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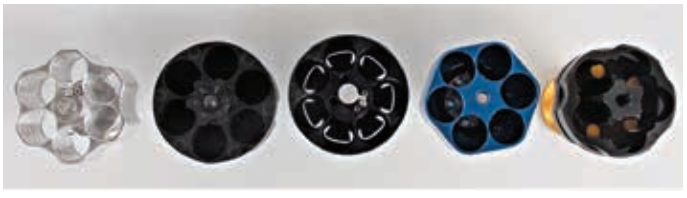
1911 HANDGUNS GO MUZZLE TO MUZZLE

We went looking for performance and value and found some winners and losers: Tested: SIG Sauer's Traditional Match Elite 1911T-45-TME, the Colt Series 70 01970A1CS, the Colt Bright Stainless Government Model O1070BSTS, Colt's Gold Cup National Match O5870A1, and the Les Baer Concept VI. ● Page 6



COMPACT 44 REM. MAG RIFLES

This handgun round finds good utility in compact rifles suited to handle its medium-range power. Which one should you buy? ● Page 17



SPEEDLOADERS

We compare five brands to see which can get you back in the fight the fastest. ● Page 26

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DOWNRANGE

GET YOURS WHILE THE GETTING IS GOOD



Todd Woodard

On April 2, NRA and California Rifle & Pistol Association (CRPA) attorneys filed an opposition to California's request seeking an immediate stay of enforcement in the case of *Duncan v. Becerra*, which found California's restrictions against so-called "large-capacity" magazines unconstitutional and unenforceable. According to an NRA release, "The decision by the United States District Court for the Southern District of California is a tremendous victory for gun owners in California, striking down California's restrictions against the manufacture, importation, sale, transfer, receipt, and possession of magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds…."

Unsurprisingly, DOJ filed a request for a stay of judgment. As noted in DOJ's motion: "To effectively preserve the status quo, and to prevent a sudden influx of large capacity magazines (LCMs) into the State of California (the 'State'), Defendant respectfully requests that the Court issue an immediate, temporary stay pending its ruling on the application for a stay pending appeal. Even if this Court, or the Ninth Circuit, ultimately issues a stay pending appeal, the State will suffer irreparable injury if LCMs are permitted to flow into the State in the interim. Defendant respectfully requests that such a temporary stay be issued by no later than April 2, 2019."

As I write this in early April, here's how this latest development affects California gunowners, according to NRA-ILA. The California Rifle & Pistol Association, with support from the National Rifle Association, filed the lawsuit that overturned the magazine ban.

The March 29, 2019, ruling puts in place an injunction (an order to refrain from performing a certain act) prohibiting enforcement of California Penal Code section 32310, which criminalizes the manufacture, importation, transfer (including giving and loaning), acquisition, and possession of a "large capacity magazine" ("LCM"), defined as an ammunition-feeding device capable of accepting more than 10 rounds of ammunition. The injunction prohibiting enforcement of the LCM restrictions ordered by the court took effect the minute it was issued on March 29.

Effect: The ruling means shooters can now acquire new magazines capable of holding more than 10 rounds in California.

However, there are risks to consider. For example, should an individual order "large capacity" magazines from an online distributor, and during the shipping process a subsequent order from a court stays the enforcement of the injunction, subdivision (a) of Penal Code

— continued on page 32

GUN TESTS CREDO

REMEMBER: BE SAFE, BE SECURE, BE AWARE

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Holster Help for the EZ380

Reader Doug's search for something to carry his Smith & Wesson M&P 380 Shield EZ in lead to an outpouring of help from Gun Tests *Readers. Also, much more on shotshell-firing self-defense firearms.*

Re "Firing Line," April 2019

Tell reader Doug that he needs to find another holster for his S&W M&P Shield EZ380. That pistol is a relatively new model, and there are not many holster choices out there yet. I bought my EZ380 at the end of December, as an Xmas present to myself, based on the reviews you folks have done.

For my holster, I found a real nice soft leather IWB at a local gunshop, which is run by pistol guys. They took an EZ off the shelf, and we tried several holsters to see what fit. The one we picked was by 1791 Gunleather, out of Miami, Florida. The exact model is RH size #3, "Multi-Fit IWB Smooth Concealment Holster."

Now once again, this holster is NOT actually designed for the EZ380, but it works great, and is real comfortable to wear. No issues with the holster catching on the mag release. Now, since I really only have one pair of jeans for IWB carry, I still wanted an OWB holster. For this I tried a different local gunshop, closer to home, and they let me try a few "universal" holsters off the shelf. The one they suggested fit the gun okay, but like you, when I pulled the EZ out of the holster, just with my hands, the magazine came flying out! So back on the shelf that model went.

I then went to shop around online. I have used holsters by Tagua before, so I looked around that website a bit, but ending up e-mailing them for some help. They have two models out so far for the Shield EZ380. The model I picked is the Texas Series, mini-Kydex/Leather black RH. The exact model # is TX-MINI-PART-1045. And as you can guess, this is a hybrid holster, with a leather paddle and Kydex holder. It can be adjusted

Tagua Gun Leather Texas Series



for tension, but it is a little stiff to start with. I have to wear that one some more for break in. This model obviously fits the Shield EZ380, and it does not even touch the mag release. **— Mike**

It does indeed, Mike. Thank you. And for some other solutions, read on. — Todd Woodard

You just printed a letter from Reader Doug. He was concerned about the magazine-release button on the S&W M&P EZ380 being compressed during holster carry. Tell him to check out Clinger Holsters. They do make a holster for that pistol. Clinger makes Kydex, and they have done their homework. Their holsters are molded to cover and secure the magazine-release button. Doug experienced exactly what I have been trying to avoid. Unfortunately, most holster manufacturers leave the magazine release uncovered. I called a few of them on the phone to ask why, and they said they don't want the holster material to make contact with the button for fear of accidental compression. Understood, but I was always thinking to myself: Why don't you design a better holster? So far in

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.

my holster research, I have found only two Kydex holster makers that take the magazine release button into consideration and bother protecting it, Dara Holsters and Clinger. **— Kent**

Todd, after reading Doug's comment in the April 2019 Firing Line, I thought you might like to know that my DeSantis 106 14 J clip IWB Tuckable holster (shown below) might be what he needs. I, too, am impressed with the EZ, and as my attached photo shows, the magazine-release button is not enclosed by the holster. Thanks for an informative and unbiased magazine that always makes my day when I see it in my mailbox.
— Scott in Georgia



Dear Todd: Just read the note from Doug concerning his problems keeping magazines in the 380 ACP EZ. That got my attention because I recently purchased one of these fine handguns, in no small part because of the review in GT. Now, losing your magazine because the release button is accidentally activated by the holster could be a problem, so I got out my [empty] pistol and the holster I bought for it, a DeSantis Mini Scabbard, and strapped them on.

At this point I have only carried the pistol a couple of times, but nothing like what Doug described happened to me in those cases, nor did it happen this time either. I wiggled and squirmed, sat down and got up, pushed on the grip with my hand, forcing it into my side, even slapping it. The [empty] magazine remained firmly in place. The Mini Scabbard has an adjustment screw to tighten or loosen the grip the holster has on the gun, and I had loosened mine slightly when I first got it. The pistol slides easily into the holster, but seems to be gripped tightly enough to stay put. In looking at the area of the holster where the mag release rests, there is no leather contacting the mag release, and all the pushing, etc. simply did not bring the leather in contact with the button.

Doug did not say which holster he is using, but if he is not using one like mine, I do recommend that he give it a try.

I will mention one thing about the 380 EZ. Apparently, they shoot a little low and to the left right out of the box, according to some YouTube reviewers. I had to adjust the rear sight on mine a bit, which is very easy to accomplish.

After some reflection, I suspect that Doug is using an inside-the-waistband holster for his pistol. The DeSantis model holster I mentioned above is not one of those. I personally do not like the inside-the-waistband holsters, finding them uncomfortable. **— Lin**

Re "Firing Line," March 2019

GUN TESTS Crew, Great magazine! Enjoy reading it every issue! My letter today is in regards to Reader John's letter about spattering targets, and how he has had poor luck seeing results from 223 and similar-caliber-round hits. I have extensive experience using Birchwood Casey's "Dirty Bird" 12-inch by 12-inch targets at 100 yards with everything from 22 Long Rifle up to 45 ACP, with phenomenal results and visibility at this range. Would strongly suggest them to all who want to be able to see their hits through their rifle scope or spotting scope at a distance. Even 22 Long Rifle hits showed up as bright-white splatters on a black background. Keep up the great work, and I can't wait for my next issue!
— Rob L. of Pennsylvania

Re "Sub-Gauge Shockwaves Go Up Against Remington's TAC-14," March 2019

Dear Editors & Testers, I really enjoyed your evaluations of the sub-gauge Mossberg Shockwaves and Remington TAC-14 in the March 2019 issue. As an owner of a .410 Shockwave, I was very interested in the results of the shot pattern tests. Based on one of your articles from a few years ago, I use the 2.5-inch Federal Premium .410 Handgun shotshell with four pellets of 000 buckshot. It patterns well at practical distances, and it gives my petite wife a more formidable option than her 380 ACP pistol. I'm a big fan of the .410. We use it for snakes and prowling varmints on my small farm, and my wife likes it for home protection, too. One piece of information that was missing from your article that I'm really curious about is the velocities of the loads you tested. I would love to see how 2.5-inch length .410 shell velocity varies from my 14-inch-barrel Shockwave versus my 2.75-inch-barrel Governor. Throw in a 24-inch-barrel hunting shotgun and you've got the beginnings of a good article. I've been a continuous subscriber of your great magazine since the 1990s. You are the *Consumer Reports* of the firearms world. Keep up the good work!
— Joe in Mississippi

Joe, thank you for the suggestion about the .410-bore velocities. I might assign that one to myself. Interesting idea.— tw

I purchased a Mossberg Shockwave a couple of years ago for home defense. I took it to the range to get an idea of how to shoot it prior to needing it for protection. I realized that it needed to be handed differently than my Remington 870, but its size would make it easier to keep hidden under my bed than a full-size pumpgun. From the beginning, it was obvious that this was not a firearm you held close to your face and looked down the rib to

aim. I began practicing holding the Shockwave as suggested in the March 2019 GT issue when I first shot it back in 2016. However, a couple of months ago, I decided to purchase a laser sight and sight it in at the range. This allows me to keep the Shockwave far from my face, by my waist, and still aim it with accuracy. **— Bob**

Re Reviews of Shotguns and 10mms

Dear Todd, enjoyed both reviews ("Perfect 10s? We Test a Trio Of Big-Bore Semi-Automatics," and "Sub-Gauge Shockwaves Go Up Against Remington's TAC-14," March 2019), but in both the 12-gauge and now 20-gauge reviews, you overlooked the big advantage of the Remington. It has the MagPul forend to which you can mount the MagPul rails and then a light and a laser. Both are real game changers. With my 12 bore and the "short shells" (which work fine in an 870), I can hammer a man-sized target at 20 yards from the hip every shot.

