GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

$5.95 May 2016/Vol. XXVIII, No. 5



DEFENSIVE SHOTGUNS

The Beretta Model 1301 was easier to handle, giving it an edge over the Benelli Model M4 and the Mossberg Model 930 SPX. **— Page 6**

VALUE GUIDE: RECENT SELF-DEFENSE SHOTGUN RATINGS **— Page 11**



10MM PISTOLS

Tested: A 1911 design from Rock Island Arsenal, the SIG P220, and a large Glock that has been chambered in 10mm since 1991. **— Page 12**

VALUE GUIDE: 10MM & 40 S&W HANDGUN RATINGS **— Page 17**





AK-PATTERN 5.56 NATO RIFLES

In this Russian vs. Polish showdown, we try out two lightly recoiling semi-autos in a favorite American chambering. **— Page 19**

VALUE GUIDE: SEMI-AUTO RIFLE RATINGS **— Page 22-23**

28-GAUGE SEMI-AUTO & O/U SHOTGUNS

Benelli, Franchi, and Weatherby competed on the skeet and sporting fields to see who offered the best value. We'd buy the Turkish. **— Page 25**

VALUE GUIDE: SUB-GAUGE SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUN RATINGS **— Page 31**

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

DOWNRANGE

MUZZLING DOCS



Todd Woodard

There's a lot not to like in Physicians Angelica Zen and Alice Kuo's opinion piece in *The Washington Post* entitled "Do you own a gun? Why your kid's doctor needs to know." It was published on April 1, but I'll avoid playing on the obvious joke there. In the story, the doctors discuss the risks of having guns unsecured in a home with children and the need for doctors to talk about the subject with patients. They spend several thousand words justifying such an intrusion into my business, but, short version, I'll take my own counsel instead of theirs, since I'm the guy who handles guns all day and they don't. Did I take precautions when my kids were growing up to ensure they couldn't get their hands on test guns? Well, sure. That doesn't make me special. 99.9% of all gun owners do the same, and they're successful at it, based on the absurdly low gun-accident rates we see these days.

Perfect gun hygiene isn't really that hard: Don't put guns and ammunition where kids can get at them. I took the additional step that, when I was handling firearms in my home office (measurements, photos, and the like), I didn't have any ammunition for those firearms on site. Could the 15-year-old version of Darling Daughter have bought 45 ACP at school and brought it home? Yeah. Very unlikely. And the guns were in a safe if I wasn't home. So, there were better chances of being hit by a smoking meteor of death than her getting in my guns. Now, she's the skeet coordinator for the National Skeet Shooting Association in San Antonio. Must be a coincidence. Number-One Son has a creative side business he calls Young Guns Media, and he's acquiring quite the collection of firearms as his budget allows. He's obviously traumatized by growing up around guns all the danged time.

They saw guns, held guns, looked at guns, photographed guns, shot guns, disassembled guns, and yadda yadda. Guns weren't mysterious totems of death that killed all children who beheld any firearm, because guns are bad, bad, bad. Guns were things to be handled carefully — like knives and cars — and no doctor had to tell them that.

So, regarding Physicians Zen and Kuo wanting doctors to lecture me on gun safety, how about you give me my shot and I'll be on my way?

Elsewhere, I watch California's ongoing legislative efforts to strip the state's citizens of effective gun rights, and it sickens me. One guy, Eric Linder (R-Corona), wants DOJ to validate local carry permits. DOJ can't even keep track of guns it helped flow into Mexico. AB 2459, authored by Asm. Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), will ban all home FFL dealers and force all remaining gun dealers to video-record all areas of their store wherever firearms or ammunition are stored. And they would have to get unobtainable insurance that covers the criminal acts of second, third, and fourth parties using a firearm or ammunition from the store in question, even if the retailer is in fact the victim of the crime. I truly feel sorry for gunowners in the formerly Golden State. GT

GUN TESTS®
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

Editor ..... W. Todd Woodard
Managing Editor ..... Tracey Taylor
Sr. Product Coordinator.... Kevin Winkle
Contributing Editors ....R.K. Campbell
Roger Eckstine
Robert Sadowski
David Tannahill
Rafael Urista
Ralph Winingham
Social Media Coordinator Cara Blake

TO CONTACT THE STAFF:
GunTestsEditor@icloud.com

GUN TESTS ACCEPTS NO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

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

Copyright © 2016, AG Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is strictly prohibited.

Printed in U.S.A. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658.

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

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

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

BACK ISSUES:
Call (800) 571-1555

How About the .410 Derringer?

Reader Tom wants to know more about a shotshell-shooting pocket gun. Reader Bob would like to know about the results of a test before the test. Two readers share more Taurus stories.

Bond Arms?

Have you evaluated the Bond Arms handgun line? I am wondering about the effectiveness of a .410 shotshell in one of these weapons in terms of self defense? Any input you can provide would be greatly appreciated. I'm a loyal subscriber and big fan of your publication. **— Tom**

Hey Tom: We evaluated the Bond Arms Texas Defender 38 Special/357 Magnum and the Bond Arms Cowboy Defender 45 Colt/.410 in the July 2002 issue. In that issue, we said, "In today's world, derringers are indeed marginalized firearms for people seeking to protect themselves. Lightweight metals such as titanium and scandium have made revolvers not only pocket guns, but in some cases possibly even shirt-pocket guns (at least in terms of heft). Double-action wheelguns offer more capacity and easier handling than derringers, we found in a recent test. Ditto that with small-frame pistols."

*Of the Bond Arms Texas Defender and the Bond Arms Cowboy Defender, we said "Don't Buy" either of them for self-defense. "There are simply better, more modern guns out there that make more sense than a derringer, in our view." We added, "If we wanted a Cowboy Action derringer, the Texas Defender, whose trigger guard can be removed, would be 'Our Pick.'" Another gun in the test, the American Derringer DA 38, earned a Conditional Buy (probably a **B** ranking today). We said, "If you have to have a derringer for self-defense, this double-action model is easier to use than the single actions. But it wouldn't be our pick for this job." In that test, we also looked at an American Derringer Model 1 in 45 Colt/.410. Of it, we said, "Don't Buy." We said, "For Cowboy shooting, we like the Bond Arms Texas Defender much better and the Cowboy Defender somewhat better. For derringer self-defense, we like the American Derringer DA 38 better."*

A look at the data from that test gives you some ideas about the efficacy of the .410 shotshell versus the other chamberings. A Winchester 38 Special 158-grain roundnose lead Cowboy load in the American Derringer DA 38 created muzzle energy of 178 ft.-lbs. and 169 ft.-lbs. in the Bond Arms Texas Defender. With a Federal Classic .357 Magnum 158-grain Hi-Shok JHP, we got muzzle energy of 464 foot-pounds and 439 foot-pounds, respectively, out of those derringers. A Cor-Bon 357 125-grain JHP produces 519 foot-pounds and 494 foot-pounds muzzle energies, respectively.

Shotshells weren't in the same realm in terms of energy. A Winchester Super X .410 Shotshell 000 Buckshot (three pellets) produced muzzle energies of 229 foot-pounds and 217 foot-pounds in the American Derringer Model 1 and Bond Arms Cowboy Defender, respectively. A Rexio .410 Shotshell 00 Buckshot load (four pellets) generated 130 foot-pounds of muzzle energy in the American Derringer Model 1 and 126 foot-pounds of muzzle energy in the Bond Arms Cowboy Defender.

More recently (December 2015), we gave an American Derringer

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.



On top are the .38 Special/.357 Magnum Bond Texas Defender (left) and the Cowboy Defender (right) in .45 Colt/.410. On bottom are the double-action American Derringer DA 38 .38 Special, left, and the single-action Model 1 in .45 Colt/.410, also from American Derringer.

Co. Standard Model 38 Special an A grade, saying of it, "The American Derringer Company handgun is a very good upgrade of the original Remington design. The construction is robust, and the pistol is well polished. The grips fit well. The plunger to release the barrel lock is an excellent addition to the derringer design, and the hammer block really sold us on the pistol. While we question the viability of the derringer for personal defense, they are still popular handguns. If you must purchase a derringer, this is the one to have." — Todd Woodard

New Ammo Tests

There's so much new ammunition (SIG, Ruger, Browning, etc.) coming on the market. The question for defense, how do new brands rate/compare to Speer Gold Tips, Hornady Critical Defense, etc.? I think this would make a most interesting and useful article in your excellent publication. **— Chet**

We agree. We're working in some of the new choices as fast as practical. — tw

Re "Firing Line," April 2016

Lou doesn't have to feel like the "Lone Ranger." I, too, had a Taurus Millennium 45 ACP compact, which I treasured for its accuracy and its size. Then, one day last summer I took it to the range and it would not fire. A broken link in the firing pin block system had rendered it worse than useless. The gun was received by Taurus on August 22, 2015. I went through the phone call and the online chat venues and got cheery-voiced and "wanna-be-helpful" folks on the phone and/or net. As polite and kind as the reception was, the news on my weapon's plight was dismal.

Over the months, I learned that Taurus in Miami gets shipments on about the first of each month and that the number of 45 ACP pistols shipped was not adequately meeting the need. When I made my March phone call, the situation had not improved. The (always) personable representative with whom I spoke apologized for the long wait I had been having, but could not give a time frame when my replacement 45 would be shipped. At this point I was offered (never pressured) a firearm



in either 9mm or 40 S&W, in several different models, all of which were "in stock." I caved and opted for a 9mm. I was told it could take up to four weeks to process paperwork, test-fire, and whatever had to take place prior to shipment to my friends at the gun store. Am I happy and was this an enjoyable experience? Hell, no. I am not angry at Taurus USA. They are in a legal quagmire such as the "Bloomberg mafia" envisions for all lawful gun suppliers. **— John**

The message from Lou regarding the Taurus quasi-recall mirrors my experience so closely that it's eerie. I returned my Millennium Pro 45 ACP Compact the first week of September, after reading about the problem in Gun Tests. After 6 months, I followed up. The recorded message referred me to the Taurus website for "Repair Status." It indicated that my gun had been received, put in for work, repair completed, but not shipped.

So I called again and held for customer service to ask when it would be shipped.

I was told to ignore the website (it was being redone, or something like that) and that Taurus had decided to replace my gun. I asked when they would ship me the replacement. Well, I had not had my local dealer fax them a copy of his FFL. No mention was made of when they intended to notify me that I needed to do that.

I got the FFL faxed ASAP, waited a few days and called to confirm they got it and ask when they would ship me the replacement. Yes, they got the FFL copy, but I had not chosen a model for the replacement. Again, no mention of when they intended to notify me that I needed to do that.

I told them I wanted the model closest to the gun I returned. We agreed on which current model that would be, and I asked the dreaded question: When would it be shipped? The reply was that the guns are back-ordered, and they don't know when to expect a shipment. I pressed for an estimate and was finally told it could be a few months.

A week or so later, I tried again. This time, I was told that they expect a shipment in mid-April. At this point, in light of what I learned from Lou's letter, I don't trust anything they say. It all looks like a big runaround to me. **— Walter**

How About a Sneak Peak?

Todd, I am a long-time subscriber to Gun Tests — maybe back to the beginning — and many thanks for your laudable and honest efforts to better inform the consumer on often rather expensive purchases.

