GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

$5.95 December 2014/Vol. XXVI, No. 12

RACING REVOLVERS

The Smith & Wesson Pro Series 686 SSR and Ruger Match Champion in 357 Magnum can shoot 2.5-inch-or-better groups from the 25-yard line — if you can.

● Page 6





22 TCM VS FN 5.7

We test the hot 22 bottlenecks, the Rock Island 22 TCM and the FNH Five-seveN 5.7x28mm, in a pistol and ammunition showdown. ● Page 11

2014 GUNS OF THE YEAR

We look through 12 months of gun, accessory, and ammunition evaluations and pick our favorites. ● Page 17



BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER '14

Ruger GP100 No. 1705
357 Magnum, $759



BEST IN CLASS PISTOL '14

Beretta 92A1
Compact Inox
9mm Luger, $650



BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY '14

Brownells
30-Round AR-15/
M16 Magazine
200200, $9.99



BEST IN CLASS RIFLE '14

Grizzly Custom Marlin 336RC 30-30 Win.
Brush Hawg Package, $1560



BEST IN CLASS SHOTGUN '14

Winchester Model Super X Black Shadow
No. 51225192 12 Gauge, $430

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

DOWNRANGE

BIG CHANGES IN WASHINGTON



Todd Woodard

I **stayed** up late on November 4 to watch the election returns come in. In particular, I was watching the Senate races because if the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress, then the chances of national gun-control legislation passing would drop to nil for the next couple of years. Things went very well.

As a result of the NRA's efforts in the 2014 elections, candidates endorsed by the NRA Political Victory Fund won hard-fought victories in Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Dakota and West Virginia. The NRA was likewise pivotal in re-electing pro-gun governors in Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Texas and Wisconsin, and in ousting a Bloomberg-backed anti-gun governor in Maryland. In addition, the NRA had great success in races for the U.S. House.

The NRA scored impressive wins in hotly contested races and played a pivotal role in increasing pro-gun majorities in both chambers of Congress.

"America's gun owners sent a strong message to Washington, D.C. that their constitutional freedoms must be respected," said Chris W. Cox, chairman of the NRA-PVF. "Michael Bloomberg and national anti-gun groups were dealt a significant blow by Second Amendment supporters across the country. A clear takeaway from these elections is that candidates who support gun control do so at their political peril."

The GOP won in Montana, South Dakota, Arkansas, West Virginia and North Carolina — all seats that had been in Democratic hands — to surpass their magic number of six net gains. The GOP currently has 52 members in the Senate, with seats still to be decided in Virginia, Alaska, and Louisiana.

Some victories were particularly sweet. In Colorado, Senator Mark Udall was defeated by Cory Gardner, who was endorsed by the NRA. NRA-endorsed Thom Tillis beat Senator Kay Hagan in North Carolina. In West Virginia, NRA-endorsed Shelley Moore Capito won. NRA-endorsed Senatorial candidate Joni Ernst won in Iowa. Arkansas Sen. Mark Pryor lost to Tom Cotton, who, like Iowa's Ernst, is an Iraq war veteran.

Amazingly, some of the bluest states changed from anti-gun to potentially pro-gun governors. Maryland elected Republican Larry Hogan as governor. Illinois ousted Democrat governor Pat Quinn in favor of Bruce Rauner. In Massachusetts, Charlie Baker defeated Martha Coakley.

On the negative side: In Washington state, voters approved Initiative 594 to expand background checks on nearly all gun sales. And anti-gun governors Dannel P. Malloy in Connecticut and John Hickenlooper in Colorado survived strong challenges. All in, though, I'll take it. **GT**

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Wants Replacement Sights

Readers Scorza and Wisniewski think a review of costly aftermarket handgun sights is worth a few pages. We agree. Reader Phil wants more wheelgun reviews. Okay with us.

Replacement Sights

I have been shooting all my life, and have had many blessings. I am not being sentimental, but your magazine is one. What a pleasure to read without all the industry-driven BS in other publications, where never a bad word is heard. Another of my blessings is being taught to shoot by a few caring, respectful people whose lessons translated to everyday life.

I have friends who golf; I dislike golf. But when I take them to the range, they are always amazed at the similarities to their driving range: the crack of the guns and the smack of the golf ball, the easy relaxed atmosphere, the fun and the camaraderie, the outdoor sport.

Now for the meat of the letter: I am 62 and my eyes are getting tired. I have trouble with the gun sights, especially pistols, and have tried the usual aids. The fact is I will be needing high-visibility sights. There are so many types of these sights, illuminated (tritium, e.g.) non-illuminated, dot, square, tube, I am having trouble making a decision. So here is my request: Could you please consider a review of replacement sights? I would be grateful for your expertise. So would many of my friends and other readers of your magazine. By the way, are any of you guys in my boat?

— John Scorza
Duxbury, Massachusetts

Hey John: Another reader asked for the same thing — see the letter below. I just scheduled a review of five or six replacements sights that should fit the bill. I understand the trouble you're having. I'm retrofitting all my carry guns with lasers for the same reason. They have night sights already, but I can shoot pretty well when I can see the target (that is, when the laser dot is on the target.) — Todd Woodard

How about a feature article comparing the various makes of pistol night sights that are currently available? Buy five pistols of the same make, model and caliber. Smith & Wesson M&P Full Size in 9mm, for example. Then install a different set of night sights from Ameriglo, Viking Tactical, TruGlo, Trijicon, etc. on each one of them.

Give the pistols a good workout in varying conditions, indoors and out, sunny and overcast days, low as well as bright light. These sights are not cheap!

—Paul F. Wisniewski
Racine, Wisconsin

Hey Paul: Dang, that is an excellent pitch. Actually, we decided to use one Glock lower and five compatible slides. That way the gun-to-gun comparison is exactly the same. Slows down the process, but eliminates more variables. Probably a month to get the sights, pistol, and slides, a month to test and write, then I can schedule it. So, between 3-5 months, is a guess. — tw

More Revolvers?

I'm a happy subscriber to Gun Tests. Yours is the first entity I've found that really does tell it like it is about the weapons and ammo you test, and I really appreciate that.

My observations in the months I have been a subscriber is that you

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.

test a lot of rifles, shotguns, semi-auto handguns, and ammo. That's fine; good job! But I have also observed that you don't test nearly as many small revolvers in 9mm and 38 Special calibers, and I wish you would test more of them — many more.

I really appreciated your test of the Charter Arms 9mm Pitbull Rimless Revolver. I know there aren't many of those out there (relatively small 9mm revolvers, I mean), but there are some. And of course there are tons of 38 Special small and relatively small revolvers out there: Charter Arms, Ruger, S&W, Taurus, and more. Please test a lot more of those, including those of low to moderate cost. Thanks for caring, Todd. Keep up the great work!

— Phil, a gun owner and hunter

Hey Phil: Thanks for writing. Robert Sadowski is the revolver beat writer. Following are the stories he's done on wheelguns this year, and I have several more of his articles in house: "Kit Guns: Ruger SP101 Rimfire Versus Used Taurus Model 94," "22 Buntlines: Heritage Rough Rider and Ruger NM Single-Six," "Snubnose Revolvers from S&W And Ruger: Which One To Carry?", "Two Shiny Six-Shooters: Ruger New Vaquero, Traditions Frontier," "Old-School 38s — S&W M10 And Colt Police Positive Special," and "All-Purpose 357 Mag Stainless Revolvers: Taurus Versus Ruger." And Roger Eckstine tested two more wheelguns in this issue. — tw

Finding Tested Guns

I have been a subscriber to Gun Tests since 2012. Is there an index for looking up a review for a particular make and model of a gun, or do I just need to browse through the past editions of the publication until I can find what I am looking for?

— Budd Kendrick
Boise, Idaho

Hey Budd: The all-time index, "Gun Tests Index 2013-1989 Updated," is posted on Gun-Tests.com. As a subscriber, you've got full access to all of our back issues. See how to get web access below. Once you're in, search for "Index" in the search window, and the story will should be the first one in the list. Click on the headline to open it. The best way to use it is to do a search in your browser window (not the website search function). Because the index is one long file, your browser can find all instances of a specific word, such as "Python." That points to three articles we've done on that revolver since 1994. It's current through 2013, and we'll update through 2014 shortly.

Or, use the search function inside Gun-Tests.com. It's in the top right corner of the page. Type in as specific a model name or number as you can provide, and the site will supply all the instances of that word as it can find. If it's generic, like "Beretta," you'll get a lot of cites — hundreds. If you make the search more specific, such as "Cheetah," you'll only get a couple of hits. — tw

Re "A Quartet of Pocket Pistols," November 2014

Hi from Montana. In reading the review of the small 380s, on page 13 you stated "Viridian's R5-G42 Reactor is the first green laser for the G42, and this model automatically ignites instantly when drawn from a supplied leather and polymer holster. I got the impression that Viridian also supplies a holster when buying the green laser. Is this correct? If not, could you provide the names of holster suppliers that have available a holster that would accommodate the G42 with the laser attached. From my experience, it's a piece of cake to find holsters around the country, but almost impossible to find a holster that accommodates a gun with a laser

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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 without your permission, but we may need to contact you.* **GT**

attached unless you pay big bucks and have one tailor-made.

— David E. Pidcock
Great Falls, Montana

Yes, the Viridian laser came with a Reactor holster that fits the Glock 42 and laser. — tw

Help on Getting Access

I have been a delighted subscriber since a couple years ago. I'll happily stay here forever if I can. Now onto my issue: I do want to be able to search the archives for specific guns, but when I type in my first and last name and zip code and account number on the website, I am told that there is missing information. I assure you, I can read my mailing label and I do have one of the 12 digit account numbers. I have typed that in so many times trying to register as a user that I have memorized it now. Every time I am denied.

Am I black-listed? Can I come wash your car or something? Is there any hope? Seriously, I just want in. Any way you can help me would be greatly appreciated.

— Kurt Helgerson

Kurt — Sorry for the trouble. I've forwarded your note to customer service. They have direct access to the accounts and can solve this for you. You can also reach customer service directly by going to the website and looking in the top-right corner of the browser window. Click on "Customer Service," and a browser window will pop up. Under the header "Additional Service Options," click "Technical Assistance." And no, you won't have to wash anybody's car, though that is a thoughtful gesture. — tw

I Can't Suppress This Any Longer

More than a year ago you wrote about the simple process of obtaining a suppressor/silencer. I thought I would give it a try. I seldom shoot near the house due to proximity of neighbors. None have complained about my noise, but I wanted to remain a good neighbor. The thought of shooting frequently and quietly was intriguing.

I made the purchase, about $1100 plus the $200 stamp. Some were cheaper, but this was recommended as a quality item. Wait time was about 11 months. Upon arrival, the item would not fit the rifle and I found that I needed to spend about another $100 for the adapter. It did then, however, install quickly and easily.

I fired another rifle of the same caliber. Yes, loud as expected. Then I fired the newly suppressed/silenced version. Much quieter. But disappointingly, it was still louder than a short-barreled 22 LR handgun. Much too loud to shoot with frequency and remain a good neighbor. Presenting a query to the manufacturer, I was informed that that was as quiet as could be expected considering the caliber and velocity. Now, they tell me. Don't believe that I can recommend the expenditure of money and time.

— Dean

I agree, it is very hard to get past the Hollywood version of how effective suppressors are. It takes a special combination of ammo, silencer, and gun to get a dramatic decline in sound, and even then, it's often just barely enough to shoot without ears comfortably.

Yes, while the process is simple, it is expensive and loooong. I'm waiting on a 22 suppressor myself that I bought in February. You didn't tell me what the cartridge was. If it's 22 LR, I'd suggest shooting low-velocity rounds. If it's a centerfire, such as a 300 Blackout, then you've got to buy or load low-velocity rounds that will still run your gun. Not an easy mix to find.

Personally, I'm in about $2000 for two suppressors, one a 45 that I'll run on my Colt 1911, which is currently at Tactical Firearms having a threaded Storm Lake barrel installed. The barrel costs about $230, and having the barrel fit will be more money. On top of that is $400 more in tax stamps. — tw

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IDPA Revolvers: Ruger's Match Champion, S&W's Pro 686 SSR

The Smith & Wesson was more race ready, with the cylinders chamfered to hasten reloads. The less expensive Ruger needed chamfering, but its trigger was smoother. Tough call.

If you believe the revolver is obsolete, think again. The double-action revolver is now more relevant than ever. Haven't you noticed the trend toward hinged triggers working the action of semi-automatic pistols? Based on developing trigger control, a double-action revolver may now be a more appropriate training device than the typical single-action-only rimfire pistols so often used to introduce beginners to shooting a handgun. The vast majority of double-action revolvers can also be fired single action simply by thumbing back the hammer. This accommodates the arthritic or partially disabled. In addition, you can utilize the same revolver to develop trigger control for single action as well as double action only and double action/single action handguns. Revolvers employ fixed barrels, making them inherently more accurate than semi-automatic pistols wherein the barrel and slide (including the sights) move in and out of position with every shot.



If a gun will perform at the match, it will be an effective tool for home and personal defense. That's why we tested two 357 Magnums aimed at the International Defensive Pistol Association Stock Service Revolver Division, the Smith & Wesson Pro Series 686 SSR, left, and Ruger Match Champion, right. After accuracy testing, we found both guns could shoot 2.5-inch (or smaller) 5-shot groups from the 25-yard line no matter what kind of ammunition we tried. Test ammunition included 130-grain 357 Magnum hollowpoint Personal Defense loads from Federal (right) and Remington's budget-priced 125-grain +P 38 Special SJHP rounds. We also tried 148-grain lead wadcutters from Black Hills Ammunition, a favorite of PPC and Bullseye competitors.