In the 10mm review, you overlooked the best new kid on the block, the Grand. My long-slide model is as accurate as my Kimber 1911 45 ACP and kicks no more than my Star 1911 clone in 9mm. The Grand also has a two-stage single-action pull that lets off at 3 pounds. Enjoyed your comments on New York, which we left 20 years ago to move to Wyoming and Florida. **— Larry**

Hey Larry: Thanks for the tips on the TAC-14 and the 10mm Grand pistol. — tw

Re "Downrange," March 2019

Todd, I hope there are plans to test the new Mossberg MC1SC pistol. If it proves reliable and adequately accurate, it could be a winner. On another subject, I read with interest that you used to shoot at West Point. My son, LTC Carl J. Wojtaszek, is the OIC of the West Point Skeet and Trap Team. If you are ever in the area, the team shoots practice every Friday night and matches on Sunday afternoon, I am sure they would love to have you. **— Carl Wojtaszek**

That is a kind offer, and I appreciate it. Please pass along our thanks to LTC Wojtaszek for his service to the country. — tw

Re "9mm Striker Gun Shoot-out: Beretta, Glock, and SIG Sauer," January 2019

Todd: I just finished reading the 9mm striker gun shoot-out article. In the review of the Glock 45, it was mentioned that "(God help anyone with an aftermarket trigger or 3.5-pound disconnect in a service or personal defense handgun.)" Why this statement? I understand that if you have to use your handgun for personal defense, the prosecution will try to prove mal-intent if any type of trigger job is done. That goes without saying. I ask because I have two Glock 19s, and one Glock 23 that are used for both target practice and home defense that I've had the 3.5-pound disconnect installed. Personally, I dislike any firearm with more than a 4- to 4.5-pound trigger because the heavier the trigger pull, the more problematic accuracy. With the 3.5-pound disconnect, my Glocks all break at about 4.5 pounds, which is not light. **— Robert**

Hey Robert: That was our attempt at sarcasm. We prefer Glocks along the lines of how you have set them up. — tw

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45 ACP 1911s: We Test Five From Les Baer, SIG Sauer, Colt

In this diverse quintet, we went looking for the sweet spot of price and utility that would define the best go-anywhere do-anything semi-automatic handgun.

The 1911 is a legendary handgun, and it has been offered in many variations since its introduction 108 years ago. During the time after World War I, there were attempts to make the 1911 into a more accurate handgun, primarily for use at Camp Perry. The first National Match handguns were modified by Army gunsmiths for the task. Colt made the pistol commercially available as the National Match during the 1930s. The first guns featured high-profile fixed sights and were considerably tightened over the fit of the Government Model. Colt offered the Gold Cup pistol as a target pistol set up for light loads. Today, we like to have a 1911 with a lighter trigger action than the GI gun and with superior sights, but do we really need an expensive handgun or a target gun for overall utility? For personal defense and most forms of competition, the handguns reviewed will do a good job. They are useful for personal defense, some forms of competition, and for hunting varmints, and even medium-size game, at moderate range. The trick is, how much do you have to pay for this performance?

Les Baer Concept VI 45 ACP, $2290

This was the build price at LesBaer.com. Les Baer's handguns have a reputation for handfitting and tight fit. This handgun certainly exhibited these close tolerances. A concern with the pistol was a break-in period. At one time, a break-in period with new 1911 handguns was SOP. Baer, in fact, recommends 300 rounds of full-power ammunition as a break in.



Tested, from top: Colt's Gold Cup National Match 05870A1, the Les Baer Concept VI, SIG Sauer's Traditional Match Elite 1911T-45-TME, the Colt Series 70 01970A1CS, and at bottom, the right gun for the shy handgunner, the Colt Bright Stainless Government Model 01070BSTS.

45 ACP RANGE DATA

Black Hills Ammunition 200-grain Lead SWC	Les Baer Concept VI	SIG Sauer Match Elite	Colt Gov't Model	Colt Series 70	Colt Gold Cup National Match
Average Velocity	890 fps	874 fps	847 fps	880 fps	864 fps
Muzzle Energy	351 ft.-lbs.	339 ft.-lbs.	318 ft.-lbs.	343 ft.-lbs.	331 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.9 in.	2.0 in.	2.6 in.	1.8 in.	1.5 in.
Average Group	2.1 in.	2.3 in.	2.9 in.	2.2 in.	1.7 in.

Remington Golden Saber 230-grain HP	Les Baer Concept VI	SIG Sauer Match Elite	Colt Gov't Model	Colt Series 70	Colt Gold Cup National Match
Average Velocity	870 fps	862 fps	860 fps	867 fps	851 fps
Muzzle Energy	386 ft.-lbs.	379 ft.-lbs.	377 ft.-lbs.	383 ft.-lbs.	369 ft.-lbs.
Small Group	2.0 in.	2.6 in.	2.8 in.	2.2 in.	1.7 in.
Average Group	2.2 in.	2.8 in.	3.1 in.	2.5 in.	1.9 in.

Hornady 200-grain XTP	Les Baer Concept VI	SIG Sauer Match Elite	Colt Gov't Model	Colt Series 70	Colt Gold Cup National Match
Average Velocity	907 fps	922 fps	880 fps	892 fps	901 fps
Muzzle Energy	365 ft.-lbs.	377 ft.-lbs.	343 ft.-lbs.	353 ft.-lbs.	360 ft.-lbs.
Small Group	1.5 in.	1.8 in.	2.5 in.	1.8 in.	1.2 in.
Average Group	1.8 in.	1.9 in.	2.8 in.	2.3 in.	1.4 in.

We fired five-shot groups at 25 yards using a Bullshooters pistol rest. We collected chronograph data with an RCBS Ammomaster set 15 feet from muzzle, temperature 56 degrees. Ammo sources: Black Hills Ammunition 200-grain Semi-Wadcutter ($14.57/20 rounds from VenturaMunitions.com); Hornady 200-grain XTP ($17.50/20 rounds from LuckyGunner.com); and Remington 230-grain Golden Saber ($26/25 from MidwayUSA.com).

As one rater noted, he has run his 1994 Corvette on the recommended lubricants, not cheaper oil, and the engine doesn't smoke or use oil at 289,000 miles, so paying attention to the manufacturer's recommendations may be important. Les Baer tells us the pistols are built, not assembled, and the pistol shows signs of a great deal of care in manufacture. When tolerances are tight, there is less slop, and this means less eccentric wear in the long run. This also means greater accuracy. We were looking for accuracy, but we also wanted reliability. The Concept VI is a personal-defense stainless-steel handgun similar to other Les Baer handguns, but with fixed sights rather than adjustable sights. The fit and finish are excellent, with all parts mating without any slop. The slide features a round top and Novak-type fixed sights. These sights afforded an excellent sight picture. Of the three fixed-sight guns, these sights were the best, beating out the Colt Series 70 and Colt Bright Stainless guns. Sight picture is as good as the adjustable-sight guns, we felt, but not adjustable for many bullet weights. There were no white outlines in these sights. The fit of the barrel bushing to the slide is tight, but with the aid of a bushing wrench, we were able to disassemble the pistol without difficulty. After the initial firing stage, most raters were able to disassemble the pistol by hand. The slide features forward cocking serrations. The cuts are nicely done. The barrel, Baer tells us, features precision cut rifling.

The Concept VI features a skeletonized hammer. The part is all steel, no MIM in this pistol. The slide lock safety is an ambidextrous design. We like this and feel that a tactical/personal defense handgun profits from this type of safety. The lever on the right side of the frame, for left hand use, isn't as large as the left hand side safety. Indent is tight and sharp. In this day of mushy indent and poor fitting in economy grade handguns, the Les Baer exhibits an ideal engagement.

Ideally, the grip safety should funnel the shooter's hand into the frame, lower the bore axis, cushion recoil, and protect the shooter from sharp edges. It must also release its hold on the trigger about halfway into its travel. The Les Baer does all this. Shooters who adopt the thumbs-forward grip style sometimes allow the palm to form a cup and raise the hand from the grip safety. The Les Baer design is by far the best of the test and eliminates this problem. Trigger compression is tight with minimal take up. The trigger is aluminum with a flat face. According to the Lyman electronic trigger pull gauge, trigger compression is exactly 5.0 pounds and consistent with every trigger press. The front strap is checkered at 30 lines per inch. This makes for excellent adhesion when firing the pistol. The grips complement this checkering. They appear to be cocobolo. They are not raspy, but are

LES BAER CONCEPT VI 45 ACP, $2290
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Les Baer Concept VI is a carry and combat pistol and features fixed sights versus other handguns offered by Les Baer that feature adjustable sights. The piece is very accurate. Stainless construction offers considerable resistance to the elements. The pistol did not require the break-in period that other handguns sometimes do. It wasn't faultless; we dinged it for a sharp edge on the safety. This is a great handgun if you can handle the price.



Action	Single action only; locked breech, Baer hammer
Overall Length	8.7 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Overall Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	39 oz.
Weight Loaded	44 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in. long, Baer NM stainless steel; Baer stainless steel throated
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	(2) 8-round
Slide	Stainless steel
Slide Retraction Effort	18.75 lbs.
Frame	Baer NM, stainless steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grips	Checkered wood
Grip Thickness (Max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (Max)	5.5 in.
Front Sight	Post, dovetailed base
Rear Sight	Notch, dovetailed base
Trigger Pull Weight	5.0 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.6 in.
Safety	Beavertail grip safety w/pad; Baer extended ambi safety
Warranty	None written
Website	LesBaer.com
Telephone	(563) 289-2126
Made In	LeClaire, Iowa





The Lobo Gun Leather inside-the-waistband holster is fully compatible with the Les Baer's forward cocking serrations.



The Les Baer required the most effort to rack. Barrel-to-slide and bushing-to-barrel fit was excellent. Forward cocking serrations show excellent machine work.



Right: We like the sights supplied with the Les Baer Concept VI. Fired offhand in speed drills, our shooters found the Les Baer was controllable and accurate. Left: Custom-grade checkering adorned the front strap. The Les Baer demonstrated excellent results. The only question was affordability.

solid in the hand. The magazine well is slightly beveled for rapid magazine changes. The pistol is supplied with two magazines. Interestingly, the Concept VI was delivered in a simple cardboard box.

We made certain the pistols were well lubricated on the bearing surfaces, cocking block, barrel hood, and barrel bushing before beginning an extensive firing test, not accomplished in a short period of time. We elected to fire each handgun with 300 cartridges in combat drills and offhand fire before firing for accuracy off the bench rest. Three hundred cartridges fired in a steel-frame 45 can be punishing to the wrists; it sneaks up on you rather than offering sharp pain at the beginning as when firing a magnum, but we proceeded in relays. On the firing range we began with 200 handloads and 100 factory rounds. We supplemented the original magazines with a stack of Wilson Combat 8-round magazines and a mix of the magazines supplied with the pistols, primarily six Colts, two Les Baer, and two SIG Sauer magazines. The handloads consisted of the 230-grain Oregon Trail bullet over enough WW231 for 845 fps average, a hardball equivalent load. Another consisted of a lighter load, an Oregon Trail 200-grain SWC and enough Titegroup for 890 fps. One hundred rounds of Remington 230-grain UMC ($19.79/50 from MidwayUSA.com) were fired in the handguns as well.

We began with the 230-grain handload as it mimics 230-grain ball. We fired at man sized targets at 7, 10, and 15 yards and also fired at steel plates from 15 to 50 yards. The initial rounds were fired as quickly as the raters could fire and reload. The Les Baer did not suffer any failures to feed, chamber, fire or eject. There were no break-in malfunctions. Practical accuracy and control were excellent. The 200-grain SWC loads felt like light target loads. The sights are regulated for 230-grain loads and a 6 o'clock hold at 25 yards. A dead-on hold was useful for knocking down plates at 50 yards. The experience was pleasant for all raters.

After the pistol was thoroughly cleaned, no wear was detected. Next, we moved to the bench and firing for accuracy. We used a mix of service and personal-defense ammunition and another proven for accuracy. The three loads tested were the Black Hills Ammunition 200-grain semi-wadcutter, Hornady 200-grain XTPs, and Remington 230-grain Golden Sabers. The Les Baer comes with an accuracy guarantee of 3 inches at 50 yards. Only one load, the Hornady XTP, met the 1.5-inch 25-yard equivalent. The others were 2.0 inches for the Remington and 1.9 inches for the Black Hills load.

