GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

$5.95 December 2016/Vol. XXVIII, No. 12

SHOTGUN SHOOTOUT

Tested: The semi-auto Mossberg 930 Tactical, Benelli's Nova Tactical Pump and TriStar's TEC-12, which can operate as a pump or semi-auto. All three will do the job, but we prefer one in particular. **— Page 6**





BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER '16

Charter Arms Off Duty 5381 38 Special, $404



BEST IN CLASS PISTOL '16

Factory Certified Pre-Owned SIG P226R 40 S&W, $725



BEST IN CLASS RIFLE '16

Savage Arms Model 12 Long Range Precision (LRP) 19137 6.5 Creedmoor, $1252



BEST IN CLASS SHOTGUN '16

Browning Citori Model 725 Field 0135303004 12 Gauge, $2470



BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY '16

Safariland 6378-53-411 ALS High-Retention Holster, $56

2016 GUNS OF THE YEAR

We look through 12 months of handgun, long gun, and accessory evaluations and pick our favorites. **● Page 13**



Uberti 1860 Henry Rifle 342880 45 Colt



Springfield Armory TRP PC9108LP 45 ACP



Rock Island Armory Baby Rock 51912 380 ACP



Beretta Model 1301 Tactical J131T18 12 Gauge



Winchester Super X3 Waterfowl Hunter Mossy Oak Shadow Grass 11155291 12 Gauge



Palmetto State Armory AK-47 MOE Edition 7.62x39mm

DOWNRANGE: 2 ● FIRING LINE: 3 ● SHORT SHOTS: 32 ● COMING UP: 32

DOWNRANGE

WHO WON?



Todd Woodard

I'm writing this blind; that is, I have no idea how the elections of 2016 turned out because they haven't happened yet. I don't know if Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump will be heading the ship of state for the next four years. It's an odd thing to contemplate. So, rather than speculate on what may have happened, I will simply admit that I have been very wrong about the effects on gun ownership a Barack Obama presidency would create. Instead, I'll just report some current facts, because I think they tell the story regardless of who wins.

I just looked at the FBI's background-check statistics for gun sales in October 2016, the latest month for which data was available (at this time). Those numbers showed that more than 2,333,539 gun-related checks processed through NICS, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, in October. That's up more than 350,000 checks over the previous October, itself a record. It's also the 18th month in a row to that firearms sales checks set a record.

Moreover, with November and December yet to be recorded, the year of 2016 has already seen 22,206,233 NICS checks — the second-highest year for checks in the history of NICS. Only 2015 had more.

The FBI statement on the sales figures said, "These statistics represent the number of firearm background checks initiated through the NICS. They do not represent the number of firearms sold. Based on varying state laws and purchase scenarios, a one-to-one correlation cannot be made between a firearm background check and a firearm sale."

Still, NICS checks are the best indicators for gun sales we have, in part because many states do not require NICS checks for sales between private parties. Nobody I know of has good data about what private-sale volume is, the comments of some politicians and so-called researchers notwithstanding. My guess is that private sales are about 10% of NICS volume.

No matter. What the numbers indisputably prove is that President Obama's positions on gun control are driving sales. The overlay between the years of his administration and the steady uptick of gun sales over the last eight years is remarkable. He is said to be the country's "greatest gun salesman" ever. Donald Trump, if he wins, cannot approach Obama's success in selling firearms.

Hillary Clinton, however, may eclipse even Obama's successes. Clinton's own campaign thinks she "has been more forceful on guns/gun lobby than any other person who ever seriously ran for president," according to documents released by Wikileaks. Also, she has said that the Supreme Court was "wrong on the Second Amendment," referencing the *Heller* decision.

When Obama won in 2008, I was sure he would attempt to suppress gun rights, thus gun sales would tank. I will now flip-flop faster than a John Kerry war statement and say that if Hillary Clinton wins on Election Day, the gun-sales numbers for November 2016 will spike to all-time highs. By the time you read this, we'll know if I got it right this time. **GT**

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Choosing the Right SIG Is Tough

Readers Chet and William like their SIG Sauers, though they disagree with our ratings of them. A second William wants to know where he can pick up some AmeriGlo sights for his G43.

Re "Bigger 9mms Handguns: SIG, Arsenal, and Beretta Go At It," November 2016

Good day: Here's why I continue to be a many-years-long subscriber to Gun Tests:

First, this from a recent cover story of one of the slick gun magazines concerning the SIG P320 RX: "...but where the P250 stumbled (trigger pull weight and quality), the P320 shines. While the P320 doesn't have the lightest trigger pull on the market, I think it has the best trigger pull on a striker-fired handgun in terms of quality. The trigger pull is the shortest and the crispest and the closest you'll find in character to the trigger pull of a 1911... usually 6.5 pounds or less...."

A typical review of a "prepared" gun shipped to a magazine that depends on the advertising big bucks.

I bought a P320 RX before this review appeared. After shooting it the first time, I immediately called SIG's excellent customer service. I reported that based on my four other SIGs, I was surprised the company put its name on the P320. My problem was a trigger that grated so terribly you could hear the agonized friction.

The rep was quite nice, and advised that the trigger on a P320 could never be as good as on the other SIGs. He added the he couldn't guarantee it could be improved. However, he said he'd e-mail a prepaid return label.

Surprisingly, three or so weeks later, the rep called me (have never had that happen before!). He passed on to me what the "gunsmith" advised him to tell me: Some parts were replaced, and most of the grating has been relieved. However, the P320's will never be as smooth as the other SIGs or have trigger pulls of much less than 8 pounds. After a thousand rounds or so, smoothness should improve a little.

My P320 is back. Trigger pull is down to 7.2 pounds, and thankfully, I now can't hear the scraping as I squeeze the much-smoother trigger. It's still not in the same class as my other SIGs, but it's certainly good enough to be usable. Thanks, Gun Tests, for always telling it like it is, as per your November 2016, comparison review of the P320. **— Chet**



I enjoyed your article "Bigger 9mms Handguns" in the November 2016 issue, but I take issue with your lowly "B" grade for the SIG Sauer P226 MK-25. I have a MK-25 that has never had a failure or problem of any kind.

The Sig-Lite night sights make the gun easy to get on target in low light, and the decocker is a safety feature I really like. But I admit the first pull can throw you off. My MK-25 is a superb pistol with very good accuracy. It feels good in your hand and oozes confidence. Yes, you do pay a small premium for a SIG Sauer, but the best always costs a little more. **— William**

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.

Self-Defense Defense: A Good Idea?

I would really appreciate any insights you have as to whether its a good idea to join USCCA or like organization. I carry on a daily basis. I really appreciate Gun Tests and look forward to every issue. Thanks.

— Mike

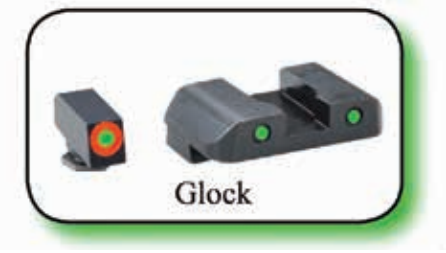
When I got my concealed handgun license a few years ago, during the mandated CHL class, I was pitched by a Texas Law Shield rep who simply said, "OK, you just shot someone in your house. Do you know what's going to happen next?" I felt a cold chill come over me, because I knew I had no idea. And a friend of mine was involved in a civil lawsuit at the time, and he had amassed $56k in legal fees during the suit, so I knew what litigation alone could cost. But I was frightened by the criminal side. Texas laws at the time were a lot more stringent on carry, and the legalities taught in the CHL course alone got me twitching. I am very much a pain avoider. Signed up that day, along with my wife and kids. For me, it was the only decision I could make if I planned to carry and trained to defend myself. I've seen some folks say, "The 2A is my carry permit!" And they may be right, as far as it goes. But the 2A doesn't define the terms of legal use of force and deadly force. There will be consequences after the incident. You can either plan and prepare for them, or not. — Todd Woodard

Re "Modern 9mm Subcompacts: CZ-USA, Glock, Steyr Compete," November 2016

Saw in the November Gun Tests about AmeriGlo sights. Where can I get them for my Glock G43?

— William

Log on to AmeriGlo.com, click on the Glock logo, and the sight sets are listed on the page. If you want a classic 3-dot design, the Spartan Operator sights feature a glare reducing rear tritium sight design



and the ProGlo orange-outline tritium front sight. The GL-450 and GL-451 sight sets are specified for the Glock 42 and 43 models. There are other models available as well, which you can see by downloading a catalog from the site. — tw

Re "Not Our Picks," November 2016

On page 11 of this issue, you had the SIG Sauer P938 Extreme graded an "F," with a comment, "Too bad it didn't work." No explanation of what didn't work. I have had a P938 Rosewood for a year now. It is my everyday carry gun, and I strap it on when I get up in the a.m. and take it off at night before going to bed. I have put more than 750 rounds through it with no FTF or FTE, from either FMJs or hollowpoints. Accuracy-wise, I average a 6-inch-diameter circle at 17 yards. I can do better with benchrest slow shots. I carry it on Safe, in a leather holster, at 5 o'clock position in Condition One, seven in the extended mag and one in the pipe. I have had no issues with any ammo I use, and I primarily use Brown and Silver Bear for practice. Hornady Critical Defense for carry. I believe the pistol deserves a more current review in Gun Tests. Thank you.

— Norm

Well, we list the grades and short comments, along with the issue date, so readers can get a quick look at a lot of guns. But here's more on what happened with our P938: "Our initial test firing made us think we'd found the ideal small nine. Everything was great, we thought. And then the nightmare began. On our next familiarization shooting with a few dozen rounds, we had a handful of failures to fire. Inspection showed the primers were essentially untouched. One or two had the tiniest mark of the firing pin. Some rounds failed to fire from repeated strikes of the hammer. Along with the failures to fire, we had occasional failures to completely eject. Commonly the last cartridge case from the magazine would get caught and mangled on its way out.

"We thought we had figured out the problem when the first test shooter said he was not holding the gun hard. We thought his limp wrist was letting the gun fly up and grab the empties. So our Senior Technical Editor decided to hold the gun gently and let the gun kick upward and catch the outgoing empty. On the shot, the empty sailed high and wide. No problem. Then, for the last round in the gun, he gripped the gun hard with both hands. This would let the gun cycle the way it was designed, he proclaimed, and the empty case would leave the gun properly just as high and wide as had the previous one. On the shot the observer didn't see the empty fly. We searched, and finally looked at the gun. To our amazement, the empty cartridge had been caught by the lips of the magazine and had remained in the gun. That was a first for us.

"Inspection revealed a broken extractor. It was such a clean break we couldn't be sure at first, but comparison with other extractors indicated there should have been more meat on this one. SIG overnighted us a new extractor. The part is investment cast, lightly machined, and has a small stress relief in the form of a fillet along one side of the chunk that broke off. It doesn't have a fillet behind the hook. We didn't





like the design, but it's common in today's handguns. If the extractor had been milled from a forging and heat-treated properly, it would most likely never break in a thousand years. But no one makes guns like that any more, not for $823."

And in conclusion: "Shown here with the extended seven-round magazine, the P938 was a compact and powerful package that we really liked when shooting the WPA Russian and Ultramax selections. Too bad neither of our test P938s would function with what we believe is an excellent self-defense round. When we acquired a second SIG P938 and function-fired it with the Cor-Bon 115-grain JHPs, it took only two shots to block the pistol's firing-pin hole. Repeated drops of the hammer on this brand-new gun would not fire the round. After that, we respectfully lowered this gun's grade to F." — tw

I saw in your November issue you had given an F rating to the SIG Sauer P938 Extreme in March 2013. I had heard early versions of this firearm did have some problems, but they may have been resolved by the manufacturer. Have you, or do you plan to, re-review the SIG 938? I was considering purchasing this model, but I want to wait until your reviewers check it again. Thanks for a very helpful publication.

— John

Yes, the P938 will eventually be retested. The availability of new versions of it and other new 9mms will speed that process. Also, two readers asking for a follow up tends to move things along. — tw

Re "Compact 45 ACP Shoot-Out: Glock, S&W, and Springfield," November 2016

I read your review with interest. I own a S&W M&P Shield (but in 9mm) and a Springfield XD-S 3.3 in 45 ACP. I learned from both that I don't favor striker actions. But I, too, found the M&P much easier to shoot accurately than the XD-S 3.3. I agree that the grip of the XD-S 3.3 is suboptimal. For me, it was downright painful to shoot with it, which means I either had to find a way to make it acceptable, or I wouldn't practice much with it (that's a bad thing).

But I love the XD-S size/caliber mix and how easy it is to conceal. The M&P is, paradoxically, almost equally concealable for me. So I spent $18 dollars and bought a Talon Grip wraparound strip for my XD-S. It was well worth the price and makes the XD-S much easier to shoot. So it is in my "carry rotation" along with the M&P and my faithful, large, obsolescent, beloved old SIG P-6. The ergonomics of the P-6 are second to none, in my opinion. Thanks for your excellent reviews. **— Brian**





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Shotgun Shootout: Self-Loader, Pump, or Dual-Action Design?

Tested: The semi-auto Mossberg 930 Tactical, Benelli's Nova Tactical Pump and TriStar's TEC-12, which can operate as a pump or semi-auto. All three will do the job, but we prefer one.

When we decided to test three tactical shotguns suitable for home defense, rather than test three pumps or three self-loaders, we tested one of each, and one that could be either. The Benelli Nova Tactical Pump was our first type, followed by a semi-auto Mossberg 930 Tactical and TriStar's TEC-12, the latter of which can operate as a pump or semi-auto. If we were jumping into the sandbox at the moment, we think the Benelli M3 might be our choice, especially after firing the near clone of it, the TEC-12. However, the team thought the Benelli Nova pump had the simplest action to use well, and for us, its performance could not be faulted. The Mossberg 930 Tactical had its advantages as well, among them being it was the most comfortable shotgun to fire and use. We had our preference, as we describe below, but you may decide one of the others is better for you. To make that decision easier, our shooters went over the three guns with an eye toward finding flaws, and before we begin in earnest, we will say we found few problems, and that any of these three would do good duty for home defense.