You can leave a revolver loaded for the life of the ammunition and, unlike a magazine-fed pistol, its ability to cycle rounds will not be affected by magazine-spring fatigue. Nor will the outline or shape of the bullets interfere with chambering. You can safely load frangible rounds, such as rat shot or snake-shot, without malfunction and even load a mix of both high-velocity and low-velocity ammunition, again without malfunction.

But our motivation for testing the Ruger GP100 Match Champion and Smith & Wesson Pro Series 686 SSR 357 Magnum revolvers is more exciting than any of the arguments above. These guns were designed to compete in the Stock Service Revolver division of International Defensive Pistol Association or, IDPA. Both revolvers meet the physical requirements to be eligible for SSR competition — a maximum barrel length of 4.2 inches or less and a maximum unloaded weight of 43 ounces or less. Stock Service Revolvers may have the capability to chamber additional rounds, but in competition, no more than six rounds may be loaded at any time.

Whereas these guns are recognized as 357 Magnum revolvers, their versatility allows them to fire 38 Special ammunition as well. And IDPA rules allow for the shooter to choose either caliber for competition. For our tests, we chose two rounds of 38 Special and one variety of 357 Magnum. Our 38 Special rounds were Remington 125-grain +P semi-jacketed hollowpoints and Black Hills 148-grain hollow-based wadcutter rounds. The Remingtons are an intermediate-power defense load, and the lead wadcutters are a popular target load commonly used in competitions that demand accuracy, such as NRA Action Pistol, PPC, and Bullseye. Our choice of magnum rounds was Federal 130-grain Hydra-Shok Personal Defense Low Recoil hollowpoint ammunition.

RANGE DATA

Remington UMC 38 Special +P 125-gr. SJHP L38S2B	Ruger GP100 Match Champion	Smith & Wesson 686 SSR
Average Muzzle Velocity	1037 fps	988 fps
Muzzle Energy	299 ft.-lbs.	271 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	2.4 in.	2.3 in.

Black Hills Ammunition 38 Special 148-gr. HBWC	Ruger GP100 Match Champion	Smith & Wesson 686 SSR
Average Muzzle Velocity	668 fps	638 fps
Muzzle Energy	148 ft.-lbs.	139 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	2.3 in.	2.5 in.

Federal Premium 357 Magnum 130-gr. Hydra-Shok JHP PD357H52 H	Ruger GP100 Match Champion	Smith & Wesson 686 SSR
Average Muzzle Velocity	1515 fps	1468 fps
Muzzle Energy	663 ft.-lbs.	623 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	2.7 in.	2.5 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a sandbag rest using open sights. Distance: 25 yards. We recorded velocities using an Oehler 35P chronograph, with the first sky screen set 10 feet from the muzzle.



IDPA competition requires that all guns be drawn from concealment. The $60 Ultrux ITP Mirage holster makes it possible to comfortably hide full-size revolvers, such as our Ruger Match Champion. Draw and reholster moves, the latter of which can be just as important on the street, was fast and sure. This unique design positions the cylinder above the belt line to minimize bulk while the lower portion of the holster serves to shield the body and stabilize the gun. The Mirage is available for right side or left-side carry (shown), with a choice of fixed or snap closure belt loops. From Hoffners.com.



Right: The Smith & Wesson rear sight was fully adjustable for windage and elevation.



Right: The Ruger's front sight was dovetailed into place. Visibility was enhanced by the addition of a green-color fiber-optic filament. Note the additional exposure to ambient light along the top of the blade. We found this design to be both rugged and exceptionally bright.

To assess accuracy, we fired a series of five-shot groups single action only from a sandbag rest. Test distance was 25 yards. To determine average velocity, we fired shots from all six chambers across an Oehler Research Model 35P printing chronograph.

Smith & Wesson Pro Series 686 SSR No. 178012 357 Magnum Revolver, $999

At first glance a Smith & Wesson aficionado might mistake the 686 SSR for the 8-round Model 627. Like the large N-frame Model 627, our test gun offered a tapered underlug, but the 686 series is built on the medium-large L-frame. The SSR category does not specify the grip-frame profile. This one has a round butt, which offers a smaller profile, making the revolver easier to conceal. A highlight of the SSR was that both a Hogue rubber Mono-Grip and a fancy wood grip were supplied as part of the package.

The 686 SSR's muted satin stainless finish has become an S&W standard. So has the checkered and relieved cylinder release with key-operated trigger lock located just above it on the left-hand side of the frame. The hammer spur was short and wide, but checkered and easy to find. The fully adjustable rear sight is an old design that still works exceptionally well, in our view. This sight was once the preferred custom upgrade for semi-automatic pistols. The front sight was a ramp design enhanced with an orange color insert. It was held in place by a roll pin. Lockup of the 6-chamber cylinder relied upon the tip of its full-length ejector rod for support. The aforementioned underlug was tapered to make holstering and drawing quicker, but it was still long enough to shroud and protect the ejector rod.

One additional feature that sets this gun apart was that the chambers have been chamfered to hasten loading. This means the 90-degree angle between the rear faces of the cylinder and the individual chambers have been

machined to provide a funneling action to hasten loading. This should be standard on all revolvers, but isn't. Even though the chamfering was mild, we found speed-loading the 686 SSR was faster when compared to unchamfered chamber mouths of the Ruger revolver.

The Smith single-action trigger weighed in at 5.5 pounds, but the double-action press put up 12.0 pounds of fight. We think there was plenty of room for a trigger job that would lighten the action and not make it a liability on the street, if carried. When pulling the double-action trigger, we heard two clicks, one to release the cylinder and another to settle the chamber behind the forcing cone. Then there was a sliding action that felt just a little sticky if you were pressing slowly. Both test revolvers rotated the cylinder counter-clockwise.

The Smith & Wesson bested the Ruger when firing two of the three test rounds. But results were close enough to be within shooter error. The 125-grain Remington 38 Special +P rounds were best, settling five shots into a 2.3-inch-wide group. We found it remarkable that the two remaining rounds, Federal's 130-grain 357 Magnum Personal Defense rounds and the light-shooting 148-grain wadcutters from Black Hills ammunition, each produced 2.5-inch groups.

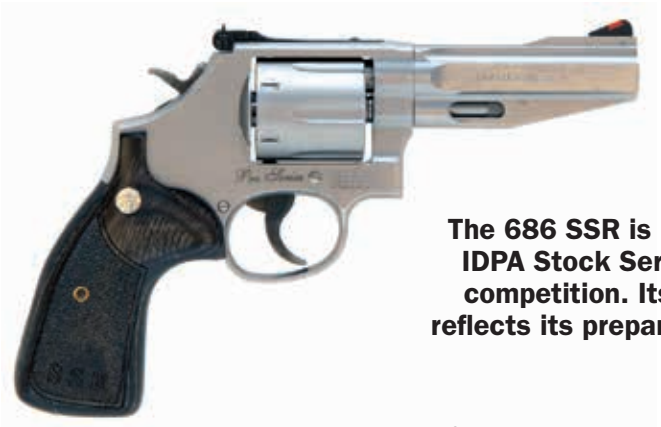
Our Team Said: The 686 SSR is pretty much ready to go for IDPA Stock Service Revolver competition. Aficionados will likely choose to lighten the trigger, and this can be achieved by backing off the strain screw, which applies tension to the main spring from the front of the grip frame. But this could also make for unreliable ignition, if taken too far. A professionally applied action job is still the best choice.

Ruger GP100 Match Champion No. 1754 357 Magnum Revolver, $899

The Ruger GP100-series revolvers are different from the Smith & Wesson 686s, but both guns were introduced to provide more durability than previous models. The Ruger GP100

SMITH & WESSON PRO SERIES 686 SSR NO. 178012 357 MAGNUM, $999

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+



The 686 SSR is ready to go for IDPA Stock Service Revolver competition. Its higher price reflects its preparation and style.





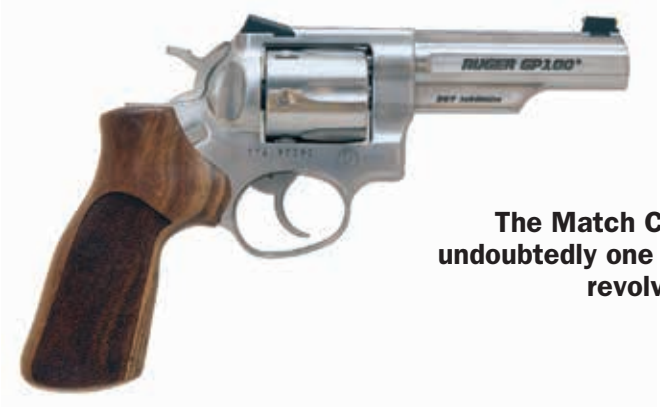
Above: The mouths of each chamber on our Smith & Wesson were conservatively chamfered (arrow), whereas the Ruger revolver wasn't chamfered at all. We can't figure out why chamfering is not SOP for all revolvers.

Overall Length	9.5 in.
Overall Height	5.8 in.
Barrel Length	4.0 in.
Sight Radius	5.9 in.
Front Strap Height	2.3 in.
Back Strap Height	4.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	37.2 oz.
Weight Loaded	40.2 oz.
Capacity	6
Maximum Width	1.56 in.
Grip Thickness (Wood/Rubber)	1.2 in./1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (Wood/Rubber)	4.6 in./4.5 in.
Frame	Stainless Steel
Barrel	Stainless Steel
Cylinder	Stainless Steel
Grip	Rubber/Wood
Trigger Pull Weight (Single Action)	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (Double Action)	12.0 lbs.
Trigger Span (DA/SA)	3.1 in./2.7 in.
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	USA



Right: A full underlug provides additional weight at the muzzle to counteract recoil and steady the gun. But our test guns were designed for Practical Shooting competition, where target-to-target transition eats up elapsed time so a full lug can slow "steering" of the revolver, making it feel sluggish. The abbreviated underlug reduces weight but still protects the ejection rod.

RUGER GP100 MATCH CHAMPION REVOLVER NO. 1754
357 MAGNUM, $899
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-



The Match Champion is undoubtedly one of Ruger's best revolvers.



Overall Length	9.5 in.
Overall Height	6.0 in.
Barrel Length	4.2 in.
Sight Radius	5.3 in.
Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Back Strap Height	4.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	37.4 oz.
Weight Loaded	40.4 oz.
Capacity	6
Maximum Width	1.55 in.
Grip Thickness	1.2 in.
Grip Circumference	4.3 in.
Frame	Stainless Steel
Barrel	Stainless Steel
Cylinder	Stainless Steel
Grip	Wood
Trigger Pull Weight (Single Action)	4.0 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (Double Action)	10.5 lbs.
Trigger Span (DA/SA)	3.0/2.8 in.
Warranty	None Stated
Telephone	(603) 865-2442
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	USA



Right: The knurled wood grip was good looking, and its subtle contours helped absorb shock by making full contact with the surface of our shooters' hands.



Right, top arrow: The Ruger's Novak-style rear sight was windage adjustable by loosening the setscrew and pushing the unit left or right. Both test guns transmit force from the hammer to the firing pin by way a transfer bar. With the hammer cocked, the transfer bar is stationed between the hammer and the firing pin. Note the relief in the hammer face (bottom arrow) located about ¼ inch from the top of the hammer. At rest, the transfer bar lowers to fill this space, blocking the hammer from contacting the firing pin.

replaced the Security Six revolver in about 1986 with innovations such as stronger lockup built into the cylinder crane rather than at the tip of the ejector rod. Another feature that adds strength to the GP100 design is the lack of side plates in the construction of the frame. Plus additional steel was added to critical areas that support the barrel.

Referred to as medium sized (between the 5-shot SP101 and Redhawk double-action revolvers), the grip frame, or butt, of the GP100 was peg-like, making it possible to apply different sized grips, including very small ones to aid concealment. However, being a target and competition model, the priority for this revolver was shooter comfort. The Match Champion's Hogue Monogrip was a beautiful hardwood featuring graceful swells and stippled panels on each side. The GP100 Match Champion's satin-stainless-steel surface was brighter than the Smith & Wesson finish of the same name. The Ruger Match Champion is the only GP100 that offers a partial underlug.

Two very recognizable Ruger characteristics were the polished flat-sided hammer and the "push-button" cylinder release. The cylinder release was hinged vertically at its center, so the operator actually must press inward on the rearmost half of the button. Otherwise, we found this design required little or no dexterity to operate.

The sights were a clear departure from those typically found on a revolver, whether fixed or adjustable. Dovetailed and low-mounted, these Novak sights are more often seen mounted on sophisticated carry pistols than on revolvers. The front sight was also dovetailed into the top strap, and we found its visibility to be extraordinary, thanks to a bright-green fiber optic that gathered light from both its front and rear edges as well as from two reliefs cut into the top of the blade. The rear unit was drift adjustable for windage. Changes in elevation could be effected by installing a different-height front-

sight blade, but Ruger seems to have struck an effective balance with the supplied front blade.

We liked the thin Ruger trigger with smoothly rounded edges. Tucking it just inside the first joint of the index finger, the shooter could feel the trigger's slight forward taper move directly to lockup, followed by a smooth, short press to release the hammer. Maximum resistance for the double-action press was 10.5 pounds. The single-action trigger weighed in at 4.0 pounds.

Accuracy results were very close to the Smith & Wesson's. The Black Hills 148-grain lead wadcutters were best, measuring an average group of 2.3 inches. The Remington 38 Special +P ammunition printed 2.4-inch groups on average. The 357 Magnum rounds expanded to 2.7 inches per five shots, putting the Ruger behind the Smith by only a computed 0.03 inches for all shots fired.