The only drawback encountered during firing was that some of the raters suffered a slight pinch on the thumb from the safety when drawing and getting into action by pressing the safety down for fire, but not during firing. A little polish could cure that. There were no failures to feed, chamber, fire or eject, and the Les Baer exhibited the best combat performance of any of the five guns tested. The Les Baer and the Colt Gold Cup traded off for top accuracy, with the Colt equaling the Concept VI in practical terms. The Colt's best group was smaller.

Our Team Said: As a personal-defense pistol or a go-anywhere do-anything emergency gun, the Les Baer Concept VI is our pick if price is no object. We rated it down a half a grade on the sharp edge that annoyed some raters.

SIG Sauer Traditional Match Elite 1911T-45-TME 45 ACP, $1050

We have seen this pistol on sale at various times for less, particularly in 9mm, but this is what was available in late 2018 at TombstoneTactical.com. It's now out of stock at that retailer. As good-quality 1911 handguns go, this isn't terribly expensive, but to most of the raters, one thousand dollars is a lot of money. What you get is a pistol that differs in some respects from John Moses Browning's original 1911, but then most all modern 1911 handguns do. When SIG Sauer introduced its 1911 handguns some time ago, the slides were designed to bear a resemblance to the P-series pistols, such as the SIG P220. The look is different, and while the Granite Series were good guns, they did not fit 1911 holsters. The TME here is a standard 1911 slide.

The pistol is attractive, with a stainless-steel slide and blued frame. The grips are cocobolo, perhaps the best looking of the test. The checkering is nicely done, and the SIG Sauer monogram on the grips is tasteful. The pistol features forward cocking serrations. There is no full-length guide rod, which some prefer. The front post offers a good aiming point. The rear sight is adjustable. The edges of the rear sight leaf are beveled. This results in less covering of the target and faster acquisition. Otherwise, the SIG sight is similar to modern Bomar-type sights. The SIG features an external extractor, unlike all of the other handguns, which feature the original tool-steel-type extractor. SIG extractors have proven reliable and long lived in action, but so have properly fitted tool-steel internal extractors. The SIG uses a Series 80-type firing-pin block. So do the Colt National Match and Bright Stainless units. The Les Baer and the Series 70 have extra-strength firing-pin springs.

The ambidextrous safety levers of the SIG are the smallest tested, but work well in practice. The grip safety is a modern beavertail safety that works as designed. The mainspring housing features a lanyard attachment, and the grips are beveled at the base. The magazine well is funneled to aid in changing magazines. The front strap is checkered at 25 lines per inch. While it isn't as nice as the Les Baer's 30-lpi rate, the checkering is well done and aided in our range work. The trigger is aluminum with a grooved face. Trigger compression is 6.1 pounds. It felt lighter, but isn't when measured. The pistol is supplied in a

SIG SAUER TRADITIONAL MATCH ELITE 1911T-45-TME 45 ACP, $1050

GUN TESTS GRADE: D

This pistol needed a little help out of the box. That said, the SIG is accurate and handles well. Adjustable sights and a checkered front strap are good features. If you're willing to do some light gunsmithing, mentally move the grade up to B.



Action	Single action only, locked breech, Cmdr. hammer
Overall Length	8.7 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Overall Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	39 oz.
Weight Loaded	44 oz.
Barrel Length	5 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	(2) 8 round
Slide	Steel
Slide Retraction Effort	17.9 lbs.
Frame	Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grips	Checkered wood
Grip Thickness (Max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (Max)	5.5 in.
Front Sight	Post
Rear Sight	Adjustable
Trigger Pull Weight	6.1 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.6 in.
Warranty	5 Year
Website	SIGSauer.com
Telephone	(603) 610-3000
Made In	U.S.A.



All pistols were fired for at least a full magazine from the retention position. This is the SIG Sauer.



The SIG's adjustable sights are dovetailed in place. SIG's beavertail grip safety is among the best of the test. The grips also received high marks. We found the fit and finish of the SIG pistol to be excellent. As a target-grade 1911 or a sporting handgun, the SIG 1911 has promise. We considered calling this gun a Best Buy.



This is the flat wire spring that gave us trouble. The pistol short-cycled with the factory-supplied spring with all loads, but the problem was cured with the addition of a Wilson Combat 16-pound recoil spring ($5.56 from WilsonCombat.com).





Above: The SIG 1911 handles well and came on target quickly. Recoil was noticeable with all handguns, but fine gripstrap checkering helped out.

locking hard-plastic case and two magazines.

We began the firing test with a lubricated handgun and the same magazines and ammunition used with the other handguns. We began to experience problems. The pistol would fire six to seven rounds, and then the slide would fail to go fully into battery. This persisted with every loading and with every magazine. The senior rater, also a qualified gunsmith and 1911 fan, deemed it a function problem not related to the magazines or ammunition. We put the pistol aside and came back to it later.

When we did, we cleaned and disassembled the handgun. The recoil spring caught our attention with its different configuration. It is a flat wire type. We changed this out with a spring borrowed from one of the Colts. The SIG ran through several magazines. We then permanently replaced the SIG spring with a Wilson Combat standard-weight recoil spring. The test was begun anew with the SIG, and it ran fine and finished the combat evaluation without a single drawback. We are all for innovation, but sometimes you should not mess with success. To recap: The pistol short-cycled with the factory-supplied spring with all loads, but the problem was cured with the addition of a Wilson Combat 16-pound recoil spring ($5.56 from WilsonCombat.com).

During the combat-firing evaluation with the new spring, the pistol never failed to feed, chamber, fire or eject. Results were good to excellent from 7 to 50 yards. The 50-yard plates were a slight challenge that perhaps could have been aided by a lighter trigger compression. The pistol proved useful in all drills. Only the Les Baer gave a better showing. The SIG was very close as these things are rated in combat shooting, which is less exact than firing for absolute accuracy. Firing off the bench, the most accurate load was the Hornady 200-grain XTP at a solid 1.75 inches. The Black Hills Ammunition 200-grain SWC averaged 2.0 inches, and the Remington 230 grain load, 2.6 inches.

Our Team Said: The SIG Sauer 1911 was reliable after the initial short cycles. The pistol is reliable and offers excellent combat shooting facility. It was the third-most-accurate handgun tested. We rated it down a full grade for the recoil-spring problem. At the same time, we agreed that as an all-round defensive handgun that could double as a hunting or competition handgun. If you're willing to buy and replace one spring.

Colt Bright Stainless Government Model O1070BSTS 45 ACP, $1550

This is a unique pistol that may end up being difficult to find, so we include its UPC number: 098289111579. We located a number of 38 Super pistols for sale that appeared identical, but few 45s. The pistol is stamped "Government Model" on one side and "Colt Custom" on the other. The pistol appears to be nickel finished, but it is actually a high-polish stainless, something called Ultra Polish in some ads. The pistol is eye catching, that is for certain. It is supplied in a hard locking case with two stainless magazines. This is the personal gun of one of the raters, and we borrowed it for this shoot out. The pistol has the general outline of the 1991A1, but there are important differences. This stainless-steel handgun has no plastic parts. The controls are standard Colt. The beavertail safety is flat, but it is an improved type over early 1911s, and the mainspring housing is flat. The trigger has a curve in it, but it is a long trigger. The sights are improved compared to the original GI type. They are identical to the ones fitted to the Series 70 gun. They feature three dots for aiming. The pistol has the appearance of an early Colt in some ways, but the ejection port is the modern scalloped type introduced with the Series 80 handguns. The fit and finish of this handgun is flawless in every way. There were no tool marks inside or out, and the Colt is a great piece as a barbecue gun. It is supplied with a set of checkered grips identical to the Colt Series 70, but the owner had fitted a set of stag MD Grips (MDGrips.com). The raters were neutral on this addition, they look good but do not affect handling.

We expected the long trigger to offer good control. As we examined the pistol we tested trigger compression. The pistol's trigger is heavy at 6.2 pounds, but not as smooth as the SIG's also heavy trigger. The pistol was dry fired for acclimation, and all commented that this is a lot of money for a pistol with a staked on front sight. We would have preferred a dovetail front sight. Surely Colt understands most of us will fire and use this handgun. A real problem that was not as apparent with the Colt Series 70 was that the front strap is slippery. The whole polished stainless surface felt slippery to the hand. When we loaded the magazines and began firing, this was a drawback in controlling the pistol.

Still, we did well drawing and firing for results at close range. The pistol draws quickly and offers real speed to a first-shot hit. The problem is that the slippery front strap really slips in the hand after four or five rounds. The MD grips are cupped in the center and have a rough bark, but that isn't the problem compared to the original checkered grips. The front strap is slippery. We considered fitting the pistol with a set of Pachmayr Signature or Hogue Monogrips, but that would have defeated the purpose of paying more than fifteen hundred dollars for a sensational looking carry gun. So we left it as it. Unlike the SIG, it functioned and did not demand a new part. It simply did not handle as well as we would have liked.

The highly polished Colt was the least desirable pistol in the combat trials. There were no problems with reliability; the pistol simply was slippery due to the front strap. Firing at steel at 50 yards, the pistol suffered compared to the others as well, largely due to the heavy trigger. In firing for accuracy from a benchrest, the High Polish Colt was the least accurate

COLT BRIGHT STAINLESS GOVERNMENT MODEL O1070BSTS 45 ACP, $1549

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

This is a handgun with flawless fit, finish, and build quality. The polished-stainless frame, slide, and parts are eye pleasing. The sights are good, but not as good as the other handguns. The slippery grip isn't easily addressed.



As issued, the Colt highly polished 1911 wore a set of checkered wooden grips, top right. The owner added stag grips, below. They did not materially affect handling. All the pistols were fast to handle and reload, in true 1911 fashion.



Action	Single action only; locked breech, spur hammer
Overall Length	8.7 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Overall Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	37.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	42.0 oz.
Barrel Length	5.0 in.
Barrel	Stainless steel
Magazines	(2) 8 round
Slide	Bright stainless steel
Slide Retraction Effort	15.0 lbs.
Frame	Bright stainless steel, beveled magazine well
Frame Front Strap Height	2.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grips	Double diamond rosewood, checkered
Grip Thickness (Max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (Max)	5.5 in.
Front Sight	Fixed post, white dot
Rear Sight	Fixed notch, two white dots
Trigger Pull Weight	6.2 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.6 in., stainless steel
Safeties	Thumb, Grip, Firing Pin
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	Colt.com
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT
Made In	U.S.A.





Left: The Colt's sights are an improvement over original GI sights. The front post is OK for most uses, but it is inferior to other guns tested.

As a Barbecue gun, the Colt high-polished pistol carried on a proud tradition, but its standard features are pricey, we thought.



1911 tested, although it wasn't a dog by any means. The pistol did not slip as badly when stabilized in the Bullshooter's rest. The Remington 230-grain JHP had a best group of 2.8 inches at 25 yards, with average groups of 3.2 inches.

Our Team Said: This nice-looking stainless-steel Colt is reliable and accurate enough for personal defense. It never failed. It features the Series 80 firing pin block for those who prefer it. It needs a different set of grips to be all it can be. We rated it down on several points including a heavy trigger, slippery front strap, and only fair accuracy. It isn't worth the money as a combat gun, in our opinion.

Colt Series 70 01970A1CS 45 ACP, $865

This was a recent price from BudsGunShop.com. The original 1911 featured what is referred to as a flat mainspring housing and long trigger. The 1911A1 answered complaints about handling and was changed to the arched housing and short trigger. Generally, these make for faster handling in a combat situation, while the long trigger and flat housing make for a better choice on a target-style pistol. Today, the flat housing is used because a beavertail grip safety mates with the flat housing better. Modern handguns are often manufactured with the long trigger and flat housing, but have 1911A1 improvements, including finger slots in the frame and a shorter hammer spur. The short trigger is about a quarter inch shorter than the long-style trigger. The shorter trigger is more friendly to shooters with small hands and short fingers. So is the arched housing.