We have had generally good luck with Benelli's Nova variations over the years. Way back in July 2007, we tested the field-grade Benelli Nova Pump 12 Gauge and gave it an "A-" for its overall performance, the feel and function of the synthetic stock and forearm, and its selection of choke tubes, which was impressive for







Our defensive shotguns included, above, the semi-auto Mossberg 930 Tactical, which we thought was the softest-shooting of the trio. At right is the Benelli Nova Tactical Pump, which had consistent and positive ejection, followed by TriStar's TEC-12 at bottom, which can operate as a pump or semi-auto.



Left: This is only a portion of the buckshot rounds we fired for this test. Our raters were soaking their wrists in Epsom salts the next morning. The 12-gauge 2.75-inch 00 Buckshot loads were Sellier & Bellot, Hornady Critical Defense, Remington Managed Recoil, and Winchester Super X shotshells. Rifle-type sights on the TEC-12 and Benelli weren't necessary to put devastating buckshot loads on target.

this bargain-priced firearm. Then in the October 2013 issue, we tested a Benelli Super Nova Tactical No. 29155 12 Gauge. That gun earned an "A-" grade, losing out to a less expensive Stevens 320 that was every bit as good as the Super Nova and hundreds of dollars cheaper. Also, that Tactical Super Nova was the heaviest of those shotguns, which can be good or bad depending on the shooter and the load. But in that test, our shooters particularly liked the feel of the grooved polymer forearm and pistol grip. Downside: The out-of-the-box trigger pull of 8.75 pounds was too hefty for our tastes. Functionally, however, the Super Nova was fine. Those same likes carry over to a Benelli Nova H2O, which features a nickel-plated barrel, that we have not worked into a head-to-head against other corrosion-resistant units. Functionally, it has felt and operated like the other Novas we've tested, but the unit we've been shooting off and on (No. 20090, $669 MSRP) for a couple of years has open rifle sights (blade front and rear notch), which we don't like as well as the Ghost Ring sight on the Nova Tactical, and the price is a big step up from the plain black Benelli. At the time of this test, GanderMountain.com listed the H2O at $650, not including shipping and other charges such as FFL receiving fees. If you need the anti-corrosion features, you may be willing to pay the premium price for it, but for us, because of the price and the sights, we'd have to call the H2O a "B" in terms of value.

We have tested a variant of Mossberg's Model 930 as recently as the September 2016 issue when we put a Waterfowl Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Camo No. 85212 12 Gauge to the test as a field piece. It rated a "B" beside other guns from Beretta, Browning, and Winchester because it was just a little heavier and didn't glide as well as the other test shotguns, in the opinion of our rates. Also, we were a little disappointed in the patterning performance with both clay-target and waterfowl loads. More to the point of home defense, however,

BENELLI NOVA TACTICAL PUMP 20051 12 GA., $372

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

The Benelli pump-action shotgun impressed all our raters. The lockup is tight, the build quality is impressive. Its patterning with buckshot was better than the other shotguns. The sights are among the best combat-style units we have seen on a factory shotgun. We liked the loading gate and the ability to cut off the magazine instantly, if need be, to change munitions. This is a lot of gun for the money. Benelli also has a 10-year warranty.



Action Type	Pump
Chamber Size	3.5 in.
Overall Length	39.8 in.
Capacity	4+1
Weight Unloaded	7.2 lbs.
Barrel	18.5 in. Long; Steel
Receiver	Black Polymer Over Steel Frame
Choke	Cylinder
Buttstock	13.9 in. LOP, Black Synthetic
Buttstock Drop at Heel	2.25 in.
Buttstock Drop at Comb	1.25 in.
Forend	Black, 10.8 in. Working Surface, OAL 11.6 in., Dual Action Bars, Shell-Stop Button
Front Sight	Post
Rear Sight	Ghost Ring Aperture
Trigger Pull Weight	7.2 lbs.
Warranty	10 Years
Telephone	(800) 264-4962
Website	BenelliUSA.com
Made In	Italy



The Benelli pump's sights were voted best of the test and are perhaps the best we have tested. A bold front post with a white-dot outline make good hits easier with the Benelli.



We liked pressing the loading gate down to load. It stays locked in place until the shotgun is fully loaded.



Fired offhand, the Benelli is comfortable enough due to stock design and an efficient recoil pad.



Winchester's formidable PDX slug produced good results during testing.

TRISTAR TEC-12 NO. 25120 PUMP/AUTO 12 GAUGE, $557

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

We like the TEC-12 a lot. It has modern styling and handles just like the expensive Benelli M3. Reliable, fitted with Benelli choke tubes, and with good sights and a pistol grip stock, the TEC-12 is a good home-defense shotgun.



Action Type	Pump/Semi-Auto	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.0 in.
Chamber Size	2.75 to 3 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	1.25 in.
Overall Length	39.5 in.	Forearm	Black Polymer
Capacity	5+1	Forearm Length	7.0 in.
Weight (Unloaded)	7.5 lbs.	Front Sight	Raised Front Bridge Fiber Optic
Barrel Length	20.0 in.	Rear Sight	Adjustable Ghost Ring
Barrel	Matte Black Steel	Trigger Pull Weight	7.0 lbs.
Receiver	Matte Black Steel	Warranty	5-Year Limited
Choke	Extended Ported Cylinder Tube	Telephone	(816) 421-1400
Buttstock	Black Polymer with Pistol Grip	Website	TriStarArms.com
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.75 in.	Made In	Turkey



The TEC-12 is a thoroughly modern shotgun with excellent features, such as switching back and forth from pump action to semiautomatic mode with the flip of a lever (arrow).



Although we did not mount optics on the top Picatinny rail, the option to do so on the TEC-12 is appreciated. The extended bolt (arrow) is required to work the action when the TriStar is in semiautomatic mode.



A rubberized, full pistol grip felt good and allowed for steady control of the TriStar during rapid-fire drills.



A bold front post with red fiber-optic sight proved an advantage for the TEC-12 in rapid fire. The extended and ported choke (arrow) may have been a factor in the reduced felt recoil we felt when firing the TriStar.

was our February 2015 test of the Mossberg 930 Tactical Special Purpose Semi-Auto 85330, very similar to the 85320 tested here, with the major difference being the earlier 85330 has a door-breaching muzzle brake. Most shooters can forego the brake and save about thirty bucks. Another option is to order the Mossberg Tactical with Ghost Ring sights, although this gets the 930 closer to the $700 range.

We first tried the unusual dual-action TriStar TEC-12 No. 25120 Pump/Auto 12 Gauge in the July 2015 issue. The ability to fire in either pump-action or semiautomatic mode was an unusual feature on this shotgun. But in a scenario involving three close-up potential threats, one in the pump-action mode and one as a semiautomatic, we got quick and solid center-mass hits. As a pump action, the TriStar run was completed in 4.84 seconds. In semiautomatic mode, the TriStar run was cut down to 4.42 seconds total. One negative that dropped its grade to an "A-" was its 9-pound trigger pull, so we looked for a sample that had a lighter trigger to retest, even though the heavy trigger did not detract from putting quick and effective shots on targets.

To test, we used Sellier & Bellot 12 gauge 2.75-inch 00 Buckshot ($119/250 from SportmansGuide.com), Hornady 12-gauge Critical Defense 00 Buckshot shells ($11/10 from CheaperThanDirt.com), Remington Managed Recoil 00 Buckshot ($5/5 from CheaperThanDirt.com, some Winchester 2.75-inch 00 Buckshot shotshells ($4.50/5 from CheaperThanDirt.com), Remington Slugger Managed Recoil Slugs ($4/5 from TargetSportsUSA.com), and the Lightfield 12-gauge Hybred Slugs ($13/5 from Cabelas.com). These four buckshot loads and two slugs gave a good range of power and function in the shotguns. We did not fire any birdshot or low-power field loads.

Here's what we thought of this trio of shotguns:

Benelli Nova Tactical Pump 20051 12 Gauge, $372

This was a recent retail price at

BudsGunShop.com, but the online retailer said this model was out of stock at press time. At the time of this test, GanderMounain.com listed the Benelli Nova Tactical Pump for $430. We purchased our test gun used for $250. The Benelli Nova tactical pump may be overshadowed by more expensive Benelli shotguns. A canvass of the raters revealed that no one had chosen the Benelli as their first gun. The beginning shooter usually chooses a Remington or Mossberg, or perhaps an economy import. In our experience, shooters move to the Benelli brand after disappointment with some other make, or perhaps curiosity. As default choices, Remington and Mossberg have earned their excellent reputation by satisfying the market, and individuals in the marketplace won't spend more money on a shotgun that isn't as widely accepted as those brands. For example, one of our raters, primarily a hunter, did not realize that Benelli made a tactical version of the company's field-grade pump-action shotgun.

The Benelli Nova tactical shotgun is businesslike in appearance and features a polymer receiver. The furniture is all black, and the shotgun is a modular design. The stock is the typical pistol grip. The forend is long and comfortable, inviting good control. The Nova features a generous ejection port. We like the robust bolt with solid locking lugs. The action is controlled by parallel bars moving the bolt. We found the action to be very smooth and capable of excellent speed. The action was smoother than the TEC-12's pump-action mode, in our estimation. The forend is ergonomic and shaped to afford excellent control. The pistol grip offers good adhesion by virtue of stippling. The safety is a push-button in front of the trigger guard. All raters gave it a high mark for positive operation. The bolt release is located on the right side of the trigger guard just ahead of the safety. The action of this test gun is tight, with no rattles. Takedown is simple; remove the magazine cap and remove the barrel. The magazine cap has a pointed component on the end

MOSSBERG 930 TACTICAL 85320 12 GAUGE, $514

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Mossberg suffered one unexplained malfunction. Otherwise, the shotgun performed well. The 930 was the lightest kicker, a not inconsiderable advantage when the recoil of the 12-gauge shotgun is considered. The Mossberg has the highest magazine capacity. Balance is excellent. The bead front sight would be no impediment in fast-moving defensive situations, and perhaps an advantage inside the home.



Action Type	Gas-Operated Semi-Auto	Buttstock Length of Pull	14.0 in.
Chamber Size	3.0 in.	Forearm	Black Synthetic
Overall Length	39.0 in.	Forearm Length	11.1 in.
Capacity	7+1	Front Sight	Bead
Weight Unloaded	7.5 lbs.	Rear Sight	None
Barrel Length	18.5 In.	Trigger Pull Weight	7.5 lbs.
Barrel	Steel	Warranty	2 Years
Receiver	Steel	Telephone	(800) 363-3555
Choke	Open Cylinder	Website	Mossberg.com
Buttstock	Synthetic	Made In	USA



The Mossberg's honeycombed recoil pad was rated the best of all three shotguns tested. The Mossberg cycles quickly and offers modest recoil. After firing the shotguns, all raters agreed the Mossberg produced the least felt recoil.



The knurled disassembly knob (arrow) locks tight but allows for easy disassembly.



The Mossberg 930 offers plenty of abrasion for a good hold. The semi-pistol grip is a good all-round option for most use. All raters felt the tang-mounted ambidextrous safety (arrow) on the Mossberg is ideal.

for pushing the receiver pins out for detail disassembly.

The magazine holds four rounds, although it looks as if it would hold five. We like the loading sequence: Press the follower up and it stays in that position as shells are loaded. There is also a button in the bottom of the forend to cut off the magazine. Why is this helpful? As an example, if you have fired a buckshot shell and now wish to quickly feed a slug into the chamber, depress this button in the forearm as you rack the bolt and the magazine will not feed. Load the chamber and get on with business. The button pops back out automatically as the forend travels forward. While the same may be done with practiced manipulation of other designs, the Benelli Tactical shines for versatility.

The barrel is 18.5 inches long. There is no choke tube and the choke is rated as Cylinder, or no choke. The action is chambered for 2.75, 3, and 3.5-inch shells. As a combat shotgun, the sights are the outstanding feature of the Nova. They offer a white-outline three-dot aiming point. The front post is protected by wings. The post may be adjusted in much the same manner as an AR-15 rifle. The rear sight is a generous peep sight that is fully adjustable. The Benelli trigger is manageable, but heavy, at 7.2 pounds.

In firing the Benelli, the impression was of a good, tight shotgun. The action was very smooth in operation, with no slop at all. Fire, pull the forend straight to the rear, and the shotgun feeds and you are good to go. We felt none of the rattle or loose motion common in economy shotguns. Raters said the stock was an excellent fit for a variety of arm lengths. The solid recoil pad gave some relief from hard recoil with the heavier loads. Recoil was no more uncomfortable than any other lightweight 12-gauge shotgun; however, it did kick the most of the three shotguns. When firing, we noted that the shotgun gave a better pattern than the other two shotguns tested, usually an inch to two inches tighter at 20 yards. The buckshot performed well, with the full-power Winchester load producing the tightest patterns, with the Hornady within a quarter inch on average. The Benelli isn't actually marked as a Cylinder bore, and it performed on the tight end of what we would expect from a Cylinder bore.

Right: It doesn't take long for the TEC-12 to chew up a target when firing 00 Buckshot loads.

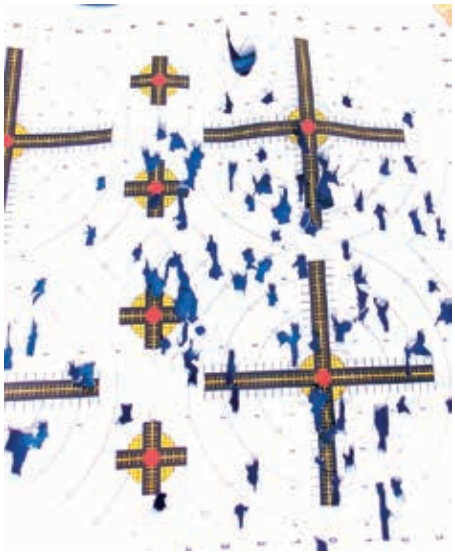
The Benelli Nova was definitely fast and smooth in operation. With buckshot loads, the shotgun was surprisingly controllable. This control is more apparent the faster you fire the shotgun. We chose a powerful slug load for testing, the Lightfield, along with the Remington slugger, and the Benelli gave good results, although recoil was stout with the formidable Lightfield. At 25 yards, the three-shot groups were as small as 2 inches, often with two slug imprints touching. Accuracy was equal with either slug load when we fired them from a standing barricade rest. The sights were part of this accuracy potential.