Our Team Said: Long underappreciated despite a sterling record of service, Ruger now has a medium-framed revolver to champion. Cutting a distinctive profile that shouts durability as well as style, the double-action trigger as delivered was smooth and light enough to satisfy most competitive shooters. The single-action trigger was superb. The sights were street worthy as well as suitable for competition. It does need chamfered chamber mouths, a modification that costs about $40.

In deciding between these handguns, we would like to make it clear that we're going to call the rankings based purely on the guns as delivered, without consideration for the potential of each gun after spending time in the hands of a match-grade gunsmith. The Ruger trigger was very smooth and acceptably light right out of the box — even for a competitive shooter. All it needs is chamfered cylinders to help it speed-load faster. The 686 SSR comes with two very different grips, and this may be a sign that the manufacturer knows it can't please everyone with a stock offering. On the plus side, the 686 has chamfered cylinders but the machining is mild compared to what most shooters want, so that probably means having the chamfering redone. Nevertheless, S&W should be applauded for offering this feature when nobody else will. On the downside, the 686 trigger, as is, was unnecessarily heavy. It's amazing how the Smith triggers can be transformed by even a journeyman 'smith, so we think the maker is simply leaving room for the competitor to have it worked to his or her individual taste. But that may be a lot to ask of the buyer after dropping so much on this expensive six shooter.

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

GUN TESTS VALUE GUIDE: 4-INCH+ 357 MAGNUM REVOLVERS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE & COMMENTS
Colt Python 357 Magnum (1988), $2500	April 2013	**Grade A+:** True revolver aficionados should start saving up to buy one of these classics.
Ruger GP100 No. 1705 357 Magnum, $759	March 2014	**Grade A:** In rapid fire, the Ruger was very controllable and a pleasure to shoot due to the weight.
Taurus Model 66 No. 66SS4 357 Magnum, $591	March 2014	**Grade A:** We would buy this one in a second for trail carry and home defense.
Smith & Wesson 686 Plus No. 164194 357 Magnum, $790	March 2007	**Grade A:** Consistent, accurate, and slotted for 7 rounds of either 38 Special or 357 Magnum.
Smith & Wesson Model 19 Combat Magnum 357 Mag., $457	March 2000	**Grade A:** If you wanted to explain to someone what a revolver should be, the M19 would be an appropriate icon.
Smith & Wesson 686-5 (6-inch) 357 Magnum, $534	May 1999	**Grade A:** With the right ammo, it shot more accurately and carried an extra round of 38s or full-bore 357s.
Smith & Wesson Model 686-2 357 Magnum, $900 (1988)	April 2013	**Grade A-:** You can't go wrong with a Very Good, Excellent, or Like New Model 686-2.
Ruger GP100 No. KGP161 357 Magnum, $701	March 2011	**Grade A-:** The GP100 was comfortable to shoot when firing full-house defense loads.
Smith & Wesson 686 No. 164224 357 Magnum, $829	March 2011	**Grade A-:** Our staff thought that improving upon the single-action trigger might be impossible.

Log on to **Gun-Tests.com** to read complete reviews of these products.

22-Caliber Centerfire Self-Loader Shoot-out: FNH Vs. Rock Island

We test the hot 22 bottlenecks, the Rock Island 22 TCM and the FNH FiveseveN 5.7x28mm. However, only one has a combination of features suitable all-round use, including personal defense.

In an intriguing and extensive match-up, we pitted two handguns chambered for hot 22-caliber bottlenecks against each other. The 22 TCM and the 5.7x28mm cartridges are interesting on many levels, but also are not the most common or easily obtained rounds. Both handguns have a military heritage, but the Rock Island 1911 is pretty far removed from its 1911A1 45 ACP ancestor.

The Fabrique Nationale Herstal FiveseveN IOM (hereafter 5.7) pistol was designed as a personal defense weapon (PDW) for military use. The 5.7x28mm cartridge was designed with the ability to penetrate light armor. Good accuracy and low recoil were important attributes. Comparatively, the original 1911 was designed to stop a man or a horse. The 1911 was designed as an all-out fighting handgun in close quarters. One gets the impression the 5.7 was intended for use at a greater standoff distance. The adaptation of the 22 TCM cartridge to the 1911 gives shooters longing for a hot 22-caliber centerfire something to use in a familiar platform.

In this test we asked lots of questions, including what are the goals of a shooter purchasing either firearm. The handguns were tested for reliability, accuracy, and fit and finish. Which system is the most controllable and accurate? Finally, which is the more practical, better buy?



The performances of the 5.7x28mm and the 22 TCM are impressive. It's our view that the 22 TCM is the superior cartridge, particularly in handguns.





Top: The FNH USA FiveseveN IOM in 5.7x28mm and, bottom, the Rock Island Armory 22 TCM/9mm Combo AC R1911-9mm-22TCM, are as different as handguns may be, but each was a joy to fire and use. The bottleneck rounds produced very little recoil.



Top: The 22 TCM is shorter and fatter than the 5.7x28mm. Since it is based upon the 223 Remington case, the head diameter is workable in a 9mm handgun. These are not shown actual size.

FNH USA FiveseveN IOM Pistol
5.7x28mm, $2000

In October 2014, FN America, LLC announced that is has completed the legal merger of FN Manufacturing, LLC and FNH USA, LLC into a single entity, FN America. FN

America, a wholly-owned subsidiary of FN Herstal, S.A., will remain headquartered in McLean, Virginia and continue to provide products, training, and support services under the FNH USA (FNHUSA.com) brand name. The company also has a development and technical center in Fredericksburg, Virginia and manufacturing operations in Columbia, South Carolina. The company produces a range of small arms for the U.S. military, such as M4/M4A1 carbines, M16 rifles, and several machine guns. In addition to manufacturing for the U.S. military, FN America also builds commercial handguns, including the FNX series of hammer-driven pistols, the FNS line of striker-fired pistols, and the FN 15 line of modern sporting rifles under the FNH USA brand.

The 5.7 handgun was developed as part of the NATO PDW program. The SMG version could spit out a dozen rounds with little muzzle rise and recoil. The pistol, some believe, is a horse without a course, while others praised the 5.7. Sales have been good enough to support the pistol in the FNH line up since its introduction. Opposition to the handgun from gun-control groups has doubtless aided sales to gun consumers, who seem to want what anti-gunners scream loudest about. Some of the early complaints were about the original armor-piercing NATO load being available to the public, but those rounds are now tightly limited to law enforcement. The Federal American Eagle FMJ loading we tested uses a conventional FMJ bullet rather than the military steel-core loading. We also tested the FN 40-grain V-Max loading and the SS195 lead-free loading. The cartridge is as important to the test as the unique handgun that chambers the 5.7x28mm cartridge, so we took additional time to run it through our ammunition protocol.

Our test gun was an original IOM model, which sells for about $2000 on GunBroker.com and other auction sites. Prices for current production guns run about $1250 at Cabelas.com.

The pistol isn't a small handgun,

FNH USA FIVESEVEN IOM PISTOL 5.7X28MM, ~$2000

GUN TESTS GRADE: B

Accurate and reliable, the FNH pistol unfortunately has design features most civilian shooters will find less than ideal, we believe. Also, the RIA's 22 TCM cartridge is more powerful. The light weight of the FiveseveN is appealing, making it a very pleasant handgun to fire. The round is chambered in FN PDWs, but we're leery of recommending it for self-defense.





The safety location was all wrong for rapid manipulation, in our opinion.



The slide lock was readily accessible. In our opinion, the safety and slide-lock locations should have been reversed.



If shot from a stable firing position, long-range hits are possible with the 5.7.



The adjustable rear sight of the 5.7 is a good feature. Our pistol arrived well regulated for shooting at 15 yards.

Action	Semi-Auto, Locked Breech Single-Action
Overall Length	8.2 in.
Overall Height	6.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	21.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	31.0 oz.
Barrel Length	4.8 in.
Barrel	Stainless Steel, 1:9 Twist; Chrome-Lined Chamber & Bore
Magazine	20-Rd. Detachable Box
Slide	Steel, w/Polymer Cover
Frame	Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	2.25 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.75 in.
Rail	MIL-STD 1913, Four Slots
Grips	Checkered
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	6.1 in.
Rear Sight	Adjustable, Two Dot
Front Sight	Post, Single Dot
Trigger Pull Weight	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	3.4 in.
Safety	Ambi Safety Lever
Warranty	None Written
Website	FNHUSA.com
Telephone	(708) 288-3500
Made In	Belgium



This is the FN field-stripped. It's very easy to get the pistol to this condition, and easy to put back together.

ROCK ISLAND ARMORY MICRO MAG STANDARD
51687 22 TCM/9MM LUGER, $550

GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (22 TCM)
GUN TESTS GRADE: C (9MM)

The two grades reflect the performance of the pistol's 22 TCM barrel and the 9mm barrel, which only fed well with ball ammunition. The 1911 22 TCM is a fun gun that offers real performance. When engaging pests and predators at long handgun range, the added weight of the handgun is a stabilizing feature. The pistol is also faster into action due to an efficient safety design.





With the 9mm barrel and recoil spring installed, the pistol was pleasant to fire, but it was not reliable during our test sessions.



The 115-grain XTP failed to feed.



The 22 TCM ejected cases exuberantly. Note cartridge case in air to the right of the shooter.



The 22 TCM doesn't recoil much.

Overall Length	8.75 in.
Overall Height	5.4 in.
Maximum Width	1.5 in.
Weight Unloaded	41 oz.
Weight Loaded	47 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in. Long, Steel, 6 Grooves; 1:16 Twist
Magazine	18-Rd. Detachable Box
Slide	Parkerized Steel
Frame	Parkerized Steel
Frame Front Strap Height	2.6 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grips	Polymer
Grip Thickness (max)	1.4 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.6 in.
Rear Sight	Adjustable
Front Sight	Post, Dovetailed
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	3.5 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.5 in.
Safety	Slide Lock Safety, Grip
Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Made In	Philippines
Telephone	(775) 537-1444
Website:	Armscor.com



The fit of the grip panels was not impressive, but it did not cause a fault when firing the handgun.



The painted front sight caused glare, fixed with a marker.

but it is lightweight. The 5.7 features a polymer frame and steel slide. The handgun weighs but 21 ounces unloaded. It is light, and this creates a whippy feel, which for some shooters must be addressed. The 5.7 is a single-action handgun with a concealed hammer. The pistol's slide lock and safety are ambidextrous. The sights are the common 3-dot combat sights with an adjustable rear sight. There is sufficient texture to maintain a good grip, and the trigger guard easily accommodates gloved-hand use. The magazine release is reversible for right- or left-hand use. Slide-to-frame fit was good, and the pistol showed evidence of quality manufacturing. The magazine held 20 rounds. There are no feed lips, only a bevel on the chamber, ensuring excellent feed reliability. Disassembly was quick and easy. The slide was covered in polymer, which results in low maintenance.

We fired the FN first with the American Eagle 40-grain FMJ load at 5, 7, and 10 yards, using both one- and two-hand combat-firing techniques. This handgun was very easy to control. One of the raters posted five hits in the X ring at 7 yards in two seconds. The 5.7 was also very accurate, with the pistol exhibiting tight groups at all ranges. A decent 5.5-pound trigger aided in the firing equation. The pistol also demonstrated excellent accuracy during the benchrest-firing stage. This was among the most pleasant centerfire handguns we have ever fired. Bench resting did not involve developing a high tolerance for recoil; however, muzzle blast was evident. The FNH produced several 2-inch groups at 25 yards, with the American Eagle shooting the single best group of 1.8 inches.

Accuracy certainly wasn't a problem with this handgun. Neither was control. Offhand accuracy was quite good despite the whippy feeling. As a carry gun, the pistol felt bulky. Also, the safety's location was a serious drawback. There was considerable difficulty in quickly accessing the safety during a draw.



The 22 TCM is the hotter round; however, it enjoys a shorter overall length, making it the more efficient cartridge for use in handguns.



We liked the performance of the 22 TCM, top, better than the 5.7x28mm, bottom. Penetration was superior, and the 22 TCM projectile stays together and does not fragment.



The 5.7 round's performance was very consistent in the manner shown, with fragmentation and jacket sheds.



The SS195LF load failed to expand despite a velocity above 2,000 fps. Note the rifling marks.



Right, the FNH post front sight worked well. The FNH shot several 2-inch groups at 25 yards, with one 1.8-inch group.

For average-size hands, it was a two-hand operation to get the pistol into operation. While some shooters claim to have mastered the safety's rapid operation, our experienced raters were not impressed with the safety location. After a considerable workout, the pistol was deemed enjoyable to use and fire and was well made and accurate. As a defensive handgun, however, the safety location clearly was a drawback. The primary use for this handgun will probably be recreational for most, versus specialized use possible by a SWAT team. However, for anyone who cannot handle a heavier pistol or a heavily recoiling handgun, the 5.7 is leagues ahead of the 22 LR or 22 Magnum handgun, as the data in the ammunition test suggests.) Surprisingly enough, anyone who once wished to use a 22 Jet revolver will find the 5.7 fills the same needs much more efficiently.

Our Team Said: The FNH is a good pistol, but it is one with several faults for personal defense, in our view. The safety is in a poor location for rapid manipulation. The pistol is bulky. The Rock Island pistol is heavy and big, but thanks to the slide-lock/safety design, the latter is faster to an accurate first-shot hit. Also, the 22 TCM pistol is more accurate than the FNH. Another factor that can't be dismissed is the price. We chose to shoot an original IOM ($2000) here because we hadn't tested it head to head when it was released, and we tested an FDE USG model in December 2011. Current 5.7s were running $1250 at Cabela's at the time of testing — still more than double the RIA's $550 counter price. Of course, 22 TCM rounds are cheaper than 5.7 ammo as well.