I have a favor to ask. My April issue just arrived, and I see an upcoming test for semiautomatic shotguns. I



am in contact with gun shops and on the verge of buying either the Benelli M4 Tactical (over $2K with the Cerakote finish) or the Beretta 1301 Tactical (which apparently is experiencing double feeds, I read online). I may not be able to wait, however, for the respective issue to arrive. Could I possibly get a sneak peak on the results? Even just the grades — especially if an issue was encountered — would be immensely helpful and could possibly prevent a costly misstep. I have an S&W Performance Center revolver that I bought several years ago at over $1,000; well before your magazine tested it. It got an "F" when a crack in the frame was discovered after your testing. My gun went back to the factory when the finish literally peeled off the very first time I cleaned it. Uggggh. Please advise. **— Bob**

Hey Bob: Sorry, I can't release the results prior to publication. But maybe the photo above can be a sneak peak of what's on the next page, where Ralph Wininghamhas given the 1301 a glowing endorsement. From left are the Benelli Model M4, a Mossberg Model 930 SPX, and a Beretta Model 1301. — tw

Re "Over/Under Shoot-Off: New Benelli Can't Beat Browning," April 2016

Sir: The Benelli Model 828U shotgun is a real problem for left-handed shooters due to the cocking lever direction. It can be used, but not quickly or smoothly. Many manufacturers have come to realize that we happy few left-handed shooters do buy guns, and some companies make some effort to accommodate us, but we still have to adapt to a right-handed world. It would be nice if you could add a gun's usefulness to southpaws in your reviews. Thanks for being the only objective gun magazine out there! Really enjoy reading it. **— Donald**

Thompson Review?

Todd & Team: Just received the April 2016 Gun Tests Magazine. I immediately flipped to the "New Long Guns Coming for 2016" article. Noticed the Kahr Thompson T1-14 45 ACP and felt that this would be a great purchase. Was hoping we could get your crew to do some testing on it. Really enjoy the magazine, keep up the great work. **— Bart**

Hey Bart: I have forwarded your request to the team for development. I imagine there will be some interest in this new rifle, if we can find one. If anyone has ideas about what else to match up in a "History Repeated" article with the Thompson, send them along. — tw



Print Subscribers: How to Get Web Access to the Archives

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

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

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

We welcome mail from our readers. To send us comments or questions about previous articles in the magazine, email us at: **GunTestsEditor@icloud.com.** *If you'll include the month and year of the article you're writing about, it's a big help. Also, please include your name, address, and phone number. We won't publish your personal information other than your name, but we may need to contact you about material in your letter.* **GT**

Semi-Auto 12 Gauges from Benelli, Beretta, and Mossberg

Designed to send lead down range in a hurry, the Beretta Model 1301 was a little easier to handle, giving it an edge over the Benelli Model M4 and the Mossberg Model 930 SPX.

While pump-action shotguns have long been the traditional standard for tactical firearms, for self defense and in law enforcement or combat situations, there are several semiautomatics on the market providing another option to the shooting public. Touching off a round with every pull of the trigger in a semiautomatic, rather than having to shuck a shell into the chamber each time with a pump action, just fits the tastes of a lot of shooters on the range and when there is a need for speed in self-defense situations. In most cases, semiautomatics are slightly faster and easier to hold on target than their pump-action cousins. At the request of a reader interested in semiautomatic tacticals, we were able to obtain a trio of these special firearms to test and review. The models included a Benelli Model M4, listing for $1,999; a Beretta Model 1301, listing for $1,075; and a Mossberg Model 930 SPX with a suggested retail of $836. Other than the pistol grip featured on the Benelli, the three shotguns were remarkably similar in appearance, with identical Ghost Ring rear sights. The difference in handling ability and speed proved to be the major factor separating the best from the rest.

In the days of old, being quicker on the draw often meant the difference between winning and losing a gun battle — with certain caveats. Accuracy and reliable functioning of the firearm were also important in situations where a shooter's life might depend upon a second, third, fourth, or fifth shot being fired quickly and effectively.

In today's world, self-defense scenarios in which multiple shots are required to eliminate a threat are, thankfully, rare for most law-abiding citizens. However, there can be cases where personal needs or personal desires can lead a shooter to look at the possibility of putting a semiautomatic shotgun into play.

Such is the case with a Gun Tests reader who contacted us with a request for a review of three semiautomatic tactical shotguns readily available to today's shooting public. He specifically requested evaluations of a Benelli Model M4, listing for $1,999; a Beretta Model 1301, listing for $1,075; and a Mossberg Model 930 SPX with a suggested retail of $836. While the price range of the three semiautomatics is quite a stretch, the appearance, handling ability, and speed of the trio are very similar.

Just like in the world of clay target shooting, a key factor with semiautomatics is their ability to reliably function. Some shooters have been heard to refer to semiautomatics as "jam-o-matics" because of failures to cycle loads. On the clay target range, a jam at the wrong time can mean the loss of a target; but in a self-defense situation, a jam can leave a shooter holding a club in a gunfight.



From top: Here is just a portion of the empties ejected during function tests with a Benelli Model M4, a Mossberg Model 930 SPX, and a Beretta Model 1301. Our Benelli regularly failed to eject lower-velocity managed-recoil buckshot loads.

Being certain a firearm will function every time is a very important factor in a shooter's decision to select the right firearm for the right use at the right time. To test the functioning ability, speed of fire, and speed of loading — in addition to checking the accuracy of our three semiautomatics — we selected a trio of loads that could feasibly be put into play as part of potential self-defense or possible close-combat situations. The ammunition included Remington ShurShot Heavy Dove 2.75-inch, 3.25-dram-equivalent loads

packing 1⅛ ounce of No. 6 shot with an average muzzle velocity of 1255 fps; Remington Managed-Recoil No. 00 Buckshot 2.75-inch loads moving eight pellets at an average muzzle velocity of 1200 fps; and Winchester PDX1 Defender 2.75-inch loads pushing a 1-ounce segmented rifled slug at an average muzzle velocity of 1600 fps.

We used Birchwood Casey Eze-Score BC-27 Green Targets for all of our testing, with slug tests at targets set 30 yards downrange (about the maximum for a self-defense situation); and set at 20 yards downrange for the buckshot and No. 6 shot loads. Here are our findings:

Beretta Model 1301 Tactical J131T18 12 Gauge, $1075

This 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

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



The oversized bolt of the Beretta was appreciated by both our ham-fisted handlers and petite shooters during our firearm drills, as was the oversized action release and safety.



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 Ghost Ring rear sight of the Beretta was similar to the sights of the other two shotguns, and we had no problems acquiring targets during our patterning and speed-firing drills.

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, but only 0.16 second faster than the Benelli and 0.3 second faster than the Mossberg.

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. Like the other two test shotguns, 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. A nice, crisp, smooth and light trigger pull is a bonus factor appreciated by shotgun shooters almost as much as rifle and pistol aficionados.

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.

In speed drills, the Beretta outshined the other two test shotguns by a narrow margin, we thought. During the five-shot 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

MOSSBERG MODEL 930 SPX TACTICAL NO. 85360
12 GAUGE, $836
GUN TESTS GRADE: B

We were a little disappointed in the Mossberg's patterning, but did not consider the slightly larger groups to be a deal breaker. The lighter hit to the pocket book, along with its handling ability and flawless functioning, were key factors in our ranking.



Action Type	Semiautomatic
Chamber Size	2.75 to 3 in.
Overall Length	39 in.
Capacity	8
Weight (Unloaded)	7.5 lbs.
Weight (Loaded)	8.25 lbs.
Barrel Length	18.5 in.
Barrel	Matte Black
Receiver	Flat Black
Choke	Fixed (Cylinder)
Buttstock	Black Synthetic
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.25 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.25 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	1.5 in.
Forearm	Black Synthetic
Forearm Length	11.25 in.
Front Sight	Elevated Red Fiber Optic
Rear Sight	Ghost Ring (adjustable)
Trigger Pull Weight	6 lbs.
Warranty	2-Year Limited
Telephone	(800) 363-3555
Website	Mossberg.com
Made In	U.S.A.



We were pleased with the Mossberg's safety, located on top of the receiver. This type of safety is easy to find and operate, even when wearing gloves or in low-light conditions.



Very similar to the Beretta, we liked the feel and shoulder-snuggle factor of the Mossberg. Only slightly less solid in the shooting platform ranking because of the checkering in the grip, we found recoil was acceptable with all test loads.



The red fiber-optic front sight provided us with a very visible hold point during both the patterning and speed drills and was easily centered in the rear Ghost Ring sight.



We found the 11.25-inch forearm provided a fine hold when moving the Mossberg through targets during rapid-fire drills.

BENELLI MODEL M4 TACTICAL NO. 11707
12 GAUGE, $2000
GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

Acknowledging its reputation as a fine military shooting tool, we could not get past its higher price and failure to cycle low-velocity loads during our field tests. In addition, a 12-pound trigger pull borders on unacceptable in our ranking of a high-quality self-defense firearm.



Action Type	Semiautomatic	Buttstock Length of Pull	14.75 in.
Chamber Size	2.75 to 3 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Overall Length	39.75 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.5 in.
Capacity	5	Forearm	Black Synthetic
Weight (Unloaded)	8 lbs.	Forearm Length	7.75 in.
Weight (Loaded)	8.75 lbs.	Front Sight	Elevated White Dot
Barrel Length	18.5 in.	Rear Sight	Ghost Ring (adjustable)
Barrel	Matte Black	Trigger Pull Weight	12 lbs.
Receiver	Matte Black	Warranty	10-Year Limited
Choke	Screw-In Internal (Mod Included)	Telephone	(800) 264-4962
Buttstock	Black Synthetic Pistol Grip	Website	BenelliUSA.com
		Made In	Italy



We would have ranked the M4 a little higher if not for the small bolt handle, tiny bolt-release button, and safety at the back of the trigger guard. They were simply not as easy to use as the oversized features of the other two semiautomatics in the test.



Acknowledging that personal preference would influence the favorability factor, we found that while the full pistol grip on the Benelli's stock did help hold the shotgun on target when it was shouldered, handling and loading the shotgun was not as quick as with the Beretta or Mossberg.



Left: The Benelli had a quick and easy to use Ghost Ring rear sight. Below: The 7.5-inch-long forend was about half the size of the other two forearms, leading to less-than-stellar handling.



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 in our evaluation of the semiautomatic.

Mossberg Model 930 SPX Tactical No. 85360 12 Gauge, $836

Almost a mirror image of the Beretta, but just a little larger and heavier, the Mossberg also had a good heft and balance right out of the box. Available for just a bit more than $800, we were impressed with the way the Mossberg provided a solid platform and moved well between the hands when acquiring targets.

The Mossberg weighed in at 7.5 pounds and measured 39 inches in length with a length of pull of 14.25 inches. The drop at the comb was 1.25 inches and the drop at the heel was 1.5 inches. Those measurements were very comfortable for our shooting team.

Like the Beretta, the Mossberg also features an oversized bolt knob that allows a shooter to easily open the action. We were also very pleased with the Mossberg's safety located on top of the receiver. This type of safety is easy to find and operate, even when wearing gloves or in low-light conditions.