The original Series 70 was introduced as an improvement over commercial Colts manufactured up to 1970. All Colts were given a general tightening up. The Series 70 was given the collet bushing, a barrel bushing with fingers that helped keep the bushing and barrel tight and produce good accuracy. This bushing was deleted in the Series 80 pistols. The Series 80 introduced the firing pin block, a lowered ejection port, and improved barrel throating. By any standard, the Series 80 is a superior handgun, but some shooters do not like the firing pin block. "Series 70" came to be used as a watch word for 1911 pistols without a firing pin block, whether they were Colts or another make. Colt answered a demand and introduced the new Series 70 without a drop safety. The fit and finish are a higher level than the 1991A1. The pistol features a lowered ejection port, which the original did not. The Series 70 features high-visibility sights, the same as the bright-finish guns, and the same sight set found on 1991A1 guns. The internal parts are the same as the Series 80. If you order a firing pin for the new Series 70 Colt, it will be a Series 80 firing pin with the cut out notch for the drop safety, but there is no provision in the new Series 70 for the firing pin block.

This pistol features a nice dark finish that is attractive. The appearance is good and the grips are nicely checkered. The pistol is supplied in a large cardboard box finished in Colt blue. Two magazines are supplied. Most of our raters liked the arched housing and short trigger. The fit of the slide lock safety, grip safety, slide lock and magazine release are good. This handgun isn't designed for targets but for personal defense. Despite a similar appearance, the Series 70 and the bright polish handgun handled considerably different. The Series 70 frame and front strap was not slick like the high polish pistol, although it did not have the adhesion of the checkered front strap of the SIG or Les Baer handguns.

During the combat-firing stage, the Series 70 pistol cleared the holster quickly and came on target fast as well. This is the lightest 1911 tested, although it is a full-sized steel-frame handgun. There are no frills and no extraneous features. Trigger compression is 5.5 pounds and smooth. The short trigger makes the action feel lighter. The arched mainspring housing keeps the pistol settled in the hand. We had no problem consistently making center hits with the Series 70. Combat-shooting results were good without a single failure to feed, chamber, fire or eject. Still, the Les Baer and SIG pistols with their superior sights and gripping surfaces turned in better results. The Series 70 is an effective 1911 with good features. During the course of fire at 50 yards, firing at steel targets, the Series 70 turned in decent results, but again not in the class with the Les Baer and SIG. Fired for accuracy, the Series 70's good fitting delivered good results. The best 25-yard group was a 1.8-inch cluster with the Hornady 200-grain XTP.

Our Team Said: The Series 70 is exactly what it is supposed to be: A no-frills back to the basics Colt. On that basis, there is nothing to fault. Reliability is spotless and practical accuracy acceptable. The price is right, too.

Colt Gold Cup National Match Blued O5870A1 45 ACP, $1190

This was a recent price at BudsGunShop.com. The original Colt National Match was in most ways a development of the work done by Army gunsmiths to produce a credible competition firearm for Camp Perry. The original featured tightly fitted parts, including a barrel and barrel bushing that became known as National Match parts. The original was a robust gun with fixed sights. Later, adjustable sights were added. The pistol developed a reputation for fragility during the 1970s that wasn't completely deserved; some of this reputation was due to misapplication of the gun to tasks it wasn't designed for. A version with a lightened slide certainly wasn't well suited to hardball loads. A sight held to the slide by a single roll pin sometimes flew loose during competition. We are covering this because you should know that a vintage Gold Cup National Match isn't always the best choice as a shooter. With the introduction of the Series 80 pistols, certain improvements came along

COLT SERIES 70 01970A1CS 45 ACP, $865

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

This handgun is the least expensive tested, but it could be the best carry gun. The fixed sights are adequate for most purposes, although they are a strain to use well on the 50-yard plates. The pistol is reliable, handles quickly, and offers fast hits. It is more in keeping with the idea of a fighting gun popularized by Colonel Cooper: Such a gun needs good sights, a good trigger and a good safety — and little else — to make it a good combat pistol.





The Colt Series 70 has a classic appearance that many find attractive. This is a no-frills 1911 that proved reliable and fast handling.

Action	Single action only; locked breech, spur hammer
Overall Length	8.7 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Overall Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	37 oz.
Weight Loaded	42 oz.
Barrel Length	5 in.
Barrel	Steel
Magazine	(2) 8 round
Slide	Steel
Slide Retraction Effort	17 lbs.
Frame	Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grips	Checkered wood
Grip Thickness (Max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (Max)	5.5 in.
Sights	Fixed
Trigger Pull Weight	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.5 in.
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	Colt.com
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT
Made In	U.S.A.

The Series 70 features double-diamond checkered grips. The beavertail lacks the upswept coverage found on some of the other guns, but we didn't experience slide bite because of it. The Series 70 frame and front strap was not slick like the high polish pistol.





The Series 70 is marked Government Model, in case anyone forgets.



The barrel bushing has a good fit, but it doesn't require a barrel-bushing wrench for disassembly like some of the others.

The Colt features sights good enough for personal-defense chores. Fired for accuracy, the Series 70's good fitting delivered good results. The best 25-yard group was a 1.8-inch cluster with the Hornady 200-grain XTP.



COLT GOLD CUP NATIONAL MATCH 05870A1 45 ACP, $1190

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (OUR PICK)

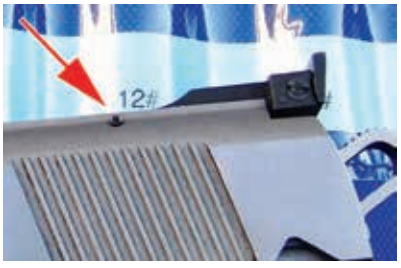
The National Match Colt is the most accurate of the five handguns tested, and looking at the best groups, it was superior by a considerable margin. Specific match-grade ammunition may give an even better showing. The pistol was reliable and easy to use well. There simply isn't anything else to criticize.



Action	Single action only; locked breech, spur hammer
Overall Length	8.5 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Overall Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	38 oz.
Weight Loaded	43 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in. long; match-grade stainless steel; 1:16 LH twist
Magazine	(2) 8 round
Slide	Blued steel; Clark-style serrated rib; Full-length target recoil spring
Slide Retraction Effort	15.0 lbs.
Frame	Carbon steel, blued; beveled magazine well
Frame Front Strap Height	2.8 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grips	Checkered walnut; Colt medallion
Grip Thickness (Max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (Max)	5.5 in.
Front Sight	Steel post, dovetailed base
Rear Sight	Adjustable; Colt Champion Bomar-style
Trigger Pull Weight	4.0 lbs.; aluminum 3-hole; adjustable for overtravel
Trigger Span	2.6 in.
Safety	Standard grip; standard thumb lever
Warranty	Lifetime
Website	Colt.com
Telephone	(800) 962-COLT
Made In	U.S.A.



The Colt is a great all-round target gun. Though designed as a target gun, the Gold Cup served as a service sidearm for one of our testers, a former patrol lieutenant, for some time.



This is previous production with the pinned-on sight. It was less than satisfactory for long-term use.



Above: We liked the Colt adjustable sight and the dovetail mount in the current production handgun. The large screw allowed easy adjustment of the Colt National Match.



Aftermarket add-ons for the National Match include a stainless beavertail safety and a Wilson Combat barrel bushing with compensator. These were viable accessories that could be felt during the combat course.

Below: Wilson Combat offers a spring caddy with different-weight springs.



that made the pistol a superior piece for competition and even general use. Regulating spring weight can be a nightmare with a Gold Cup pistol that has had its springs replaced. You cannot judge spring weight by looking at the spring. The Gold Cup is supplied with a full-power recoil spring and a reduced-power spring for target loads. The lighter spring is painted green. The hammer spring is lighter as well. With the lighter hammer spring, the Gold Cup may function well with lighter target loads because it is easier for the slide to recoil and cock the hammer when the hammer spring is less than the standard 24 pounds. Keep this in mind and be certain you have the proper spring in place for the load. We conducted this test with the standard 16-pound recoil spring.

Colt lists this pistol as having a blued finish. At one time, the National Match pistols featured a Royal Blue finish similar to the Colt Python. We like the finish of this pistol, and it is excellent by any standard, but perhaps not the Royal Blue of 1960s. However, the frame and slide finish did not match. The slide features a post front sight and a close copy of the classic Bomar rear sight. The rear sight is adjustable for windage and elevation. This sight is a considerable improvement over Colt sights of the past. It is securely dovetailed in place in the manner we once paid custom gunsmiths to mount Bomar sights. The slide is smooth in operation as the slide rolls over the locking lugs. The trigger is an aluminum unit to prevent backlash from a heavy trigger. The factory trigger compression was a crisp 4.0 pounds out of the box.

We also had access to a modified GCNM, whose owner added a stainless beavertail safety and a Wilson Combat barrel bushing with compensator ($79.95 from Wilsoncombat.com). These were viable accessories, and we tested their effect on recoil management during the combat course.

The grips are nicely checkered Colt wood grips with the rampant pony roundel. We like these grips better than the cheap plastic types found on Colt Gold Cups in recent years. The Gold Cup Trophy differs slightly from the National Match, and we prefer the National Match pistol for most uses. The National Match will be fitted with walnut grips. The frontstrap features striations for a firmer grip. For most uses, this is all that is needed to maintain a firm grip on the Colt. The Colt is supplied with two blue-steel Colt 8-round magazines. We took the slide off the pistol by removing the slide lock and running the whole unit forward. There were no tool marks of any type, and the internal finish was excellent.

Running the combat course with the National Match at first seemed odd since our mind-set was "this is a target gun." As it turned out, the Colt gave an excellent showing with all loads. With the Colt's excellent trigger, our shooters did good work. There is no X-ring score in combat shooting, but the Colt did well. When it came to knocking over steel plates at 50 yards, the Colt turned in an excellent showing. There were no failures to feed, chamber, fire or eject. The Colt is a good shooter. We also found the Wilson Combat compensator definitely limited recoil. However, some shooters found the compensator distracting.



We used a mix of lead SWC handloads and modern jacketed ammunition during the test. We found 200-grain loads were a sweet spot for accuracy.

In bench accuracy, the National Match 45 gave excellent results. The best result at 25 yards was a 1.2-inch group. One rater remarked that he would like to work up handloads for this piece.

Our Team Said: The Colt National Match is a beautiful gun, well finished, and the most accurate handgun tested. The addition of the compensated barrel knocks it out as a carry gun, but for shooting action targets, it is worth a look.

To recap the other results of this grab-bag of 45s:

After firing more than 1600 cartridges during combat shooting and 225 more in the accuracy stage, we had a pile of brass and sore wrists. We learned the performance of the Les Baer was excellent by any standard. The pistol was ideal for most uses. The only drawback is the Concept VI's expense. For working people and hobbyist, this expense may not be feasible. Just the same, we have much praise for the Concept VI.

The Colt Bright Stainless is an attractive handgun, but you really would have to want a pretty Colt to pony up for this one. The performance was, overall, at the bottom of the heap. It is reliable, but it is not the most impressive 45 on the combat course.

The Colt Series 70 was the least expensive gun tested. It would be the best carry gun for the money. It is lighter, fast into action, and doesn't have adjustable sights to snag. Performance was excellent.