Rock Island Armory 22 TCM/9mm Combo AC R1911-9mm-22TCM, $550

The price shown is the cost of the pistol at the time of testing from CenterfireSystems.com. The RIA 22 TCM is a modified version of the high-capacity target-grade 9mm handgun. We canvassed the big online gun sites and found few in stock, but the prices are attractive, from about $550 to $700.

The pistol was supplied in a lockable case with the handgun, a single magazine, and a spare barrel and recoil spring in 9mm Luger. Right off the bat, we saw the Rock Island has both more and less than the FNH pistol. The FNH was supplied with three magazines. The Rock Island was supplied with a single magazine, which isn't very helpful in a self-loading pistol even if that magazine holds 18 rounds. We did a search and found magazines for sale at an average of $25, and some were not available until a month later according to the retailer. So, to bring the magazine situation up to par with the 5.7x28mm pistol, we need to spend fifty additional bucks. That isn't unreasonable, but we would prefer a spare be supplied with the handgun. In fact, we think three magazines is the minimum: one on the belt, one in the gun, and one resting.

But no matter what else we do, we cannot supply the FNH pistol with a 9mm barrel, whereas the 22 TCM comes with a spare 9mm barrel. The death of many cartridges has been their limited availability. The 41 Action Express was one, and the 400 Cor-Bon perhaps another, but either could be chambered in existing handguns in popular calibers and returned to 9mm or

5.7x28mm, 22 TCM, and 22 Magnum Loads

Gun: FNH FiveseveN with 4.8-inch barrel	Average Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Average Accuracy (in.)	Power Factor (pf)	Expanded Width (in.)	Retained Weight (gr.)	Penetration In Water (in.)
40-gr. 5.7x28mm V-Max	1705	21	257	2.3	68	Fragments	22/55%	12
40-gr. 5.7x28mm FMJ	1655	18	243	2.1	66	.224	40/100%	24+
27-gr. 5.7x28mm JHP	2030	35	247	2.5	54	.224	27/100%	10

Gun: Rock Island Armory Micro Mag with 5-inch barrel	Average Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Average Accuracy (in.)	Power Factor (pf)	Expanded Width (in.)	Retained Weight (gr.)	Penetration In Water (in.)
40-gr. Armscor 22 TCM	1924	25	328	2.0	76	.30	36/90%	14

Gun: Ruger Single Six with 4.6-inch barrel	Average Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Average Accuracy (in.)	Power Factor (pf)	Expanded Width (in.)	Retained Weight (gr.)	Penetration In Water (in.)
40-gr. CCI 22 Magnum JHP	1320	18	154	2.5	52	.26	38/95%	15

Notes: *The 22 Magnum ammunition was included for comparison. Average Velocity and Standard Deviation readings were recorded by firing 10-shot strings over a Competition Electronics Pro Chrono chronograph. The muzzle was 10 feet from the first skyscreen. Ambient temperature: 77 degrees. Elevation: 815 feet above sea level.* ● *The accuracy figures are the average of three five-shot groups. For accuracy, we fired the test gun from a benchrest at a 25-yard target.* ● *To calculate IPSC power factor, multiply bullet weight in grains by the velocity in fps, then divide by 1000.* ● *The retained-weight column shows the measured recovered bullet weight, then retained weight as a percentage of the actual bullet weight.*

Comments: *We felt that the ideal balance of expansion and penetration was found in the 22 TCM loading. This load also generated the greatest energy. The Federal American Eagle loading in 5.7 is a practice load. The 5.7 V-Max load, with a penetration depth of 12 inches, demonstrates adequate penetration for personal defense. The SS195LF load was a surprise. While its high velocity was expected, the bullet penetrated only 10 inches and exhibited no expansion. There are claims for it tumbling in terminal performance, but there was no evidence it did so in water. We also fired the RIA handgun with its 9mm Luger barrel using Federal 9mm Luger 124-gr. HST P9GST1S ammo. Its muzzle velocity was 1179 fps; muzzle energy was 382 ft.-lbs., and average group size was 2.3 inches.*

Ammo Sources: *Federal American Eagle 5.7x28mm 40-gr. FMJ AE5728A (Gander Mountain #707579, $25); FN SS197SR 5.7x28mm FN 40-gr. Hornady V-Max SS197SR (MidwayUSA.com #428067 $30/50), 5.7x28mm FN SS195 LF Hollow Point 27-gr. #10700013 (CTD #9-40994, $26.87/50), Armscor 22 TCM 40-gr. JHP (CenterfireSystems.com #AM22-TCM-JHP, $20/50), Federal 9mm Luger 124-gr. HST Federal P9GST1S (CTD #2-FEP9HST1S, $22.75/20).*

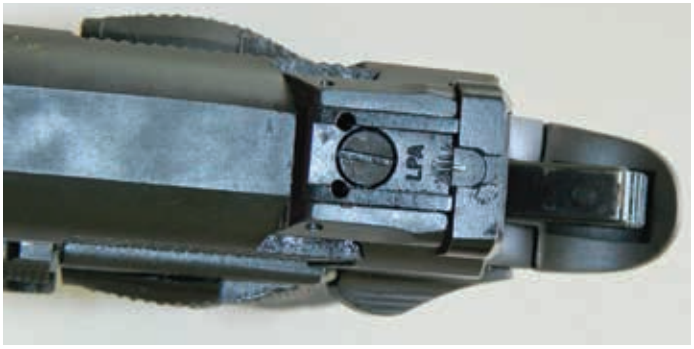


The Federal American Eagle 40-grain full-metal-jacket load, left, is the least expensive choice among the pricey 5.7 rounds, while the V-Max load from FN, right, is a credible frangible load.

45 ACP with a simple barrel change. The 9mm backup barrel offers real versatility.

The 22 TCM was developed from a shortened 223 Remington cartridge. The rim diameter at .378 inch works well in a 9mm breechface. All that is required to convert the 22 TCM to 9mm Luger is to change the barrel and recoil spring.

As for the pistol itself, the Rock Island handgun is a double-column magazine 1911. The pistol uses the standard grip safety and slide lock safety of the 1911. There was no ambidextrous safety, as found on the RIA Tactical II. The pistol was finished in a matte black exterior. The finish seemed evenly applied, but it exhibited holster wear along the flats of the slide after modest use. The slide was finished in a flat-top configuration we find attractive. The safety was stiff in operation, but loosened after use. Originally, the safety was fast enough when moving to the Off position and no



A combination of a flat-top slide and adjustable sights give the RIA pistol a target-grade appearance. Performance backed that up. The adjustable rear sight is necessary in a dual-caliber platform.



This is the real advantage of the dual-barrel RIA pistol — the ability to use plentiful and powerful 9mm Luger ammunition.

impediment to speed work, but very stiff when moving to the On position.

The grips are OK, but they looked and felt cheap, we thought. They could be replaced if the owner so chose. The right-hand panel seemed poorly fitted where an extension met the grip safety. They were a fair attempt at producing useful grips for an outsized frame. The sights were good examples of sporting and combat sights, with a fully adjustable rear sight and a post front. However, an insert in the front sight proved troublesome during the firing test. Lift the gun into the sun to aim, and the front sight disappeared. We blacked it out for the firing test. The pistol's grip frame was large, but most raters were able to control the pistol and use it well. In 45 ACP perhaps there would have been a problem, but not with the 22 TCM and the 9mm Luger.

The sweet spot for the pistol was the trigger. Trigger compression was a tight and smooth 3.5 pounds with no creep. The trigger was a great aid in the excellent accuracy of the pistol. The handgun was heavy at 41 ounces unloaded — roughly twice the weight of the 5.7. While recoil isn't a factor with either handgun, the 22 TCM Rock Island exhibited little movement in firing. When firing off hand at longer ranges, the heavier 22 TCM pistol proved to be more stable and capable of better practical accuracy, we thought.

The initial evaluation began with the pistol lubricated and loaded with the Armscor 40-grain rounds. Drawing from an Alien Gear IWB holster, we fired the pistol at attacker-sized targets at 5, 7, and 10 yards. The results were excellent. All raters remarked upon the ease of control. The pistol's 7-pound recoil spring makes the handgun easy to cock and load, and the pistol's light recoil was appealing to anyone who cannot use a heavier caliber for whatever reason. (The 1911 45 ACP uses a standard 16-pound recoil spring.) On the bench, the pistol turned in several 2.0-inch groups at a long 25 yards, and while the average was slightly greater, this is an accurate handgun.

While the focus of this test are the hot 22s, it was reasonable to test the 9mm barrel, as this is a big selling point of the pistol. If the conversion did not work out, the handgun's use would be cut in half. And, frankly, for some shooters the novelty will wear off and they will still own what remains a credible and accurate high-capacity 9mm handgun. Beginning with Federal American Eagle 115 grain and moving to the Speer Gold Dot 147-grain JHP, the pistol with its 9mm barrel was controllable and accuracy was good. Those who believe the 9mm is a light kicker learned that there is a difference between the 22 TCM and the 9mm Luger. Accuracy was comparable with the 9mm Luger barrel and slide, averaging about 2.3 inches. It is good the pistol is supplied with adjustable sights, we found. The 9mm bullets' dwell time in the barrel are greater and the loads correspondingly fire high. It is doubtful you will be able to use the same sight settings for both rounds.

More problematic, we encountered function problems with every JHP loading. The Hornady XTP failed to feed, with the bullet nose being caught on the feed ramp. We loaded the magazine with the Black Hills EXP and enjoyed a half-dozen rounds firing before this rounded-nose JHP also was caught on the feed ramp. No point in wasting further ammunition at this point. We were disappointed after the flawless showing with the 22 TCM cartridge. We fired 100 rounds of American Eagle 115-grain FMJ without a problem. The pistol was also rated down for the finish compared to the FNH and also the tight safety. However, the tight safety did not detract from combat ability, the problem was in placing the safety on, not off, where the gun would fire. The grips could have been better, but the pistol works in the primary caliber and it is accurate.

Our Team Said: Compared to the 40-grain V-Max 5.7x28mm load, the 22 TCM 40-grain load exhibited a 200-fps advantage. The 27-grain 5.7x28mm load is faster but uses a lighter bullet, so its energy isn't comparable to the 22 TCM. Additionally, the 22 TCM bullet did not fragment. It expanded consistently. The 5.7x28mm V-Max loading penetrated less and fragmented. Compared cartridge to cartridge, we think the 22 TCM is the better cartridge.

If you want a hot 22-caliber centerfire self-loader, the RIA is accurate, more so than the FNH pistol, and costs much less. It is also more powerful. This is a great fun gun, easy to shoot and accurate. This is among the few affordable self-loaders useful for small-game hunting and predator control. Keep it on the hip during your chores, and a pesky coyote is in trouble out to 100 yards, and perhaps a little further.

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

2014 Guns & Gear 'A' List

Which firearms, accessories, and ammunition offer the best combinations of performance and value? We look back at the previous 12 months of Gun Tests to find out.

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



BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER '14

Ruger GP100 No. 1705 357 Magnum, $759



BEST IN CLASS PISTOL '14

Beretta 92A1 Compact Inox 9mm Luger, $650



BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY '14

Brownells 30-Round AR-15/ M16 Magazine 200200, $9.99



BEST IN CLASS RIFLE '14

Grizzly Custom Marlin 336RC 30-30 Win. Brush Hawg Package $1560, ($1910 as tested)



BEST IN CLASS SHOTGUN '14

Winchester Model Super X Black Shadow No. 51225192 12 Gauge, $430

THE 2014 'A' LIST FIREARMS

GUN TESTS GRADE: A+/A PRODUCTS

★ Alexander Henry 12-bore Double Rifle, $8500
★ Armalite AR-10(T) 10TBNF 7.62X51mm NATO, $1914
★ Beretta CX4 Storm PX4 JX4P415 40 S&W, $915
★ Beretta 92A1 Comp. Inox J90C9F20 9mm Luger, $650
★ CZ-USA 527 Varmint #03066 17 Hornet, $725
★ Glock Model 41 45 ACP, $775
★ Grizzly Custom Brush Hawg Package $1560
★ Henry Repeating Arms Lever H010 45-70 Gov't, $850
★ High Standard Supermatic Citation 10X 22 LR, $1275
★ Ithaca M1911-N 1911-C45G10 45 ACP, $1799
★ James Erskine 12-Bore Double Rifle, $12,000
★ Kimber Tactical Pro II 45 ACP, $1317
★ Para USA Expert Commander 96748 45 ACP, $799
★ Roberts Defense Super Grade Pro 45 ACP, $1549
★ Rock River LAR-8 A4 308A1239X 7.62 NATO, $1335
★ Rossi Circuit Judge SCJ4510 45 LC/410 Bore, $684
★ Ruger GP100 No. 1705 357 Magnum, $759
★ Ruger New Model Single-Six 22 LR/22 WMR, $569
★ Ruger SP101 #5759 327 Federal Mag., $600-$800
★ Ruger SP101 Model #5718 357 Magnum, $659
★ Savage 24V 222 Rem./3-Inch 20 Gauge, $400-$500
★ SIG Sauer 1911 C3 1911C0-45-T-C3 45 ACP, ~$650
★ SIG Sauer 556 SWAT Patrol rifle R556-16B-PS-RD 223 Rem/5.56x45mm NATO, $1399
★ Smith & Wesson Model 10 38 Special, $295
★ Smith & Wesson Model 41 22 LR, $1000
★ Smith & Wesson M60 #178013 357 Magnum, $799
★ Smith & Wesson Performance Center Model 629-8 44 Magnum, $900-$1000
★ Springfield Armory Custom XDM 5.25 Competition XDM95259SHC 9mm Luger, $1281
★ Springfield Armory Custom XDM 3.8 XDM9389CBHC 9mm Luger, $1056
★ Taurus Model 66 No. 66SS4 357 Magnum, $591
★ Thomas Kennedy 14-Bore Percussion Double Rifle, $12,500
★ Thureon Defense 45 ACP Carbine, $970
★ Winchester 1886 Limited Series 45-70, $1340

There is a compact version of the Beretta 92FS, but it is seldom seen. It has an aluminum frame and steel slide, fires a double-action first shot, and holds 13 rounds in the magazine. The Beretta locks and unlocks via an oscillating wedge.