Rather than the white-dot front sight of both the Beretta and the Benelli, the Mossberg features a red fiber-optic bar that is quite easy to see, even in low-light conditions, through the Ghost Ring rear sight.

While it was not uncomfortable

to handle and fire, the checkering on the Mossberg's forearm and stock was a little less sharp than that of the Beretta and did not provide quite as good a shooting platform as we would have liked.

The trigger pull was just a little more than 6 pounds — not a deal breaker, but a little harder than what we would consider in the desirable range. There was no creep in the crisp pull.

During the live-fire testing, the Mossberg did not perform as well as either the Beretta or the Benelli. With the slugs, the Mossberg produced an 8.5-inch group of five shots at 30 yards, with a tendency to pull a little low left rather than stay dead center mass like the other two semiautomatics. The 20-yard test of No. 00 buckshot also seemed to have a tendency to hit a little low and left, with an average group of 8 pellets covering an 8-inch spread.

In the speed tests, we averaged a 1.3 second string of five shots; the first at 0.48 of a second; the second at 0.85 of a second; the third at 1.16 seconds; the fourth at 1.46 seconds, and the fifth at 1.78 seconds. That was 0.30 of a second slower than the Beretta and 0.14 of a second slower than the Benelli — a razor thin difference to be sure, but still slightly slower.

Putting the timer on a one-shot reloading drill, the Mossberg could be fired, reloaded, and fired again in 3.66 seconds, which was slower than the Beretta but faster than the Benelli. Like the Beretta, we felt the Mossberg was easy to handle and keep on target even during the rapid-fire testing.

Our Team Said: The low price is a big selling point for this semiautomatic that is just a bit bigger, heavier, and slightly harder to handle than the higher-priced Beretta. Other than the slightly poorer patterning performance, the Mossberg seems to be quite capable of serving as a solid shooting tool for self-defense situations.

Benelli Model M4 Tactical No. 85360 12 Gauge, $1999

The heavyweight of the group, also sporting the highest price tag, the Benelli has the heft and feel of a rugged shooting tool. As noted earlier, the shotgun we were provided for our test and review featured a full pistol-grip stock designed to help lock the firearm into shooting position. This type of grip works fine when the shotgun is snuggled into a shooter's shoulder, but can hinder the process of loading or cycling the action.

Weighing in at 8 pounds with an overall length of 39.75 inches, the Benelli was the big boy on the block in this semiautomatic match-up. We found the shotgun was not as well balanced and comfortable to handle as either of the other two semiautomatics in the test. Admittedly, there are some shooters who simply do not favor a full pistol grip on a stock, so personal preference may have influenced our evaluation.

In addition, we found the 7.75-inch grooved forearm (the shortest forearm among the trio) a little harder to handle than the other two semiautomatics, making it just slightly slower to bring on target.



The Benelli M4, left, produced better center-mass hits and slightly tighter groups with both slugs and buckshot.

We should note that the M4 was designed in 1998 for use by the U.S. Marine Corps and is the current combat service shotgun of the U.S. Joint Services — a testament to a firearm getting the job done efficiently and effectively. Still, one major downside we found in the Benelli was the very sluggish trigger pull with a 12-pound touch off. While not as important as it is with rifle and pistol shooters, trigger pull can still be a factor when shooting a scattergun to effectively engage a target. We would recommend a gunsmith adjustment on this firearm that would reduce the pull weight to somewhere in the 5- to 7-pound range.

Unlike the other two shotguns with fixed chokes, the Benelli featured a barrel threaded for internal choke tubes (a modified tube was supplied with the test firearm), providing shooters with a choke option for handling various shooting situations. The modified choke was most likely a factor in the patterning performance of the Benelli. A 4-inch group was produced with the slugs and an average group with the No. 00 buckshot measured just 5.5 inches across. Both groups were the best of all the test shotguns and were quite impressive.

We did encounter a problem with the managed-recoil buckshot loads that had an average muzzle velocity of 1,200 per second. The Benelli failed to eject or cycle any of the buckshot rounds. This could cause problems for shooters attempting to practice with low-velocity loads in order to reduce shoulder shock.

In the speed-loading test, the Benelli was a distant third. An average of 4.03 seconds was required to fire, reload, and fire again. During the five-shot drill, the Benelli could be cycled in an average of 1.16 seconds, with the first shot at 0.46 of a second; the second at 0.77 of a second; the third at 1.06 seconds; the fourth at 1.33 seconds, and the final shot at 1.62 seconds.

Our Team Said: We found the Benelli was just not quite as smooth handling as either of the other two shotguns, and we were a little uncomfortable with its bulk. While it has a solid history of rugged military use, we found the M4 does not transcend into home-defense mode as well as the other two shotguns in the test. Retailing for just under $2,000, we expected more from this Benelli semiautomatic that has a history of providing our military with a fine shooting tool. The heavy trigger pull of 12 pounds, its slightly clunky handling ability, and failure to cycle low-velocity ammunition were all factors lowering the ranking of this self-defense firearm.

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

VALUE GUIDE: RECENT SELF-DEFENSE SHOTGUN RATINGS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Century Arms Catamount Fury SG1874-N 3-inch 12 Gauge, ~$400	Mar 2016	D	The Fury SG1874-N looked like the Izhmash Saiga, but was plagued by malfunctions.
Century Arms Catamount Fury II SG1875-N 12 Gauge, ~$575	Mar 2016	D-	Beset by malfunctions, the Fury II SG1875-N shotgun was worse than its stablemate.
Chiappa Triple Threat No. 930-032 12 Gauge, $1599	Oct 2015	B-	Three barrels. Too unwieldy for anything other than close-quarters self-defense.
Standard Mfg. DP-12 DP01130 Pump-Action 12 Gauge, $1700	Oct 2015	C	The unique double pump was too unwieldy and too pricey for us.
Silver Eagle Ptarmigan SxS 12 Ga. GH200ACE1228, $1297	Oct 2015	D	Only suitable for self defense as a last-ditch resort, in our opinion.
Remington Model 870 Pump 81180 20 Gauge, $530	Sept 2015	A-	Good trigger, good handling and good patterning combined for its good ranking.
Legacy Escort Gladius Magnum 20 Gauge, $580	Sept 2015	B+	Attractive and functional tactical features, good handling. Needs a lighter trigger pull.
Tristar Tec-12 25120 Pump/Auto 12 Gauge, $689	July 2015	A-	Performed well in both pump-action and semi-automatic modes.
Mossberg Model 590 Magpul 50669 Pump 12 Gauge, $773	July 2015	C-	Excessive recoil and poor accuracy. Nice trigger pull of 5.5 pounds.
CZ-USA Model 612 HC-P 06510 12 Gauge, $366	June 2015	B+	This tactical firearm would be a fine self-defense tool for budget-minded shooters.
Weatherby PA-459 TR No. PA4591219PGM 12 Gauge, $499	June 2015	B-	This pump action performed well with only minor flaws in handling and accuracy.
Remington 870 Express Tactical Pump 81200 12 Gauge, $442	Feb 2015	A	The 870's 18.5-inch-long barrel handled quickly in close quarters.
Mossberg 930 Tactical SP Semi-Auto 85330 12 Gauge, $544	Feb 2015	B	Fast handling, kicked less than expected. Had a failure to extract.
Rock Island Armory M5 Pump 51329 3-in. 12 Gauge, $242	Feb 2014	B	Corrosion-resistant finish. Stiff safety and a malfunction knocked the grade down.
Winchester 1300 Pump Action 3-in. 12 Gauge, $250 Used	Feb 2014	B-	Smooth, reliable, and deadly accurate with slugs, we found out.
Tristar Raptor A-TAC Semi-Auto HD 20120 3-Inch 12 Gauge, $450	Jan 2014	A-	Showed flawless operation with full-power loads of all types in our testing.
Stevens M320 Home Defense 19495 Pump 12 Gauge, $270	Oct 2013	A	Inexpensive; we could find no fault with it as an effective self-defense tool.

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

Full-Size 10mm Pistols from SIG, Glock, and Rock Island Arsenal

The Glock was the softest shooting, and the SIG was refined, but the RIA was a real tackdriver when firing this high-performance round. For self-defense or hunting, each may have a role for you.

The 10mm Auto cartridge seems to be going through a renaissance. There is new ammunition being manufactured in velocities the 10mm was intended for, like in the newer SIG Elite Performance ammo, and firearms manufacturers such as Glock and SIG have offered new pistols chambered in the round, the G40 Gen4 MOS and P220-10, respectively. We wanted to take a look at the 10mm in a full-size pistol that we could easily open-carry on the back 40 or concealed under a jacket or coat for in town. Since there are numerous examples of 10mm pistols to test, we also wanted to see if a different platform favored the big-bore caliber.

As we tested, we gained renewed respect for the 10mm round. Some testers even thought the round may be a liability in a self-defense situation due overpenetration. If we were in a crowded mall and were able to get solid center-of-mass hits on an attacker, we wondered whether certain loads would overpenetrate and hit a bystander. We do think it is a good round to punch through vehicles with and to stop big bears, and we also feel it is an excellent hunting cartridge if kept to bow-hunting distances on feral swine, whitetails, and small black bears. Around bystanders, we would most likely stick with the 10mm Lite or 10mm FBI loads if we carried the 10mm concealed.

The 10mm Auto creates a maximum pressure in the range of 37,500 psi. Compare that to the 45 ACP, which has about 21,000 psi with 230-grain ball ammo. The round was the brainchild of Jeff Cooper and a few like-minded individuals who wanted better terminal ballistics than the venerable 45 ACP could produce. The 10mm Auto exceeds 357 Magnum power and is very close to that of the 41 Magnum. The 10mm Auto is a brute of a round with the type of recoil you would expect from a magnum revolver. The mythical Bren Ten was one of the first semi-automatic pistols chambered in the round. The pistol never really lived up to its expectations due to magazine difficulties and the 10mm Auto thoroughly trouncing the Bren Ten's mechanism. The 10mm Auto has such a fast-moving bullet that it tends wreak havoc with the pistol's recoil mechanism. Colt first chambered its 1911 Series 80 in the cartridge in 1987, and it caused receivers to crack where the slide stop fits into the receiver. A



The Glock G20 Gen4 (top right), the SIG Sauer P220-10 Match Elite (middle), and the RIA Tac Ultra FS (bottom) each has its own design philosophy for a 10mm pistol, and all three performed exceptionally well — soft recoiling (for the most part), accurate, consistent, and reliable. Costs between the three contenders ranged from $687 to $1417, however, making the Glock our overall value choice.



On the Rock Island pistol, the slide stop cut is rounded on the top to avoid stress. Original Colt Delta Elites had square slide-stop holes that cracked.

relief cut was made by Colt to fix the situation, and the company's pistols in 10mm ran fine thereafter. When the FBI adopted the round after the Miami-Dade shoot out in 1986 due to agents' underperforming handgun cartridges, the Bureau soon realized agents could not or had a hard time handling the recoil of the 10mm Auto. The Bureau had adopted the cartridge first, then adopted the S&W Model 1076, which was purpose-built for the round. The FBI's solution was to load the 10mm light, which made it more tolerable to agents. The 10mm loads became known as 10mm Lite or 10mm FBI. We all know the light 10mm load is nothing but a 40 S&W in a longer case. The 10mm Auto produces about 300 foot-pounds more energy than the 40 S&W when the 10mm Auto is loaded to its standard velocity, and it's even hotter with niche ammo like that from Buffalo Bore. The 40 S&W changed the way law enforcement looked at cartridges, and the 10mm Auto might have been forgotten if it were not for some diehard fans — one of whom is on the Gun Tests staff.