Our Team Said: In the end, the raters gave the Benelli our highest accolade, a Best Buy ranking. At the time of the research for this report, Benelli was offering a $30 rebate, making the Nova Tactical an even better deal. We did not test the Benelli with light loads but the pump action should be reliable with such loads. Neither did we test 3.5-inch shells, as they seemed a bit much for a tactical shotgun that you might use in and around the house. For function, accuracy with slugs, and reliability, the Benelli Nova Tactical is a good all-round choice.

TriStar TEC-12 No. 25120 Pump/Auto 12 Gauge, $557

This was the counter price at BudsGunShop.com at the time of this test. The TEC-12 came with high expectations because it is the most expensive shotgun in this test and we had already rated it an "A-" about 18 months ago. Expense isn't always a sign of quality, but the TriStar gave good results.

The TEC-12's outline, controls,





Here's the TEC-12 at the moment of firing. The TEC-12 cycles very quickly. It was comfortable to fire, even with heavy loads.



Above: The TEC-12's ghost ring rear sight gave excellent results on the firing range. Below: While the TEC-12's rear sight fell off during the test, we feel this was shooter error. The shotgun has been in service for some time without malfunctions.



and operation will be familiar to Benelli fans. This is a straight-up copy of the Benelli M3. This isn't a bad thing when done well, and as we discovered the TEC-12 is done well. Nor is it a poor man's version of the expensive Benelli shotgun, but we will note the finish isn't up to top-line Benelli quality, as might expected in this price range. Perhaps the TEC-12 may be termed a smart man's version of the M3.

The TriStar shotgun uses the dual action mode of operation pioneered with the SPAS 12 and which is likewise used with the Benelli M3. The TEC-12 uses the Benelli inertia action rather than a gas-operated action. The main parts are the rotating bolt head, inertia spring, and bolt body. Compared to a gas-operated shotgun, there is no powder residue likely to find its way into the action. While the action is cleaner, the lighter mass of the parts, according to Benelli, makes for faster cycling. We found this to be true with the TriStar clone.

The TEC-12 features a 20-inch barrel. A difference we found worthwhile is that the TEC-12 barrel is threaded for Benelli chokes. Some prefer a tighter choke than Cylinder bore, and the TEC-12 offers this option, whereas the Nova does not in the unit we tested. We fired a few shells with a Full-choke tube in place, and there is a difference in the tightness of the pattern, making the TEC-12 more useful at long range, if need be. The pistol-grip configuration of the TEC-12 is comfortable and helps the shooter shoulder the gun quickly. The TEC-12 proved to be a comfortable shotgun to fire. Even when emptying the magazine quickly, we saw excellent results on target. The shotgun swings quickly, although perhaps not as quickly as the Mossberg 930. However, we felt that we were able to center hits more efficiently with the TEC-12 due to the sight configuration. The cycling speed made the TriStar fast; the Mossberg's speed came from lower felt recoil.

The sights are a protected wing front post, and the rear sight, an adjustable peep design, are also protected by a wing. It is mounted on a Picatinny rail, which likewise would allow mounting a good optic, if desired.

The use of the pump-action feature should be carefully considered. As an example, one of our raters deploys this shotgun as his personal alarm and emergency shotgun. He never uses the pump action. But then, few of us have a need to launch flash-bangs or use rubber riot-control loads. To change from semi-auto to pump action, the shooter looks for a locking ring that fits over the locking lugs. To operate the selector, which is located at the end of the magazine tube, close the action. Move the ring counter clockwise to disengage the locking rings. Then pull the forend to the rear, and you are in pump-action mode. To return to self-loading operation, the ring is moved clock wise. The pump-action mode isn't necessarily intended for use if the self-loading function doesn't operate. It is intended for light-load use. As an example, when attempting to feed light loads in the TEC-12, the owner noted it did not function. But some partially ejected, tying the gun up. You cannot simply fire light loads and expect to work the self-loading action. You may get by with some loads, but with most, you have a tie up that presents varying difficulties of freeing the shotgun. Using bird-shot for practice in a pump and then relying on a self-loader for combat doesn't make sense either. Still, the pump-action mode is good to have and an undeniable advantage.

Loading and using the TEC-12 requires attention to detail. When loading the shells, we found that an effort must be made to be certain the shells catch in the magazine. To unload the shells, a spring-loaded shell stop on the left of the magazine may be used. The magazine holds five 2.75-inch shells, and it will chamber four 3-inch shells as well. The shotgun never malfunctioned.

Accuracy with slugs was on par with the Benelli. We found that the adjustable Ghost Ring rear sight and red-bar front sight bracketed by high-rise side plates were easy to align on target. That resulted in exceptional performance on longer targets. The Lightfield slug proved particularly accurate, with a group of less than 2 inches at 20 yards while the Remington spread to almost four.

Patterning was similar to the Mossberg 930 with most buckshot loads, but we saw they were not quite as tight as the Benelli's. During firing, the rear sight fell off, but we feel that it took a lot of shooting to cause this to loosen. After tightening down, it won't happen again. The owner is glad it happened on the range, not during critical use.

Our Team Said: We like the TriStar TEC-12. It isn't overly complicated for a dedicated user and it works well. We think most homeowners will be better served with a simpler shotgun like the Nova, and the price for the Benelli is a lot better. But this product does work well, and the slightly lighter trigger pull at 7.0 pounds allows

The Mossberg 930 gave excellent results in rapid fire, proving that a bead-sighted shotgun can be brilliantly fast. The Mossberg 930 holds a total of eight buckshot loads with one in the chamber, which is plenty of firepower. The Mossberg 930 fits most shooters well, comes to the shoulder quickly, and balances well. Shims are provided to allow the shooter to adjust the drop at the heel.



us to give it that half-grade boost it didn't earn before.

Mossberg 930 85320 Home Defense 85320 12 Gauge, $514

This was a recent online price listed for an in-stock gun at CheaperThanDirt.com. The Mossberg 930 Home Defense (sometimes listed as the Home Security) shotgun is 39 inches in overall length and features a bead front sight. The Cylinder-bore 18.5-inch barrel rides over a 7-round magazine. The Mossberg 930 is a gas-operated self-loading shotgun. The 930 featured a black synthetic stock, bead front sight, and had the largest payload of any of the shotguns tested.

The bolt features a large cocking knob. You may cock the bolt with the right hand or reach over the receiver and cock the shotgun with the left hand. Either works just fine. An indicator in the front of the trigger guard gives both visual and tactile warning the shotgun is cocked. Checking to make certain the piece is cocked is pretty easy, but we would still do a chamber check before critical use. The stock fits most raters well, and the recoil pad is adequate. The Mossberg features the trademark receiver-mounted tang safety. The location is universally praised, and we like it as well. The Mossberg locks up tight with a single but very large locking lug. It is more similar to most pump-action shotguns in lockup than the general run of self-loading shotguns. The 930 uses gas operation versus the inertia operation of the Benelli-derived TEC-12. This gas operation actually works between two action bars; it is as if a pump-taction shotgun were converted to gas operation.



Above: We do not know why one round did not chamber after firing off the first shot, but the firing pin fell on an empty chamber. We quickly racked the bolt and kept firing. What happened was a failure to feed. Below: The Mossberg ejects a casing of Remington Managed Recoil buckshot, an example of the lightest load chosen for this shotgun. Hornady's Critical Defense patterned best in this particular shotgun.



The Mossberg 930 fits most shooters well, comes to the shoulder quickly, and balances well. Shims are provided to allow the shooter to adjust the drop at the heel. This is a good touch. With a shotgun intended to be used primarily by feel, the Mossberg handles ideally. Some shotguns fire a little above the barrel and some a little low, but how you hold your head, erect or on the stock, also affects the point of impact of the shotgun when the shooter uses the barrel-mounted front bead. This shotgun features a simple front bead, while the others employ aperture sights. For fast shooting at moderate range, the bead works well enough.

Trigger compression was excellent, with the trigger breaking at 4.5 pounds. We did not waste time attempting to fire the 930 with light birdshot loads; it isn't designed for those. The Remington reduced-recoil buckshot would be an example of the lightest load chosen for this shotgun, and Remington's reduced-recoil slugger would be the lightest slug load most shooters would use. Those two and the other slug and buckshot loads functioned well. Hornady's Critical Defense patterned best in this shotgun. The greatest felt recoil was with the Lightfield Hybred slugs, as may be expected by their weight and powder charge. Over the course of a week, our shooters ran a total of 100 buckshot shells through the Mossberg, encountering only a single problem. The rater loaded the chamber, dropped the bolt, then loaded the magazine full with the Sellier & Bellot load. The first shell fired and ejected, and then the rater pressed the trigger, and got only a "click." He quickly racked the bolt and fired the remaining magazine of shells. What caused the malfunction? We do not know for certain, but it was the only one we had with the Mossberg.

All raters liked the way the Mossberg handled. It has a solid feel, and the stock fits the shoulder well. When firing the shotgun at 7, 10, and 20 yards, our shooters were suitably fast with the Mossberg. Because some shooters like to have the home-defense shotgun's chamber empty and bolt open to discourage youthful mistakes, we also looked at how fast we could make the shotgun ready from that state. We found it was easy to quickly rack the bolt of the Mossberg 930 with either hand to charge it, while an empty Benelli must be pumped to load. The TEC-12 was as fast as the 930 to load with the right hand, but we found the action release to be more difficult to operate when reaching over the receiver.

With slug loads, the Mossberg 930 fired low for one rater and high for another, reflecting different head positioning. Accuracy was good, with three slugs hitting inside 2 inches at 20 yards and two overlapping in the group.

Our Team Said: We like the Mossberg 930 Home Defense. Spending more money for the Tactical version with aperture sights might be worthwhile for true tactical use, but for home defense, the Mossberg is effective. It also had a big advantage over the others if smaller shooters are in the market: felt recoil was the lightest of the shotguns tested. The Mossberg is downright comfortable to fire. We rated the Mossberg down a half grade based on an unexplained failure to feed.

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

2016 Guns & Gear Top Picks

Which pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns, accessories, and ammunition were the picks of our testers in the past year? We look back at the previous 12 months to highlight the winners.

Toward the end of each year, I survey the work R.K. Campbell, Roger Eckstine, Austin Miller, Robert Sadowski, David Tannahill, Tracey Taylor, John Taylor, Rafael Urista, Ralph Winingham, and Kevin Winkle have done in GUN TESTS, with an eye toward selecting guns, accessories, and ammunition the magazine's testers have endorsed. From these evaluations I pick the best from a full year's worth of tests and distill recommendations for readers, who often use them as shopping guides. These choices are a mixture of our original tests and other information I've compiled during the year. After we roll high-rated test products into long-term testing, I keep tabs on how those guns do, and if the firearms and accessories continue performing well, then I have confidence including them in this wrap-up.

— Todd Woodard











BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER '16

Charter Arms Off Duty 5381 38 Special, $404



BEST IN CLASS PISTOL '16

Factory Certified Pre-Owned SIG P226R 40 S&W, $725





BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY '16

Safariland 6378-53-411 ALS High-Retention Holster, $56



BEST IN CLASS RIFLE '16

Savage Arms Model 12 Long Range Precision (LRP) 19137 6.5 Creedmoor, $1252



BEST IN CLASS SHOTGUN '16

Browning Citori Model 725 Field 0135303004 12 Gauge, $2470





Our Factory Certified Pre-Owned SIG P226R 40 S&W, $725, came from South Carolina Gun Company (SCgun.com). This was a police service pistol that has been refurbished. The pistol was delivered in a red cardboard box to distinguish it as a factory refurbished item. Still, the pistol appeared as new. The fit, finish, and quality control on the SIG left little more to be desired. Savings were $225 compared to the common $950 counter price of a new P226 with a rail and regular sights. Like two other test pistols, this one featured a rail, thus the "R" designation in the model number (which has been dropped from currently manufactured guns).

The SIG is a double-action first-shot pistol like the Beretta, but it featured no manual safety. The de-cocker was very ergonomic, located between the trigger guard and the grip frame. The trigger action was the smoothest double-action first-shot pistol tested, with a break at about 12 pounds. The single-action trigger broke at 4.25 pounds. Reset was much faster than other SIGs we have tested.

The sights were good examples of combat sights, with the typical SIG white outline treatment. The grip frame fit most hands well. The bore axis sat higher in the hand than the CZ or Ruger, and similar to the Beretta 96, and recoil moved straight back down the shooter's arm. Handfit was comparable to the Beretta, but not quite on the par with the CZ.

The pistol was fast on target, and the smooth trigger action aided in landing a fast and accurate first shot. Control in rapid fire was comparable to the Beretta and better than the Ruger overall, but the heavier CZ was more controllable and did a better job in rapid fire. Still, in firing double taps and in rapidly engaging targets, the SIG did well. The vote was close.

In the benchrest firing session, it had a clear-cut edge over the other handguns. The refurbished SIG was most accurate with the three loads tested, averaging less than 2 inches for five shots in most of the testing. The Black Hills Ammunition 180-grain JHP exhibited a brilliant 1.4-inch group on one occasion, while the average was 1.9 inches.

Our Team Said: Based on its accuracy, reliability, relatively light weight, firing comfort, and a very fair price, the Factory Certified Pre-Owned SIG P226R earned an A+ rating from our test team.

