full-length buttstocks that have been cut down tend to stab rather than provide adequate dispersion of impact. As with each of our shotguns, the smaller buttstock could conceivably be stretched by mounting a thicker buttpad or even a butt sleeve. Or another option is to choose the Silver Field, which would be configured with an LOP (14.25 inches) more like the others in the test. It comes in a 20-gauge 3-inch-chamber 26-inch model that weighs a factory-spec 6.3 pounds. (No. 011413605).

The Montefeltro offered a full-length vent rib above the barrel. There was a red filament bead up front and a small silver bead about halfway down. The rib measured about 0.3 inch in width and was horizontally grooved to diffuse glare. The lines were continued into the top strap of the aluminum receiver. Below the barrel, the forend offered a grip groove that ran its full length, which our shooters praised. Also, checkering ran continuously from one side to the other just below the forend groove.

The magazine end cap that ratcheted the forend down onto the magazine tube prevented overtightening, no matter how much the cap was turned. The forend profile was slender, and magazine capacity was four rounds. The Montefeltro employs an aluminum receiver, and the trigger guard was a synthetic plastic. Despite the weight-saving materials in the middle of the gun, the 5.8-pound (unloaded) Benelli was not muzzle heavy. Its point of balance was directly below the bolt-release button. The bolt, bolt handle, cartridge drop lever, carrier and trigger were each chromed in contrast to the black finish of the receiver. In fact, the bolt handle pointed out a major advantage the Benelli held over all the other shotguns: Low bolt-retraction effort.

Using a 25-pound spring scale hooked to the bolt handle, we measured the effort needed to rack the bolt

back on the Benelli at a low 5.5 pounds. The Remington V3 was next at 9.5 pounds, followed by the Mossberg at 13.75 and the Micro Midas at a hefty 19 pounds. One shooter said, "The Browning is hard to get open. When I gripped the handle with my palm, it marked my skin. The Benelli was super smooth and easy to open."

The Benelli's trigger safety was located at the upper right rear corner of the trigger guard and told the gun's status by feel and sight. Protruding from the right-hand side, the safety was triangular shaped, indicating engagement. With the safety off, the opposite end of the crossbolt was peg-shaped, protruding from the left-hand side of the trigger guard. A serrated cartridge drop lever was located on the right-hand side at the upper front corner of the trigger guard. This could also be considered a safety feature because it gives the shooter the option of transporting the shotgun with the magazine loaded and bolt closed on an empty chamber. Working the bolt will not chamber a round until the drop lever is pressed. This feature also allows the shooter to eject a dud or safely switch to a different load, such as from birdshot to slug or buckshot. Ejecting the chambered round to load the next round from the magazine can be accomplished by pressing the drop lever rather than by pressing the trigger and firing a shot.

Another major advantage the Montefeltro arrived with was a set of shims to change the angle of the stock, cast left or right, or drop up or down. The drop and cast shims were plastic and applied between the receiver and the front of the buttstock. The stock was then slipped over the mounting rod. A steel locking plate coded to match the shim held the stock at the desired angle. A 13mm socket wrench with an extension is a handy tool for tightening down the nut that seats the stock. The Benelli's stock arrived slightly in favor of the right-handed shooter. The supplied buttpad connected to the stock with a Phillips-head wood screw that was retained with the pad. Additional accessories were a complement of flush-fit Crio choke tubes including Full, Modified, and Improved Cylinder. Also included was a choke wrench.

At the 40-yard pattern board, we learned that the Benelli Montefeltro put 60% of the shot above the target midline through the IC choke. Density was 45%, or about the middle of the IC range on the Hunter John target table.

At the range, our shooters immediately noticed that the Benelli was lighter than the other shotguns. Together with its slender profile, the Montefeltro was easy to point and quick to move, they said. One of the reasons our Benelli weighed less was its Inertia Driven system, which utilized fewer moving parts (bolt body, inertia spring, and rotating bolt head). This likely contributed to the smaller overall weight and easy bolt-retraction effort. In particular, the 6.1-pound (loaded) Benelli was not muzzle heavy at all.

It also resulted in a thinner forend because there was no need to house a gas mechanism. For our shooters, the handling characteristics of the Benelli made the faster shots easier. But until they got accustomed to its weight, matching the speeds of longer-traveling targets resulting in some run-past leads, but that was a temporary problem.