Our shooters chose three very popular platforms to test the 10mm Auto: a 1911 design from Rock Island Arsenal (RIA), the SIG P220 model, which custom gunsmiths have been converting to 10mm for years, and the large Glock frame, which has been chambered in 10mm since 1991. All of these pistols in other calibers, namely 45 ACP, have received high grades in the past from us, so our expectation was these pistols would perform, and they did. All the pistols ran exceptionally well, with no malfunctions or jams. That says a lot because some 10mm Auto pistols are finicky because factory ammo is loaded light, standard, and heavy. We used an assortment of ammo; two light loads from Federal and two standard 10mm Auto loads from SIG in the Elite Performance Ammunition line, that are much faster than the Federal's load. The Federal loads consisted of American Eagle 180-grain FMJs which clocked slightly over 1000 fps, and Personal

ROCK ISLAND ARMORY TAC ULTRA FS 10MM, $819

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

This 10mm offered lots of custom 1911 features and great accuracy at a good price.



Action	Locked Breech Single Action Semi-Auto
Overall Length	8.8 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	32.5 oz.
Weight Loaded	40.9 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in.
Capacity	8+1 (single stack)
Slide	Parkerized, Steel
Frame	Parkerized, Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.3 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	VZ Operator G-10
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.8 in.
Front Sight	Dovetail Fiber Optic front
Rear Sight	Adjustable
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	4.8 lbs.
Trigger Span (SA)	2.8 in.
Magazines	2; Steel
Safety	Ambidextrous thumb, beavertail grip
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Website	Armscor.com
Made In	Philippines



Note the paper clip which was required to field strip the RIA.



The RIA uses a flared barrel and solid one-piece recoil guide rod, both of which help to enhance accuracy.



The extended beavertail offered a good hold, but some testers said the aggressively textured G10 grips abraded their palms.

Protection 180-grain Hydra-Shok JHPs, which had an average muzzle velocity of slightly under 1000 fps. The SIG ammo averaged well over 1200 fps, except for the V-Crown 180-grain JHP in the Glock. The Glock showed lower velocity across the board with all the ammos compared to the SIG and RIA. Note the Glock barrel is also half an inch shorter than the RIA and SIG barrels.

We used open sights and a rest and fired at targets placed 25 yards down range. With all three pistols we could get 5-shot groups at under 2 inches. Testers felt the pistols were accurate. We also fired for speed at 10 yards to get a sense of follow-up accuracy. We found the recoil from these beasts opened up our groups. These are not pistols for those sensitive to recoil, and we don't recommend having a new shooter start on a 10mm unless you want to cause a permanent flinch. Experienced shooters felt the pistols helped us manage recoil; in particular, the Glock and SIG did better than the RIA. As always, we also found other characteristics to love and hate. Here's the dope:

Rock Island Armory TAC Ultra FS 10mm, $819

The TAC Ultra FS is manufactured in the Philippines by Armscor. Out of the box, it has a bold look due to the full dust cover and Picatinny-style accessory rail. Some testers did not like the look or how it dragged along the mouth of a holster when holstering and unholstering, but all did appreciate the extra heft the full dust cover gave the pistol. It has a rather plain, but well executed, Parkerized finish. The G10 grips offered a lot of traction, and some shooters felt they rasped their palms after extended firing. The SIG and Glock grip did not abrade the skin in the same way.

The TAC Ultra FS was equipped with all the features we have come to expect in a 1911— extended beavertail, ambidextrous thumb safety, magazine-well funnel, high traction grips, excellent sights, match-grade barrel, one-piece recoil

SIG SAUER P220-10 MATCH ELITE 10MM, $1417

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

Diehard SIG fans liked this pistol. It was refined and pleasant to shoot, but very expensive compared to the others. Best suited for hunting or target shooting.



Action	Locked Breech, SA/DA, Semi-Auto
Overall Length	8.7 in.
Overall Height	5.7 in.
Maximum Width	1.2 in.
Weight Unloaded	44 oz.
Weight Loaded	52.4 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in.
Capacity	8+1 (single stack)
Slide	Matte black, steel
Frame	Matte stainless, steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.3 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	G-10 Piranha
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.8 in.
Sights	SIGLITE three-dot night sights
Trigger Pull Weight (DA)	8.6 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	4.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.0 in.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.7 in.
Magazines	2; Stainless Steel
Safety	Decocker
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Website	SIGSauer.com
Made In	USA



No tools were required to disassemble the SIG.



The SIG's G10 grip offered good adhesion without abrasion.



The rear and front sights on the SIG were tritium-filled and glowed in darkness.

RANGE DATA

SIG Sauer Elite 10mm Auto 180-gr. FMJ	SIG Sauer P220-10 Match Elite	Glock G20 Gen4	RIA Tac Ultra FS
Average Velocity	1222 fps	1200 fps	1244 fps
Muzzle Energy	597 ft.-lbs.	576 ft.-lbs.	619 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.6 in.	1.4 in.	1.0 in.
Average Group	1.9 in.	1.8 in.	1.6 in.

SIG Sauer V-Crown 10mm Auto 180-gr. JHP	SIG Sauer P220-10 Match Elite	Glock G20 Gen4	RIA Tac Ultra FS
Average Velocity	1231 fps	968 fps	1276 fps
Muzzle Energy	606 ft.-lbs.	375 ft.-lbs.	651 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.8 in.	0.7 in.	1.5 in.
Average Group	2.1 in.	1.1 in.	1.9 in.

Federal Premium Personal Defense 10mm Auto 180-gr. Hydra-Shok JHP	SIG Sauer P220-10 Match Elite	Glock G20 Gen4	RIA Tac Ultra FS
Average Velocity	983 fps	856 fps	1012 fps
Muzzle Energy	386 ft.-lbs.	293 ft.-lbs.	409 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.7 in.	0.7 in.	0.5 in.
Average Group	1.9 in.	1.2 in.	0.7 in.

Federal American Eagle 10mm Auto 180-gr. FMJ	SIG Sauer P220-10 Match Elite	Glock G20 Gen4	RIA Tac Ultra FS
Average Velocity	1078 fps	1043 fps	1058 fps
Muzzle Energy	465 ft.-lbs.	435 ft.-lbs.	447 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.7 in.	1.6 in.	1.1 in.
Average Group	2.0 in.	2.6 in.	1.2 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 25 yards with open sights. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph with the first screen set 15 feet from the muzzle.

guide rod — features normally found on high-dollar 1911 pistols. Needless to say, the 1911 fans found a lot to like in this pistol.

The TAC Ultra FS uses a Series 70 system, so there is no internal firing pin safety. The slide and slide stop are forged. In lieu of the traditional barrel bushing, it uses a one-piece guide rod and bull barrel that locks up at the muzzle with a tight fit in the slide to aid accuracy. It also requires a paperclip to field strip. The SIG and Glock do not require a tool to field strip. The barrel is stainless steel with a built-in feed ramp like a Clark Custom barrel. The integral ramp fully supports the case, so there is no gap between the frame and barrel for bullet noses to get hung up on.

The slide serrations were angled at the front and rear and gave good traction when racking the slide. The top of the slide is domed, like old-school GI-style pistols, with the red fiber-optic front sight dovetailed in place, as was the dehorned adjustable two-dot rear sight. We found the TAC FS shot high out of the box and needed to be cranked down. The rear sight was flush with the rear of the slide for maximum sight radius. The adjustment clicks were precise. In use, the sights on the RIA offered the best sight picture, followed by the SIG and then the Glock.

Serrations on the front grip strap and a checkered polymer main spring housing helped provide a solid grip, while the upswept beaver tail allowed a higher grip on the pistol with no hammer bite. The speed bump on the grip safety was oversized, so a less-than-perfect grip will still deactivate the grip safety. The skeletonized hammer has plenty of grip to cock and uncock the hammer. The extended ambidextrous safety flicked on and off with precise clicks. The trigger was also skeletonized and was adjustable for overtravel. Vertical serrations on the trigger face keeps your finger on the trigger, even under recoil. The trigger had a slight bit of take up and a bit of creep before it broke, on average, at 4.8 pounds.

The aggressively textured VZ Operator II grips have a golf-ball pattern near the outer edge of the grip and near the front strap and deep diagonal cuts on the rest of the grip. A thumb-recess notch allows better access to the magazine release. Some testers thought the grips were too raspy for the 10mm recoil. A magazine funnel

on the butt of the receiver is held down by the grip-panel screws. The funnel ensured faster reloads and required base pads on the magazines so they could be slammed home with the palm of our hand. Two 8-round magazines with metal bodies and followers and rubber base pads came with the pistol. Loading these magazines was easy on the thumbs.

Disassembly requires a paperclip to trap the recoil spring guide, which can be a pain, especially at the range or in the field where a paper clip may not be available.

All ammunition cycled flawlessly through the RIA. We also found that the TAC FS was very accurate. One tester was able to group six of the eight holes touching, creating one large hole. We did have to tighten the grip screws after about 200 rounds, but that should easily be part of your maintenance procedure.

Our Team Said: Recoil was very controllable, with the extended dust cover helping to reduce muzzle flip, though some felt the grips were raspy. Accuracy was the best of all three pistols tested. The paperclip to disassemble was an extra tool to carry, and the price seemed very fair for how well this 1911 was equipped.

SIG P220-10 Match Elite 10mm, $1417

The P220-10 is a refined and substantial pistol weighing in at 52.4 ounces with a loaded magazine. The weight really helped to reduce felt recoil, as our testers soon found out. It uses a full-mass slide to help combat recoil. Other P220 slides have lightening cuts, depending on the model variant. Out of the box, the Reverse Two-Tone Stainless finish was impeccable and looked sharp with the green toothy G10 Piranha grips. In hand, the SIG did not have the girth of the Glock, which felt chunky in hand and was harder for shooters with small hands to control. The RIA had a similar girth as the SIG due to the grip panels, which could be adjusted with aftermarket grips but at an additional cost.

The SIG's slide was finished in matte black finish and equipped

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



Field-stripping is easy and tool-less. Note the dual-coil recoil spring to help reduce felt recoil.



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.