SIG SAUER P226R FACTORY-CERTIFIED PRE-OWNED 40 S&W, $725

GUN TESTS GRADE: A+
BEST IN CLASS PISTOL

The pre-owned SIG P226R turned in as-new performance. Reliable and fast handling, the SIG got high marks during the firing tests. The pistol was ergonomic and fit most hands well. The double-action trigger was very smooth.

Action	Double Action Semi-Auto, Locked Breech
Overall Length	7.7 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	34.0 oz.
Weight Loaded 12 rounds	42.4 oz.
Barrel Length	4.4 in.
Barrel	Blued Steel
Magazine	12 Rds., Blued Steel
Slide	Steel
Frame	Aluminum
Frame Front Strap Height	2.5 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.4 in.
Grips	Plastic
Grip Thickness (max)	1.4 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.6 in.



Sights	Steel
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	12.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.25 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.4 in.
Safety	No Manual Safety
Warranty	1 Year
Telephone	(603) 610-3000
Website	SIGSauer.com



The SIG decocker and slide lock are close to the hand and easily manipulated.



The SIG P226R was drawn from a Nelson holster, shown, one of the best-designed and executed IWB types we have used in some time. The Neoprene backing on a leather holster may be an original step.

CHARTER ARMS OFF DUTY 53811 38 SPECIAL, $404

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-
BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER

The Off Duty started off with a gritty trigger but soon slicked up; it was the lightest and most compact in this test.



Action Type	Double Action Only
Overall Length	6.25 in.
Barrel Length	2.0 in.
Sight Radius	3.8 in.
Overall Height	4.9 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	12 oz.
Weight Loaded	16.1 oz.
Cylinder Gap	.006 in.

Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Matte Aluminum
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Matte Stainless
Frame Front Strap Height	1.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grip	Ribbed Rubber; Finger Grooves
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.0 in.
Front Sight	Ramped Blade
Rear Sight	Top Groove
Trigger Pull Weight (Double Action)	12.0 lbs.
Safety	Internal Transfer Bar
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(203) 922-1652
Website	CharterArms.com
Made In	U.S.A.



The Charter's ejector rod is nested and in two pieces that snap into the frame. The lock-up was tight, leading to confidence in its reliability.

The Charter Arms Off Duty 5381 38 Special, $404, had a hammerless design, meaning the hammer was enclosed within the frame, making the Off Duty smooth and snag free. The frame is made of aluminum and left in a matte finish. The barrel, crane, and cylinder are made of stainless steel with a complementary matte finish. As a result, the gun had a subtle two-tone look that some testers liked.

The black rubber grip was minimalist, with finger grooves that positioned our hand in a high, comfortable spot. The sides of the grips also had a slight palm swell and were ribbed for a better grasp. In addition, the grips filled that space behind the trigger guard that the RIA left vacant. In fact, our grip hold was the highest on the Charter Arms, which helped control muzzle flip and perform a fast second shot. We did note that the rubber grip fit to the backstrap overlapped. Not the best fit by any means. We would remove the extra rubber that overlaps the rear back strap. When shooting the Off Duty, we needed to curl the small finger under the grip.

The Charter's cylinder lock up was the tightest of all three with no wiggle, which gave us more confidence in the design. The Off Duty locks the cylinder in the front and rear. The Charter Arms uses the ejector rod, which is nested and in two pieces that telescope to snap back into the frame. The cylinder latch was well serrated and large. It is pushed forward to swing out the five-shot cylinder. Both the grips and latch are speedloader friendly. The front edge of the cylinder had a slight chamfer, which aided reholstering.

The Off Duty revolver employs a one-piece frame, which makes the small revolver strong while allowing it to be slightly smaller than two-piece designs.

The 2-inch barrel used a full lug that enclosed the ejector rod. The lug was tapered so reholstering was easier. The ramp front sight was milled into the top of the barrel and serrated to minimize glare. The rear sight was a groove along the top. It was also notched so the aluminum rear sight contrasted nicely with the stainless front sight. These were the best sights, in our opinion. Out of the box, the trigger was gritty, but it soon smoothed out with dry-fire practice and range testing. The trigger was serrated in the middle, allowing users to keep the position of their trigger finger the same, even during recoil.

Due to the compact size and light weight of the Off Duty, recoil was most noticeable, whacking the web of our hand at the top position of the grip. The rear of the rubber grips were squared off, and we also felt those edges slap our palms. If the rear edges of the grips were rounded, we believe felt recoil would be less.

We felt 2.0 inches for five shots was acceptable for a close-in defense weapon. We were able to coax it to under an inch with the Federal ammo, and our smallest groups with the Armscor and Hornady ammos hovered around 1.5 inches. The smallish grip and stacking on the last bit of trigger press no doubt hindered accuracy. Empty cases ejected smartly out of the Charter Arms, as they did with the other two.

In concealed carry, the Off Duty shined. It could be carried in a holster designed for a S&W J-frame or dropped in a pants or cargo-pants pocket.

Our Team Said: The Off Duty was the lightest and most compact revolver tested. The trigger was initially gritty, but it smoothed out after use. We would not hesitate to carry this revolver.

SAVAGE ARMS MODEL 12 LONG RANGE PRECISION (LRP) 19137 6.5 CREEDMOOR, $1252

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS RIFLE

The Model 12 LRP shot the smallest groups of the test with every round we tried.



Action Type	Bolt, 2 lugs	Stock	HS Precision Fiberglass; w/Aluminum Bedding Block
Overall Length	46.25 in.		
Barrel	26.0 in. Long, 1:8 Twist Matte Blued Finish	Stock Length of Pull	13.5 in.
		Trigger Pull Weight	2.1 lbs.
Overall Height w/o Scope	6.5 in.	Safety	3 Position, Tang
Weight Unloaded	11.1 lbs.	Warranty	1 Year
Weight Loaded (140 grain)	11.4 lbs.	Telephone	(800) 370-0708
Action Finish	Matte Blued	Website	SavageArms.com
Magazine	3 Rounds; Removable, Flush Fit Box	Made In	U.S.A.



Heavy and well made, the jeweled bolt of our Savage Model 12 LRP fit into a precise barreled action mounted in a vise-like stock. Solid.

Based on the accuracy and simplicity of the Savage Arms Model 12 Long Range Precision (LRP) 19137 6.5 Creedmoor, $1252, the specially bedded fiberglass stock is still the heavyweight champion, even if this platform is under attack from the chassis designs. The HS Precision Pro Series Tactical (PST) stock on the Savage grabs your attention, as do the LRP's 1-inch-diameter 26-inch-long fluted carbon-steel barrel, oversized bolt handle, and scrolled and polished chrome bolt.

Our test rifle model, No. 19137, was so new at the time of this writing that the manufacturer had not yet assigned a photograph to its web link. But it does resemble the $3695 HS Precision PLR custom rifle, though our test rifle offered a more vertical grip and the barrel of our LRP showed decidedly less taper. The heft of the barrel walls made the 6.5mm bore look relatively tiny, with the result being a rifle that was heavy but with a balance point very near the center of its 46-inch-plus overall length.

The Model 12 fed from a detachable magazine. We liked that it fit flush to the receiver, but magazine capacity was limited to only three rounds. Formed from sheet metal, the magazine's construction was robust. While feeding and working the action, we found it to be smooth and reliable, but also a bit heavy, in our view. The words, "Warning: Precision Target Trigger" were emblazoned on the left side of the action, and, yes, this was indeed a special iteration of Savage's Accu-Trigger. The center activation lever was also colored red to remind the shooter to pay extra attention. Our Savage LRP had the lightest-weight trigger in our test, coming in at about 2.25 pounds with little variation. The trigger sensation was very easy to learn, and it did not ask the shooter to overcome a sharp break or wait through a lengthy compression.

The tang-mounted safety offered a third central position so the bolt could be worked with the trigger locked down. We found ourselves more willing to use the safety on this rifle (rather than just leave the bolt open) because the stock was so comfortable in the hand. Both sides of the vertical pistol grip offered the same natural palm swell, leaving the thumb for either left-handed or right-handed shooters resting atop the safety. So far, index to the trigger was about perfect for everyone who has shot the LRP.

Some of our smaller shooters thought the buttstock felt a little long, but length of pull measured only about 13.5 inches. We think its length was somewhat of an illusion caused by the supplied two-piece scope base. With only one cross slot fore and aft of the ejection port, adjustment for eye relief was limited to sliding the scope back and forth within the rings.

In testing the Howa and Ruger rifles, we saw a distinct preference for the A-Max Match loads and much less willingness for those rifles to deliver the 129-grain SST Superformance hunting loads into a tight group. Before shooting the Savage, we credited this to the Superformance ammunition being designed more for terminal ballistics than match-grade accuracy. But the Savage was ready to pile at least one shot on top of another in every group, including those shot with the Superformance. In addition, both A-Max rounds produced some sub-half-inch groups. The Howa and Ruger rifles each favored the Hornady 140-grain A-Max ammunition with an average-sized group of about 0.6 inches. The Savage tied this performance and delivered 5-shot groups averaging 0.6 inches and 0.5 inches across for the 129-grain and 120-grain ammunition, respectively.

Our Team Said: Our wish list for the newest Savage Arms model 12 LRP was very short: A one-piece scope base, a second sling stud beneath the forend, and maybe an adjustable cheekpiece. In the meantime, buyers of this rifle are going to be bored shooting at less than 300 or 400 yards. If longer-range competitive shooting interests you, this rifle is probably the simplest and least expensive way to get started.

BROWNING CITORI MODEL 725 FIELD NO. 0135303004 12 GAUGE, $2470

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

BEST IN CLASS SHOTGUN

This is another in a long line of solid, fine-handling over-and-unders. This new field model patterned well, broke targets well, and looked good while doing its job.



Action Type	Over/Under	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.6 in.
Chamber Size	3 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.5 in.
Overall Length	44.75 in.	Forearm	Grade II/III Checkered Walnut, Gloss Oil Finish
Capacity	2		
Weight (Unloaded)	7.75 lbs.	Front Bead	Ivory
Barrel Length	28 in.	Rear Bead	Ivory
Barrel	Polished Blued Steel, Chrome Lined	Rib	¼ in.
		Trigger Pull Weight (Bottom)	4.5 lbs.
Receiver	Low Profile Silver Nitride, w/Roll Engraving	Trigger Pull Weight (Top)	4.25 lbs.
		Trigger Reset	Mechanical
Safety	Non-Automatic	Warranty	Limited
Choke Tubes	Invector DS Flush-Fit (IC, M, F)	Telephone	(800) 333-3288
Buttstock	Grade II/III Checkered Walnut, Gloss Oil Finish	Website	Browning.com
		Made In/Assembled In	Japan
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.25 in.		

The Browning Citori Model 725 Field 0135303004 12 Gauge Over/Under, $2,470, is the latest version of a long line of Browning over-and-unders that have found favor with the shooting public. At first glance, there are only minor differences in the appearance between this field model and its sporting-clays cousin introduced about five years ago. The new model features a rounded forearm designed with a slight palm rest, high-relief engraving on the receiver, and ivory front and mid-bead sights.

Internally, the Browning has a mechanical trigger system, back-bored barrels with lengthened forcing cones, and the Invector-DS internal choke tube system, with Improved Cylinder, Modified, and Full tubes included with the Field model, the same features introduced when the original Model 725 hit the market.

This field shotgun provided a solid, well-balanced platform for handling clays and birds, as expected. It tipped the scales at 7.75 pounds and measured 44.75 inches in length, with our team finding no fault in its heft or handling ability.

The shotgun's length of pull was 14.25 inches, with a drop at the comb of 1⅝ inches and a drop at the heel of 2.5 inches. These dimensions are right on the average mark for an out-of-the-box shotgun, and our team members had no problems adjusting.

We liked the feel and looks of the checkering on both the pistol grip and the newly designed forearm. Our shooters documented no handling problems in any of our testing.

With birds in the air, we should note we were particularly impressed with the trigger-pull touch-offs of 4.5 pounds for the bottom barrel and 4.25 for the top barrel. The Fire-Lite mechanical triggers in the Model 725 are both smooth and crisp, going the extra step to help a shooter stay on target when touching off a shot.

Our trip to the patterning board before field testing on the clay target range with the Browning was an eye-opener. We have patterned several Browning shotguns featuring the Invector DS (Double Seal) chokes and found the tubes seem to pattern very well. This Model 725 Field was no exception. Firing the Winchester Extra-Lite No. 7½ shot shells at a range of 30 yards, we found the Modified choke in the top barrel produced a 57-43 percent pattern (57 percent above the center and 43 percent below) and the Improved Cylinder choke in the bottom barrel produced a 62-38 percent pattern. Shooting just a little high is exactly what a field shotgun should do to handle rising targets.

We were particularly impressed with the pattern spread, finding a very solid and uniform distribution of hits. Both the Modified and Improved Cylinder tubes delivered just under 40 percent of the strikes within a 20-inch circle around the center of the targets. There were 202 hits in the 20-inch circle with the Modified choke and 164 hits with the IC choke.

This solid, uniform patterning performance with no holes that might allow a clay or bird to escape undamaged was verified on the clay-target range. We smacked most targets with authority. A ragged pattern that might only cause a chip to fly off a clay target is acceptable on the range, but a crippling shot on a bird in the field because of ineffective pellet trauma is not. We found the Browning hit targets hard when the shooter puts the pattern in the right place at the right time. Recoil with the Browning using the two light loads was well within the comfortable range, and spent shells were ejected with authority each and every time — there were no malfunctions of any kind.

Our Team Said: This shotgun, whose predecessors date back more than 40 years, is a true tribute to the solid, reliable, high-quality Browning over-and-unders on the market today. It handled very well on the clay-target course, excelled on the patterning board, and helps a shooter look sharp to his compatriots while serving as a solid shooting tool.

UBERTI MODEL 1860 HENRY 342880 45 LC, $1429

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

We were pleased with all aspects of this Italian-made rifle. It was done entirely right, we thought. It shot well, everything worked, and it looked like it ought to look.