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

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

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

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

The Beretta had a slide-mounted decocker and a manual safety. The pistol is decocked, and if desired, the lever is left in the down position for on Safe carry. Using a strong straight-thumb technique, the shooter may switch the Beretta to Fire and Safe relatively quickly. So, if you prefer a manual safety, then the Beretta is the top pick.

During the firing test, the Beretta was drawn from concealed carry and fired at man-sized targets at 5, 7, and 10 yards. We fired 100 rounds of Black Hills 115-grain remanufactured loads during this test. The pistol was new out of the box. There were no malfunctions of any type during the combat-type firing. Recoil was never uncomfortable. We found the long double-action trigger of the Beretta limited first-shot hits. Some raters, such as our military officer, did much better than others. He achieved speedy center hits at 15 yards on demand.

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

The Beretta takes down with a lever on the left side of the frame. A plunger on the right side of the frame is pressed to allow the lever to move. The slide is taken off the frame, the recoil spring and guide lifted out, and the barrel removed. Care must be taken to reposition the locking wedge if it is allowed to move out of battery during disassembly.

Our Team Said: The Beretta's stainless-steel finish and the ability to mount a combat light give it great utility as a carry gun and home-defense pistol.

If you have between $1500 and $2000 to put into a good 45 auto, which one will you get? There are many candidates, and choosing between them is often

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

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS PISTOL

The Beretta's stainless-steel construction, manual safety, light rail, and excellent accuracy added up to high marks.



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

ITHACA GUN CO. M1911-N #1911 C45G10
45 ACP, $1799
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Excellent fit and finish, flawless operation. This pistol holds its own against other 45s in the same price range.



Action	Locked Breech Single-Action Semi-Auto
Overall Length	8.75 in.
Overall Height	5.6 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	42.8 oz.
Weight Loaded	47.4 oz.
Barrel	5.0 in.; 1:16 LH Twist, Match Grade Stainless Steel
Magazine	(1) 7-Rd. Detachable Box; Stainless Steel, w/Bumper
Slide	Flat-Top Carbon Steel; Rear Serrations
Frame	Carbon Steel, Hand-Lapped
Front Strap Height	2.5 in., 22-Ipi Checkering
Back Strap Height	2.8 in., 22-Ipi Checkering
Grips	Checkered Cocobolo w/Logo
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.9 in.
Front Sight	Serrated Blade, Dovetailed
Rear Sight	Adjustable Novak Style, Dovetailed
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.1 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.9 in.
Safeties	Left-Side Slide Lock, Beavertail Grip
Warranty	1 Year Limited
Telephone	(877) 648-4222
Website	IthacaGun.com
Made In	Upper Sandusky, OH

more a test of which brand name sounds the best. Frankly, guns in this price range are very hard to separate because they're all pretty darned good. In the August issue, we looked at a gun whose provenance is hard to match, the full-size Ithaca Gun Co. M1911-N #1911-C45G10 45 ACP, $1799. Between 1942 and 1945, Ithaca Gun Company made 382,000 of the 45-caliber Model 1911-A1 pistols for the military, and according to company documents, Ithaca received a "certificate of appreciation" from the federal government for improving a manufacturing procedure for the triggers. The original Ithaca Gun Company was located in Ithaca, New York, and was probably best known for its M37 shotgun. When Ithaca restarted several years ago in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, new management invested in CNC machining to make its older guns cost-competitive with more modern designs. Those techniques were also applied to a very modern pistol product pitched as a semi-custom 1911 for carry or duty use. The Ithaca comes in a hard plastic case with foam inserts and a 1-year limited warranty.

The Ithaca's dimensions were 8.75 inches in overall length, 5.6 inches in overall height, and a maximum width across the grips of 1.3 inches. Unloaded, the Ithaca weighed 42.8 ounces and 47.4 ounces loaded, with a 7+1 payload. The Ithaca came with just one stainless-steel magazine with a detachable plastic bumper to prevent them from getting damaged if dropped.

It had an upswept extended beavertail grip safety with a big palm bump for sure release. The front had a well-fitted, thick barrel bushing. The Ithaca requires a supplied Allen-head wrench to break it down.

The Ithaca's grips were made of checkered cocobolo with the "Ithaca" logo cut into the tops. We preferred the slightly meatier and slightly less aggressive feel of the Ithaca. The frame had a standard 1911A1 cut behind the trigger and a flat mainspring housing. The Ithaca sported a flat-top matte-black carbon-steel upper with one set of rear grasping grooves; likewise, its matte-black frame was carbon steel, with the two pieces being hand-lapped for a tight fit. We could detect no looseness in the Ithaca's fitting, yet its slide still moved smoothly under hand operation. The gun's magwell was lightly beveled for better magazine insertion.

The Ithaca's front sight was a grooved-face blade dovetailed into the slide with an Allen-head retention screw. Paired with an adjustable Novak-style rear, also dovetailed in but lacking a retention screw, we got a superb view of the target with great light bars.

During our range session, we made only a couple of clicks adjustment in the Ithaca's rear sight to move up the groups about an inch.

We tested with three types of 45 ACP ammunition with different bullet profiles and bullet weights: Get On Target Ammunition, a 230-grain FMJ ball style; a PMC Bronze 185-grain jacketed hollowpoint; and a Speer Lawman 185-grain truncated metal jacket with a squarish nose profile. We had no feeding or other function problems with the Ithaca.

Off the bench, the Get On Target 230-grain FMJ produced a 2.4-inch average group size and it shot to windage point of aim at 25 yards out of the box, and just a little low.

With the PMC Bronze 185-grain JHPs, the Ithaca fired 2.2 inch average groups. The Speer Lawman shot best in the Ithaca, 1.4 inches.

Our Team Said: The Ithaca Gun Co. M1911-N #1911-C45G10 45 ACP, $1799, gets an A grade from us. It's a tightly fitted, accurate, reliable, nice looking pistol.

On our plate in the December 2013 issue was an old standby, the Glock 21 Gen 3 45 ACP, $600, a big, hand-filling handgun capable of packing a devastating punch with anything from classic 230-grain hardball to the lightest-weight, super-expanding bullets. The Glock magazine held 13 rounds. This larger-than-normal capacity gave the gun a sizeable grip, a caved-in back strap to help get your hand around it, a polymer frame, and steel slide. We tested with

GLOCK 21 GEN 3 45 ACP, ABOUT $600
GUN TESTS GRADE: A

There are no controls you don't need, and while it might not be the finest gun for left-handed people, we liked its setup.



Overall Length	8.2 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Barrel Length	4.6 in.
Sight Radius	6.8 in.
Front Strap Height	2.9 in.
Back Strap Height	4.0 in.
Weight Unloaded	27 oz.
Weight Loaded (14 rds. 230-gr.)	38 oz.
Capacity	13+1
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	6.1 in.
Frame	Black Polymer
Barrel	Matte Stainless Steel
Slide	Matte Stainless Steel
Grip	Matte-Black Polymer
Trigger Pull Weight	5.3 lbs.
Trigger Span	3.4 in.
Warranty	1 Year
Telephone	(770) 432-1202
Website	Glock.com

Winchester 185-grain BEB, Lawman 230-grain hardball, and with Cor-Bon 185-grain jacketed hollowpoints. The Glock came with a loading-assist device that slips over the magazine.

All the Glocks have squared-off slides, blocky profiles, matte-black finish, the trigger with built-in safety, and a minimum of controls other than that trigger. Bigger calibers are bigger guns. In the case of the Model 21, it's a pretty big package. We'd guess those with average or small hands would reject it. The grip has a hollow area that might help some get a solid grasp on the gun. We thought it felt quite horrid compared to the similar styling of the 40-caliber Glock Model 23. In the case of this G21, it does not have alternate grip inserts. What you see is what you get. There is a Gen 4 model that costs more and has interchangeable back straps, and if you like the gun but not its grip, you might give the Gen 4 model a look.

Prices for Glocks vary with availability. As this is written we've seen a G21 offered for less than $540, and some for more than $600. Our test gun had night sights, which add about $40 or $50. The sight picture with the Glock's steel sights was slightly wider than some other pistols we've shot, and thus a bit faster. Three glowing green dots, or three off-white buttons, is what the shooter sees, depending on ambient light.

Takedown is pure Glock simplicity. Clear the gun, pull back slightly on the slide while pulling downward on the two finger-grip releases just above the trigger. Release the slide, press the trigger, and off comes the slide with its barrel and spring. The spring is captive. Putting the Glock back together is one of the simplest processes in the industry. Stick the barrel into the slide, slip the spring — which only goes in one way — into place, slide the slide onto the frame and give it a tug toward the back, and you're done. Apart, the Glock has just five big pieces, none easily lost.

On the range, the Glock performed perfectly. Recoil was there, but it wasn't too much for a seasoned 45 shooter. Accuracy was on par with other 45s, and the Glock actually worked with all the test ammo.

Our Team Said: The Glock will always work, even if it's not the smallest, easiest-carried 45 out there.

With proper load selection and marksmanship, the 9mm represents a reasonable level of power for a practiced shooter. Toward that end, in the October issue, we tested popular concealable handguns chambered in 9mm, one

SMITH & WESSON M&P9C NO. 209004
9MM LUGER, $480
GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Smith & Wesson subcompact is as slick as possible, with no protruding controls and no safety.



Action	Locked Breech DAO Semi-Auto Striker Fired
Overall Length	6.7 in.
Overall Height	4.3 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	21.9 oz.
Weight Loaded	27.9 oz.
Barrel Length	3.5 in.
Barrel	Stainless Steel
Capacity	11+1
Slide	Black Stainless Steel
Frame	Black Textured Polymer
Frame Front Strap Height	1.75 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	2.7 in.
Grips	3 Interchangeable Panels
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.4/5.6/5.8 in.
Front Sight	Dovetailed, White Dot
Rear Sight	Steel, Low Profile, 2 White Dots
Sight Radius	5.7 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	6.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Double Action	2.6 in.
Safety	No Manual Safety
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	USA

of which was the Smith & Wesson Military & Police M&P9c #209004 in 9mm Luger, $480.

To evaluate the handgun, it was fired from a solid benchrest-firing position, as we test all handguns. However, in this case the pistol was fired for groups at 15 yards rather than the 25 yards assigned for service pistols. The short sight radius and double-action trigger simply doesn't lend itself well to pinpoint accuracy.

The cost reflects actual pricing from Cheaper Than Dirt! at the time of testing, without shipping and transfer fees. More recently, this gun is listed at CTD for $442. The Smith & Wesson Military & Police self loader is aimed at the market dominated by Glock. Excellent human engineering and good features have resulted in Smith & Wesson gaining a respectable market share in this niche. The smaller version retains the good features of the original full-size pistol. The Smith & Wesson had several design features that all of the raters liked. The slide design was stylish and the cocking grooves gave plenty of leverage. The slide was tapered toward the front to allow easy insertion into a tightly molded holster. The slide lock was ambidextrous; the magazine release was not. The frame was nicely stippled across the back strap; the front strap texture wasn't as aggressive. The Smith & Wesson magazines held 11 rounds,

The raters liked the sights. The rear sight isn't a Novak, but it was high profile and low snag. The front sight was nicely dovetailed in place. The Smith & Wesson featured a loaded-chamber indicator that works visually only. There was a light rail, albeit a short one. Trigger compression broke at 6 pounds even. When testing the trigger, we hooked the RCBS registering trigger-pull gauge up, and the trigger did not budge. We had to be certain the hinged component at the bottom of the trigger was actuated. We liked that.

During combat firing, the Smith & Wesson gave good to excellent handling results for a compact handgun. The grip was a little short, but just the same, we were in control of the pistol. During benchrest firing, the M&P9c gave good accuracy. The most accurate choice was the Speer 124-grain Gold Dot, which notched an average group size of 2.0 inches at 15 yards.

After the shooting comes the cleaning. The raters liked the breakdown of the M&P. Unload the pistol, remove the magazine, lock the slide back, twist the lever, and then release the slide to allow it to run forward off the slide. The recoil spring and guide and barrel are easily removed.

Our Team Said: During the test, we saw no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject, with suitable accuracy and good ergonomics.

RUGER 22/45 LITE NO. 03900 P45MK3ALRPFL 22 LR, $499

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

We liked the suppressor-mounting system better, and magazines for the gun are easier to find. Fun to shoot.