VALUE GUIDE: 10MM & 40 S&W HANDGUN RANKINGS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
H&K USP Compact 40 V 1 40 S&W, $799	Dec 2006	A	Rated "Our Pick," at this price it should be the best. Finished first in accuracy and speed.
Kahr P40 40 S&W, $707	July 2005	A	Rated "Our Pick," we liked the look, feel, and especially the rapid-fire potential of the P40.
Smith & Wesson 4046 (DAO) 40 S&W, $290	May 2003	A	This police trade-in was worn but needed only a recoil spring to be ready for carry again.
Smith & Wesson 610 10mm Revolver, $684	Nov 2000	A	You can hunt and play a lot of different games with this gun. Hard to find used.
Smith & Wesson M&P40c 109203 40 S&W, $480	Jan 2015	A-	Credible handgun with good design, reliability, and combat-shooting performance.
Heckler & Koch P30S V3 40 S&W, $1005	Oct 2010	A-	Fastest shooter. Offers a modular grip, multiple safeties, and a refined single-action trigger.
Glock 29 10mm, $637	Oct 2011	A-	Accuracy and power in a surprisingly controllable package.
Springfield XD Service Bi-Tone XD9302HCSP06 40 S&W, $605	Nov 2009	A-	A lot of value for the money. Shot well, decent trigger, and we liked its safety features.
Smith & Wesson M&P40 No. 209200 40 S&W, $495	Oct 2007	A-	It gets a lot of things right. The beavertail, sights, and slide cuts were excellent.
Kahr PM40 No. 4043 40 S&W, $786	Oct 2009	A-	Not a blindingly fast pistol, but precise and powerful. A best bet for ankle carry.
Smith & Wesson Model 610 10mm, $833	May 2004	A-	Handles more powerful 10mm rounds and 40 S&W rounds with exceptional accuracy.
Walther PPS No. WAP10002 40 S&W, $713	Oct 2009	A-	For summertime carry or as a matching backup piece, the PPS may be hard to beat.
FNH-USA FNP-40 40 S&W No. 47832, $450	July 2013	B+	Clean ergonomics in the grip, smooth and easy use, simple takedown.
Glock G22 Gen4 40 S&W, $649	Oct 2010	B+	The Gen 4 grip system should make this gun more appealing to a wider variety of shooters.
SIG Sauer SP2022 E2022-40-B 40 S&W, $570	July 2013	B	The grips had the best texture, but we preferred the overall ergonomics of others.
Beretta PX4 Storm JXS4F20FC 40 S&W, $511	Jan 2015	B	The Storm isn't the lightest 40-caliber subcompact, but it is among the easiest to fire.
Walther PPQ No. 2776481 40S&W, $680	July 2013	C+	Tricky takedown method and unusual magazine release made it stand out good and bad.

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

with SIGLite three-dot night sights with tritium inserts. We found the sights were large and easy to use. Slide serrations are angled and placed forward and aft. They offered a positive grip to rack the slide. The matte-stainless receiver has checkering on the front grip strap, and the backstrap is formed by the grips. It was contoured to better fit your hand and offered a positive grip with no abrasion. The grips had a golf-ball-dimple texture on the sides and a backstrap that sticks to your hand, but does not abrade your skin during recoil. Testers with small-to-average-sized hands could comfortably grip and fire the pistol without the pistol shifting in their grip during recoil. The trigger guard was undercut in the rear, and with the semi-beavertail, it allowed testers to grip the pistol higher and closer to the bore's axis, thus there was less felt recoil. An accessory rail gave users the opportunity to mount accessories. It was smoother and less toothy than the rail on the RIA, we thought.

The SIG is traditional, using a double-action/single-action trigger. The first shot is fired DA with a long smooth press followed by SA mode. Both trigger modes were crisp. DA pull averaged 8.6 pounds but felt lighter, and SA was 4.5 pounds on average. Located on the left side of frame was a decocker; the only manual safety on the pistol that safely decocks the pistol from SA to DA. The SIG also incorporated a firing pin block. The pistol will fire with the magazine removed. A loaded-chamber indicator tells shooters a cartridge or a case is in the chamber. Field stripping does not require tools and is fast.

The magazines are made of steel with a polymer follower and floorplate pad. Witness holes indicating how many rounds remain were marked on the exterior. Loading the magazine was easy on testers' thumbs.

At 25 yards, testers found the SIG was easy to shoot averaging five-shot groups at two inches. Recoil was quite controllable, which testers attributed to the pistol's weight. Some likened the recoil to a .45 ACP +P.

Our Team Said: This is more of a hunting pistol because it was large and heavy for concealed carry. We would own one in a heartbeat — expect for the price. So for those readers who don't want us to factor money into the grade, just buy this one.

Glock G21 Gen4 10mm, $687

The G21 Gen4 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.



This is the G20 Gen4 with optional 6-inch hunting barrel installed. Velocity increased with it, but it was still slower than the 5-inch barrels on the SIG and RIA.

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, yet still put its total cost well under the cost of the SIG and near the cost of RIA

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, and its price was the least of all three pistols. 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.

Written and photographed by Robert Sadowski, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.*
Special thanks to Eastern Outfitters (easternoutfitter.com) of Hampstead, North Carolina, for their assistance. GT

AK-Pattern 5.56/223 Rifles: We Test Izmash and Archer

AR-15 shooters will ask, 'Why buy an AK in this chambering when there is a perfectly good American design for the round?' We answer this question and more in head-to-head testing.

Putting new calibers in old designs is a popular trend, proving you can teach an old dog new tricks. In this test we look at the classic AK-47 platform chambered in 5.56x45mm to see if the new trick would fit the old dog. Matching a new rifle to an old favorite in caliber means keeping fewer types of ammo around the house, so we wondered how the AK would perform with the smaller 5.56mm NATO round to match our favorite AR platforms. Many AR and M4 variants are now available in a range of chambers, from 22-caliber plinkers to 300 Blackout and most things in between, including 7.62x39mm, so this switch works both ways if you want it to. We recently found two AK-styled rifles chambered in 5.56 NATO that we could perhaps upgrade into something better, if the base rifle functioned well enough to consider making the initial investment. Depending on their performance, these two AK-47 variants chambered in the NATO 5.56x45 round might be nice additions to a collection and would make a great companion to an AR in the same caliber.

We found a Polish Archer, imported by I.O. Interordnance, and an Izhmash Saiga Sport, imported by TGI, Inc., of Knoxville, Tennessee, to compete in a head-to-head contest of fit, form, and function, with considerations toward making modifications. Here's what we learned:





Above: The Izhmash Saiga Sporter would be a fine base from which to accessorize a field rifle to exactly your liking. It needs a better trigger in particular. The Archer rifle, below, had a Tapco trigger that we liked, but our test sample showed irritating malfunctions throughout the test despite ammo and mag changes.

Izhmash Saiga Sport 5.56x45mm, $599

Before we get to the rifle itself, we should note the troubled provenance of this particular rifle and why we're reporting just about the imported product itself, and not its national availability. The rifle is stamped "TGI KNOX TN" on the left rear receiver, designating that the importer was Tennessee Guns International, Inc. of Knoxville, Tennessee. According to a Department of Justice release from March 27, 2014, Charles M. Jones III, former owner and president of (TGI), was sentenced in U.S. District Court to serve one year of probation and 100 hours of community service as a result of his felony conviction for importation of goods (firearms) by false statements. Jones pleaded guilty to the offense pursuant to a plea agreement, the release said. The plea agreement also resulted in TGI forfeiting and relinquishing several thousand firearms and firearms parts that were seized from TGI. Now, TG International, operating out of Louisville, imports and sells parts and accessories from Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Finland, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, and Austria, but does not list any firearms on its website. So, in the nearby module for this rifle, there's no contact information or other support listed. However, CDNN lists what we believe is a similar or identical rifle for $499, and other vendors may sell it as well.

The Izhmash Saiga Sport is a Russian-made AK-47-style rifle. While Izhmash is more famous for the Saiga 12 shotgun model and the 7.62x39mm AK-47, the 5.56 NATO model still holds true to the bigger Saiga designs. The first point about the Saiga is also the first thing most people change after purchase, the trigger. The Sport model of the AK-47 is a modification of the original design to make previous versions easier to pass import regulations, most notably the trigger has been moved backward toward the rifle stock. Also, the pistol grip is missing, and the foregrip is longer, covering the gas tube. This makes the overall look slightly less like a traditional AK and more like a hunting rifle with an AK receiver.

The trigger occupies space that usually holds a pistol grip, but the pins in the receiver are all in the original

location, so the mechanism has been extended. This creates a 7.5-pound, longer, mushier break on the trigger, and it was very noticeable when stacked up to the Tapco G2 in the Archer. With its rifle stock, it does not resemble a typical AK, and the ergonomics are off as well.

Shooting it more like a semi-automatic hunting rifle with a rough trigger, and less like a normal AK, led to respectable out-of-the box accuracy, with our team averaging groups of 1.37 inches at 50 yards with a scope. We shot the Saiga with a Leapers UTG 5th Generation quick detachable Picatinny-style double rail mount MNT-978, available for $28 from MidwayUSA.com. This mount allows for a scope to be mounted on an AK-47. It is constructed of machined aluminum and is adjustable to fit the majority of side rail variants. It features a quick-detach lever for simple installation and removal. It has STANAG dimensions and 12 slots on the top rail and eight slots on side rail. The best part of shooting the Saiga was the all-day reliability, with no failures in our tests with any ammunition, steel or brass cases, 5.56 or 223 Rem., and both magazines that came with the gun. The Saiga and the Archer each came with one magazine, and they were not the same. Testing both magazines with all three types of ammunition through the Saiga went well, with no feeding or ejection issues.

Our Team Said: The Saiga ended up being exactly what we expected after our experience with its 7.62x39 big brother. This was an AK-47 that doesn't quite look the part, but sure does work like it. The B+ grade is the result of all the things we wish we could change on this rifle, such as the trigger and lack of a pistol grip. Functionally, our testing with the Saiga was flawless, and as a quick online search or conversation with your local gunsmith will tell you, the conversion process to make the Sport a traditional AK is not difficult or expensive.

Fabryka Broni Archer 5.56x45mm, $900

Our test rifle was originally imported by I.O. Inc., based at the

IZHMASH SAIGA SPORT 5.56X45MM, $599

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The Saiga Sporter doesn't have the classic AK look, but it performed just like the real deal.



Action	Semi-Auto, Gas-Operated Rotating Bolt	Length of Pull	13.75 in.
Overall Length	37.75 in.	Rear Sight	Tangent Leaf, 100 to 300m
Overall Height	7.0 in.	Front Sight	Hooded Post, Adj. for Windage
Maximum Width	2.5 in.	Sight Radius	14.75 in.
Weight Unloaded	7.9 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	7.5 lbs.
Weight Loaded (w/30-rd mag)	9.1 lbs.	Safety	Lever Style
Barrel	16.0 in., Chrome Lined	Warranty	NA
Magazine	Detachable Box	Telephone	NA
Frame	Black Steel	Website	NA
Buttstock & Handguards	Fixed Polymer	Made In	Russia

The Izhmash Saiga Sport model has the trigger moved backward toward the rifle stock. Also, the pistol grip as found on the Archer is missing. This makes the Sport look less like a traditional AK.



Right: The rear and front sights on the Saiga are what the AK user would expect — typical ladder design rear and drift-adjustable front. We prefer to add an optic, which requires the placement of a mount, purchased separately.





Right, top and bottom: The main virtue of the Saiga was its all-day reliability. We had no failures in our tests with any ammunition or magazine. If you like the run-all-day nature of the 7.62x39 cartridge and rifle, you'll probably like this smaller chambering even more because it is easier to shoot.





time in Monroe, North Carolina. I.O. Inc. has since relocated to Palm Bay, Florida. Fabryka Broni, also known as Łucznik Arms, is a Polish arms manufacturer in Radom, Poland. Łucznik translates to English as Archer or Bowman, which is why the rifle can be found listed as both Archer and Radom in the United States, depending on the seller. Ours was imported by I.O. Inc and is listed as a standalone Archer model on the company's website.