Overall Length	43.9 in.
Barrel Length	24.3 in.
Sight Radius	21.6 in.
Overall Height	8 in.
LOP	13.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	9.2 lbs.
Weight Loaded	9.9 lbs.
Magazine Capacity	13

Action Finish	Brass
Action Type	Lever
Barrel Finish	Blued
Magazine Type	Tubular, Integral
Stock	Walnut
Trigger Pull Weight	6.2 lbs.
Warranty	5-Year Limited
Telephone	(301) 283-6981
Website	Uberti.com
Made In	Italy

Uberti makes a fine rifle. We'd be happy to own this one just as an example of how such guns ought to be made.



Uberti makes five versions of the Uberti 1860 Henry Rifle 342880 45 Colt. The Trapper 342910 in 45 Colt has an 18.5-inch barrel, a brass frame and buttplate, and a case-hardened lever. The Rifle models have similar cosmetics to the Trapper but have 24.5-inch barrels, one chambered in 44-40 (342390) and our test gun in 45 Colt. Two more Rifle models come in the same chamberings (342370 in 44-40 and 342360 in 45 Colt) and have the same barrel lengths as the brass ones, but they display case-hardened frames and levers and blued buttplates and list for $30 more.

Our first glance at the Uberti test model was extremely satisfying. We found the barrel flats to be properly done. The edges between them were sharp enough and, sighting along the flats, we found them to be dead level. The bluing was authentic looking. It was not rust bluing, but looked close enough to it to satisfy us. Our impression was that this is how the 1860 Henry is supposed to look. While the action was not quite so glossy as the Henry version, it still reflected much like a mirror and was, like the barrel flats, dead flat. The walnut stock had some lovely tiger-striping in it that our photos might not pick up, and inletting was excellent. While the stock finish was mighty hard, it had none of the milkiness that Henry's rifle had.

The little button behind the loading lever had distinct stops every 90 degrees, a feature was missing from the previously tested version. The sights were identical to those found on the Henry Henry, the rear having all the same little cuts, holes, notch contours, elevation slide and markings as on the other rifle. The front sight was also identical in contour to the other rifle, and had a flat-topped blade insert of somewhat shiny metal. The hammer was blued, but the loading lever was case hardened. We believe the original Henry rifles (from the 19th century) had blued parts, but there were some finish variations in the 1866 and 1873 rifles that followed it, so we believe it's possible some of the original Henrys had case-hardened parts. If that's not true and the dull case coloring offends you, rub the parts with cold blue and call it good. We don't think that's necessary, however — it looked mighty nice.

The rifle had the caliber marked just behind the rear sight on top of the barrel as "45 COLT." The left side of the barrel had the importer's name and Uberti's name tastefully small. Behind that were two Italian proof marks. On the top of the barrel, an inch in front of the rear sight, was "PATENT. OCT. 16. 1860." The top tang of the action held the designation "MOD. 1860 HENRY" and the bottom tang held "A. UBERTI – ITALY" and the serial number. The action proof marks were under the action just behind the loading platform. There were no other markings on the rifle.

We found all the controls to be smooth, including the "loading" gate at the front of the rifle. We did note the edges of just about everything — the front gate system, the edges of the magazine cut along the bottom of the rifle, etc. — were all sharp enough to cut the hands. A little wear from use will fix that, or these could be deburred carefully by the owner. We can't knock the rifle for that, however, because it all looked clean and crisp with those sharp edges. Loading the rifle was easy, by which we mean the follower easily raised the front lock to let the gate swing open without any of the fiddling the Henry's version needed. The magazine held 13 rounds, despite the manual saying it was 10.

Groups with the PMC averaged 2.3 inches at 50 yards off the bench. The front sight was slightly shiny, and we chose to blacken it to get a better sight picture in our late-fall light. We accomplished that with a Sharpie, and that helped our groups. To our joy, the rifle had a decent trigger pull, 6.2 pounds and free of creep.

Our Team Said: We thought the Uberti 1860 Henry was as good a rifle as any we've tested, modern or otherwise. We were extremely gratified to see a company making such a high-grade version of the old Henry, never mind where in the world it's made. We'd buy this one instantly if we wanted a brass gun for fun.

The Springfield TRP PC9108LP 45 ACP, $1347, was originally offered as an affordable version of the Professional Model. The fit and finish were noticeably superior to the Loaded Model, and to our eyes, it was on par with the much more expensive Professional Model. (Bud's listed one for $2,345.)

The TRP pistol we tested was supplied with two magazines, a plastic range holster, and dual magazine carrier. The TRP uses a lightweight firing pin and heavy firing pin spring as a safeguard and does not incorporate a firing pin block into the action. When racking the slide of the TRP, we believe the fit was tighter than the Colt Combat Elite or Rail Gun and much tighter than the Loaded Model.

The Springfield TRP features a Teflon-based coating that proved durable during our testing and it was self lubricating. Still, we lubricated the pistol just the same as most users will. The fit of the slide to the frame was tight, with very little lateral play. The cocking serrations forward and rear are a bit longer than the Colts'. The Novak sights were identical, save the TRP featured self-luminous tritium inserts, which are a pricey and helpful upgrade. The full-length guide rod offered reasonably rapid disassembly by use of an Allen wrench compared to a two-piece guide rod that may be unscrewed by hand. We only report on what we observe, and the Springfield full-length guide rod did not loosen and was easy to field strip. The slide-lock safety was ambidextrous and gave the TRP another advantage. Fit and crispness of the slide lock safety and magazine release were each excellent. The trigger action was clean and broke at 5.5 pounds.

A big advantage was the TRP's checkered front strap, which presented 20-lines-per-inch checkering that gave good adhesion when firing. Coupled with checkered G10 grips, most of our shooters liked how the gun felt during tactical firing. One of the female raters felt the checkering was too sharp for her palm. Our most experienced rater also found the abrasion to be a bit sharp and saw the checkering left an outline in his palm. To control the pistol in stressful times, with sweaty or wet hands, these textures are helpful. Outside the test, we should note that one of the raters used a TRP for more than a year as a daily carry gun and eventually changed to a Novak Custom Gun, largely based on abrasion and weight of the TRP.

Elsewhere, the grips were made of G10 composite and were well turned out and offering good abrasion. The TRP also featured a magazine chute. Be aware that this chute isn't compatible with every type of bumper pad. The Springfield TRP proved more accurate than the other pistols. The single best group was a 1.25-inch group with the Winchester 230-grain JHP, the hottest load tested with the most energy and recoil. On a bright sunny day, the sun glinted on the night sights, which is worth noting.

Our Team Said: We rated the Springfield TRP the best performer in this race, and we'd pay the extra money for it if we could afford it. While not a Best Buy, it was Our Pick.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY TRP PC9108LP
45 ACP, $1347
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

This is a first-class 1911. The Springfield offered excellent reliability, accuracy, and night sights, a big advantage. Excellent slide-to-barrel fit and frame-to-slide fitting.



Action	Single-Action Semi-Auto, Locked Breech
Overall Length	8.5 in.
Overall Height	5.7 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	42 oz.
Weight Loaded	45.5 oz.
Slide	Carbon Steel, Black Armory Kote
Frame	Carbon Steel, Black Armory Kote
Barrel	5.0 in. Match Grade Stainless Steel, 1:16 Twist; Full-Length Guide Rod
Magazine	(2) 7-Rd. Stainless Steel w/Slam Pads
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Black & Grey G10 Checkered
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4 in.
Sights	Low Profile Combat; 3-Dot Tritium
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safety	Slide Lock, Grip
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 680-6866
Website	Springfield-Armory.com
Made In	Geneseo, Ill.

The Springfield TRP is a well-made 1911. We would pay the higher price to get this superior handgun. Part of its appeal is a hard-use Teflon-based finish, but it is also delivered with goodies, right, including a latchable and lockable hard case, two magazines, a plastic range holster, and magazine carrier.



The Rock Island Baby Rock 51912 380 ACP, $356, is a 1911-like 380 ACP pistol. When we say 1911-like, many may compare the pistol to the Kimber 380 or the Browning 380 pistol previously tested. The Rock is longer than the Kimber and shorter than the Browning, not a bad place to be. The Rock is a true miniature 1911. The pistol features a plunger tube on the frame and also uses a grip safety, something the other small 1911 handguns do not. The slide is machined from steel. The extractor is an external type. The ejection port is generous. There are two sets of cocking serrations front and rear. The forward set is smaller but effective.

The sights are excellent for a small pistol. The front sight appears attached by a tiny set screw. The rear sight is dovetailed in place. These sights are useful for shooting to 25 yards or more. The slide lock and magazine release are 1911 types, positive in operation. The grip safety is a beavertail type we liked very much. The slide lock safety is positive in operation. The safety was never difficult to use, but it was stiff in operation when first manipulated. It became smoother in use. A definite click was heard when the safety was taken off. Our 1911 fans rated this as ideal.

The front strap is smooth with a slight recurve at the base. The rear strap features a grooved mainspring housing. The hammer is a steel skeletonized type. The trigger breaks cleanly at 4.5 pounds. Our raters felt that this trigger is as good a single-action trigger as we have felt from the factory. The pistol isn't heavy, but at 22 ounces, it weighs almost as much as both of the other pistols tested put together.

The pistol was lubricated and taken to the firing range. The Rock was supplied with a spare 7-round magazine. The Remington also is delivered with a spare magazine; the Ruger is not. The pistol was loaded with the same mix of ammunition the other handguns were fired with. In combat drills there were no malfunctions of any type. There were no break-in malfunctions as with the Remington, and the pistol fired 100 rounds of mixed ammunition without issue. In combat firing the pistol was far more accurate than either of the pocket pistols. At 5 yards, a smooth DAO trigger is good enough for center hits, but by the time you get to 10 yards, the heavier weight of this solid-feeling 380 and straight-to-the-rear trigger compression of the single-action lockwork are great advantages. The raters conducted fast-paced drills and rapid mag changes that were not possible with the DAOs.

One foible, and it was shooter induced. On two or three occasions, the rater did not fire when he meant to because the grip safety was not completely depressed. (And this is our 1911 fan!) Simple firing-grip adjustment and attention to detail quickly solved this issue.

In benchrest accuracy testing, the Rock walked away from the other handguns because of its size.

The single best group was a 2.0-inch effort with the blistering hot Black Hills Ammunition 60-grain Xtreme Defense at 1250 fps. The Rock's groups were half that of the Remington. The Baby Rock was by far the most comfortable pistol to fire from the benchrest.

Our Team Said: If you like cocked-and-locked carry, or even hammer down in the pocket, then you should make room for the Baby Rock, because it is quite a shooter.

ROCK ISLAND ARMORY BABY ROCK 51912 380 ACP, $356

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

The Baby Rock has a lot going for it. The only true demerit was a stiff slide-lock safety. This loosened up during testing. Combat shooting gave good results. Accuracy was excellent.



Action	Single-Action Semi-Auto; Locked Breech
Overall Length	6.6 in.
Overall Height	4.6 in.
Maximum Width	1.1 in.
Weight Unloaded	22 oz.
Weight Loaded	24.1 oz.
Barrel Length	3.75 in. Steel; 6 Grooves, 1:16 Twist
Magazine	7-Rd. Detachable Box
Slide	Parkerized Black Steel; 3 Front Cuts; 5 Rear Cuts
Frame	Parkerized Black Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.3 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.8 in.
Grips	Checkered Black Polymer
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.6 in.
Front Sight	Serrated Front Blade; Dovetail Cut
Rear Sight	Two-Dot Low Profile; Dovetail Cut
Trigger Pull Weight	4.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.25 in.
Safeties	Slide Lock Lever; Grip
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(775) 537-1444
Website	Armscor.com



The Black Hills Xtreme Defense load clocked a blistering 1255 fps out of the Baby Rock.

In our experience, modern shooters tend to look at the 380 as a lighter alternative to the 9mm, but a better comparison is between the 38 Special snubnose and the 380. So, as a point of reference, when we tested 380 ACP loads this year, we included a middle-of-the road 125-grain JHP 38 Special +P load fired from a 2-inch-barrel revolver to represent an average for performance with the 125-grain JHP.



The Federal HST load offered the heaviest weight bullet and excellent performance.

Test Setup

We fired horizontally into gallon jugs at 10 feet. The jugs are 6 inches deep, so measuring penetration was a simple thing if the bullet penetrates at least two jugs. Often the bullet barely penetrated the third or was found resting in place at the bottom of the jug, allowing interpretation of the distance traveled.