Grading the SIG Sauer 1911 is tricky, and you'll have to adjust your expectations based on our results. As it came out of the box, the SIG is a D gun because of the malfunctions. If you were shooting only targets with it, those malfunctions wouldn't be a threat to your health. The problems would simply make you a loser in a match. But when we looked at the overall package, we saw a lot to like. The pistol offers adjustable sights, which is a necessity for some types of shooting. The SIG wasn't as tightly fitted as the Les Baer, but the former gave the Les Baer solid competition. Also, there's room in the price to have a trigger job done to get it closer in performance to the Colt Gold Cup. The pistol was completely reliable with all loads after we changed the recoil spring, and this was a $6 upgrade, plus 10 minutes of disassembly. Thus, the dual grade of D/A-. If you're willing to make the spring change, then consider the SIG to be a Best Buy.

Written and photographed by GUN TESTS *Staff, using evaluations from* GUN TESTS *team testers.* **GT**

Compact 44 Rem. Mag. Rifles: Rossi and Ruger Shoot It Out

This handgun round finds good utility in compact rifles suited to handle its medium-range power. We found a trio of handy long guns that offered passable short-range accuracy and pleasant firing.

The 44 Remington Magnum has been a favorite hunting cartridge for some of our test team members who live in states where straight-wall cartridges are legal for deer hunting, but where short sight line conditions keep ranges way down. Chambered in short, carbine-length rifles, the 44 Rem. Mag. can be quick to shoulder, fast to shoot, and offer plenty of power. As one of our 44 Rem. Mag. hunters said: "They make big holes and leave a nice blood trail." These rifles are lightweight and make for easy carry. In brush-choked terrain when pushing deer, sitting in tree stand for a black bear, or waiting on pigs to wallow, these carbines offer power, and in lever-action models, super-fast follow-up shots. They can also make a good truck gun.

While lever-action 44 Rem. Mag. carbines are common, we wanted to look at something different and assembled three candidates. To serve as a baseline, we chose the Rossi R92, a clone of the iconic Winchester Model 1892 and a good example of a typical lever-action 44 Mag. carbine with exposed hammer, iron sights and tubular marine that's loaded via a loading port. The Ruger 77/44 is quite different. It is a bolt-action rifle and comes with scope mounts and detachable rotary magazine. The Ruger 96/77 is a lever-action carbine similar to the Savage Model 99. The hammer is enclosed in the receiver, it has a scope mount built into the receiver, and uses a detachable magazine. The 96/77 was produced from 1996 through 2004 and our test sample was lightly used. The R92 and 77/44 are both current production guns and easily obtained; used 96/44 models are also



The 44 Remington Magnum cartridge in a lightweight, short rifle makes a great hunting rig for whitetail deer, black bear, and feral pigs at ranges out to 100 yards. We found we liked the accuracy of the Ruger 77/44 (top) but hated the magazine release and dinged its grade accordingly. The Ruger 96/44 (middle) was accurate and offered fast follow-up shots with its smooth, short-stroke lever. It's worth looking for used. The Rossi R92 (bottom) operated like we expected a Model 1892 to operate — but with a smooth action, an unexpectedly nice trigger, and plenty of recoil to let you know you were throwing some serious lead downrange. We'd opt for the Ruger 77/44 if we wanted to shoot with an optic and the Rossi R92 if we wanted to shoot iron sights and have a fast follow-up shot. If you find a good used Ruger 96/77, it would be worth taking home.

ROSSI R92 MODEL 920442093 44 REMINGTON MAGNUM, $560

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The R92 is a modern take on the iconic Winchester Model 1892 rifle. This rifle offers nostalgia with modern refinements. What made the original '92 great for hunting and defense is what makes the R92 great for hunting and defense.



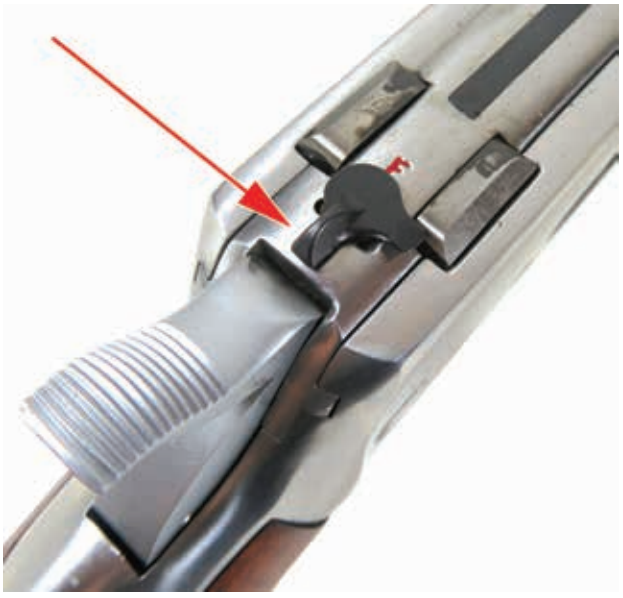
Action Type	Lever-action, exposed hammer
Overall Length	37.25 in.
Overall Height	7.0 in.
Weight Unloaded	5.6 lbs.
Weight Loaded (10-round mag.)	6.0 lbs.
Receiver	Stainless steel
Barrel	20 in. long; 1:30 RH Twist
Finish	Bright stainless
Stock	Smooth hardwood, steel buttpad
Length of Pull	13.25 in.
Magazine	10-round tube
Front Sight	Blade
Rear Sight	Adjustable buckhorn
Trigger	4.3 lbs., single-stage
Safety	2 position
Warranty	1 year
Telephone	(800) 948-8029
Website	RossiUSA.com
Made In	Brazil



Above: With the 96/44 on top of the R92, you can see the difference between the 96/44's short-stroke and R92's traditional stroke.



Top right: Empties from the Rossi R92 were ejected up. The lever stroke was noticeably longer and slower compared to the 96/44.



Right: To be imported, the R92 is required to have a manual safety, unlike original Model 1892 guns. This detracts from the R92's traditional appearance but offers a level of safety original '92s do not have.



Not stellar accuracy, but the Rossi shows it is quite capable of MOP (minute of pig) with SIG V-Crown ammunition.



Notice the circular cut in the Rossi loading port. This makes it easier to load cartridges in the magazine tube. We fit 11 rounds in the tube.



Left: The Rossi front post was black with a brass bead. It is adjustable for windage because it is dovetailed into the barrel. Right: The traditional buckhorn rear sight is adjustable for windage and elevation. The Brazilian hardwood had a reddish tint that looked sharp with the stainless-steel metal.

fairly easy to find, especially on online gun-auction websites.

How We Tested

With the lever-action 96/44 and R92, we used open sights at 50 yards. Even though shooting with open sights pushed the envelope on our skill and potential accuracy, we were pleased with our results. We decided to test the two lever guns with open sights and test the bolt action with a scope since scope rings were packed with the rifle.

We had three 44 Rem. Mag. loads on hand: our go-to Black Hills 240-grain JHP, SIG V-Crown 240-grain JHP, and Grizzly Cartridge Company's 300-grain WFNGC (Wide Flat Nose Gas Check). The Grizzly round is a solid, cast lead bullet that uses a gas check because Grizzly loads these lead, non-jacketed bullets to a fast velocity. We tested the rifles wearing a thin flannel shirt over a T-shirt — not typical hunting attire of a jacket or coat, but the light clothing gave us a better chance to assess felt recoil with the different stock types. It was a successful and useful strategy. We also ran a 44 Special load through these rifles to see if these less-powerful cartridges posed any cycling issues. (We'd stick with 44 Rem. Mag. loads for hunting.) We found a big difference between points of impact of a 44 Special and 44 Rem. Mag. cartridge, so be aware that you will need to use some good old Kentucky elevation when switching between cartridges. We also noticed differences between the 240-grain JHP 44 Rem. Mag. ammo loads. The SIG ammo averaged 199 fps faster than the Black Hills and grouped higher at 50 yards. This is a good reminder to ensure factory muzzle velocity as well as the bullet weight and type are similar when switching ammo brands. The Grizzly ammo also had an average increase in muzzle velocity of 214 fps over the Black Hills.

The rifling twist rate in the two Ruger rifles was 1:20 inches, which stabilizes traditional 44 Mag. bullet weights like 240 grain and the longer and heavier bullets in the range of 300 to 325 grains. The Rossi has a 1:30-inch twist rate, which is faster than the standard pistol twist rate of 1:38 for the round. Data shows the accuracy of the 300-grain Grizzly load through the Rossi was not as tight as it was with the 240-grain loads. Still, a 2-inch group at 50 yards with irons is MOP (minute of pig) in our book. We ran HSM Cowboy Action 44 Special rounds through the rifles and found this cartridge down right delightful to shoot through these light carbines.

The 44 Mag. produces stout recoil in a handgun. In lightweight carbines like the three tested, we found the Rossi and Ruger gave us the worst shoulder beating. After 20 rounds, recoil became very noticeable due to the Rossi's straight stock and steel recoil pad. The recoil in the 94/44 was more tolerable, and we attribute that to the pistol-grip stock. The recoil in the 77/44 was very tolerable due to the stock and rubber

RUGER 77/44 MODEL 7401 44 REMINGTON MAGNUM, $754

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The 77/44 offers accuracy and power in a lightweight rifle. We disliked the magazine and downgraded it a half a grade. The magazine aside, this a nice hunting rifle out to 100 yards.



Action Type	Bolt-action, 90-degree lift
Overall Length	38.5 in.
Overall Height	6.7 in.
Overall Height (w/optic)	8.7 in.
Weight Unloaded	6.1 lbs.
Weight Loaded (4-round mag.)	6.3 lbs.
Receiver	Alloy steel
Barrel	18.5 in.; 1:20 RH twist
Finish	Blued
Stock	Checkered American walnut, solid rubber buttpad
Length of Pull	13.5 in.
Magazine	(1) 4-round detachable, rotary
Front Sight	Blade w/brass bead
Rear Sight	Folding adjustable; scope rings included
Trigger	6.0 lbs., single stage
Safety	3 position
Warranty	None written
Telephone	(888) 220-1173
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	U.S.A.





Above: A nice change from the more common synthetic stocks is the 77/44's checkered American walnut. Pretty nice wood for a rifle with a street price of $750. Below: The classic 3-position safety (arrow) allows for safe reloading and carry.

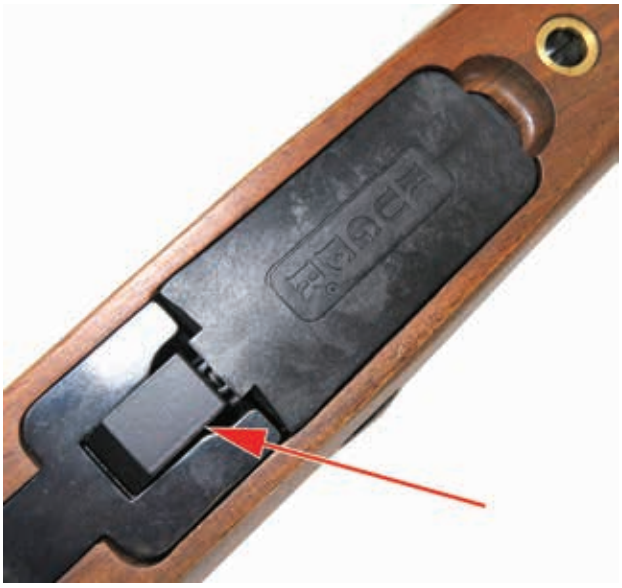


Above and right: The small knob and close proximity to the eyepiece make running the 77/44 slow compared to the lever actions.



Right: This is what an average group looked like with the 77/44. The top hole is from two bullets using Black Hills ammo.