The Archer is the civilian model of the Beryl military rifle made for the Polish Armed Forces. This design is relatively new, being adopted by the Polish military in 1997, but it is still based on classic AK roots. The civilian version can be loaded out to match most of the military options, minus full automatic cycles and under-mounted grenade launchers. The optional rail, stocks, and handguard make the Archer tacti-cool, but we had our doubts about the top rail holding a zero after cleaning.

The Archer comes standard with a U.S.-made ProMag polymer magazine that counts towards the rifle's 922r compliance. Our inspection showed the rifle to be well made, if rough in spots. The Fabryka Broni "FB" inverted triangle logo adorned the left front part of the receiver. The four-position collapsible polymer stock was easy to adjust and had a thick and soft rubber recoil pad that felt good on the shoulder, but which wasn't entirely necessary to cushion the recoil of the light 5.56 ammo.

Elsewhere, we liked both the magazine-release paddle's oversized tab and enhanced safety lever, which made the Archer easy to manipulate. The large tab in the middle of the safety lever has a cutout, which holds the bolt carrier's charging handle, allowing the action to be locked open. The top rail Picatinny mount was made of steel and had a full-length sighting channel so the shooter could use always use iron sights, even with an optic mounted.

The telescoping stock adds a nice change in ergonomics, and the Tapco

— continued on page 24

FABRYKA BRONI ARCHER 5.56X45, $900

GUN TESTS GRADE: C

The Archer is definitely tacti-cool, but in our tests, it did not perform as well as it looked.



Action	Semi-Auto, Gas-Operated Rotating Bolt
Overall Length	35.5 to 38.25 in.
Overall Height	7.9 in.
Maximum Width	2.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	8.8 lbs.
Weight Loaded (w/-rd mag)	9.9 lbs.
Barrel	16.25 in., 1-10 RH Twist, Black Parkerized Steel
Magazine	Detachable Box
Frame	Military Finish
Buttstock & Handguards	4-Position Telescoping Stock, Plastic
Length of Pull	11 to 13.75 in.
Rear Sight	Tangent Leaf, 100 to 1000m Adj. for Elevation and Windage
Front Sight	Hooded Post, Adj. for Elevation
Sight Radius	14.5 in.
Trigger Pull Weight	4.5 lbs.
Safety	Lever Style
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Telephone	(321) 499-3819
Website	IOInc.us
Made In	Poland



One of the additions the Archer includes is a tab on the safety lever (arrow). It makes the safety easier to manipulate and it holds the bolt open.



Another Archer upgrade is the sizable steel Picatinny rail. Using a detachable LaRue base, we found taking the scope on and off the rifle held zero, which we didn't expect.



Here's what we didn't like about the Archer: stoppages. We tried a variety of ammunition and magazine combinations to sort this out, as well as a mid-test breakdown and cleaning, but the gun never ran as reliably as the Saiga, which had no hiccups.

VALUE GUIDE: SEMI-AUTO RIFLE RESULTS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
DPMS LR-308 AP4 7.62x51mm NATO/308 Win., $1399	Feb 2016	A-	Maneuverable enough to get in and out of pickups, with lots of punch.
Patriot Ordnance Factory P308-20 Gen3 7.62x51mm NATO, $2599	Feb 2016	B+	This is a lot of spend for only marginally better accuracy. We do recognize the quality.
Tresna Defense JAG9G BU 9mm Luger, $1100	Dec 2015	A-	This is a quality rifle with good accuracy. Compatible with Glock 9mm magazines of any size.
Stag Arms Model 9T 9mm Luger, $1275	Dec 2015	A-	The 9T offered a slightly better trigger pull and slimmer, more-user-friendly handguard.
S&W Model M&P15 Sport 811036 5.56mm NATO, $550	Nov 2015	B+	We didn't miss the dust cover and forward assist. Will suit the needs of budget AR buyers.
Daniel Defense DDM4v7LW 02-128-16524-047 5.56 NATO, $1350	Nov 2010	B	Well built. Graded down for its expense compared to the S&W rifle.
Battle Rifle Co. BR4 LIT Carbine 5.56 NATO/223 Rem., $1495	Aug 2015	A-	This was a well-made rifle with upgrades that we liked. It needed a better trigger.
CMMG Mk4LE 55AE160 5.56 NATO/223 Rem., $825	Aug 2015	B	Accuracy was acceptable, and the rifle seems well built. Completely reliable in our tests.
PTR PTR-91 G.I. 915304 308 Win./7.62 NATO, $850	June 2015	A-	The PTR 91 G.I. is a great rifle. Once broken in, the rifle gave excellent reliability and accuracy.
Century Arms C91 Sporter 308 Win/7.62 NATO, $509	June 2015	B	The Century rifle is worth the money. We traced a few short cycles to problematic magazines.
LWRCI M6A2 Gas Piston Carbine M6A2R6B16 6.8 SPC, $2250	May 2015	A	This is a well-put-together gun with heavy-duty components, but that turns into weight.
Battle Rifle Company BR4 Odin 6.8 SPC, $1495	May 2015	B	This gun required a cleaning to function. It was lighter, which makes it easier to carry.
Just Right Carbine (Glock Based) 45 ACP, $773	Feb 2015	A-	After a trip to the factory for warranty repair, the JRC became reliable, accurate, and useful.
Thureon Defense 45 ACP Carbine, $970	June 2014	A	Worked well with a variety of loads. Recent customer-service response worries us.
Beretta CX4 Storm PX4 JX4P415 40 S&W, $915	Mar 2014	A	Ergonomic, reliable, and accurate. We find nothing to fault in its performance.
Kel-Tec Sub-2000 40 S&W, $400	Mar 2014	B	A lightweight, affordable and useful carbine. Malfunctions caused the rate to go down.
IWI Tavor TSB16 5.56 NATO, $1999	Sept 2013	A-	Tricky takedown method and unusual magazine release made it stand out good and bad.

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

VALUE GUIDE: SEMI-AUTO RIFLE RESULTS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Wise Lite Arms Sterling L2A3 9mm Luger, ~$500	June 2013	A	This collectible had excellent construction and perfect operation.
Pioneer Arms Corp PPS-43C Pistol 7.62x25 Tokarev, $500	June 2013	B	The PPS-43C or Radom is one clumsy pistol, but an interesting piece of history.
Thureon Defense Carbine 9mm Luger, $700	June 2012	A	Makes the leap from a good home defender to a carbine effective for area defense
Kel-Tec Sub 2000 9mm Luger, $400	June 2012	A-	The Kel-Tec design really grows on you. The controls are well laid out.
MechTech Systems Carbine Conversion for Glock 9mm, $505	June 2012	B	An option for the Glock fan wishing to dedicate a pistol to the carbine concept.
UZI (Norinco) Carbine 9mm Luger, $800 (used)	Oct 2012	F	Going price for the Norinco UZI is far too high. And reliability was not good.
Kriss Super V Vector CRB/SO KCRBS0803801 45 ACP, $1895	Aug 2011	A-	Handled nicely, shot accurately. It's Swiss. Named a Gun of the Year.
Hi-Point Carbine w/Front Grip 4595TSFG 45 ACP, $340	Aug 2011	B	Yes, this was roughly assembled. But we can't look past the good sights and accuracy.
Heckler & Koch USC 45 Carbine 45 ACP, $1888	Aug 2011	C	It's just as expensive as the Kriss, but we vastly prefer the Swiss gun.
57Center AR57 PDW 5.7X28mm Upper, $696	Mar 2011	B+	The PDW Upper was functionally right with good design and execution.
Ruger K-Mini Thirty-P/20 No. 5853 7.62x39mm, $966	July 2010	B+	Liked the 20-round mag, but we would keep the flush-fit five-round magazines on hand.
DPMS Panther 16-Inch RFA2-762-16 7.62x39mm, $850	July 2010	B+	The gun can be delivered with options to suit the owner. Pay attention to mag quality.
Steyr AUG/A3 SA USA Bullpup Rifle 5.56x45mm NATO, $2000	Sept 2010	B	This gun is expensive, and our test gun gave us a lot of trouble that the others didn't.
MSAR STG-556 Bullpup Rifle 5.56x45mm NATO, $1750	Sept 2010	B	The MSAR was much more accurate with our test ammos, and we've seen it selling for less.
FN FS2000 Tactical 5.56x45mm NATO, $1995	Sept 2010	B-	We're hard pressed to recommend that you spend around $2000 for this gun.
SKS Standard Type 56 7.62x39 w/Fiberforce Stock, $510	July 2010	B	Found in good condition, these guns are reliable and not fussy about ammunition.
CMP-2 Inland Carbine 30 US Carbine, $495	Dec 2009	A	This is among our first choices of all the carbines, especially in light of its low price.

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

— continued from page 22

G2 trigger made most of the first magazine an enjoyable experience. As we sighted in the scope, we noticed a pattern of failures in the functioning of the Archer. Every second to last round in a magazine jammed. We were using the Brown Bear 223 Remington ammunition to sight in the scope, so we switched to the M855 5.56x45mm and the magazine the Saiga came with and had the same problem, the second to last round in the magazine failed to load. Performing our due diligence, we tried all three ammunition types and both magazines and found that using the M855 or Tul-Ammo in the original magazine worked best, in that it didn't have a feed failure on that second-to-last round every time, just most of the time. We tried not loading a full magazine, but the only configuration that never produced a failure was two rounds or fewer in a magazine, which leads to a lot of reloading. Overall accuracy was slightly outside of the Saiga at 1.5-inch average groups. We wanted to test the rail mount's return to zero, so after the testing was finished for accuracy, we field-stripped the rifle, pulling the top rail with scope off and cleaning and oiling the rifle in hopes this might help with our malfunction problems. We were pleasantly surprised with the zero on the scope after putting it back on, seeing no noticeable loss in accuracy after the rail removal. But malfunction issues on the second-to-last round persisted.

Our Team Said: We liked the overall fit and feel of the Archer, and the rail system is a great addition to the AK receiver, but we could not get past the rifle's feed failures. Also, the Saiga left little wear on the magazines, only minor scuffs on the outside of the plastic, while the Archer chewed up the topside of its magazine like a teething toddler. The gouges in the magazine did not seem to effect the functionality of it in either rifle, but it definitely looked bad, and in the long run might create some functional issues beyond what we experienced.

Another problem is the Archer magazines are expensive and hard to find. A recent check of magazine prices on GunBroker.com showed the proprietary magazines sell for upwards of $40 and there aren't that many listings.

All in, we would rather buy the $600 Saiga and have it converted with a better trigger and pistol grip. However, a similar supply problem exists for the Saiga 5.56 magazines, and may be worse. *Caveat emptor.*

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

RANGE DATA

Brown Bear 223 Rem.	**Fabryka Broni Archer**	**Izhmash Saiga**
Average Velocity	3072 fps	2996 fps
Muzzle Energy	1152 ft.-lbs.	1096 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.0 in.	0.5 in.
Largest Group	2.2 in.	2.0 in.
Average Group	1.6 in.	1.1 in.