Action	Blowback Semi-Auto Single Action
Overall Length	8.5 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.15 in.
Weight Unloaded (w/mag)	23.6 oz.
Weight Loaded (10 rds)	23.8 oz.
Capacity (as tested)	10+1
Barrel Sleeve	4.4 in. Stainless Steel 6 Grooves, 1:16 RH Twist
Muzzle Thread	½x28
Bolt	Stainless Steel, Internal Cylindrical
Bolt Retraction Effort	6.0 lbs.
Upper Receiver	Gold Anodized Aluminum, Fluted Barrel Shroud, Drilled & Tapped (Weaver)
Frame	Zytel Polymer
Grips	Replaceable Black Laminate Panels
Grip Thickness (max)	1.15 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.75 in.
Grip Frontstrap	2.25 in. tall, Horiz. Grooves
Grip Backstrap	3.1 in. tall, Checkered
Sight Radius	6.5 in.
Sight, Front	Fixed Plastic Front Blade
Sight, Rear	Fully Adjustable Steel
Trigger Pull Weight (Single Action)	4.7 lbs.
Trigger Span (Single Action)	2.75 in.
Trigger Travel to Break	0.180 in.
Trigger Travel (After Break)	0.084 in.
Trigger Guard	1.5 in. Long; 1.1 in. Tall
Safety	Frame-Mounted Button
Slide Stop	Button, Left Side Only
Magazines	(2) 10-Round Blued Steel, Removable Polymer Basepads
Accessories	Zipper Case, Manual, Internal Lock Key, Scope Base
Warranty	None Written
Loaded Chamber Indicator	Yes
Magazine Disconnect	Yes
Reversible Magazine Release	No
Picatinny Rail	No
Telephone	(928) 541-8892
Website	Ruger.com
Made By/In	Sturm Ruger Co., Prescott, AZ
Online Price Range	$360 to $420

Rimfire plinking pistols should be fun to shoot and easy to operate and maintain, and if they offer a little more for the buck, even better. In the February issue, we came across a 22 LR semi-auto we thought would be fun to shoot and which offered threaded barrels for suppressor use — a definite upgrade over the basic 22 LR tube: the Ruger 22/45 Lite No. 03900 P45MK3ALRPFL, $499.

The Lite's threads were protected by a knurled ring that could be unscrewed by hand. Underneath, the barrel was threaded ½x28. Externally, the ring was integrated into the Lite's lines. The top of the Ruger polymer front sight sits 0.4 inch above the aluminum shroud and







We used a Silencerco Sparrow SP-1505 for the test. Top left: The Sparrow is installed on the Lite, showing how the can integrates into the Lite's lines. Left: The Lite's threads were protected by a knurled ring that could be unscrewed by hand. Underneath, the barrel was already threaded at ½x28, allowing fast and easy installation of the Sparrow.

0.875 inch above the boreline, more than enough to clear the 1.062-inch-diameter Sparrow suppressor (half its diameter being 0.531 inch). Also, the Ruger's shroud top is drilled and tapped for a scope base, so adding your choice of red dot to the Ruger would be easy if you preferred an optical sighting solution.

It was an enjoyable experience to shoot without having to wear hearing protection. If any of the ammo had been supersonic, we would have worn protection to deal with the sonic crack. Most shooters who are new to suppressor use note that the devices are quiet, but not in-the-movies quiet — it is hard to meet the fictional expectations of Hollywood. Some other quick notes about the Sparrow. Because the 22 LR round is not copper jacketed, molten lead and carbon debris will explode into the silencer when the projectile exits the muzzle. It is possible for a 22 suppressor to fill with lead and become heavy and ineffective. To avoid this, 22 silencers must be disassembled for cleaning and regular maintenance.

Silencerco's Multi Part Containment (MPC) technology allows the 22 Sparrow to be easily disassembled for cleaning and maintenance after heavy use. This is achieved by applying two tube halves before sliding the outer tube on the rest of the assembly. The outer tube can be easily removed, and the tube halves are free to pull away from the baffles without having to rotate or slide. Just pull off the tubes, clean the components, and reassemble.

The 22 Sparrow handles 22 LR cartridges as well as 17 HMR, 22 WMR, and the 5.7×28mm FN, and it's rated for full-auto 22 LR machine guns. It weighed 6.5 ounces and measured 5.08 inches in length. Our testers said the silencer helped stabilize the front ends of the test pistol, improving follow through. Also, we didn't shoot fast enough for the can to build up much heat, so handling it wasn't a problem. According to the manufacturer's specifications, it will produce a 41dB sound reduction when fired in the Walther P22 using CCI Standard Velocity cartridges. MSRP is $499.

Our discontinued test gun is the gold-anodized Lite version that is substantially like the black-anodized #3903 that's still listed on the Ruger website. Even though the #3900 isn't cataloged any longer, a quick web search finds many still for sale. In both the Lite and standard forms, the 22/45's claim to fame is that it duplicates the feel of a 1911. In addition to the identical grip angles, the 22/45 features the same fire-control locations (manual safeties, magazine releases, and bolt hold-opens) as the 1911. Also, its trigger feel is classic Bullseye, making it a low-recoil complement for a centerfire 45.

The barrel is a heavy bull design in appearance, but the exterior bulk doesn't translate to weight. There's a 4.4-inch-long stainless-steel barrel sleeve inside the fluted aluminum shroud (which is also drilled and tapped for Weaver bases), making the unloaded weight with an empty magazine only 23.6 ounces and a loaded weight (10+1 rounds) of 23.8 ounces. Of course, the Zytel Polymer frame is light in weight as well.

As we noted above, the Ruger's sights were tall enough to see over our test suppressor, and because they were fully and easily adjustable, they would be easy to center, even with bullet weights varying between 26 grains to 40 grains and muzzle velocities varying by hundreds of feet per second.

At the range, the 22/45 shot the smallest bench groups in the test with Armscor 36-grain rounds (0.8 inches) and pretty well with the CCI and Remington rounds, both at 1.1-inch average group sizes. Part of that accuracy was due to the wide, comfortable trigger, which offered a small amount of take-up (0.180 inch) and then a solid stop followed by a 4.7-pound break. After the shot broke on the Ruger, we had to release the trigger completely by moving the finger forward until the trigger reset. The trigger guard was small and lacked any texturing, which is fine for the target shooter/plinker.

Retracting the Ruger's bolt ears, which pull back the breech bolt, took a little getting used to as we switched between guns. We kept trying to slide the shroud rearward, rather than grabbing the ears. Bolt retraction effort was a modest 6 pounds, so even arthritic hands could work the action successfully. However, the edges of the ears were very sharp, and one shooter cut his thumb on them.

The Ruger was not ambidextrous, with the safety appearing as a frame-

mounted button near the trigger guard on the left side only, ditto that for the slide-stop button, and the magazine release was not reversible. Other notable features were that the Ruger had a loaded chamber indicator, used a magazine disconnect, and lacked a Picatinny rail.

Our Team Said: After break in, the Ruger fed flawlessly with all our test ammos. Its suppressor-attachment scheme was very simple and easy.

When we took a look at 357 Magnum double-action revolvers with 4-inch barrels and adjustable sights in the March issue, we gave both the Ruger GP100 No. 1705 357 Magnum, $759; and the Taurus Model 66 No. 66SS4 357 Magnum, $591 **A** grades. Both had transfer-bar firing systems, wherein the blow from the hammer is transferred via the transfer bar to the firing pin located in the frame. To determine which handgun we preferred, we battered this pair with all the 38 Special and 357 Magnum ammo we could scrounge. The results were close, but features of the Ruger made it a little better, in our estimation.

The GP100 has been part of Ruger's lineup since 1986. Ruger lists five different models in the Standard GP100 family with barrel lengths of 3, 4, 4.2, and 6 inches. Finishes are either blued or stainless steel. Manufacturer's suggested retail prices range from $699 for the alloy steel models to $759 for the stainless-steel 357 Magnum revolvers. All models come with Hogue Monogrips.

On the Ruger, the sights, grooved barrel and grips, as well as a satin stainless-steel finish gave the Ruger a refined look and feel. The Ruger mixed squared edges, such as at the trigger and the hammer, with graceful lines on the barrel and behind the GP100's cylinder.

With clean, unloaded revolvers, we checked the barrel/bore alignment with each chamber using Brownells 38/357 Service Revolver Range Rods (#080-617-038WB, $40 at Brownells.com), and we found all the chambers were in spec. The Ruger had a tighter cylinder lock with the hammer cocked back.

The Ruger one-piece frame is easier to disassemble than the Taurus, but don't lose the small pin which holds the mainspring compressed. If you do, a paperclip works in a pinch. Both use a coil spring for a main spring.

The Ruger revolver did not offer an internal safety lock like the Taurus. Instead, the Ruger came with a padlock designed to pass through a single chamber with the cylinder swung away from the frame.

Testers felt the rear sight of the GP100 was better because it was built into the Ruger's frame, protecting it more, though that protection bulked up the GP100. A very small screwdriver was required to turn the Ruger's windage-adjustment screw. The front sight on our Ruger was a black ramp grooved to reduce glare and dovetailed into place. Shooters preferred the sights on the Ruger.

The bore centerline of the Ruger was slightly higher than the Taurus, but there was no extra perceived muzzle flip, our shooters said. The wheelguns merely used two different design approaches, both of which worked to our satisfaction.

The finger grooves of the Ruger's rubber grip were more pronounced, yet fit average to large-size hands exceedingly well.

Our Team Said: In rapid fire, the Ruger was very controllable and a pleasure to shoot due to the weight. If money wasn't a concern, our team would prefer to buy the Ruger GP100.

Single-action-revolver purists cringe at the thought of a transfer bar in a six-shooter. The fact is, classic single actions are usually five-shooters rather than six-shooters. Reason: For safety, the loading regime for a classic single action is to load a chamber, skip a chamber, and load the rest, which allows the hammer to rest on the empty chamber. Some single actions have built-in transfer bars that are raised into firing position as the trigger is pulled to the rear. When the hammer falls in this design, it hits the transfer bar, which in turn transmits energy to the

RUGER GP100 NO. 1705 357 MAGNUM, $759

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS REVOLVER

The GP100 performs, has desirable features, and will last even with extreme use. More expensive, but more better.



Action	Single/Double Action
Overall Length	9.5 in.
Overall Height	6.0 in.
Maximum Width (Cylinder)	1.6 in.
Weight Unloaded	40.0 oz.
Weight Loaded	42.4 oz.
Barrel Length	4.0 in., 1:18.75 RH Twist
Capacity	6
Frame Material/Size	Satin St. Steel/Medium
Cylinder Material	Satin Stainless Steel, Fluted
Frame Front Strap Height	2.5 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	4.2 in.
Grips	Hogue Monogrip; Textured Rubber w/Finger Grooves
Grip Thickness (max)	1.3 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.2 in.
Front Sight	Ramp
Rear Sight	Adjustable
Sight Radius	5.4 in.
Trigger Pull Weight Single Action	4.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight Double Action	10.0 lbs.
Trigger Span Single Action	2.0 in.
Trigger Span Double Action	3.5 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(603) 863-3300
Website	Ruger.com
Made In	Newport, NH

TRADITIONS FRONTIER SERIES 1873 SINGLE ACTION NO. SAT73-126 38 SPECIAL/357 MAGNUM, $609

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Frontier offered a more traditional SAA revolver at a good price. The nickel finish was slick and pleasing to the eye.



Action	Single Action
Overall Length	10 in.
Overall Height	5.5 in.
Maximum Width	1.7 in.
Weight Unloaded	44.4 oz.
Weight Loaded	47.2 oz.
Barrel Length	4.6 in.
Barrel	Blued Steel, 6 groove, 1:18.75 RH
Frame	Nickel Plated Steel
Front Strap Height	2.1 in.
Back Strap Height	3.3 in.
Grips	Smooth, one-piece White PVC Polymer
Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	6.0 in.
Sights, Rear	Receiver Notch
Sights, Front	Blade
Sight Radius	6.3 in.
Hammer Cocking Force	5.5 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight	3.2 lbs.
Trigger Span	2.8 in.
Safety	None
Warranty	None Written
Telephone	(860) 388-4656
Website	TraditionsFirearms.com
Made In	Italy (Pietta)

firing pin. Thus, these transfer-bar revolvers can be carried fully loaded without the risk of an discharge if the revolvers are accidentally dropped on their hammers. The ability to load six rounds appeals to plinkers, hunters, and home defenders, but to a Cowboy Action Shooting competitor, the advantage is moot — only five rounds are ever loaded at a time during CAS competition.

We evaluated a transfer-bar design in 38 Special/357 Magnum in the April issue: The a Traditions Frontier Series 1873 Single Action Model No. SAT73-126, $609.

The Traditions Frontier Series 1873 Single Action is a classic single action. The Frontier uses the skinny trigger, had a grip that flared out, the ejector pivoted away from the barrel during shell extraction, and a flat main spring. The Frontier requires the hammer be at half cock to rotate the cylinder but the loading gate could be opened with the hammer fully forward. Testers found it was easy to load the Frontier once they had the process down.

The purists in the bunch seemed to gravitate to the Traditions Frontier. They liked the trigger and the flared out hog-leg grip. The grip was one piece of white PVC plastic that had a familiar feel in hand. The bottom edge of the grip, however, was sharp and cut a shooter who was firing 357 Magnum rounds. The problem was easily fixed with a file.

There was no play in the cylinder on any of the chambers when the hammer was cocked, and we tried to rotate the cylinder while the bolt was in the locking slot of the cylinder. A Brownells range rod was dropped down the barrel to determine chamber bore alignment. There was no resistance to the rod passing from the barrel bore to each cylinder chamber.

The finish was nicely executed, though there were some tool marks on the side of the trigger and in the frame just under the rear sight groove. One nit was the ugly rollmark on the top of the Frontier — but this did not hinder performance. The front edges of the cylinder were chamfered, so holstering was easier. There were no issues with a hammer slipping during cocking. Ham-fisted users found the cocked hammer bit into the web of their hands if their hands were high on the grip. This was more noticeable when firing the hotter 357 Magnum rounds. Many said they would take a file or Dremel tool to the edge of the hammer spur to make it less sharp. None said it was a show-stopper, it was just a trait of SAA revolvers. In a two-handed hold, the non-shooting hand could easily thumb back the hammer for fast shooting. With repeated firing, the barrel did heat up, so we appreciated that the ejector head of the Frontier rotated away from the barrel when it was needed to eject an empty case.