Above: Our main complaint about the 77/44 was the difficultly removing the magazine. The magazine latch button (arrow) had a very stiff spring, and the clearance on the magazine in the magazine well was tight. At times, we resorted to loading the magazine from the ejection port.



We used our support hand to pinch the magazine out of the 77/44. The magazine latch was difficult to depress.



The difference between the Ruger magazines is the additional edge at the front of the 77/44 magazine (right). The 96/44 magazine (left) was easier to manipulate, and we are not sure why Ruger decided to make the 77/44 more difficult to insert and remove.

recoil pad. It's all a matter of physics. A lightweight carbine pushed rearward by velocity and the mass of a fast-moving, heavy bullet does produce a shove. In a hunting situation where only a few rounds — if that — may be fired, we felt recoil wasn't a deal breaker. On the other hand, don't think running through a box of 240-grain bullets going 1400 fps or more is going to enjoyable.

While we looked for accuracy, we also looked at ease of use. Unloading and loading is what hunters do most often. Cycling the action for a fast follow-up shot is also common in hunting situations. Which one of these rifles would we prefer to use in a tree stand? Read on to find out.

Rossi R92 Model 920442093
44 Remington Magnum, $560

The R92 is a knockoff of the Winchester Model 1892, and, in our opinion, Rossi does a great job of recreating a more modern take on this iconic rifle. Our sample was made of stainless steel with a bright finish. We liked the stainless finish and assume it will dull over time and use. The Brazilian hardwood stock and forearm were fitted well. We think this is a sharp-looking rifle.

The black buckhorn rear sight was traditional and adjustable via a stepped ladder for elevation. For windage, we needed to tap the sight over slightly, which we assumed we would need to do with a Rossi. We have needed to do this in the past with Rossi rifles, and we did with the sample here, as it shot slightly to the right at 50 yards. The front blade is black and wears a brass bead and is dovetailed into the barrel. We thought the sights were adequate, though we found we could shoot the 96/44 opens sights slightly better.

Loading was not a chore with the Rossi. Some loading ports have stiff springs on the loading gate with sharp edges, so when a cartridge is inserted, brass is shaved off the case. Not so with the R92. There was a small circular cut in the loading port and loading gate that eased loading. This cut is not traditional and may turn purists away, but we liked the ease of loading. We were actually able to load 11 of the 44 Mag. cartridges in the tube with no issues. With the magazine tube fully loaded, there is some heft to R92. This helps with managing recoil, but we assume most hunters will only load five rounds or whatever your state hunting laws dictate. We did not bust our thumbs loading the Rossi. The traditional tube magazine was easy to load, but unloading meant we racked the lever until it was empty. Picking up cartridges that fall into dirt or snow is a pain, so make sure you clean your rounds off or unload in a place where the cartridges fall in a clean environment. Or have a buddy stand off to the side and catch the rounds in his hat.

The lever was smooth edged and not sharp, so

RUGER MODEL 96/44 44 REMINGTON MAGNUM, $775

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The 96/44 offers a super-fast follow-up shot due to its short-throw lever. It is easy to tote due to its light weight and offers plenty of power and accuracy. A good brush gun, in our opinion.



Action Type.....Lever action
Overall Length .....37.25 in.
Overall Height .....6.5 in.
Weight Unloaded .....6.1 lbs.
Weight Loaded (4-round mag.) .....6.1 lbs.
Receiver.....Alloy steel
Barrel .....18.5 in.; 1:20 RH Twist
Finish.....Blued
Stock.....Smooth hardwood, steel buttpad
Length of Pull .....13.25 in.
Magazine .....(1) 4-round detachable rotary
Front Sight.....Blade w/brass bead
Rear Sight.....Folding adjustable
Trigger .....6.6 lbs.
Safety.....2-position crossbolt button
Warranty .....None written
Telephone.....(888) 220-1173
Website.....Ruger.com
Made In.....U.S.A.



The 96/44 short stroke dumped cases at our feet and was fast to cycle. The 96/44 was only chambered in 44 Rem. Mag., unlike the Model 99, which was chambered in a variety of centerfire rifle calibers.



The short-throw-lever loop is similar to a Savage Model 99.



A brass pin protrudes from the top of receiver, indicating the rifle is cocked.



The magazine was easy to remove. By just pressing the magazine latch (arrow), the magazine dropped free. Too bad the design wasn't continued in the 77/44.





This three-shot group from the Ruger 96/44 with the Grizzly 300-grain solids is quite acceptable for iron sights at 50 yards.



The front sight was typical Ruger, a black post with brass bead.



The top of the receiver was milled for use with Ruger rings. We would slap a red dot on this one faster than you can say boo.



The lever loop was case-hardened colored. Note the crossbolt safety just forward from the trigger. It was easy to reach, for those with long fingers.

working the lever fast and hard was fun and easy on our hands. The action was not as smooth as the action of the 96/44, but it was better than what we expected. Quite a bit better. We did notice tool marks inside the action, but the rifle cycled smoothly and had a nice trigger. The hammer did not require lots of thumb muscle to cock or hold and place on half cock. The serrations on the hammer spur offered good texture. The trigger broke at 4.3 pounds on average.

Also untraditional, the R92 has a manual safety located on top of the bolt. The small safety lever can be rotated 90 degrees to place the rifle in Safe mode or in Fire mode. In Safe mode, the action can be cycled to unload the R92, and the hammer could be snapped forward via a press of the trigger, though the hammer does make contact with the firing pin, the firing pin is held back by the safety lever. The Rossi also has a half-cock notch on the hammer that blocks the trigger. Some kitchen-table gunsmiths like to remove the safety, but in our opinion, it adds a level of safety to the rifle. There are also plenty of aftermarket spring kits for those who like to tinker on hammer and trigger springs.

Though not the most accurate of the rifles tested, we did find we could squeeze out decent accuracy for hunting and plinking. The Black Hills load gave us the best accuracy, and the SIG and Grizzly ammo provided the most recoil. After 20 rounds, we found the full-power 44 Rem. Mag. loads got our attention. Make a note: The R92 thumps good on both ends. We could have fired 44 Special loads all day without getting a sore shoulder.

Our Team Said: If you are looking for an easy-to-carry rifle that provides plenty of firepower, then the R92 is a great option. In the back of a truck or tucked behind the bedroom door, this rifle can protect the ranch as well as feed the ranch. The average price of a new Model 1892 knockoff is about $850 to $1800, depending on the brand, barrel style, the quality of the wood, and where you purchase it. Winchester has reintroduced its Model 1892, and is the model most similar to the Rossi we tested. That rifle has a suggested list price over $1000. The Rossi is a bargain in comparison.

Ruger 77/44 Model 7401
44 Remington Magnum, $754

The 77/44 is a rifle old man Ruger would have liked: straight comb stock of American walnut nicely checkered and a blue-steel barreled action. Most testers liked the look, too. This is a traditional bolt action rifle tweaked to run on a pistol cartridge via a rotary four-round magazine that sits flush with the bottom of the stock.

The 77/44 came from the factory with Leupold style 1-inch rings, and we just happened to have a 1-inch Styrka S3 Series 4-12x50mm scope in the shop. We almost wish Ruger would ship rifles with 30mm rings so we can take advantage of the new generation of 30mm scopes. Since the 77/44 is chambered in 44

44 REMINGTON MAGNUM RANGE DATA

SIG Sauer V-Crown 240-grain JHP	Ruger 77/44	Ruger 96/44	Rossi R92
Average Velocity	1669 fps	1687 fps	1675 fps
Muzzle Energy	1482 ft.-lbs.	1517 ft.-lbs.	1495 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.45 in.	1.51 in.	1.83 in.
Average Group	0.48 in.	1.57 in.	2.16 in.

Black Hills 240-grain JHP	Ruger 77/44	Ruger 96/44	Rossi R92
Average Velocity	1245 fps	1330 fps	1322 fps
Muzzle Energy	924 ft.-lbs.	943 ft.-lbs.	932 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.61 in.	0.99 in.	1.77 in.
Average Group	0.76 in.	1.10 in.	1.93 in.

Grizzly Cartridge Company 300-grain WFNGC	Ruger 77/44	Ruger 96/44	Rossi R92
Average Velocity	1517 fps	1481 fps	1530 fps
Muzzle Energy	1533 ft.-lbs.	1461 ft.-lbs.	1560 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.94 in.	0.53 in.	2.00 in.
Average Group	1.50 in.	0.82 in.	2.09 in.

44 SPECIAL RANGE DATA

HSM Cowboy Action 200-grain RNFP	Ruger 77/44	Ruger 96/44	Rossi R92
Average Velocity	950 fps	955 fps	960 fps
Muzzle Energy	401 ft.-lbs.	405 ft.-lbs.	409 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.04 in.	1.05 in.	1.01 in.
Average Group	1.55 in.	1.62 in.	1.49 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired three-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 50 yards with open sights (96/77 and R92) or optics (77/44). We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph 15 feet from the muzzle.

Rem. Mag., its range is only out to 100 yards, so a low-power scope or red dot would be ideal. The Styrka featured a simple Plex duplex-style reticle. We liked this scope and felt it helped us get the best accuracy out of the 77/44. It has parallax adjustment and the turret caps, like a traditional hunting scope. We think the Styrka scope was more scope than required on the 77/44, but it worked well, and we had a ball punching big holes in the target. As we saw differences in shots between the ammo due to velocity, we found it easy to chase the hole with the turret adjustments and quickly zero the rifle for the specific cartridge.

The wood stock was well finished and had machine-cut checkering that offers a nice texture and plenty of hold. The forearm is slender and easy to hold. As you move closer to the receiver, the stock gets fatter and flatter on the bottom. A tasteful plastic grip cap with the Ruger logo was nicely fitted to the pistol grip. The stock also had sling swivel studs. The dark brown rubber buttpad sucked up some of the recoil, making this rifle a pleasure to shoot, even with full-house 44 Rem. Mag. loads. The steel was blued nicely. The barrel wore the same sights as the 96/44 and nearly every other Ruger rifle ever built. To say we are accustomed to these sights is an understatement. We have learned to shoot these sights well, but we opted for the scope and Ruger's built in scope mount. We are glad we did, since accuracy at 50 yards was excellent.

The bolt is matte gray in color and had a 90-degree lift, which means the eyepiece of the scope is very close to the bolt knob when the bolt knob is lifted up. We have become spoiled with 60-degree bolt throws, and we could not run the 77/44 as fast as we would have liked. No big deal, as it is a function of the bolt design and, besides, with the accuracy we achieved, we probably wouldn't need a fast follow-up shot. Yep, we are that confident in the accuracy of this rifle. We found lifting the bolt up with our trigger finger, racking it back with our trigger finger, then pushing forward with our thumb was fast, but we still needed

to crank it down. That was when it slowed us down. The 77/44 could not keep up with the lever actions in the fast follow-up shot test. The trigger was heavy at 6 pounds but had no creep.

The bolt was easily removed from the receiver via a small bolt button. Press it and pull the bolt free. We liked the three-position safety since it allowed us to unload the 77/44 without removing the magazine in the middle position. With the safety in the full rearward position, the bolt is locked.

Removing the magazine from the Ruger 77/44 was cumbersome and gave us fits until we learned the trick. The Ruger 96/44 had a similar magazine system to the 77/44, but it was much easier to unload. Something must have been lost when Ruger used the design in the 77/44. Nice rifle. Hate the magazine set up. What caused us grief was magazine insertion and removal. This might as well be a fixed box magazine because it took real effort and finger strength to remove the magazine. Ruger offers two ways to release the magazine in the manual. Might we suggest a drop-free magazine? In all fairness, we did learn to become proficient in removal and insertion of the magazine. There is not a lot of wiggle room when inserting or removing the magazine. We have used rimfire versions of the 77 and found the magazines easier to insert and remove. We finally found the pinch method with the support hand was the fastest way to remove the magazine. We also found we could load the magazine while it was inserted in the mag well as if it were a fixed magazine. We also loaded single rounds by placing the round on top of the magazine and pushing the bolt forward. The magazine soured us on the rifle, until we fired it.