Federal Premium 380 ACP 99-Grain HST JHP P380HST1S, $20/20 @ MidwayUSA.com

This load gave unexpected results. This is the fastest load tested over 70 grains, and it is heavier than the average 90- to 95-grain JHP. Yet velocity was high at a solid 1043 fps average. Energy was greater than any other load. Recoil was greater than the other loads, but it was not uncomfortable. Penetration went to a full 13 inches and expansion to .70 caliber.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A+

Black Hills 380 ACP 60-Grain Xtreme Defense D380N420, $26/20 @ MidwayUSA.com

Costing $1.30 per shot, this 60-grain load uses a solid all-copper projectile. Penetration is superior to the Ruger ARX solid bullet. Velocity is slightly higher. Penetration was on the level with the Cor-Bon 70-grain JHP and the Federal 99-grain HST. This bullet is a good choice for personal defense. Among non-expanding loads, this bullet is much superior to a FMJ bullet. This was the most pleasant load to fire. Accuracy was likewise outstanding, being bested by the Hornady XTP and the HPR loads.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Hornady American Gunner 380 ACP 90-Grain XTP Jacketed Hollow Point 90104 $16.50/25 @ MidwayUSA.com

The American Gunner XTP gave credible results, including the best accuracy of any load tested this time around. The XTP is a proven bullet that offers good expansion in most scenarios. The XTP posted 933 fps velocity. Expansion was adequate, winding up at the 12-inch threshold. Expansion was adequate at .52 inch.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Ruger Self Defense 380 ACP 56-Grain PolyCase ARX $20/25 @ MidwayUSA.com

The Ruger ARX load is designed to offer an alternative for those who feel that JHP loads do not offer adequate penetration for smallish pistols.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

380 ACP SELF-DEFENSE LOAD PERFORMANCE DATA

Gun: Rock Island Armory Baby Rock w/3.75-in. barrel	Average Velocity (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Average Accuracy (in.)	Power Factor (pf)	Expanded Width (in.)	Retained Weight (gr.)	Penetration In Water (in.)
56-gr. Ruger ARX	1209	181	2.6	68	0.355	100%	13
60-gr. Black Hills FMJ D380N420	1240	205	2.0	74	0.355	100%	13
62-gr. RIP JHP	1280	225	2.6	79	Frag	50%	9
80-gr. Cor-Bon DPX	1104	216	2.5	88	0.46	100%	14
90-gr. Fiocchi JHP 380APHP	927	172	2.5	83	0.50	75%	12
90-gr. Hornady FTX	920	169	2.1	83	0.50	100%	11
90-gr. Hornady XTP 90104	933	174	1.6	84	0.52	100%	13
90-gr. HPR XTP	878	154	1.8	79	0.45	100%	13
95-gr. Winchester	884	165	2.4	84	0.54	100%	10
99-gr. Federal HST P380HST1S	1043	239	2.4	103	0.70	97%	13

Notes: *Average Velocity readings were recorded by firing 10-shot strings over a Competition Electronics Pro Chrono chronograph. The muzzle was 10 feet from the first skyscreen. Ambient temperature: 60 degrees. Elevation: 815 feet above sea level. ● The accuracy figures are the average of two five-shot groups. For accuracy, we fired the test gun from a benchrest at a 15-yard target. ● To calculate IPSC power factor, multiply bullet weight in grains by the velocity in fps, then divide by 1000. ● The retained-weight column shows the recovered bullet weight as a percentage of the actual bullet weight.*

Billed as being able to cycle five rounds in less than half a second, the Winchester Super X3 Waterfowl Hunter Mossy Oak Shadow Grass 511155291 12 Gauge, $1200, is a sleek, smooth and effective shooting tool. Without question, the Winchester cycled both clay target rounds and heavy steel loads faster than any of the other shotguns in the test. Felt recoil was also the lightest of all the semiautomatics we put through their paces, our shooters said.

Sporting a Dura-Touch finish, we were pleased with the feel and handling ability of the Winchester. As veteran shooters can attest, sometimes a shotgun just feels like it belongs in your hands – this was the case with the Winchester.

With an overall length of 48.75 inches; a 28-inch barrel; a length of pull of 14.25 inches; a drop at the comb of 1.5 inches; and a drop at the heel of 2 inches, the fit was fine for all members of our team. We noted the trigger pull of 6 pounds was slightly heavier than we would have liked, but was very crisp and did not hinder our target-breaking abilities.

Quick to bring to bear on targets, the Winchester consistently broke more clays with more authority than any of the other shotguns in the quartet. While the old saying of "It is not the tool, it is the worker," applies in most cases, having a good tool in your hands can't hurt a shooter's performance in the field.

The patterning board gave testament to why our clay target breaking success was high with the Winchester. The modified barrel produced a 60-40 pattern with the clay target shot and a 58-42 pattern with the steel shot. All of the steel shot was in a solid pattern within a 20-inch circle surrounding the center of the pattern paper and there were no holes in any of the quadrants with the clay target load. There were no malfunctions of any kind with any of the loads and.

Our Team Said: The slightly lower price tag compared to others in the test helped us choose the Winchester.

WINCHESTER SUPER X3 WATERFOWL HUNTER MOSSY OAK SHADOW GRASS 511155291 12 GA., $1200

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Excellent handling, very smooth and quick functioning, and a lower price were the trio of factors that pushed the Winchester to the top of our list.



Action Type	Semiautomatic
Chamber Size	2.75 to 3.5 in.
Overall Length	48.75 in.
Capacity	5
Weight (Unloaded)	6.75 lbs.
Barrel	28 in. Long; Dura-Touch Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Finish
Receiver	Alum. Alloy; Dura-Touch Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Finish
Choke	Screw-in Invector-Plus (IC, Mod, Full)
Buttstock	Dura-Touch Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Finish
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.25 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.0 in.
Forearm	Composite; Dura-Touch Mossy Oak Shadow Grass Finish
Forearm Length	12.5 in. (textured)
Front Sight	Red Fiber Optic Bar
Mid-Bead	None
Trigger Pull Weight	6 lbs.; Black Trigger
Warranty	One Year Limited
Telephone	(800) 333-3288
Website	WinchesterGuns.com
Made In	Portugal

Easily the fastest-cycling semiautomatic in the group, the Winchester's action was easy to use and provided ample access to the trigger, loading port, and safety.



The Winchester's very slim design and comfortable feel were appreciated by our shooting team. Without question, it was the best-handling semiauto in the quartet.







Note the lines in the stock, which gave us some concern at first glance, but which proved to be a very comfortable and an appropriate feel for the smooth-handling Super X3.

If feel, function and handling ability are key factors in a waterfowl hunter's ranking, the Winchester easily makes the top of the list. It has a very fast and smooth action, patterns well, and provides the secure feel of a veteran field shotgun that can go on for years.



In the January 2016 issue we published a test of bolt-action rifles chambered for 6.5 Creedmoor, including a Howa Austrian Brown Cerakote, a Savage Arms Model 12 LRP, and a Ruger Precision Rifle. All three rifles were impressive, but since then Ruger has released an Enhanced version, so we thought we'd better get one and see if the new features were worth the extra $200.

The model number for the (original) 6.5CM Ruger Precision Rifle previously tested was 18005. The Enhanced version is number 18008. Both rifles utilize a 24-inch-long medium-contour cold-hammer-forged barrel with a 1:8 twist. It is attached to an adaptation of the Ruger American action fed by a 10-round removable box magazine. The fully adjustable butt stock was the same, and so was the adjustable trigger. Our earlier test gun came trigger-pull weight adjusted to 2.6 pounds, with variation measured to be 1.4 ounces. Despite the owner's manual claiming that the adjustable range was 2.25 pounds to 5.0 pounds, our Enhanced rifle arrived with a 2-pound trigger with variation of only about 0.8 ounces.

The 18008 (Enhanced) rifle weighed about 0.1 pound more, even though the Samson Evolution Key Mod handguard was replaced by Ruger's trimmer RPR Short-Action handguard, which also does away with the integrated top rail.

To compare the difference in cost between the suggested retail price of an RPR Enhanced with common upgrades purchased aftermarket, we visited the RPR Pro Shop at LongRiflesinc.com. We found a bolt shroud for $60 and a muzzle brake for $180. Brownells offered handguards starting at $175, so the Enhanced model does save the shooter about $215 if the shooter were to upgrade the rifle himself.

For recording accuracy data, we were able to fire two of the three rounds used in our earlier test. They were Hornady's 120-grain A-Max and the Hornady 129-grain SST. Hornady's 143-grain ELD-X Precision Hunter rounds were fired in place of the 140-grain A-Max ammunition we shot in the first test. After a careful break-in consisting of 50 rounds, we mounted a Steiner 5-25x56mm Military Scope with Horus Reticle and recorded the groups fired from the 100-yard bench at American Shooting Centers (amshootcenters.com). Called bad shots were counted. Firing the 120-grain and 129-grain resulted in widest groups of 0.93 and 0.95 inches respectively. We still managed to record average groups measuring less than 0.75 inches across because the smallest groups for the 120s measured 0.60 inches and the SST rounds delivered a 0.57-inch-wide group. The 143-grain rounds showed the most consistency, with groups measuring between 0.45 inches and 0.6 inches.

Our Team Said: The change from a plastic to an aluminum bolt shroud was a no-brainer. The muzzle brake was not as loud as others and definitely helped keep the rifle from moving upward or torqueing away from point of aim. A comparison on the accuracy chart shows the Enhanced wins out. Maybe not by a lot, but we think more accurate results were easier to achieve. To answer the question as to which rifle is a better buy, it's probably a question of how much you want to modify the rifle. Costwise, the Enhanced certainly has a leg up versus aftermarket costs, and there's always something to be said for buying a second-generation product.

RUGER PRECISION RIFLE 18008
6.5 CREEDMOOR, $1599
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

This is another solid effort by Ruger. They took an already good gun and made it a touch better. The add-ons work great, but you may want to accessorize it yourself.



Action	Bolt, 3 Lugs, Parkerized Finish
Overall Length (min/max)	43.25 in./46.25 in
Folded Length	35.60 in.
Barrel	24.0 in. Long, 1:8 Twist, 5 Grooves Parkerized Finish; Fluted, 5/8"-24 Threads RPR Hybrid Muzzle Brake
Overall Height (w/o Scope)	7.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	10.75 lbs.
Weight Loaded	11.25 lbs.
Magazine	2 10-Rd. Magpul PMAGs
Buttstock	Adjustable, Folding; Anodized Aluminum
Bedding	Modular Free Float
Buttplate	Rubber, Adj. Cant
Length of Pull (standard/set)	12.0 in./15.5 in.
Handguard	RPR Short Action
Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	Picatinny
Trigger Pull Weight	2.0 lbs.
Safety	Rotating Thumb
Warranty	None Written
Telephone	(336) 949-5200
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	U.S.A.

Ruger's proprietary handguard subtracted the top rail but still left facility for adding sections of rail where desired. We used some of the supplied rail to make room for attaching the superb Atlas bipod. Then we added a Bravo Company keymod flashlight mount.



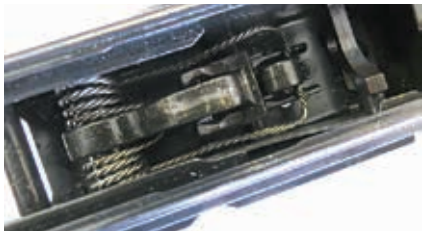
PALMETTO STATE ARMORY AK-47 MOE EDITION
7.62X39MM, $749

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

This AK with modern Magpul furniture updated the design; accuracy was acceptable, as well as the price.



Action Type	Semi-Automatic Long-Stroke Gas Piston
Overall Length (Min/Max)	35.25 in.
Overall Height	8.0 in.
Weight Unloaded	6.7 lbs.
Weight Loaded (w/30-rd mag)	8.2 lbs.
Barrel	16.2 in. Long; 4150 Steel, 1:9.5 Twist, Melonite Finish
Muzzle Device	Slant Brake, 14-1 LH Threads
Buttstock	Black Magpul MOE AK
Length of Pull	12.8 in.
Handguard	Black Magpul MOE AK
Grip	Black Magpul MOE AK
Receiver	Stamped Blued Steel
Magazine	(1) Magpul PMAG, 30 Rds.
Rear Sight	Tangent Leaf, Elevation Adj.
Front Sight	Winged Post, Windage Adj.
Sight Radius	15.0 in.
Trigger	5.5 lbs., Mil-Spec; Single Stage, Double Hook
Safety	2-Pos. Lever
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(803) 724-6950
Website	PalmettoStateArmory.com
Made In/By	USA/Palmetto State Armory



The PSA rifles used standard braided-wire trigger springs.



The MOE's short handguard exposed the gas tube; a metal heat shield is built in.

Looking at the Palmetto State Armory AK-47 MOE Edition 7.62x39mm, $749, out of the box, our team thought the PSA AK-47 MOE Edition would cost almost twice the list price, and that was because of the finish and the Magpul MOE furniture. The blued finish was excellent. The AK-47 MOE rifle looked fine from muzzle to butt with blued metal and the modern polymer buttstock and furniture. The MOE furniture gave the old AK platform a refreshingly new look and feel. The handguard, we thought, allowed for a better grip since it was ribbed and had an integrated heat shield to protect the shooter from barrel heat from excessive firing. The fixed stock was a good length of pull at 12.8 inches, though the tall shooters would have liked a slightly longer LOP. The stock has a hidden compartment under the cheek rest to store small items. An optional cheek riser can also be added at additional cost (Magpul.com; $9.95). It also had a rubber buttpad. The pistol grip was a Magpul MOE, also with a storage compartment. We liked the furniture and thought it gave the AK better ergonomics than traditional wood. The Magpul MOE lightened the AK to 6.7 pounds; the Classic Red with wood stock/furniture weighed 9 pounds, and the Century 9.6 pounds.

Test members also noticed the smoothness of the action. It cycled slickly and was super smooth. The safety lever did not drag over the side receiver and it was precise. On some rebuilds we have found the safety selector drags along the side of the receiver and can be loose, not providing confidence. A cleaning rod and one Magpul mag were included.

The PSA AK-47 MOE employed a 1-millimeter-thick stamped heat-treated carbon-steel receiver with a side mount that allows a shooter to attach an optic. We used a Russian-built PK-01 VS red dot optic from Kalinka Optics and found the optic sat low and just above the dust cover. A good set up. When we found that the PK-01 did not lock in place on the Century rifle we decided to keep the playing field level and test with open sights. But this was a major plus, in our eyes.

A 16.2-inch 4150 steel barrel that was Melonite treated had six-groove rifling with a 1:9.5 twist. The classic slanted muzzle brake was attached onto the barrel's muzzle. Sights were traditional, with an 800-meter rear sight and adjustable front sight. The trigger was an ALG single-stage model with a smooth press and shorter pull than the standard AK trigger. Its required a 5.5-pound press to fire. It had initial take up but a relatively clean break. The MOE edition also used a standard magazine release. We used both polymer Magpul and aluminum Polish surplus magazines and had no issues inserting the magazines or running the AK on the magazines. We ran the AK hard and it performed.

Using a rest at 100 yards we were able to get three-shot groups under 4 inches with Hornady steel case ammo and steel case Wolf ammo, which we thought was good accuracy considering we were using open sights and the triggers was not designed for precision work.

Our Team Said: The PSA MOE edition clearly updated the handling and balance of the AK-47 platform.