Our Team Said: This is a well-made, fast-handling shotgun. Its light weight makes it easy to carry in the field, and if the shooter matches shotshells to the light weight, she can find comfortable, well-performing hits on practically any target. Yes, the 3-inch magnum punched hard, but physics being what they are, a slim shotgun will kick more. But with a properly fit stock, that negative can be eased as well. Take out some of the pitch and the shotgun pushes more back rather than slapping the face. Once properly fit to the shooter, we think any complaints related to recoil would be minimized.

Browning Silver Field Micro Midas 011412605 20 Gauge, $1030

Our Browning shotgun was easily distinguished from our other test guns by the satin silver finish on the alloy receiver, an extra-thick Inflex 1 buttpad, and a satin-finished walnut stock. The trigger was gold anodized. The vent rib was noticeably taller than those found on the other 20-gauge test guns, and about the same height as the rib on the Remington 12 gauge. The crossbolt safety at the rear upper corner of the trigger guard was triangular shaped on both sides, and it was nestled into a recess at the rear of the receiver integrated with the contour of the pistol grip. The pistol grip was somewhat flat sided and checkered. The forend was squared off and offered a shallow finger groove beneath the barrel. Checkering on the Micro's forend was handsome, covering about 180 degrees of the wood side to side continuously. The Mossberg's forend had side checkering, but it lacked the bottom texture found on the Micro and the Montefeltro. The Remington forend had a texture in its synthetic forend. But the Montefeltro's checkering was taller than the Browning's.

The 26-inch barrel offered a lightweight profile. The vent rib, fit with a brass front bead, was grooved to reduced glare and measured 0.25 inches across. The line of the rib was continued on to the receiver, which likewise featured machined lines cut longitudinally into the top of the receiver. It continued all the way back to where it dropped away suddenly toward the stock. Browning calls this a semi-humpback design.

Each of our test guns arrived disassembled, but all that was needed was to insert the barrel into the receiver, slip the forend over the magazine tube and/or the gas assembly, and screw down the retainer cap. The Browning's Active Valve gas system was slightly more complicated, probably because its gas operation is more sophisticated. The Active Valve system is selective in how much gas it uses to cycle the action. When firing lighter loads, the valve will capture and utilize most of the gas. When firing magnum loads, much more of the gas

MOSSBERG INTERNATIONAL SA-20 ALL PURPOSE FIELD 75789, $441

GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (BEST BUY)

Excellent, consistent shooter. Not as nicely finished as the Benelli or Browning, but costs $550 less.



Action	Semi-auto, gas-operated
Chamber Length	3 in.
Overall Length	46.25 in.
Barrel	26.0 in. long glossy blued steel
Receiver	Matte-anodized black aluminum alloy; grooved topstrap
Bolt-Retraction Effort	13.75 lbs.
Ventilated Rib	0.3 in. wide; checkered
Sights	Checkered ventilated rib; brass bead front
Choke Tubes	SK, IC, Mod, IM, F
Magazine Type	Tubular
Magazine Capacity (Plugged)	2
Magazine Capacity (Unplugged)	5
Weight Unloaded	6.5 lbs.
Weight Loaded (3)	6.65 lbs.
Weight Loaded (5)	6.98 lbs.
Buttstock	Satin-finish Turkish walnut, wrist checkering
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in., adj.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	1.75 in., adj.
Buttstock Pitch	2.0 in., adj.
Buttstock Cast	None
Buttpad	Rubber, 0.46 inch thick, hard heel insert
Forend	1.6 in. thick, checkered walnut
Trigger Pull Weight	6.5 lbs.
Accessory	Fitted gun case
Warranty	1-year limited
Telephone	(203) 230-5300
Website	Mossberg.com



Talk about value added: the Mossberg came with a fitted plastic breakdown case and socks for the two major parts.



Another benefit included with the SA-20 is the set of five choke tubes and tube key, all packaged in a handy case.



Left: The barrel is stamped "Made in Turkey by Kayhan Armsan." None of our female shooters were concerned about that. Below, the SA-20 had nice-looking wood.



will be bled off, reducing felt recoil.