M855 223 Rem.	**Fabryka Broni Archer**	**Izhmash Saiga**
Average Velocity	2960 fps	2984 fps
Muzzle Energy	1206 ft.-lbs.	1225 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.7 in.	0.3 in.
Largest Group	2.3 in.	2.9 in.
Average Group	1.5 in.	1.1 in.

Tul-Ammo 223 Rem.	**Fabryka Broni Archer**	**Izhmash Saiga**
Average Velocity	2915 fps	2956 fps
Muzzle Energy	1037 ft.-lbs.	1067 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.5 in.	0.8 in.
Largest Group	3.0 in.	2.8 in.
Average Group	1.4 in.	1.9 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five three-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 50 yards, with a Nikko Stirling 3-9x42mm riflescope mounted on the guns' rails. The Archer had the top rail supplied. To the Saiga, we added a Leapers UTG 5th Generation quick-detachable Picatinny-style double rail mount MNT-978, $28 from MidwayUSA.com. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph with the first screen set 15 feet from the muzzle.





Left is the Leapers UTG 5th Generation quick-detachable Picatinny-style double rail mount MNT-978, $28 from MidwayUSA.com. Made of machined aluminum, it adjusts to fit the majority of side-rail variants and has a quick-detach lever. At right is the Izhmash with the mount in place, holding the Nikko Stirling riflescope.

28-Gauge Showdown: Benelli, Franchi and Weatherby Face Off

Benelli's Legacy is a special gun for the special shooter. The Instinct L from Franchi may be the pro's choice, but the economical Weatherby SA-08 is our ultimate go-to sub-gauge.

In our May 2015 evaluation of 28-gauge shotguns, we focused on a pair of gas-operated semi-automatics and found both the Legacy Sports Pointer and the Beretta Excel shotgun had a lot to offer. Our intention was to follow up with two or three more gas-op 28-gauge autoloaders, but we ran into a problem. The actual number of 28-gauge shotguns of any description currently being produced is relatively small. So for anyone looking to buy a 28-gauge shotgun, they will need to widen their search and consider not just the gas-operated semi-automatics, but also recoil-operated semi-autos and over-under shotguns as well. That is just what we did when setting up shotguns for this test.

Our representative gas-operated shotgun was the Turkish-made $899 Weatherby SA-08 Deluxe. The Weatherby was actually scheduled for our 2015 evaluation, but a manufacturer's recall prevented us from acquiring one. The Weatherby in this year's test was an updated post-recall shotgun.

Next, Benelli is famous for its recoil-operated semi-automatic shotguns, but the company has adopted a term they feel is a more-accurate description — inertia driven, which may indeed offer a more suitable description of how it operates. That is the action in the $2039 Benelli Legacy tested here, one of the more refined semi-automatic shotguns available today.









Above and right: A single-shot station was the Benelli's forte. Firing at a second clay bird was a little more difficult because the recoil was more disruptive to the sight picture than with the other guns, we thought.

To round out the crew, we chose the $1,699 Franchi Instinct L, an over/under shotgun that is still light, despite having two barrels. Both the Benelli and the Franchi were made in Italy, and, not surprisingly, they are both owned by Beretta.

Our testing procedure began with patterning each shotgun from a distance of 25 yards with a Modified choke installed. Since the Franchi had two barrels and

Left, top and bottom: The $899 Weatherby SA-08 Deluxe was the one gun we all thought we'd buy. It had big-gun handling, and it seemed that we could do anything wanted to with the gun. It fit a lot of different people and transmitted the least felt recoil of our test guns. At American Shooting Centers in Houston, we put more lead downrange with the Weatherby SA-08 because it was the most comfortable to shoot, and everyone shot it well. The SA-08 is suitable for upland hunting as well as skeet, sporting clays, and 5 Stand. There aren't many bargains in the world of firearms, but here's one worth your attention.

order of fire was interchangeable upon command, we patterned each barrel as though it were two different shotguns, changing to the Modified choke for each pattern. Three shots were fired on the target to give us a true reading of pattern spread and point of impact.

All three guns accepted 2¾-inch shells, and our three test loads were each rated at 1200 fps carrying ¾ ounce shot charges. The Estate Super Sport Competition Target load held No. 7 ½ shot. Our Fiocchi 28GT8 load delivered No. 8s, and the Winchester ammunition was loaded with No. 9s.

The second phase of our tests was more fun than patterning, beginning at the self-pull stations at American Shooting Centers in Houston. From there we moved to ASC's skeet ranges. Here's what we learned about the shotguns on the range:

Weatherby 28 Gauge SA-08 Deluxe, $899

At first glance, it can be difficult to gauge what the Weatherby SA-08's chambering is. Only an inch or two longer than our other two shotguns, 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.

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.

The Weatherby offered the highest capacity. 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 of our three shotguns. We did have one failure to feed after about 200 rounds

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 28-gauge SA-08 shotguns are slightly different from the 12-gauge and 20-gauge models. There was nothing fancy about the gas system, but the piston was marked for light loads.



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.

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: This is the shotgun we'd probably choose over many 20-gauge semi-autos for all-round use. 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.

Benelli Legacy 28 Gauge 10435 Semi-Auto, $2039

For a lot of people, the Benelli Legacy may end up being the most expensive shotgun in their gun safe. Even if you paid more for another shotgun, the Legacy will likely remain a very special gun. The chrome coating on the bolt and bolt handle was as deep and rich as will be found. The lower portion of the nickel plate steel receiver was etched with scrollwork and two different landscapes below a pair of pheasants on each side. A gold shield amid elaborate leaf and scroll, with the number "28" engraved, adorns both sides as well. The pistol grip wore a badge proclaiming it was a 28 (gauge) on its butt.

The upper part of the receiver was

BENELLI LEGACY 10435 28 GAUGE $2039

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

Looks alone can sell this gun. Fit, pointing, and trigger make for an excellent first shot, but the Legacy's recoil demands greater effort to maintain control for successful follow-up shots.



Action Type	Semi-Auto, Recoil Operated
Chamber Size	2.75 in.
Overall Length	47.5 in.
Capacity	2+1
Weight Unloaded	5.1 lbs.
Barrel Length	26.0 in.
Barrel	Hammer-Forged, Crio-Treated
Receiver	Nickel-Plated Steel Lower, Blued Steel Upper
Choke Tubes	C, IC, M
Stock	Satin Walnut

Buttstock LOP	14.4
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.25 in.
Forearm	Walnut
Front Bead	Filament
Rear Bead	Brass
Rib Width	0.275 in.
Trigger	6.3 lbs.
Warranty	10 Years
Telephone	(800) 264-4962
Website	BenelliUSA.com
Made In/Assembled In	Italy/Italy



The appearance of the $2039 Benelli Legacy was rivaled only by its ability to mount and point. The thin forend offered superior ergonomics because its bulk did not have to hide a gas system. This also made the gun lighter, especially from beneath the support hand.



The upper portion of the action is like a cowl that slips onto the chamber end of the barrel.



The lower portion of the receiver was nickel plated and engraved with a different field scene on each side. The "28" medallion is gold plated.



The polymer trigger guard was machined rather than pieced together. Its signature Benelli shape, along with deeply beveled edges, leaves plenty of room for a gloved finger. Both semi-auto shotguns utilized crossbolt safeties. The bolt-release lever is at the front of the guard.

a heavy matte blue and was actually a separate piece entirely. Two-piece receivers are not that common, so the first time you assemble one, its bound to feel a little clumsy. The answer was to fit the upper part of the receiver on to the chamber end of the barrel and going forward, treat the barrel and upper as a single piece.

Unlike break-action shotguns, semi-automatics are not regularly disassembled except for cleaning. However, without gas flow to cycle the gun, the Inertia Driven action never seems to need cleaning. This includes the trigger assembly that can be removed by driving out a single pin from the receiver. As a result, you'll probably want a full-length soft case to go with the hard plastic takedown case that the Legacy arrives in.

The Legacy's buttpad was moderately thin but pliant, without being sticky. The wood fore and aft was very pleasing but not spectacular. Benelli lists the 20-gauge and 12-gauge Legacy shotguns as having AA-Grade Satin Walnut stocks. Both the 24-inch and our 26-inch-long barreled 28-gauge models ship with Satin Walnut stocks with WeatherCoat. Perhaps the maker fully expects the 28s to spend more time upland than in the safe, but we wondered why the less expensive guns were fit with a higher-grade wood. Checking with BenelliUSA customer service, we learned that the 28-gauge models cost about $240 more due to lower production volume rather than an upgrade in wood.

The trigger guard was machined from polymer stock with the sides beveled to guide the finger even when wearing a glove. A crossbolt safety was found at the high rear corner. The trigger was gold plated to match the gold medallion on the receiver. To the right-hand side on the forward edge of the trigger guard was a bolt-lock lever that served three purposes. Not only did it lock open the bolt on an empty chamber but also served to release a shell from the magazine. The appearance of the drop-down lever also served to indicate the hammer was cocked.

FRANCHI INSTINCT L 40811 O/U 28 GAUGE, $1699

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Franchi Instinct is a reasonably priced introduction to the world of serious shotguns. Our team agreed they wouldn't mind spending additional money to have it professionally fit.



Action Type	Over/Under w/Barrel Select
Chamber Size	2.75 in.
Overall Length	45.5 in.
Capacity	2
Weight Unloaded	6 lbs.
Barrel	28.0 in., Blued Steel
Receiver	Case-Hardened Steel
Choke Tubes	IC, M, F
Stock	Satin Walnut
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.25 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.0 in.
Forearm	Walnut
Front Bead	Filament
Rear Bead	None
Rib Width	0.25 in.
Trigger	4.85 lbs.
Warranty	7 Years Limited
Telephone	(800) 264-4962
Website	FranchiUSA.com
Made In/Assembled In	Italy/Italy



Shooting doubles with a gun that doesn't cycle the ammunition means that immediate recoil is the only disturbance to the sight picture as you transition to the next target. That's just one of the reasons why our team would prefer the Franchi Instinct L over-under as their competition sub-gauge shotgun.



The Franchi featured case-hardened-color steel, mild engraving, auto ejection, and a barrel selector. The selector was turned to Safe automatically upon closing the action.



Our shooters would buy the Instinct L over/under even if we had to have it professionally fit.



The Prince-of-Wales grip was nicely checkered and visually appealing, and it also allowed the index finger to drop down to the trigger while tucking in behind the trigger guard.



The Weatherby SA-08 liked Estate shells loaded with No. 7½ shot.

With no need to incorporate a gas system, the forend was dedicated to accommodating the shooter's support hand. The lower side was checkered, but the most effective feature was its hourglass shape.

The barrel was topped with a ventilated rib with carbon-fiber finish along the sides. There was a stainless steel mid bead directly above the end of the fore grip and a red, light-gathering filament up front. The mount for the filament was removable, held in place by a small slotted screw.

The Benelli Legacy arrived with three chrome-plated flush-fit chokes in Cylinder, Improved Cylinder, and Modified constrictions. Cast off to the right upon delivery, three additional shims were provided with the stock. The shims were steel and easily replaced to modify cast and drop. On synthetic-stock Benelli shotguns, removing the butt pad to gain access to the stock retaining nut is achieved by simply pulling free the buttpad. The buttpad on the Legacy and other wood-stocked Benellis are held in place by a screw top and bottom.