The Beretta Model 1301 Tactical J131T18 12 Gauge, $1075, is a very light and quick semiautomatic that is a recent entry into the tactical market. Stand-out features at first glance include the oversized charging handle, a large textured bolt release, and an oversized reversible safety button. We were pleased with both the aesthetics and functionality of these features, along with the deep checkering on both the forearm and stock that earned the Beretta plus marks for easy and secure use.

The barrel of the tactical shotgun sat deeper in the forearm than the other models, giving the firearm a sleek look in addition to adding to the quickness factor of getting on targets. With an overall length of 38.25 inches and tipping the scales at just 6.25 pounds (the lightest of the test gun trio), we were pleased with the overall feel and handling ability of the shotgun. It should be noted that we did attach stock spacers included in the box to give the Beretta a length of pull of 14.5 inches, rather than the original 13.25 inches. The longer LOP was more comfortable for our test team, and we also felt that this additional length helped control felt recoil from the various test rounds.

According to the company's advertising, the Beretta features an integrated Blink gas operating system with a cross tube gas piston; a rotating bolt head lock-up; and a new feeding system that supposedly allows the Model 1301 to cycle 36 percent faster than any other semiautomatic shotgun on the market. We found it cycled faster than either of the other two shotguns in our match-up.

The drop at the comb was 1.5 inches and the drop at the heel was 2.25 inches, providing us with quick and easy target acquisition. We had no problems with putting the semiautomatic into play during speed drills and rapid fire tests. The Model 1301 Tactical features a Ghost Ring rear sight system that is also interchangeable, which is very easy to use and quick to put on target even in low-light conditions.

Breaking at a crisp 5 pounds, the trigger pull of the Beretta also earned the shotgun good marks. The Beretta fared very well on the range, producing an average 7-inch pattern with slugs at 30 yards and an average 6.75-inch pattern with eight pellets of No. 00 buckshot. Hits were all in the center mass area.

During the five-shot speed drill, the shells were all touched off in exactly 1.0 second. The first shot was at 0.45, followed by a shot at 0.71, 0.96, 1.20 seconds, and 1.45 seconds. Shots were alternately fired at two separate targets about 2 feet apart in a very effective manner.

To test the speed-loading ability of the shotgun, we started with a chambered round and another round in our left hand (each member of our test team is right handed). At the sound of the beep from the timer, the chambered round was fired, a round was then dropped in the open chamber, the action was closed and another shot was touched off. The drill was completed in an average of 2.79 seconds, well under the times for either the Mossberg (3.66 seconds) or the Benelli (4.03 seconds). Both speed-drill shots were on target, and we were impressed with the quick, accurate performance of the 1301.

As noted earlier, felt recoil with the Beretta was not considered uncomfortable with any of the loads, and there were zero malfunctions during any of the live-fire testing.

Our Team Said: The 1301 was a lighter, quicker and easier-to-handle shotgun than the other two semiautomatics. We believe the Beretta will meet and exceed the needs of the shooting public seeking a self-defense firearm. Falling in the middle of the price range of the trio didn't hurt.

BERETTA MODEL 1301 TACTICAL NO. J131T18
12 GAUGE, $1075
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Just a little lighter and quicker to bring on target, the Beretta performed without a hiccup while producing good patterns and loading fast.



Action Type	Semiautomatic
Chamber Size	2.75 to 3 in.
Overall Length	38.25 in.
Capacity	5
Weight (Unloaded)	6.25 lbs.
Weight (Loaded)	6.9 lbs.
Barrel Length	18.5 in.
Barrel	Matte Black
Receiver	Matte Black
Choke	Fixed (Cylinder)
Buttstock	Black Synthetic, Checkered Grip
Buttstock Length of Pull	Adj. 13.25 to 14.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.25 in.
Forearm	Black Synthetic, Checkered
Forearm Length	13 in.
Front Sight	Interchangeable Raised White Dot
Rear Sight	Ghost Ring (adjustable)
Trigger Pull Weight	5 lbs.
Warranty	1 Year Limited
Telephone	(800) 237-3882
Website	Beretta.com
Made In	Italy



Comfortable and taming recoil in an acceptable manner, we found the Beretta stock, with the addition of the supplied spacers, very pleasing and a good fit for all of our test team.

The Glock G20 Gen4 10mm, $687, is the latest evolution of Glock pistols with replaceable back straps to fit a variety of hand sizes. Testers liked the ability to swap back straps; four sizes came with the pistol or the pistol could be used without a back strap, so five possible grip configurations are available. Some testers with smaller hands thought the Glock still felt a bit chunky in the hand compared to the other pistols.

The accessory rail on the G20 Gen4 was smooth, which made it easier to holster. In fact, testers felt the G20 was the most comfortable 10mm to carry due to its light weight of only 39.5 ounces loaded. The G20 also has the three safety features: trigger, firing pin, and drop safety. This is a very safe pistol.

The sights on the Glock are serviceable, but were the least liked by testers. The plastic front used a dot with the plastic rear sight outlined. The target picture was fine, but we preferred the sights on the other two pistols. Glock sights are easily replaced (Store.TeamGlock.com; $10-$32), and there are numerous aftermarket sights which still cost more, bringing the Austrian entry in line with the cost of the RIA but still well under the SIG.

The trigger was typical Glock, with a pull weight of about 5.5 pounds. It is a trigger we have come to accept or enhance with drop-in aftermarket trigger kits. The Glock we felt was more easily customized by the owner than the RIA or SIG, and that was a plus. In fact, our test pistol was owned by one of our staff, who also had an extra 6-inch hunting barrel (Store.TeamGlock.com; $150), which added to the total cost of the pistol.

The longer barrel allowed the Glock to generate more velocity with the 10mm ammo, averaging about 30 fps extra per load, but when we reviewed the range data, the Glock data was still lower than the other two pistols, even with the addition of a 6-inch barrel. Data still showed the Glock lagging behind the velocity of the RIA and SIG. We were had hoped the 6-inch hunting barrel would eke out more velocity, but it essentially leveled the velocity playing field between the pistols, while adding length to the Glock.

At the range, we found the Glock provided the second-best accuracy, on average, of the three pistols. With the defense loads — Federal Hydra-Shok and SIG V-Crown — the best 5-shot group was tied at 0.7 inches. Testers felt the Glock was also the softest shooting of the pistols, hands down. The polymer frame of the G20 flexed to help absorb recoil, while the slightly fatter grip had more contact with the palm, so recoil was more spread out.

Our Team Said: The Glock was the softest shooter. The girth was larger, but manageable, and the trigger was a Glock trigger that could be improved with an aftermarket kit. Plus there are numerous other parts to customize the pistol.

GLOCK G20 GEN4 10MM, $687

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

This G20 offered the most DIY customization, was the softest shooter and was accurate, plus the price was less. Also, it was the best suited for concealed carry.



Action	Semi-Auto; Locked Breech DAO
Overall Length	8.0 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	30.7 oz.
Weight Loaded	39.5 oz.
Barrel	4.6 in.
Capacity	15+1
Slide	Black, Steel
Frame	Black, Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.6 in.
Grips	Textured Polymer w/Finger Grooves
Grip Thickness (Max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (Max)	6.3 in.
Front Sight	Fixed Dot
Rear Sight	Outline, Driftable
Trigger Pull Weight	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.9 in.
Magazines	3; Polymer
Safety	Trigger Lever
Warranty	1-Year Limited
Website	US.Glock.com
Made In	Austria



The G20 Gen4 grip is modular, allowing users to custom-fit the grip to their hands.



The finger grooves actually fit many hand sizes and allowed testers to get a firm grip.

When you look at the Weatherby 28 Gauge SA-08 Deluxe, $899, at first glance, it can be difficult to gauge what the Weatherby SA-08's chambering is. Its appearance was much closer to that of a full-size 12-gauge shotgun. We're not sure what caused that.

Obviously, some care was taken in the selection of the wood. The pistol grip and the forend were machine checkered, probably by pressure but in a classic pattern. The bolt and bolt-release button were chromed. The trigger was stainless steel, and the trigger guard was polymer with a crossbolt safety at the rear, where it joined the receiver.

The barrel sported a ¼-inch-wide ventilated rib with only a front brass bead as a sight. The gun arrived with three flush-fit chokes (Improved Cylinder, Modified, and Full) plus one of five different polymer shim plates installed that left the stock cast slightly off to the right. Changing shims required a Phillips-head screwdriver to remove the buttpad, which consisted of a 0.4-inch-thick medium-soft rubber with a smooth plate at the heel, then a 13mm socket wrench to remove the stock. Weatherby recommends that at least one plate be in place at all times.



There was nothing fancy about the gas system, but the piston was marked for light loads.

Weighing in at about 5.5 pounds, the gun seemed a little light for its size. The long barrel made it feel whippy at first, but each shooter in our test team found it easy to adjust his or her swinging motion after just a couple of rounds of skeet.

With a full complement of six rounds loaded, the gun's handling slowed considerably. But even when loaded with only two rounds for the skeet field, the Weatherby transferred the least amount of felt recoil. We did have one failure to feed after about 200 rounds of fire without lubrication. A spray of RemOil and about 300 rounds later, the Weatherby had not been cleaned and no sign of any malfunctions reappeared.

Patterning the Weatherby SA-08 showed a very similar performance to the Benelli, but with a few more fliers when loaded with the Estate Super Sport Competition Target load. Maybe the manufacturer was not so important in our patterning tests as was the configuration. It is interesting to note that the Weatherby preferred 7½ shot, the Benelli No. 8 shot, and the Franchi shotgun No. 9s.

Without changing the original shim setup, we had to work a little harder to center our shots on the pattern board. But with so many shims supplied, we were confident it wouldn't take much to adapt the drop and cast to just about any shooter.

Our Team Said: The top competitors among our team shooters couldn't put their finger on any one aspect that was over the top great about it, but by the end of the day, the SA-08 was the gun most of us wanted to continue to shoot. The more we shot it, the more we forgot what gauge it was or how relatively little it cost. More than one shooter agreed they would buy an SA-08 no matter how well the other guns performed.

WEATHERBY SA-08 DELUXE 28 GAUGE, $899

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Sub-gauge recoil with big-gun balance and feel makes this a great all-round shotgun.



Action Type	Semi-Auto, Gas Operated	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Chamber Size	2.75 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.25 in.
Overall Length	48.75 in.	Forearm	High-Gloss Walnut
Capacity	5+1	Front Bead	Brass
Weight Unloaded	5.5 lbs.	Rear Bead	None
Barrel	28.0 in., Blued Steel, Chrome Lined	Rib Width	0.25 in.
		Trigger	5.8 lbs.
Receiver	Blued Steel	Warranty	None written
Choke Tubes	IC, M, F	Telephone	(805) 227-2600
Stock	High-Gloss Walnut	Website	Weatherby.com
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.0 in.	Made In/Assembled In	Turkey/Turkey



The Weatherby SA-08 buttpad was fit with a plastic cap on the heel to shield the soft rubber from catching on your clothing during the mount. The glossy walnut finish turned out to be durable as well as handsome.



The SA-08 looks like a full-size 12 gauge due to its glossy walnut stock, deep blue-steel receiver, and 28-inch barrel.

MOSSBERG MVP LONG RANGE (LR) 27697
7.62MM NATO/308 WIN., $945
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The MVP LR is well suited as an entry-level rifle for long-range shooting; it offered reasonable accuracy.



Action Type	Bolt, Two Lugs, 60-Degree Lift; Tactical Handle
Overall Length	39.5 in.
Barrel	20.0 in. Matte Blued Steel; Medium Bull Fluted, Threaded
Overall Height	6.5 in.
Stock Length of Pull	13.25 in.
Weight Unloaded	8.0 lbs.
Weight Loaded	9.3 lbs.
Capacity	10+1
Action	Matte Blued Steel; Installed Picatinny Rail
Magazine	Detachable Polymer Box; Accepts M1A/M14 and AR10-style
Stock	Polymer Pillar Bedded; Adj. Cheekrest; OD Green Stippled Benchrest Style; Dual Front Swivels
Trigger Pull Weight	3.0 lbs., LBA Adj.
Safety	2 Position
Accuracy Guarantee	None
Warranty	1-Year Limited
Telephone	(203) 230-5300
Website	Mossberg.com
Made In	USA



The bolt knob was oversized and comfortable to operate. The bolt throw was 60 degrees, which gave plenty of room for our fingers between the bolt handle and the Meopta's eye piece.

Using the Gallery of Guns Gun Genie on the Mossberg site, we found several Mossberg MVP LR 27697 7.62mm NATO/308 Win. rifles near the Houston office selling for between $696 (FountainFirearms.com) and $815 (FullArmorFirearms.com). The Mossberg MVP LR is built off Mossberg's MVP series of rifles. It uses a proprietary bolt-face design that feeds from both standard AR-10 style and M1A/M14-style magazines. We had plenty of Magpul AR-10 style magazines on hand and had no issues with them.

The bolt was a push-feed style with two lugs, and it cocked on opening. Manipulating the bolt was smooth, and it wiggled slightly, but we had no issues working it from a variety of shooting positions. The bolt body had a decorative spiral, and the bolt handle had a large tactical-style knob, which we liked. The bolt throw was 60 degrees, which gave plenty of room for our fingers between the bolt handle and the Meopta's eye-piece. A one-piece Picatinny style rail came installed on the receiver, and it provided enough space to mount the large Meopta scope. However, we would have liked a slightly longer rail because the Meopta is such a long scope, as are other long-range glass.

The safety had two positions; fully forward is the "Fire" position; fully rearward is the "Safe" position, which locks the trigger, though the bolt can be manipulated to eject a round out of or into the chamber. It was located on the right side of the receiver and fell under the thumb of a right-handed shooter. The bolt release was located on the left side of the receiver. To remove it, partially retract the bolt, press the bolt release button, and the bolt assembly pulls free from the receiver. The 20-inch barrel had a 1:10-inch twist and a medium-bull taper with shallow flutes. The muzzle was threaded for a device and wore a protective sleeve, which we liked. The magazine release was inset into the bottom of the stock so there is no fear of an accidental magazine dump. The inset was small, and large-fingered shooters could only get the tip of a finger into the hole to press the release paddle. The paddle was flush with the bottom of the stock. All metal wore a nice matte-blue finish.