To assemble the Silver Micro, we began by making sure the push rod was in the proper slot. Viewed from the front of the receiver, the slot was located at about 10 o'clock. The 12-gauge models capture the push rod at about the 2 o'clock position. Next, the gas piston fits into the loop-shaped gas bracket attached to the lower radius of the barrel about 1 foot from the chamber. At this point, it was just a matter of fitting the chamber end of the barrel into the receiver, then applying the forend and screwing down the magazine cap while working against the sleevebar spring. The aluminum cap was checked by a spring-loaded detent consisting of three fingers that extended from the end of the magazine to mesh with grooves inside the cap. We doubt the retainer cap will be able to work its way loose.

Extras included a ¼-inch polymer spacer that can be placed between the buttpad and the stock. We added this piece at the request of our shooters. The Browning also arrived with three flush-fit Invector Plus chokes in Improved Cylinder, Modified, and Full constrictions. The Invector Plus chokes were the only ones in the test that had their designations spelled out on the surface of the chokes as well as indication by notches along the edges of the tubes. A flat choke-tube wrench came along as well.

As we mentioned above, the Browning felt too short for our lady shooters, but we recognize how subjective shotgun fit can be. Women with shorter arms could easily have been pushed too far back. Ballparking what that sleeve measurement might need to be, if the woman's regular sleeve measurement is less than 31 inches, she might prefer the shorter stock. To get a better read on this, it's worth renting a couple of shotguns with different buttstock lengths at your local shooting range.

Our Team Said: The action was very stiff, and our female shooters instantly figured out that racking the bolt took a lot of effort, which got an immediate downgrade. The stock was too short, and the forend was

a little bulkier than the Benelli, and they didn't like the shape as well, which knocked it down another notch. The grades teetered between B- and C+, but when the price was figured in, our shooters said they wouldn't buy the Micro Midas when there were other options such as the Benelli and Mossberg.

Mossberg International SA-20 Field 75789 20 Gauge, $441

At 6.5 pounds empty, the SA-20 handled loads from ⅞ ounce to 1¼ ounce without adjustment. The SA-20 comes in a foam-padded plastic hard case with green buttstock and barrel socks. One of the major reasons hunters, irrespective of gender, choose a 20 gauge over a 12 gauge is the former's smaller frame and weight. Also, though they may already own a 12, many field shooters wind up reaching for their 20s because the smaller gun is just easier to handle.

Our SA-20 measured 46.25 inches in length and weighed 6.5 pounds. It has a five-round magazine capacity of 2¾-inch shotshells. It comes with the company's Sport Set of five chokes and a wrench in a breakdown-style plastic case, a free gun lock, and a one-year limited warranty. All the metal surfaces are glossy blue on top of satin-finish walnut stocks.

Included with this shotgun is a matching set of stock spacers. These spacers allow you to raise or lower the vertical position of the stock, arguably the most important measurement after LOP. Each spacer is marked with the amount of drop or rise they will provide. To install, make the gun empty and on Safe. Remove recoil pad (screws will remain in recoil pad). Remove the stock bolt using a ½-inch socket wrench. Remove the stock. Place the selected stock spacer on back of receiver, text side facing out. Note the clocking slot. Reinstall the stock and stock bolt. Do not overtighten the bolt. Replace the recoil pad, making sure you do not overtighten the screw. Test the adjustment.

Like on the Browning, the gas system vents excess gases to aid in recoil reduction and helps eliminate

REMINGTON V3 FIELD SPORT BLACK SYNTHETIC 83401 12 GAUGE, $670

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

This gun functioned perfectly and shot well. No complaints about its operation. But our female shooters preferred two others.