With SIG V-Crown 240-grain JHPs, we were able to shoot three-shot groups that measured slightly more than the bullet diameter. With our go-to Black Hills load, the groups were slightly larger. We were driving tacks with the 77/44, and that gave our testers confidence in this rifle. One team member made an offer to buy the rifle while still at the range.

Our Team Said: If you can live with the magazine (and some of us said we could), you can expect a short, handy bolt-action rifle that is plenty accurate and comfortable to shoot. It is a nice set up for medium-sized game out to 100 yards.

Ruger Model 96/44
44 Remington Magnum, $775

The 96/44 was produced from 1994 to 2004. Like many other Ruger firearms, the 96/44 is Ruger's revision of a famous design, and in this case it mimics the Savage Model 99. The 96/44 looks and acts a lot like the old Savage, but the former is different. This lever action uses a short-throw lever, enclosed hammer, and rotary magazine like the Savage, but the similarity stops there. The 96/44 was only chambered in 44 Rem. Mag., unlike the Model 99, which was chambered in a variety of centerfire rifle calibers.

The 96/44's lever throw is much shorter and hence faster to manipulate than the Rossi R92. There is no exposed hammer, like there is on traditional lever-action rifles such as the R92. The hammer is enclosed inside the receiver, which makes the rifle more streamlined, plus there is little chance of debris getting caught in the action.

The 96/44 uses a cocked-hammer indicator that can be seen and felt. A small brass indicator pin protrudes from the rear of the receiver, letting the shooter know the rifle is cocked and ready to fire. The lever is case hardened and looks sharp next to the blued receiver and barrel. The crossbolt safety is located just forward of the trigger. It was a bit of a stretch to reach the button unless you had long fingers. The hardwood stock is plain and smooth and a bit chubby in the grip, making it feel a bit like an M1 Carbine. The buttplate was steel, and recoil was noticeable after about 25 rounds of the hotter ammo. The sights were traditional Ruger 10/22 style sights: A post front with a brass bead and folding rear sight that could be adjusted for windage and elevation. The 96/44 was dead on, so we did not have to adjust it. The top of the receiver is milled to accept a scope and uses standard Ruger scope rings, so if you wanted to mount an optic, you could.

The plastic magazine is a super-sized 10/22-style rotary magazine that is super easy to load and holds four cartridges. Even the slightly longer 300-grain-bullet ammo loaded with ease, and there was plenty of room for the slightly longer bullet in the magazine. When we pressed the magazine-release button, the magazine dropped into the palm of our hand just like a 10/22 magazine. To insert the magazine, you need to insert the front of the magazine into the magazine well first, then rotate the rear in until it clicks; similar to a 10/22. Additional magazines are available at MidwayUSA.com ($30). The 77/44 magazine is not compatible with the 96/44.

The two-stage trigger pull was more than we'd like at 6.6 pounds, but we were able to deal with it. The smallest three-shot group we fired was 0.5 inches. Across all ammo, the 96/44 averaged about 1.5-inch groups with open sights. We assume with a scope, those groups would shrink.

Our Team Said: The 96/44 is a fast shooting rifle with moderate recoil. Accuracy was good and the action was slick and fast. We liked this rifle and if we saw one on the used rack, we'd probably make an offer. If we owned this rifle, we'd mount a low-power optic on it.

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

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

Revolver Speedloaders: Proven Designs and New Innovations

Tested among these accessories are choices from HKS, Safariland, 5 Star, Pachmayr, Maxfire, and Speedbeez. The Speedbeez is the fastest into action, but it lost its cartridges during the drop test.

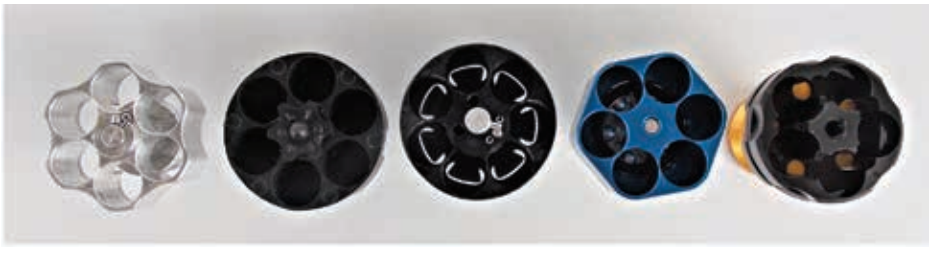
During the past year, revolvers have gotten a lot of attention. The introduction of the Taurus AirLite six-shot revolver, basically a six-shot J frame, was interesting. Ruger introduced a seven-shot 357 Magnum version of the GP100. The revolver, it seems, continues to interest the self-defense shooter who wants his or her carry handgun to agree with the Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS) maxim. We have done reports on revolvers and on self-loading pistol magazines, but we've never tested revolver speedloaders. It seemed long overdue. We got together a team of revolver shooters, collected a number of revolvers, and ordered a range of revolver speedloaders. While the basic design of all speedloaders is similar, we discovered that there are important differences in the speedloaders that will be important to the user. Whether the speedloader is used for competition or defense, we think the reader who carries a revolver would be well advised to carry a speedloader, master the technique to deploy it, and choose the device well.

Test Procedure

We examined the speedloaders for fit, finish, ease of loading and a solid lock on the cartridges. We executed several speed loads with each design, using both Lyman snap caps and loaded hollowpoint and serrated-nose type cartridges. We also dropped the speedloaders from a height of five feet three times, or until they lost their cartridges. Speedloaders are usually dropped on the ground, unloaded, after the revolver is loaded, and they should not crack when dropped. We also feel that it is important that the speedloader retain its gun load if the speedloader is dropped on the ground during a fumbled load. Then you may lift the speedloader up again and finish the load. If the cartridges are lost when the speedloader is dropped, and you have to pick them up one at a time, your battle will probably be over.

To execute the speed loads, we used a proven technique as taught by one of our raters, an NRA- and state-certified instructor. The revolver is fired empty and then passed to the weak-side hand. As the handgun is passed to the left hand, the right thumb opens the cylinder. The left hand takes the handgun and the fingers press the cylinder out as the left-hand thumb presses the ejector rod to eject the spent shells. The muzzle must be pointed upward as the cartridges are ejected. The muzzle is then pointed downward. The right hand has retrieved the speedloader and the speedloader is guided to the cylinder. It is important that the fingers guide the bullet nose into the chamber. If the speedloader is guided by the release knob, the hold isn't as stable and it is more difficult to load the cylinder. After the cartridges are loaded into the cylinder, in the case of the HKS, 5 Star, and Pachmayr, the action knob is turned to release the cartridges. The Safariland and Speedbeez are simply pressed forward to release their cartridges. The speedloader is allowed to fall away.

The Maxfire's unique design demands a different procedure. We felt that this procedure is not as fast



Left to right are our competitors: the 5 Star, Safariland, HKS, Pachmayr, and Speedbeez loaders.



As the height of the speed loaders grew, it was more difficult to conceal them. This is an important consideration.

as the others, but it is what it is. The revolver is fired empty and then the spent cases are ejected. The right hand maintains control as the barrel is tilted upward and the right thumb hits the cylinder release. The left hand strikes the ejector rod and ejects the spent shells. The barrel is then tilted down as the Maxfire is brought to the cylinder. Contrary to what you would expect from seeing the large ring on this rubber speedloader, the finger doesn't go inside the ring. The ring is held in the palm, oval out, to guide the gun load into the chamber. This goes smoothly enough. Once the revolver is loaded, the Maxfire is pulled to the left and off the cylinder. If you have not practiced, you will pull the cartridges back out of the cylinder. However, for those who practice, this is a very fast reload, as far as inserting the speedloader and then drawing the speedloader away. We found that the action could be fast, but the need to keep the revolver in the right hand seems unfamiliar. Here's what we thought about each speedloader.



To release the cartridge load, the Speedbeez control knob (1) is pressed forward, the Pachmayr knob (2) is twisted, as is the HKS type (3), while the Safariland (4) is simply pressed forward. The 5 Star (5) also requires the control knob be twisted.

SPEEDLOADER DIMENSIONS

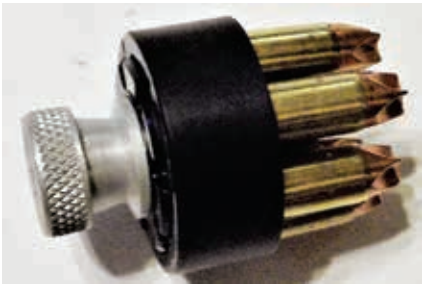
	Unloaded Weight	Diameter	Height
Safariland	0.75 oz.	1.52 in.	1.32 in.
HKS	1.0 oz.	1.48 in.	1.31 in.
Pachmayr	1.2 oz.	1.32 in.	1.68 in.
5 Star	1.0 oz.	1.35 in.	1.24 in.
Speedbeez	1.5 oz.	1.58 in.	1.87 in.
Maxfire	0.4 oz.	1.45 in.	1.50 in.

HKS Speedloaders

We tested with four types of HKS speedloaders, two of each types, with identical results in each case. They accepted 38 Special/357 Magnums in 5-, 6-, and 7-shot capacities and cost about $8 each. We also used a five-round speedloader for the 44 Special, which cost $10.34. The HKS is among the longest serving speedloaders and the best known, with the Safariland close behind. They are often found on the rack at well-stocked gun shops for $10 to $11. HKS speedloaders are affordable and, in our experience, durable. They are incrementally heavier than the Safariland but slightly smaller in diameter. We used a Galco speedloader pouch during the test. It was $39.20 from OpticsPlanet.com. The speedloader should fit the pouch if used for personal defense, so the small differences in outside diameter with the six-shot 38/357 speedloaders compared were not particularly important. The maximum spread in weight was 0.75 ounce, and in diameter the maximum contrast was 0.16 inch. Height was the most important consideration for concealed carry then, given similar dimensions in the other particulars. The HKS consists of a round cylinder-like body that holds the cartridges. The locking mechanism is aluminum for the most part. To load, the speedloader is turned upward with the locking knob at the bottom in the unlocked position. (Turn the knob left.) Load the cartridges. Turn the knob to the right and you are locked in place. The



The black HKS control knob is easily used, while the blue Pachmayr offers even greater control.



During the drop tests, the HKS proved rugged and kept its gun load in every instance.

speedloaders easily fit in the Galco and other popular speedloader pouches. To execute, the speed load we placed the bullet nose in the chamber and released the gun load by moving the knob to the release point. Then, the speedloader was shaken or pulled away from the revolver cylinder.

In the speed drills, the HKS was fast enough for



When doing a speed load, the muzzle must be pointed upward to eject the shells. The proper procedure is essential when executing a speed load.



The Maxfire was usable, but we did not like the manual of arms as well as the other speedloaders.



The Safariland speedloader is all plastic and seems durable. There is no unlocked position achieved by turning the knob.



While the Safariland knob is prominent, the Safariland actually operates by pressing the speedloader body forward. The knob is used as a brace to press the cylinder forward.

personal defense. The user must practice extensively to get the speed load right with any of the designs tested. The HKS is slower than the Safariland and Speedbeez designs in loading the cartridges into the cylinder. The need to twist the knob rather than simply push forward to release the cartridges may be a speed demerit. However, the HKS design passed all drop tests, while the Speedbeez did not. Another important consideration is the number of speedloaders offered by HKS.