After repeated firing, there was no ring around the cylinder of the Frontier, nor did we get any lead splashed back due to a misaligned chamber. We didn't clean the revolver during testing, and with more than 300 rounds of all types of ammo through it, there was no binding of the cylinder.

Our Team Said: The Frontier was favored by testers who preferred traditional SAAs. The lower price of the Traditions Frontier was appealing.

To make an S&W N-Frame revolver into a compact carry gun means reducing the revolver's barrel length and grip. What's left is still a large frame and cylinder that holds six cartridges. It is big metal, compared to an S&W J-frame, Ruger, or Taurus compact revolver normally used for concealed carry. The N-frame is renowned for its strength and has three safety features built into the mechanism: a hammer block, rebounding hammer, and hammer stop. All three safety features work unseen inside the frame and under the sideplate and make the revolvers very safe, guarding against accidental discharge from being dropped on a hard surface or a hammer slipping out from under a thumb. In the November issue, we tested an N-frame derived from the classic S&W Model 29, the S&W Performance Center Model 629-8 44 Magnum, $900-$1000.

The 629-8 came out of S&W's Performance Center a few years back and is not currently catalogued.

S&W PERFORMANCE CENTER MODEL 629-8
44 MAGNUM, $900-$1000
GUN TESTS GRADE: A
The ported 3-inch barrel, low fixed sights, and compact grip made this a concealable N-frame that was easy to shoot well.



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

Testers felt that the 629-8 got concealed carry right for a big-bore revolver. At first glance, the 629-8 looked like a traditional revolver, but the features are what pushed this revolver ahead. The frame, barrel, and cylinder wore a matte-stainless finish while the trigger and hammer had a chrome-flashed finish. It also wore a set of the Secret Service–style grips that we grew to appreciate. The grips were fitted well to the frame and allowed use of a speedloader. The 629-8 had a 3-inch barrel that was ported and equipped with fixed sights that were large and serviceable.

The round barrel featured an oblong port between the muzzle and front sight. This helped tame felt recoil. On average, the longer barrel gave slightly more muzzle velocity even with the port. The front ramp sight with red insert was dovetailed into the barrel, allowing the user to swap out the front sight to sync up point of aim with the ammo used. This is important since the rear sight was a groove machined in the frame's top strap and was not adjustable.

The surface of the trigger was smooth and made DA mode feel less than it actually measured. A trigger stop was built into the trigger, which is a nice feature to reduce rear movement of the trigger to the barest minimum. The teardrop-shaped hammer spur added to concealability and usability. The front edge of the cylinder wore a nice chamfer, and all the chambers were chamfered for ease in reloading. The crane also had a ball detent that locked into the frame rock solid. The ejector rod was housed in an enclosed shroud under the barrel and performed as it should.

The 629-8 weighed 43.7 ounces loaded. The added weight, along with the porting and longer barrel, made this revolver easy to shoot. The 629-8 also had a long sight radius, which also made the revolver easier to aim. At 15 yards, we were able to consistently shoot five-shot groups at one inch. The the 629-8's sights were designed for concealed carry, and they performed. This revolver is a brute in recoil, but we felt it was easy enough to manage.

Drawing the 629-8 from concealed carry, the outside of the revolver was smoother and more snag free than the other revolvers.

Our Team Said: The 629-8 was a serviceable concealed carry big bore, but finding one may be difficult since it is no longer produced.

In the February 2003 issue of Gun Tests we published a single-page feature entitled "Mike's Ultimate Truck Gun." In that, we described how gunsmith Mike Montgomery had taken a pawnshop refugee 30-30 Winchester Marlin 336RC and upgraded it. For a decade, it has been a favorite of Contributing Editor Roger Eckstine, but after 10 years of riding in a pickup truck, Truck Gun needed renovation.

The Gun Tests staff thought the Marlin 336RC would be an ideal candidate for a Before & After renovation, in which we take a previously reviewed gun and either upgrade it ourselves or send it to a specialty shop to see how the changes perform and assess whether we think they're worth the money. Eckstine chose gunsmith Lew Bonitz, purveyor of Grizzly Custom Guns based in Columbia Falls, Montana (GrizzlyCustom.com, [406] 892-4570), to do the work.

What Eckstine wanted was a variation on the Brush Hawg package, which includes shortening and recrowning the barrel at 16.5 inches; shortening the magazine tube, if required, and adding a custom LPA ghost ring sight system with single post front sight and dovetail fill to replace factory rear sight. Also included were an enlarged lever loop, smoothing all ports inside and out, modifying the loading gate for easier loading/unloading, and extensive action smoothing, including a trigger job, dehorning, and adding a bobbed hammer and stainless steel follower. Rounding out the Brush Hawg was a Pachmayr Decelerator recoil pad and leather butt-cuff ammunition carrier (right or left handed) with matching Slimline leather sling, satin matte

GRIZZLY CUSTOM MARLIN 336RC 30-30 WIN. BRUSH HAWG PACKAGE $1560, ($1910 AS TESTED)

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS RIFLE

Grizzly transformed a 25-year-old pawnshop lever-action carbine from a beater gun to a firearm worthy of being passed down.



Action	Lever	Stock Drop @ Heel	2.0 in.
Overall Length	33.5 in.	Stock Pitch	2.2 in.
Overall Height w/o Scope	6.5 in.	Forend	Walnut, w/Sling Stud
Maximum Width	1.5 in.	Rear Sight	Aperture
Weight Unloaded	7.2 lbs.	Front Sight	Red Filament
Weight Loaded (incl. cuff+sling)	8.0 lbs.	Sight Radius	20.8 in.
Capacity	4+1	Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	Picatinny, Extended
Magazine	Tubular	Trigger Pull Weight	4.5 lbs.
Barrel	Matte Blue, 17.5 in., 1:10 Twist	Safety	Half Cock
Buttstock	Natural Walnut	Warranty	None Written
Buttplate	Rubber, 0.8-inch Thick	Telephone	(406) 892-4570
Length of Pull	13.5 in.	Website	GrizzlyCustom.com
Stock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.	Made In	USA

metal prep and bluing. Base price of the Brush Hawg Lever gun Special built on a customer's gun is $1560.

Eckstine didn't need the 17.5-inch-long barrel to be shortened any further; he just wanted the barrel re-crowned. He also ordered the extended Picatinny sight rail instead of the 3-rail Picatinny forend featured in the Tactical package. He also didn't want the barrel band with the single-slot Picatinny rail for attaching a light along the side, and he also passed on changing the sights to a ghost ring. But the existing rear unit, which had minor damage, was exchanged for a new Williams rear aperture, so he decided on a new NECG ramped front sight and light-gathering filament.

The major addition was a 10.75-inch-long XS Sights Scout Picatinny rail stretching from the rear sight to about 6.5 inches beyond the receiver. The rifle's classic look was maintained, with the metal re-blued and the wood refinished.

We hoped the relatively inexpensive recrowning alone would restore Truck Gun's accuracy to its 2003 numbers. Overall, we did see that. One round shot in both tests was the Federal 125-grain Hi-Shok hollowpoints, which recorded 0.6-inch groups in 2003 and 1.0-inch groups at 50 yards in 2013. With 150-grain bullets, the Grizzly did slightly better than the original (1.1 inch compared to 1.3 inch), and with 170-grain Winchester Silvertip bullets, the Grizzly shot on par (0.7 inch) with the best original Federal 125-grain performance, and about half-inch better than the 170-grain Federal Classics used in 2003. For Eckstine, accuracy with the 170-grain Federal Classics was important because he found their profile made them faster to load into the rifle — a key point due to its relatively low capacity.

Pulling down the original lever required a little more than 6.0 pounds on average. The new lever action was smooth and tight, requiring no more than 4.0 pounds of effort to operate it. Eckstine complained that the original small square loop cramped his hand. The big loop on the renovation was more comfortable and faster to operate as well.

Trigger-pull weight before renovation was about 5.5 pounds with occasional creep or grit. The trigger pull weight was reduced to about 4.5 pounds without any sign of grit or creep.

The new front sight was clear, and installation of the stanchion and Picatinny rail were seamless.

The refinished stocks had finish depth comparable to wood treatment in high-end cars. The Grizzly Custom Guns leather butt cuff with matching padded sling was very pleasing. The nylon cuff it replaced was barely functional and certainly not a visual attribute.

The original Truck Gun was limited to just its iron sights. The new rail system allowed us to add various sights to the Marlin.

Our Team Said: If you have a gun of similar vintage and want to update it, we heartily recommend all of Grizzly's functional upgrades — the trigger and action jobs, smoothing the loading gate operation, and adding new and improved mechanical sights. But keep in mind that Grizzly primarily provides package builds rather than individual modifications. At a final cost of $1910 plus shipping, this was a pricey project but still less costly than many custom guns.

In the May 2014 issue, we tested an ArmaLite AR-10(T) Black Target Rifle 10TBNF in 308 Winchester, $1914, with Freedom Munitions 150-grain FMJs, Federal Match 168-grain Match Kings, and Hornady 155-grain JHPs. Although the ArmaLite had the basic black-rifle setup, it had a thick stainless match barrel and a tubular forend. The rifle came with no iron sights, so we again called on our 36X Weaver target scope to wring out the rifle. This was one heavy dude. With our scope bolted in place, no ammo, the rifle tipped the scales at 12 pounds, enough to give the shooter a good iron-pumping workout by simply lifting it without firing a shot. The heavy 20-inch barrel measured 0.8

ARMALITE AR-10(T) 10TBNF 7.62X51MM NATO/ 308 WINCHESTER, $1914

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

Plain but accurate, the ArmaLite had a free-floating heavy stainless barrel and a decent trigger.



Action Type	Semiautomatic	Action Finish	Parkerized
Overall Length	39.9 in.	Barrel Finish	None
Barrel Length	20 in.	Magazine Type	Detachable
Sight Radius	N/A	Stock	Fixed, polymer
Overall Height w/out scope	7.1 in.	Trigger Pull Weight	5.0 lbs.
LOP	14.6 in.	Warranty	Limited Lifetime
Weight Unloaded	10.7 lbs.	Telephone	(800) 336-0184
Weight Loaded	12.3 lbs.	Website or Email	ArmaLite.com
Capacity	20+1	Made In	Illinois

inch in diameter at the muzzle. The trigger pull was a two-stage unit. It took about 3 pounds for the first stage, and broke at 5.0 pounds, dead clean and crisp.

The heavy tubular forend fit our machine rest nicely, and was comfortable to grasp. This aluminum forend provided a circular shield for the free-floated barrel. Its bottom had seven threaded holes to give a variety of positions for a sling. The magazine went in and came out cleanly, just like it was supposed to. Takedown was standard, and offered no surprises. Looking inside the rifle, we found fine workmanship everywhere we looked, though nothing appeared to jump out as being special. The details on such a rifle are, of course, what make the difference, and these can be subtle in the extreme. The stock and pistol grip seemed to be standard items. The stock had a useful trap in its butt, but the pistol grip was simply hollow. The trigger guard could be opened for winter use.

On the range, using our machine rest with the round forend, we could hold the tiny dot of the 36X scope absolutely motionless on the target, so we knew we were getting all we could out of the rifle. With the Federal ammo it shot its best, giving groups that averaged 1.2 inches, not quite the minute-of-angle promised by the maker. However, our groups had all three shots in a horizontal line, promising one-hole groups if we could determine the cause of the slight windage movement. In short, with more shooting, we might have done better. With Hornady's ammo, the rifle averaged the same, and it gave the rifle's best group at 0.9 inch.

Our Team Said: We could not fault the ArmaLite AR-10(T) Black Target Rifle 10TBNF in any way. It exhibited decent accuracy with both types of match ammo, and promised more accuracy than we got. It was way too heavy, we thought, for a general-purpose battle rifle, and for that it would have needed iron sights, too. However, if you want or need a good black target rifle, here it is.

Rimfire rifle ammunition was used as far back as the U.S. Civil War to launch big, big bullets. But in today's modern era, we think of much smaller rounds, with 22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire (WMR) and 17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire (HMR) topping the list in power and effectiveness. In the May issue, we were curious to see how a magazine fed semi-auto, CZ-USA's $510 Model 512 No. 0216 22 WMR, would fare

CZ-USA 512 RIFLE NO. 0216 22 WMR, $510

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Reliable, clean running, and inexpensive, the CZ's chambering makes it more fun (and more powerful) than most other rimfires.



Action	Semi-Automatic	Stock Pitch	4.2 in.
Overall Length	39.3 in.	Bedding Block/Pillars	No/No
Overall Height w/o Scope	7.9 in.	Forend	Beechwood
Maximum Width	2.25 in.	Rear Sight	Elevation Notch-Adjustable Ramp, Drift for Windage
Weight Unloaded	5.8 lbs.		
Weight Loaded	5.9 lbs.	Front Sight	Hooded Post
Capacity	5+1	Sight Radius	15.5 in.
Magazine	Single-Column Removable Box	Receiver Scope-Base Pattern	11mm Dovetail
Barrel	20.5 in., 1:16 in. Twist Matte Blue Steel	Trigger Pull Weight	6.0 lbs.
		Safety	Crossbolt at Trigger Guard
Buttstock	Matte-Finished Beechwood	Warranty	1 Year Wood, 5 Years Mechanical
Buttplate	Plastic, 0.3-in. Max. Thickness		
Length of Pull	13.75 in.	Telephone	(800) 955-4486
Stock Drop @ Comb	1.0 in.	Website	CZ-USA.com
Stock Drop @ Heel	2.0 in.	Made In	Czech Republic

in a varmint-cartridge test. There's nothing wrong with more output if an autoloader is accurate and not too finicky. There are precious few 22 WMR autoloaders in production, due supposedly to reliability issues and, of course, demand.