Action	Semi-auto, gas-operated	Weight Loaded (3)	7.79 lbs.
Chamber Length	3 in.	Weight Loaded (4)	7.89 lbs.
Overall Length	47.0 in.	Buttstock	Matte-black synthetic
Barrel	26.0 in. long, black oxide finish	Buttstock Length of Pull	14.25 in.
Receiver	Anodized-aluminum alloy, matte black oxide	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
		Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.44 in.
Bolt-Retraction Effort	9.5 lbs.	Buttstock Pitch	3.1 in.
Ventilated Rib	0.3 in. wide; grooved	Buttstock Cast	None
Sights	White bead front; silver bead mid-rib	Buttpad	SuperCell, 1 inch thick
Choke Tubes	IC, Mod, F (Rem Chokes)	Forend	2 in. thick, textured black synthetic
Magazine Type	Tubular	Trigger Pull Weight	6.2 lbs.
Magazine Capacity (Plugged)	2	Warranty	2-year limited
Magazine Capacity (Unplugged)	3	Telephone	(877) 387-6691
Weight Unloaded	7.49 lbs.	Website	Remington.com



Here's the short Remington action after a workout. We had no function problems whatsoever with the V3.



Here's a look at the guts of the action. Return springs inside the receiver replace the traditional mainspring extending into the buttstock. Propellant gases diverted through ports in the breech operate twin pistons that unlock and open the bolt.



Early in the test, our female shooters identified problem areas they had with the V3. It was much heavier than the Benelli and Mossberg guns, lacked stock adjustability, and the stock texture on the forend was slicker than the checkered wood stocks, they said.



stress on the operating components. Notable was that while shooting this 6.5-pound gun, we didn't notice any more recoil with it than with the heavier guns. Also, it pointed very fast, our team said. The trigger-pull weight was a decent 6.5 pounds, and the rounded trigger itself was comfortable on the finger. The top of the receiver offered a better sighting plane than did the Browning and Remington, the female shooters said, and it was on par with the Benelli. On our sample, the bolt-release button was easy to work, and none of our female shooters had trouble with the button. However, the bolt-retraction effort was a stout 13.75 pounds, which knocked it down a peg.

The stock dimensions were comfortable for most of our shooters, including a Lefty, since there was no cast in the stock. The wrist felt trim in the hand. Also, the pistol grip had a forward flip that increased control of the gun.

Like the other 20 gauges, it wasn't drilled and tapped for scope mounting like on the Remington V3, and the 20s lacked sling-swivel studs. For a hunting shotgun, the former item is a big plus, since getting drill-and-tap work done well aftermarket is a hassle. Also, not having studs is an oversight for a field gun, we feel. We prefer being able to affix a proper sling. At the minimum, it wouldn't cost a lot for any of the 20-gauge makers to add a different cap on the front to supply one attachment point.

The SA-20 had positive ejection with the low-recoil ⅞-ounce load, which is something the Browning didn't do. The SA-20 has a nicely chromed bolt, and it came with a rubber bolt cover. Some shooters used the cover to operate the heavy action. The SA-20's trigger guard is plastic, not steel or aluminum alloy. As we noted, the forend checkering doesn't wrap like on the Benelli and Browning guns. The grain of both the stock and forearm were plain, with a mid-tone brown grain. The stock and forearm are satin finished in a tough, clear lacquer. Checkering on the wood appeared to be laser cut, and it was clean with no overruns on the borders. The SA-20 has a half-inch-thick rubber recoil pad with a hard insert at the top of the pad, so the rubber doesn't grab clothing.

The crossbolt-type round safety button on the Mossberg SA-20 is mounted behind the trigger in the polymer trigger guard. The safety moved positively and without incident.

Our Team Said: The Mossberg SA-20 is a Best Buy. Our female shooters liked the way it shot and that it didn't cost a ton of money.

Remington V3 Field Sport Black Synthetic 83401 12 Gauge, $670

At 7.5 pounds empty, the V3 handled 2¾- to 3-inch loads without adjustment. Our shooters had no issue with its function or operation. The Field Sport was 47 inches long and weighed nearly 2 pounds more than the empty Benelli at 5.8 ounces and was a pound heavier than the Mossberg. When our shooters hefted the guns side by side, they didn't like the extra poundage at all.

The V3 has a three-round magazine capacity (2¾-inch shotshells), the least of the test. It comes with three of the company's Rem Chokes and a wrench, but unlike the Mossberg, there was no included gun case. It has a two-year limited warranty.