Available are loaders for 22-caliber revolvers, the 32 H&R Magnum, small-frame and large-frame revolvers, and the big 44s. The HKS is the only speedloader available in some applications. We compared the weight and diameter of only the six-shot 38 Special revolvers for a fair comparison. As the dimensions below show, there is no real size and weight advantage for any speedloader.

Our Team Said: The HKS is durable, affordable, and, with practice, it is fast. We rated the HKS down a half grade based on speed compared to the Safariland, which also passed the drop test.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST BUY

Safariland Six-Shot Speedloader, $12.68

The Safariland speedloader is all plastic and seems durable. A set that one of the raters has had in use for perhaps a decade showed fraying and chips from being dropped around the outer edges, but it still worked fine. The Safariland loader differs from the HKS. There is no unlocked position achieved by turning the knob. If a gun load isn't in the loader, it is unlocked. The ammunition is loaded, and the knob is pushed up and to the right. While we did not have access to the internals, this appears to spring-load the speedloader for a rapid release of the gun loads. We dropped several Safariland speedloaders and were not able to dislodge the gun load. We had on hand six loaders, and the total number of drops for loaded speedloaders was 18 without failure or losing the gun load. Loading in the revolver cylinder is the same as the HKS. The release is both different from the HKS and fast and positive. The cartridges are pressed into the chambers and the body of the Safariland loader is pressed forward. There is no turning of the knob; the gun load is released into the chambers without any other motion. The Safariland speedloader never failed to work properly in more than a dozen loads with each individual speedloader on hand. We like this system. A tiny bit more effort is needed to prepare the Safariland device, but loading the revolver with this speedloader is fast, positive, and natural. This advantage might be a lifesaver, and we like it very much.

Our Team Said: The Safariland costs more than the HKS, but the former is faster, and it costs less than speedloaders that do not work any better or do not work as well.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A OUR PICK



The scalloped 5 Star control knob is easily manipulated. The 5 Star is all aluminum, but it weighs the same as the HKS. The 5 Star company offers a speedloader for the Taurus Judge.



The aluminum-body 5 Star device passed all drop testing. It loads in the same manner as the HKS and Pachmayr. The 5 Star device never lost its load.



The Pachmayr speedloader features a scalloped cylinder for lighter weight and a lower profile.



Pachmayr's speed loader proved reliable.

5 Star K6, $20

This unit is available at 5StarFirearms.com. The 5 Star unit is very similar to the HKS and also similar to the Pachmayr. The 5 Star is all aluminum. The 5 Star speedloader weighs the same as the HKS, 0.25 ounce more than the Safariland, 0.2 less than the Pachmayr and .5 ounce less than the Speedbeez. The 5 Star company offers good coverage, with 22-, 38-, 357-, and 44-caliber options, and even a speedloader for the Taurus Judge. The aluminum-body 5 Star device passed all drop testing. It loads in the same manner as the HKS and Pachmayr. The knob is not round but is instead scalloped. Since the HKS and Pachmayr are checkered, they have plenty of adhesion but the scalloped 5 Star doesn't need checkering. We found no demerit nor disadvantage compared to the HKS design. In speed drills, the unit performed well.

Our Team Said: If you like the HKS, you will like the 5 Star, but you will pay more. We rated it down a half grade based on speed compared to the Safariland.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Pachmayr Competition Speedloader, $15.44

The Pachmayr speedloader operates in a similar manner to the HKS but features rubber washers that cushion the case head. There is little to no play of the loaded cartridges. The scalloped body makes the Pachmayr slightly smaller than the HKS, at 0.16 inch less diameter. We liked the scalloped design of the main body of the Pachmayr. The primary advantage over the HKS and 5 Star designs is a larger release knob that makes handling and speed incrementally superior. The unit is very smooth in operation and perhaps the best finished of any of the devices tested. While it costs more than similar designs, it also offers an advantage. The larger release knob had the Pachmayr running neck and neck with the Safariland for speed.

Our Team Said: This is a good quality speedloader with excellent finish.

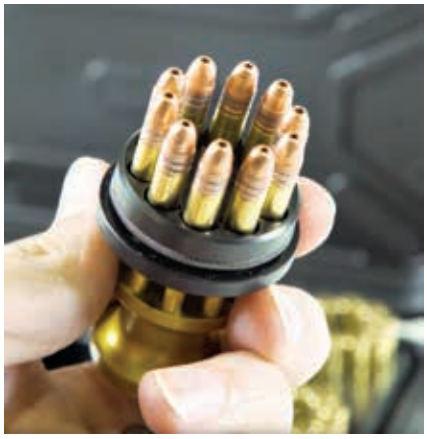
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Speedbeez Speedloaders, $36 each

The different capacities include the SB 5 shot, SB 6 shot, and SB 7 shot, all available at Speedbeez.com. We tested several five-, six-, and seven-shot Speedbeez speedloaders. The company offers a large selection of the most popular types from 22 to 44 caliber. The Speedbeez is taller than the HKS and others tested and will not fit in the Galco speedloader pouch when the Speedbeez is loaded. This speedloader is loaded in a different manner than the other speedloaders. The cartridges are pushed into individual openings in the speedloader by finger pressure. The cartridge case rims are held by wire springs. We shook the springs and did not lose the gun load when holding it above a desk, our initial test. When dropping the Speedbeez speedloaders, all except the five-shot speedloader lost the entire gun load on the first drop. We continued and did the full three drops, with the same results. The five-shot 38 Special speedloader lost two or three cartridges on average when dropped. We dropped it once, picked up the dropped cartridges, reloaded and tried again. The SpeedBeez was rated down a full grade based on this defect. This isn't the most secure speedloader. When the cartridges are grasped by the nose, they may simply be plucked out of the



The Speedbeez is an interesting design in many ways. A wire spring retains the cartridges.



Speedbeez offers a large selection of the most popular types from 22 (right) to 44 caliber. To load the Speedbeez, push cartridges into individual openings in the speedloader.



To load the revolver, simply place the gun load in the cylinder and press the back of the speedloader and you are reloaded. This was fast and easy.



Speedbeez also offers a case that helps reload the unit. Arrange cartridges in the case, and press the loader down on the cartridges.

speedloader. However, during the loading phase, the Speedbeez was the fastest revolver speedloader tested. Simply place the gun load in the cylinder and press the back of the speedloader and you are re-loaded. Let the Speedbeez fall away. We cannot stress enough how fast and easy this is.

Our Team Said: If you are certain you will not drop the Speedbeez, this is a very fast speedloader if this is the primary concern. In absolute terms of a split second, it is faster than the Safariland. In practical terms, in a personal-defense event, it might not be measurably faster. It lost its gun load during the drop test and might do so if carried in a jacket pocket, a common carry. Plus the Speedbeez is the most expensive speedloader tested, costing as much for one as for four HKS speedloaders.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

Maxfire Speedloader, $15

This speedloader is the least expensive tested, at $15 for a two-speedloader pack from MidwayUSA.com. The Maxfire is all rubber with no moving parts. The ring that is molded with the device is useful for carrying and when removing the loader from the gun load as it is chambered. The loading process isn't difficult as the cartridges are placed in the loader and fitted into other the wedges molded into the Maxfire body. The load is staggered as the cartridges are locked into the Maxfire speedloader. We are so used to loading with the left hand holding the revolver and the right hand accessing and using the speedloader, the Maxfire loading procedure coming from the left side with the speedloader felt foreign. We spent more time on the Maxfire than the other loaders to be certain that wasn't anything we were missing. If something feels odd, it is imperative that we continue with the test until it either feels better or continues to be odd despite our best efforts. After a thorough test, we found we could use the Maxfire in an efficient manner, but we preferred the other speedloaders. If the loader is properly used and pulled directly to the left, the load goes smoothly. If there is a snag, then the cartridges may be pulled out of the cylinder.

During the drop tests, the Maxfire speedloaders regularly lost part of the gun load. The tests were conducted from the same height as the other tests. We made three drops with each Maxfire speedloader. In four out of the six drops, the Maxfire lost four cartridges. The cartridges left were the two most forward cartridges. In a fifth drop, the Maxfire loader lost five cartridges. In another drop, the Maxfire loader landed dead on the cartridge noses and all of the cartridges were retained.

Our Team said: We rated the Maxfire down a grade as a result of poor drop tests. We rated it down another half grade based on the loading procedure. While the actual loading of the cylinder isn't slow, we did not like the right hand on the revolver and left hand drawing the speedloader procedure.

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-



The Maxfire requires the cartridges be placed into slots to load.



Right: The Maxfire speedloader is light and, with practice, may be loaded quickly. Below: Here's a look at the Maxfire nose on. Bottom right: After loading, the Maxfire is slid to one side. The Maxfire is workable for those who practice.





Gun Tests Bottom Line

Three of the speedloaders operated in a nearly identical manner. The HKS, 5 Star, and Pachmayr gave good results. The Pachmayr fit into the Galco pouch in spite of a longer action knob. The Pachmayr is a good speedloader with limited coverage of popular calibers. Because we advise using consistent units, this is a factor.

We see no point in purchasing the 5 Star over the HKS due to the expense involved. The HKS is the Best Buy. The Safariland loader is the fastest in combat loads compared to the previous three of a similar design tested. The Speedbeez is a very fast unit, but it is expensive and does not hold its gunload when dropped. The Maxfire is inexpensive, about the same price for two as for a single HKS. We did not like the manual of arms, but if your budget is small, this is an option. We did not like its failure on the drop test.

Whichever speedloader you choose, stick with the type. It was inevitable that during the testing, some raters became confused when switching between different styles of speedloaders. It would be a disaster to use the Speedbeez in competition, we believe, and then the HKS for concealed carry, or vice versa. You should be familiar with the gear you use. If you concealed carry the HKS, use it in competition, and if you compete with the Speedbeez, carry it for personal defense. After our test, we prefer the Safariland speedloader. The Pachmayr, on a tactical basis, is a close second for personal defense. The HKS is the Best Buy based on price, value, and coverage.

Written and photographed by Gun Tests *Staff.* **GT**

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Section 32310 will once again be in effect — including the "receiving" of any "large-capacity" magazine. Thus, the delivery of an order after the injunction has been stayed will arguably be in violation of Penal Code Section 32310, exposing you to misdemeanor or felony charges.

Also, it's worth noting the ban on possessing an LCM has been unenforceable since June 29, 2017, when this same court issued a preliminary injunction preventing the law from taking effect while the parties litigated the merits of the case. And because CA DOJ is seeking a stay only as to the provisions allowing for acquisition of new LCMs, the injunction against the possession restriction should remain in effect for the time being. That said, people should stay tuned to legal alerts to be updated of any changes. Also, lawfully acquired LCMs can be lawfully used.

BEWARE: The ruling does NOT mean you can use an LCM in a semiautomatic, centerfire rifle with a "fixed magazine," e.g., an AR-platform rifle with a device affixed to only allow removal of the magazine when the upper is separated from the lower, or similar device, that is designed to avoid "assault weapon" designation.

To read the briefs for yourself, a copy of the order granting the permanent injunction can be viewed on the Michel & Associates (MichelLawyers.com) website. Search for "Duncan" on the site to see the litigation record.

If you live in California, the new gold rush — a "mag rush" — is on. Magpul began shipping standard-capacity magazines (30 rounds) on April 3. Brownells is offering a substantial discount on 10-packs of 30-round magazines. Elite Tactical Components, Natchez Shooters Supplies, Wilson Combat, and other magazine makers also announced they would be shipping LCMs to California — legally — while the ban is no longer in effect. That could change any day. Get yours while the getting is good. **GT**

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