The ejectors in the Franchi's catalog picture were jeweled, but the ejectors on our gun were plain.

The pattern board showed that our Benelli Legacy favored the Fiocchi number 8 shot ammunition. The pattern was perhaps the most even of all three shotguns, if not as dense as our Franchi, with shot spreading into a nice, wide circle. Despite the gun not being specifically fit to any one test-shooter upon arrival, we found it easy to center our shots on the pattern target.

Our Team Said: At first glance this was the gun everyone wanted. Absolutely the best rib, bead, grip, finish and style. But after firing the Legacy our team was broken down to three different camps. For one group the Legacy's recoil made it uncomfortable to shoot, much more than was expected from a sub-gauge shotgun, and this disqualified it from their choice. The second camp found the level of recoil was far outweighed by its precision fit and accuracy. But they were also skeptical of being able to reset quickly enough to break a second bird. Finally, competitors and hunters who typically shoot a lot of 12 gauge thought the recoil was greater than they expected but nevertheless reveled in its style and accuracy.

Franchi Instinct L 28 Gauge No. 40811 Over/Under, $1,699

Despite ammunition not being cycled into position before and after each shot, you might be surprised to read that a single-trigger over-under shotgun is often referred to as having a semi-automatic trigger. Once the trigger was pressed and the firing pin behind one chamber has done its job, the trigger resets and is ready to launch the firing pin assigned to the opposite barrel. One pull, one bang, as semi-autos are usually described.



With the Weatherby barrel removed, the bolt relaxed in the forward position, exposing the blunt end of the firing pin. There was nothing ground-breaking in this design, just solid performance.



Fiocchi No. 8 ammunition was the favorite of our Benelli Legacy.

Other features on the Franchi Instinct L were automatic. Such as ejection of the shells when the break action was fully opened and resetting the safety to the on-safe position when the action was closed. Once loaded, the tang-mounted thumb safety must be pushed forward before the gun will fire. The order of fire, meaning which firing pin the trigger releases first, was also under the shooter's thumb and could be switched at will.

Many competitive shooters prefer to disengage the auto safety, but shooting at the skeet, sporting clays, or trap field means not loading until you are in position and it is your turn to shoot. In the field walking with dogs or other hunters, you might lose a bird by forgetting to turn off the safety, but there will just as likely be a time when the auto safety will prevent a dangerous shot. Whenever we forgot to turn off the safety, we simply dismounted the gun and started our routine over again.

Safety manipulation and a stiff



The Benelli Inertia Drive system is a recoil-operated design. Simple and rugged, dependability was the Benelli's greatest strength.

GUN TESTS
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

1. To Change Your Address
If you are moving, please attach your present mailing label to this form, and enter your new address here:
Name
Company
Street
City
State Zip

2. To Order/Renew
To order, or extend your current subscription, enter your name and address above, and check the subscription term you prefer:
__ One year: $49
__ Two years: $98
__ New subscriber
__ Renewal
These rates are good in U.S. and Canada only. For all other countries: 1 year $72 (air), 2 years $144 (air).

3. To Give a Gift Subscription
Enter your name and address above and your giftee's name and address below. The subscription rates stated above apply to gifts.
__ Send a One-Year Gift
__ Send a Two-Year Gift
Name
Street
City
State Zip

Return this coupon (or a photocopy) to:
GUN TESTS
P.O. Box 8535
Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535





Testing our single-barrel shotguns with Modified choke tubes convinced us to pattern both the top (left) and bottom (right) barrels of the Franchi Instinct L with the same choke. The pattern did print lower with the lower barrel, but aiming as if it were a rifle is not how a shotgun is fired. In both barrels, the quality of the pattern was at its best with Winchester No. 9s.

opening lock (which of course eases with time) were the only complaints. The two-stage foam buttpad was almost 1-inch thick. Its application was tight, but the edge of the A-grade satin walnut buttstock looked a little bit chopped. What we really liked about the stock and forend was the checkering. If the Franchi's checkering was not hand cut, we'd like to have one of their machines because it was well done. Aiding in our strong-hand grip was the Prince-of-Wales stock. Besides looking great, we liked getting our hand low and deep behind the steel trigger guard to work the roomy gold-colored trigger. Aside from available gauges, the Prince-of-Wales stock and tapered Schnabel forend are some of the features that differentiate the Instinct L from the Instinct Sporting.

The receiver of the Instinct L was color case-hardened for greater strength as well as for appearances. The metal work showed modest engraving and had a pleasing hand-drawn look about it. The locking lever was finely checkered. Once open, the lugs were jeweled. We noticed the ejectors in the catalog picture were jeweled as well, but the ejectors on our shotgun were plain.

The barrels were joined without ventilation. The top rib was ventilated, but just narrowly, and showed only about a 0.5-inch-long red filament bead. Supplied chokes were chrome-plated flush-fit Cylinder, Improved Cylinder, and Modified. In the field, the progression to a second shot of greater constriction is generally preferred, working on the assumption that once missed, the bird flies farther away. The tighter choke keeps the pattern of shot together longer, enabling it to hit a more distant target. Extended choke tubes including Skeet 1 and Skeet 2 are optional.

At the patterning board, we decided to compare the top barrel to the bottom barrel by sharing the modified choke between the two. What we found was the top barrel seemed to produce fewer fliers than the bottom barrel. Actually, the top barrel of the Instinct L was the top performer overall when firing the Winchester No. 9s, producing the densest pattern and fewest flyers. Aiming with the bead to same spot on the target as when firing the upper barrel, the pattern printed slightly lower, as would be expected. The lower barrel printed more flyers, but the pattern was otherwise close to being identical to the pattern from the upper barrel.

The Instinct L seemed to recoil less when fired from the lower barrel, helpful to what is a popular practice, firing from bottom to top. Certainly the impulse to move the barrel upward was less than when firing the top barrel. In terms of actual

patterns, all three loads produced dense patterns. The Estate 7½ rounds finished second, producing a few more flyers. The Fiocchi number 8s seemed to string vertically, with errant hits top and bottom.

Our Team Said: The upland hunters and the skeet competitors on our team were split on their view of the auto safety. Not everyone liked the work it took to open a new O/U shotgun, but they understood it would become easier with use, and it did indeed after about 200 rounds. The Instinct L was rated second in most recoil among our three shotguns. What was really surprising was that in spite of every complaint, the Instinct L was the one shotgun that each member of our team agreed they would spend additional money on to have it professionally fit. At the end of the day, we thought that with proper fit and additional practice, our scores would show the most significant improvement with this gun rather than continuing to shoot with either of the semi-autos. As one shooter put it, he'd choose the Instinct L as his first serious over-under.

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

VALUE GUIDE: SUB-GAUGE SEMI-AUTO SHOTGUNS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Beretta A400 Xplore Action J40AA88 28 Gauge, $1550	May 2015	A	Very responsive with rapid cycling, this handsome shotgun was a pleasure to shoot.
Benelli Ultralight 28 Gauge, $1760	Dec 2012	A	The only downside we could find with the Benelli was the price tag.
CZ-USA Model 720 Reduced Length 06039 20 Gauge, $499	Oct 2012	A	Our junior shooter preferred the 720 Reduced Length because it kicked least.
Browning Silver Hunter Twenty 011350605 3-inch 20 Ga., $1079	April 2009	A	It was a joy to carry all day, and the company resolved a trigger problem promptly.
Mossberg SA-20 No. 75771 3-Inch 20 Gauge, $496	Mar 2009	A	The stock dimensions were comfortable for most of our shooters, including Lefty.
Browning Silver Hunter Micro Midas 011389605 20 Ga., $1179	Oct 2012	A-	We would prefer a recoil pad with a wider print that was less grabby.
Benelli Montefeltro Combo 10832 20 Gauge, $1299	Oct 2012	A-	The cast and drop shims would go a long way in setting up the gun.
Remington 11-87 Sportsman No. 29825 3-inch 20 Gauge, $757	Mar 2009	A-	Added weight did make the gun slower, but we didn't miss a target because of that.
Remington Premier 1100 Sporting 82846 20 Gauge, $1385	April 2009	B+	We loved the 1100 Premier's fit and finish, the case, and the well-fitted Limbsaver pad.
Legacy Sports Pointer KPS28A028W 28 Ga., $701	May 2015	B	This is a solid field gun. Long length of pull and no shims limits fit.
Browning Silver Mossy Oak Duck Blind 011366604 20 Ga., $1064	Mar 2009	B	The Browning was easier to load from the bottom of the gun than some others.
Remington Model 1100 Sporting 28 Gauge, $1300	Dec 2012	C	The firing pin did not make center hits on the primers of both the Rio and B&P ammunition.
Beretta AL 391 Urika 2 Gold J39TB26 3-inch 20 Gauge, $1550	April 2009	F	Our sample had long take-up and creep in the trigger and was a jam-o-matic with one load.

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

GUN TESTS
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

SHORT SHOTS

The 2016 SHOT Show in Las Vegas had hundreds of new accessories we found interesting, but don't have the space to report on. Here's a quick round-up of a few items of note:

● Aftermarket supplier ATI rolled out the AR-22 Pistol Stock System, a polymer receiver chassis and a T2 pistol grip as well as a six-sided aluminum free-floating forend that sports an FS8 nose cone. The stock also features a 16-inch aluminum Picatinny rail that runs the length of the receiver and forend for optic mounting.

● The clever Compact Ammo-Up makes allows for collecting spent brass and shotshells without bending over. The device will pick up a variety of casings, including 380, 9mm, 10mm, 40, 45 Auto, 38 Special, 308/7.62, and 223/5.56. A shotgun version picks up both shotgun shells and wads.

● For 2016, CrossBreed Holsters is introducing the Freedom Carry line. What sets this new holster apart is that it can be worn in several positions without sacrificing comfort. The holster also allows the user to carry larger firearms in the appendix position. The Freedom Carry is available for more than 300 different firearms, including those with lights, lasers, and micro red-dot sights (depending on model). Hard to beat the two-week, try-it-free guarantee.

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

● Practical Target Guns: Kimber Gold Target versus the Springfield Loaded Model Target.

● 4X 40 S&W Shootout: Tested: The double-action-first-shot SIG P226, the double-action-first-shot Beretta 96 Vertec, the selective-double-action CZ 75B, and the double-action-only Ruger SP40.

● 380 ACP Ammo Update: Black Hills 60-gr. Extreme Defense, Cor-Bon 80-gr. JHP, Federal Premium 99-gr. HST, Fiocchi 90-gr. JHP, Hornady 90-gr. XTP American Gunner, HPR 90-gr. JHP, Ruger ARX 56-gr., Winchester Defend 95-gr. JHP, RIP 62-gr. JHP, and more....

GUN TESTS
THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

Customer Service Contacts

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

CALL TOLL FREE: 800-829-9084

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

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

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

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

We will respect your request not to publish personal information. Email comments to
GunTestsEditor@icloud.com.
Or "Like" the **Gun Tests Magazine** Facebook page.
Twitter: @GunTestsMag
YouTube: Gun Tests Magazine

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