The trigger is Mossberg's LBA system, which allows users to adjust the trigger. From the factory, ours measured 3 pounds. It was crisp with no take up and broke cleanly and consistently. The trigger guard and magazine well were polymer. Nit: A slight flare on the magazine well would make magazine changes a bit smoother, though we had no issues.

The synthetic stock is similar to a benchrest stock, with a wide, flat forend well suited for shooting off a rest and a vertical pistol grip with palm swell, which made shooting the rifle prone or seated very comfortable. The barrel was free floated in the stock from the action forward. The rubber buttpad was sharp edged and serrated; it stuck to our clothing. Sling swivel studs were installed, as well as an attachment point for a bipod.

We fired from the magazine and single-loaded cartridges with no issues, and found it quite easy to shoot three-shot groups under one MOA. With the Aguila 150-grain FMJ BT ammo, we were able to get our best group, three shots in 0.46 inches. With the Black Hills ammo, our best group opened to 0.66 inches. With Hornady Match, our best group was 1 inch. On average, this rifle shot just under 1 MOA for three shots at 100 yards.

Our Team Said: It is entirely possible the owner could find factory ammo and/or handload ammunition to get this gun at a half-inch at 100 yards.

We found the Smith & Wesson M&P9L Performance Center Ported 10098 9mm Luger for as low as $656 cash at BudsGunShop.com. The Smith & Wesson M&P9 Performance Center Ported pistol was designed to compete out of box in action-shooting competitions. It comes in a hard case with one steel magazine, three grips and a tool to replace them, and S&W's C.O.R.E. (Competition Optics Ready Equipment) adapter plates, screws, and wrenches for up to six reflex-sight options. We mounted the Leupold DeltaPoint and found the installation straightforward.

The process: First find the corresponding plate, place it on the slide, then use the two screws to sandwich the plate between the optic and slide. Just determine which adapter plate works with your sight; the Trijicon RMR, Leupold DeltaPoint, C-More STS, Doctor, and Insight MRDS are supported. Also, the M&P9 came with tall three-dot steel sights that co-witnessed with the Leupold and were dovetailed into the slide.

This Performance Center pistol featured a ported barrel with two oblong ports that aligned with the two forwardmost ports in the slide. The slide had eight slots milled into it to reduce weight and vent gases. The stainless-steel barrel also had a viewing port that allowed the shooter to see if a round or case was in the chamber. The recoil spring in the M&P9 was a flat coil spring with a steel one-piece recoil guide rod.

The frame featured three grip inserts that adjusted the trigger span as well as provide a bit of a palm swell. The panels had a toothy texture that nonetheless did not abrade the skin. Most testers liked the palm swell and chose to use the small grip module. The FN and Glock had flat grip sides. The M&P9 stored the grip tool in the butt heel, which we thought was a good idea since it is always handy and will not get lost.

The trigger was enhanced on this model with a Performance Center sear that provided a crisp 4.5-pound trigger press. The trigger also reset faster and was equipped with an overtravel adjustment screw. The grip module needed to be removed to adjust the stop with a supplied hex wrench, which is also stored in the butt of the M&P9. We liked how the trigger broke, with some test members preferring the flat face of this trigger compared the to round trigger face of the Glock.

At the range most testers agreed that M&P9's grip made a favorable first impression. The pistol had nice balance and presented a low bore axis, so the gun sits low in the hand. We ran the M&P9 Performance Center on paper at 25 yards and found we were surgically accurate with it using two ammos. With the Hornady American Gunner shooting 115-grain XTP bullets, we averaged 0.9-inch five-shot groups. The Winchester Train ammo averaged 1.0 inches. We liked this accuracy and attributed the performance to the enhanced Performance Center trigger.

Our Team Said: We liked the Leupold sight on this handgun. The Performance Center M&P9 provided six reflex sight mounting options, had tall sights, showed a great trigger, could be adjustable to a variety of hand sizes, and presented other enhanced features. It is a good choice and good value.

SMITH & WESSON M&P9L PERFORMANCE CENTER PORTED 10098 9MM LUGER, $812

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

This Performance Center M&P9 provided six reflex-sight mounting options, had tall sights, and employed enhanced features that we thought made it a good value.



Action	Semi-Auto, Double Action Striker Fired
Overall Length	8.5 in.
Overall Height	5.3 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	24.1 oz.
Weight Loaded	30.9 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in. Long, 8 Ports; Stainless Steel
Capacity	17+1
Slide	Black, Stainless Steel, 8 Ports; Optics Cut Top
Frame	Black Polymer; 3-Slot Picatinny Rail
Frame Front Strap Height	2.3 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.4 in.
Grips	Textured Polymer; 3 Modular Backstraps
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in., 1.25 in., 1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.5 in., 5.7 in., 6.0 in.
Front Sight	White Dot Dovetail
Rear Sight	Fixed, 2-Dot
Optics Mounts	Trijicon RMR, Leupold DeltaPoint, Jpoint, Docter, C-More STS, Insight MRDS
Trigger Pull Weight	4.5 lbs.; Adj. Trigger Stop; Performance Center Sear
Trigger Span	2.6/2.8 in.
Magazines	1; Steel, Double Stack
Safety	Decocking/Safety Lever
Warranty	Lifetime
Made In	USA
Website	Smith-Wesson.com

The plate is placed on the slide, then the Leupold DeltaPoint nests on top of it.



We calculated an average price of $532 for the Ruger LCR Model 5456 9mm Luger offered by five retailers through the Gallery of Guns app on the Ruger website. The LCR (Light Compact Revolver) is a different breed of snubnose using polymer, aluminum, and steel construction. A polymer fire-control housing is the grip and trigger guard portion of the revolver, while the frame assembly is aluminum, with a stainless-steel barrel sleeve in the frame. The cylinder is stainless steel and is traditionally fluted, unlike the radically fluted cylinder of the LCR 38 Special +P model. The Ruger was five ounces lighter than the Taurus, which is significant especially for a daily carry gun, but 3.7 ounces heavier than the LCR 38 Special model. It came with a soft case and cable lock. The LCR also uses a transfer bar safety system that enables the hammer to hit the firing pin only when the trigger is pulled all the way to the rear. So it is safe to carry fully loaded.

The matte finish was well executed, and we anticipate the polymer/steel portions to wear similar to a polymer/steel semi-auto. The trigger was smooth and felt much lighter than 10.5 pounds due to the friction-reducing cam-fire system. The trigger pull was also smooth, without stacking effect — noticeably better than the Taurus. The cylinder latch on the LCR is squeezed rather than pushed forward like on the Taurus or an S&W revolver. Manipulating latches of both revolvers was solid and precise. The end of the ejector rod on the Ruger LCR 9mm engages a pin in the shroud, locking up the front and via the ejector in the rear. Lock up was tight, and there was little play side to side or front to rear. Both revolvers locked up tight.

The sights were similar to those on the Taurus, except the ramped front-sight blade was pinned in place and replaceable or can be modified for a certain load. It also has a white strip on it so it is easier to acquire. The rear sight is a groove along the top strap that seamlessly blends into the arched portion of the frame covering the hammer. In our view, the LCR had more user-friendly sights and were a plus.

The Hogue Tamer grip had a pebbled texture on the sides, palm swells for both left- and right-hand shooters, and finger grooves. Where the web of the shooter's hand contacts the grip is embellished with the Ruger logo. We also found a section of squishy blue rubber on the inside of the grip for absorbing more recoil. The grip felt good in hand, but was slightly larger than the 905 grip, something our testers thought would make the LCR print or hinder a draw from a pants pocket holster, depending on the size of your pocket. The rubber-to-metal fit of the grips of both guns was excellent.

RUGER LCR MODEL 5456 9MM LUGER, $532

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The LCR has a buttery-smooth trigger, and the grip design stands out from traditional snub-nose revolvers. Plus, it is lightweight.



Action	Double-Action-Only Revolver
Overall Length	6.5 in.
Barrel Length	1.875 in.
Sight Radius	3.5 in.
Overall Height	4.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	17.2 oz.
Weight Loaded	19.2 oz.

Cylinder Gap	0.007 in.
Capacity	5
Frame Finish	Matte Black
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Matte Black
Frame Front Strap Height	1.7 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grip	Hogue Tamer Monogrip
Grip Thickness (max)	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.2 in.
Front Sight	Ramped Blade
Rear Sight	Fixed Groove
Trigger Pull Weight	10.5 lbs.
Safety	Transfer Bar
Warranty	None Written
Telephone	(928) 541-8892
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	USA

The Ruger comes with three moon clips. The LCR will fire 9mm cartridges without the moon clips, but it will not eject the empty cases.





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At the range, we found the LCR to be noticeably lighter than the 905. It also allowed a higher grip on the revolver, which means placing the center line of the bore closer to the shooter's hand, reducing felt recoil. Indeed, we thought the LCR shot softer and produced less muzzle flip, particularly in rapid fire.

Our Team Said: The more time we spent with the LCR 9mm, the more we came to appreciate the smooth trigger and grip design, which makes this non-traditional revolver easy to shoot and manipulate.

We noted that handgun retention for those who practice open carry is a prime consideration. Civilians, in particular, who plan to openly carry their firearms — such as our Texas readers were able to do for the first time on January 1, 2016 — must now be concerned with the safety considerations of out-in-the-open carry. We recognize that some legal gun owners will want to open carry, so the gun owner must maintain control of a carry firearm while still having fast access to it.

We challenged retention using two types of grips, "educated" and "freestyle." The educated grip describes how an instructor might handle the gun, with the trigger finger held straight alongside the frame with three fingers wrapped below the trigger guard, thumb hugging the opposite side of the pistol. The freestyle grip started with all four fingers beneath the trigger guard and thumb wrapped around the other side. We also tried grabbing the gun with the left hand from a right-hand-side-mounted holster.

The Safariland 6378-53-411 ALS, $56, was fashioned from a synthetic laminate similar in look and feel to polymer. This moderately concealable holster was lined with suede and arrived with a paddle in place that locked securely onto the pants below the belt line. We found this unit difficult to remove even when not wearing a belt. The paddle was large and form fitting, spreading the weight of our Springfield Armory 1911A1 pistol with 5-inch barrel evenly and comfortably. A belt-loop panel and hardware were also provided to accommodate 1.5-inch-wide to 1.75-inch-wide belts. Belt retention in either case was without failure. The body of the holster was a perfect fit, covering all but the handle, including the upgraded Heinie Straight 8 sights. The right-side safety paddle was exposed, however, and could be deactivated. A pistol with a left-side-only thumb safety would be that much more secure. The thumb-drive release for the locking mechanism was well hidden along the inside of the holster below its top line, approximately where we would stage our thumb to be ready to interact with the safety. But the thumb safety was not accessible until the gun had been raised from the holster about 1.5 inches.

Our Team Said: We found only a limited amount of angles from which the gun could be drawn — a good thing. Held in the Safariland 6378-53-411 holster, our gun was extremely well protected from damage that could result from rolling around on the ground during a fight for the pistol. Thanks to the ALS, perhaps the most effective system found in our tests, and a solid belt mount, there's a good chance the gun may well stay in place long enough for a ground fight to conclude and the user get enough working space to safely draw the pistol. GT

SAFARILAND 6378-53-411 ALS, $56

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY

The interior of the Safariland ALS holster was lined with waterproof velour. Belt loops were supplied, but the paddle offered excellent comfort and support. Connection to the belt was so strong, it was tough to remove when gearing down for the night. The Safariland ALS holster nearly covered the pistol to reduce access and protect the gun from damage.







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SHORT SHOTS



Colt is expanding its Competition Pistol line by offering those guns in a series of stainless-steel models. Set up to be race-ready pistols for USPSA and IDPA matches, the Competition Pistol and Gold Cup models now come in stainless-steel slides and frames. Other features include Novak's new patent-pending adjustable rear sight and fiber optic front sight, competition ergonomics, including an undercut trigger guard and upswept beavertail safety, and a National Match barrel. The stainless steel Colt Competition Pistol is available in 45 ACP (O1080CCS, $1049), 9mm (O1082CCS, $1049), and 38 Super (O1083CCS, $1099).

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

- Bargain Hunter: Used Selective-Double-Action 9mm Handgun Shootout: Taurus PT 92AF, CZ-75B Stainless, and an AT-84 CZ clone.

- IWB Holsters: Barber Leather Works Snaps and Straps, Barber Leather Works Chameleon, Stealth Gear Onyx, Discrete Defense Solutions IWB, Hidden Hybrid Holsters HHS S1, KT-Mech.com Gunfighter IWB, Alien Gear Cloak IWB, Gold Star Holsters IWB, Mernickle Holsters PS 2, The Master's Holster reversible IWB, Tagua 4 in 1 holster, Blackhawk! Tuckable, and more.

- 44 Special Loads Tested: Buffalo Bore 190-grain LSWC HP, Cor-Bon 200-grain DPX, Fiocchi 200-grain JHP, Hornady 165-grain FTX, Hornady 180-grain XTP, Blazer 200-grain Gold Dot, and Speer's 200-grain Gold Dot.

- 357 Magnum Personal Defense Loads: When it comes to personal defense, most folks are going to carry a 2-, 3- or 4-inch-barrel revolver. So in a short-barrel wheelgun, how does the Magnum work? Tested: Cor-Bon 100-grain PowRBall, Winchester 110-grain JHP Q4204, Winchester Silvertip 145-grain X357SHP, Cor-Bon 110-grain JHP, Federal 130-grain Hydra Shock 357H52PDH, Black Hills 125-grain JHP D357N2, Hornady 125-grain FTX Critical Defense, Hornady 140-grain FTX, Buffalo Bore 125-grain Tactical, and Buffalo Bore 140-grain Tactical.

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