Remington's VersaPort gas system debuted in 2010 in the Versa Max shotgun. An updated version of that gas system appears in the Remington V3 Field Sport, which is said to be a lighter, sleeker version of older autoloading systems. The VersaPort system is very different than previous designs, with the gasworks sitting directly ahead of the receiver. Small ports are located in the barrel breech. Chambered shotshells regulate how much gas is diverted to work the action. Three-inch loads, for instance, block half the ports, which diverts more gas to operate the gun. Shorter 2¾-inch shells uncover all the ports, so less gas pressure enters the operational system. The design leads to a very compact receiver, 8.25 inches in length, and it puts weight

GUN TESTS

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

1. To Change Your Address

If you are moving, please attach your present mailing label to this form, and enter your new address here:

Name

Company

Street

City

State Zip

2. To Order/Renew

To order, or extend your current subscription, enter your name and address above, and check the subscription term you prefer:

__ One year: $49
__ Two years: $98
__ New subscriber
__ Renewal

These rates are good in U.S. and Canada only. For all other countries: 1 year $72 (air), 2 years $144 (air).

3. To Give a Gift Subscription

Enter your name and address above and your giftee's name and address below. The subscription rates stated above apply to gifts.

__ Send a One-Year Gift
__ Send a Two-Year Gift

Name

Street

City

State Zip

Return this coupon (or a photocopy) to:

GUN TESTS
P.O. Box 8535
Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535

GUN TESTS
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

Shotgun Comparison continued from page 31

between the hands for better balance. That's compared to 8, 8.6, and 8.9 inches for the receiver lengths for the Mossberg, Browning, and Benelli, respectively. The barrel sports a ventilated rib that contains a small silver mid bead and a larger white bead at the muzzle.

A feature the 20 gauges all lacked was that the receiver topstrap is drilled and tapped for alternate sights. The receiver sidewalls have faint lines through the middle, and the left-side receiver carries a "V3 Field Sport" engraving. The middle of the right receiver panel has a quarter-inch wide QR code just ahead of the polymer trigger guard. All the metal and stock surfaces are matte black, and the color tones are very close to each other. The metal finish is black oxide.

While shooting this 12 gauge, we didn't notice any more recoil with it than with the lighter guns, a function certainly of its weight, but perhaps also the operating system. Also, it pointed pretty well, our shooters said. The trigger-pull weight was 6.2 pounds, and the broad trigger shoe was comfortable, even after extended firing. Another negative, however, was that top of the receiver was plain, while the three 20s had grooved receiver tops.

The bolt-release button was easy to work, and the bolt-retraction effort was not so bad at 9.5 pounds, which put it ahead of the Browning and the Mossberg in terms of ease of use. The stock dimensions were comfortable for most of our shooters, but there was no utility for adjustment, as on the Benelli and Mossberg shotguns.

Our Team Said: Perhaps the Remington V3 Field was doomed to fail from the outset because it was so different from the 20 gauges. "Fail" is probably not the right word, because despite its differences in weight and texture and cosmetics, our shooters graded the V3 better than the Browning by a wide margin. Perhaps we'll hold on to it and try it with some other 12 gauges in the future.

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

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

● Heavy-Bullet 9mm Loads: the Buffalo Bore 147-grain JHP Standard Pressure, Federal's Deep Penetrating Hydra-Shok 135-grain, the Federal 147-grain HST and HST +P, and others get slammed into the water jugs to see which one can punch through.

GUN TESTS
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

Customer Service Contacts

If you have a problem with your magazine subscription, damaged or missing issues, need to change your mailing or email address, or renew your subscription, visit Online Customer Service at:
Gun-Tests.com
Click "Contact Us"

CALL TOLL FREE: 800-829-9084

SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT
Gun Tests (US)
P.O. Box 8535
Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535

Gun Tests (Canada)
Box 7820 STN Main
London ON
Canada N5Y 5W1

QUANTITY REPRINTS
Reprints of **Gun Tests** articles are available.
Minimum Order: 1,000.
Contact:
GunTestsEditor@icloud.com

EDITORIAL OFFICES
Gun Tests *welcomes letters or email concerning our articles. Please include your name, telephone number, and hometown.*

We will respect your request not to publish personal information. Email comments to GunTestsEditor@icloud.com.

Because of daytime testing requirements, the writers and editorial staff can't answer phone inquiries. But the staff responds to email. If you have a question or comment about Gun Tests evaluations, please email individual writers at: GunTestsEditor@icloud.com. Thanks for your understanding.