We shot the rifle for accuracy from the 100-yard line at American Shooting Centers in Houston using a Harris BR (bench rest) bipod up front and a beanie bag from Triad Tactical beneath the stock. For optics, we stayed with the Nikon Monarch 4-16X23mm BDC scope purchased from Brownells in December 2012.

The CZ 512 offered a mix of old and new technology. The stock and forend were fashioned from beech without checkering, but was pleasingly finished. The buttplate was plastic, and there were sling studs fore and aft. In between was where things got interesting. The lower portion of the receiver consisted of fiberglass-reinforced polymer and contained the trigger mechanism and detachable magazine housing. The upper half of the receiver was composed of an aluminum alloy that secured the hammer-forged barrel and chromed bolt assembly.

The CZ 512 shares 5-shot single column magazines ($25) with the CZ 455 series rifles that have been available for a long time. Extra magazines (including 10-round mags, $35) are easy to find. The magazine release was on the lower receiver just forward of the magazine well. It was a small drop down lever we pulled rearward to discharge the mag. The 512 utilized a crossbolt safety located at the upper rear corner of the trigger guard, which was molded as one with the receiver. Inside the trigger guard was a small sheet-metal lever that served as the bolt stop. Without manually pulling back the right-side bolt handle and pushing the lever upward, the bolt returned to the closed position when the magazine was empty.

The CZ 512 offered a set of open sights as well as facility for mounting a scope. There was a 11mm dovetail for mounting scope rings directly to the receiver, and CZ also offers a Weaver-style adapter plate ($46 from Shop.CZ-USA.com). Installing the Weaver mount would allow the shooter to choose from a wider variety of rings.

We chose to utilize the integral rail and mount our scope using a pair of steel-construction CZ-USA scope rings. These rings do not require a cross notch for a secure fit, so we were free to shift the scope forward or back without limitation. This proved helpful because we needed the front of the scope to clear the rear sight assembly and still provide the proper distance to the shooter's eye.

At the bench, the recoil impulse of the blowback mechanism gave us a bit of a surprise. We learned that without a solid cheekweld on the comb, the shooter was in for a fair amount of slap.

The trigger on the 512 was a little heavier than we think was necessary, with no indication in the owner's manual that it was user adjustable. Trigger weight registered between 5.75 pounds and 6.25 pounds of resistance with a little bit of creep. Although such characteristics are not ideal for accuracy, we did manage to produce 5-shot group averages of 1.1 inches, 1.4 inches, and 1.2 inches firing the Hornady 45-grain Critical Defense ammunition, the 40-grain Speer Gold Dots, and CCI Maxi-Mag rounds, respectively.

The front sight unit was a tall blade protected by a hood. The rear sight slid forward and back, up and down a ramp for elevation adjustment, and was secured by a locking screw. The blade was drift adjustable for windage. With the cheek hunkered down on the comb so the eyes can meet the sights, we got a tightly bonded cheekweld that removed any stock slap. If we owned this rifle and were going to shoot a scope on it full time, we would remove the rear sight so that the scope can be mounted as low as possible.

Another aspect of owning a semi-automatic rimfire rifle is keeping it clean. We did fire some lead bullets through the CZ 512 (Winchester's 45-grain Dynapoint Magnum), but shooting primarily jacketed bullets all but eliminated the need to take down and clean the action. We found that brushing the bolt face and the breech was enough to keep things running, but here's how the CZ 512 takes down for cleaning. Remove the magazine, lock back the bolt and inspect the chamber. Release the bolt. Loosen the screw in the forestock and pull it toward the muzzle to remove. Depress the barrel to release the body locking pin. Push the pin sideways (with a tool if necessary). You can now pull apart the barrel and receiver, but the bolt handle will need to be removed for complete separation. Remove the bolt handle by pulling it outward, overcoming a slight detent. Now the two parts can be separated completely, but you need to control the bolt so that the recoil spring does not eject the bolt. Hold on to the bolt top firmly, push it slightly to the rear to overcome the pressure of the recoil springs and tilt it upward to allow for complete removal. All in all, this was not daunting, but it was tricky the first time we tried it, especially when compared to servicing a bolt-action rifle.

Our Team Said: After experiencing complete reliability firing the CZ USA 512, we have to wonder why other manufacturers gave up on semi-automatic 22 WMR rifles. Accuracy was on par or better than other 22 WMR rifles previously tested. Above all, this is a gun that is good looking, fun, acceptably powerful, highly reliable and currently, unique.

No one can dispute the popularity of the Winchester Model 12, which set the standard for pump-action shotguns from August 1912 until it was discontinued in May 1964. There are still many, many of the old Model 12s in use today — truly a testament to the craftsmanship of the fine firearm. The Model 12 was discontinued because, with its forged and machined steel parts, Winchester deemed the shotgun was too expensive to produce at

WINCHESTER MODEL SUPER X BLACK SHADOW NO. 51225192 12 GAUGE, $430

GUN TESTS GRADE: A- BEST OF CLASS SHOTGUN

A smooth-handling shotgun with a slick action that reminded us of the Model 12. Out of the box, this is a go-to slide action.



Action Type	Pump	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.4 in.
Chamber Size	2.75 to 3.5 in.	Buttstock Drop @ Heel	2.0 in.
Overall Length	49.0 in.	Forearm	Black Synthetic, Textured
Overall Height	6.25 in.	Forearm Length	11.5 in.
Capacity	3 or 4 +1	Front Bead	Brass
Weight (Unloaded)	7.0 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	8.0 lbs.
Barrel Length	28 in.	Warranty	Unwritten
Barrel	Matte Black	Telephone	(800) 945-5237
Choke Tubes	Invector Plus Black; IC, M, F	Website	WinchesterGuns.com
Buttstock	Black Synthetic, Textured	Made In	Turkey
Buttstock Length of Pull	13.75 in.		

a competitive price. Fast forward to 2013 when the Winchester SXP came on the shooting scene as what is billed as a shotgun capable of the fastest follow-up shots of any pump on the market — three shots in less than half a second. In the May issue, we decided to get some hands-on time with the Winchester Super X Pump Black Shadow No. 51225192 12 Gauge, $430, to see how it compared to its famous Model 12.

Shooters who favor pump-action shotguns, whether for nostalgia or economic reasons, generally agree that their smoke pole will not be as balanced or handle as well as high-end over-and-unders or semi-automatics. The pumps are workhorse tools, but can be evaluated on more than just their ability to send lead downrange in a safe and effective manner.

Our test session focused on function, but also took into account balance and appearance. To give us a good sense of performance, we checked it on the patterning board using both lead target loads and steel waterfowl loads. For handling clay targets and birds, we patterned Federal Game & Target 2¾-inch loads with 1⅛ ounces of No. 8 shot and an average muzzle velocity of 1200 fps and Winchester AA Xtra-Lite Target 2¾-inch loads with 1 ounce of No. 7½ shot and an average muzzle velocity of 1180 fps. Our steel loads in the test were Winchester's new Elite Blind Side 3-inch loads with 1⅜ ounces of No. 2 shot and an average muzzle velocity of 1400 fps.

With its new-age textured forearm and stock, high-strength alloy receiver, and Inflex Technology recoil pad, the Winchester SXP would never be mistaken for its ancient ancestor, the Model 12. That being said, its heft and feel, plus its lightning-fast slide action, does do honor to the venerable pump that many considered to be the finest single-barrel shotgun ever made.

Red stripes here and there, in addition to the Winchester logos, provide a little contrast to the all-black shotgun for those who look for a little fashion in their shooting tool.

As noted in the promotional material, the action of the pump is incredibly fast and smooth. Working the action on an empty chamber was very pleasant, with none of the stiffness normally found in a shotgun right out of the box. On the range, the pump lived up to its billing, wherein second and third shots were handled in a manner that reminded some of our older test team members of their younger years wielding a Model 12 — high praise indeed.

The shotgun was long, measuring 49 inches from the back of the recoil pad to the end of the barrel. The length of pull was 13.75 inches, an LOP comfortable for all of our test group. The drop at the comb was 1.4 inches and the drop at the heel was 2 inches. These dimensions fit like a glove for most of the test group.

We were slightly disappointed with the trigger pull weight of 8 pounds, which is heavier than most shotgun shooters favor. A little gunsmith tweaking would be recommended to allow for smoother handling of targets and birds.

Our trip to the patterning range was enlightening and surprising, as the Winchester produced a nearly perfect 50-50 pattern with the target loads and about a 55-45 pattern with the steel shot. Even the heavier waterfowl loads did not cause much shoulder trauma when fired in the 7-pound shotgun.

Clay targets were handled with comfort and ease during our field tests, and we encountered no problems with any of the ammunition. Once again, we were very pleased with the way the shotgun cycled the second round on clays and the third shot when putting patterns on paper.

Our Team Said: It was hard for us to find any fault with this latest Winchester Model SXP Black Shadow pump-action shotgun that follows in the huge footsteps of the legendary Model 12.

The 12-gauge shotgun is often seen as the *ne plus ultra* of problem solvers. Though many argue over handgun calibers, it seems that the efficiency of the 12 gauge is too great to argue against. The shotgun is not just a firearm, it is a system that will use light shot, buckshot, and solid slugs. The question for our raters was, should we purchase a pump or a self-loader for home defense?

TRISTAR RAPTOR A-TAC HOME DEFENSE NO. 20120 12 GAUGE, $300 USED, $450 NEW

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Flawless operation with full-power loads of all types. Easy to get into play and handled great during firing.



Action Type	3-in. Semi-Auto, Gas Operated	Buttstock Drop @ Comb	1.5 in.
Overall Length	40.5 in.	Buttstock	Black Synthetic Ventilated Rubber Pad
Overall Height	8.25 in.	Forearm	Black Synthetic
Capacity	4+1	Sights	Fiber-Optic AR-15 type, Adjustable Rear, Post Front
Weight Unloaded	6.9 lbs.	Trigger Pull Weight	5.25 lbs.
Weight Loaded	7.4 oz.	Warranty	None As Is, 5 Years New
Barrel Length	20 in.	Telephone	(816) 421-1400
Barrel	Blued Steel	Website	TriStarArms.com
Choke Tubes	1 Supplied (Used) IC, M, F (New)	Made In	Turkey
Buttstock Length of Pull	14.25 in.		

To find out, for the January issue we purchased a TriStar Raptor A-TAC Home Defense No. 20120 12 Gauge, a Turkish shotgun configured with a pistol grip stock and AR-15–type sights. This shotgun is often seen at Cheaper Than Dirt and other outlets for about $330, although a rater reported finding the piece on sale for $280.

In combat firing, the self-loader was the clear winner. Aim, fire, the piece loads itself. On another note, when the piece runs empty, the pump may be put into action with a single shell drooped into the action. But the self-loader is far faster. It is already locked open on the last shot. Drop a shell in, hit the bolt release, and you are back in the game. In firing drills and running the piece empty, the self loader came out ahead of the game.

In firing tests at combat ranges of 7 to 15 yards, the A-TAC came on target more quickly and hits were surer using Wolf Performance Ammunition buckshot. Moving from target to target, the A-TAC gave good results. Frankly, we all thought we were pretty quick with the pump shotgun until matched against a good self-loading shotgun. Then we were not so fast.

During the test program, we used a small quantity of Wolf slugs as well. The shells functioned perfectly and gave good function and good groups on the target. The A-TAC fired very close to the point of aim at 15 yards with slugs.

The A-TAC featured a 20-inch barrel and held five rounds in the magazine. The handling was excellent in a home environment, with the pistol grip allowing one-hand carry, although you really need both hands on the gun to hit anything. You aim this one like a rifle. Function was good with full-power shells. With birdshot and other lighter loads, function was problematical, as expected. However, the shotgun functions about 50% of the time with field loads, allowing a modicum of practice with these loads. With full-power buckshot, the A-TAC ran like a charm, never failing to feed, chamber, fire, or eject. The same for slugs. Recoil is certainly there when you have to run the piece full power all of the time.

We have to state we fired this one more than the others, for two reasons. One, the brand is less well known, and two, it is a self-loading shotgun and that means reliability had to be qualified. We felt this didn't skew the odds against the A-TAC because it worked during the test. More than 200 full-power buckshot shells, primarily Wolf, were fired without incident. We fired a handful of Winchester, Remington, and Federal buckshot with equally good results. Another forty Wolf 12-gauge slugs were fired and another 25 Fiocchi Aero slugs. This was spread out over a few weeks in deference to shoulders. Function with full power loads was ideal.

Our Team Said: The Raptor A-TAC was voted a Best Buy and was the unanimous winner as the best choice for home defense.

In a May test of AR-15 magazines, several products earned A grades, including the NHMTG AR-15/M16 30-Round Magazine MA02L, $19.99; the Magpul AR-15/M16 PMag Gen M3 MAG557BLK, $14.20; the Magpul PMag 30 AR/M4 Window Gen M3 MAG556BLK, $17.05; and the Brownells 30-Round Gray

BROWNELLS 30-ROUND GRAY AR-15/M16 MAGAZINE W/SS SPRING 200200, $9.99

GUN TESTS GRADE: A

BEST IN CLASS ACCESSORY

Dependable, tough, affordable.



AR-15/M16 Magazine w/SS Spring 200200, $9.99. Any of the Grade: A magazines are excellent choices; we preferred the Brownells unit for its price. If you prefer polymer bodies, the PMags were both top choices, with the cartridge-counter window option giving that model the edge over the regular PMag. If we were buying AR-15 magazines, we would decide whether we wanted aluminum or polymer bodies, then shop the top-ranked items for the best price.

GUN TESTS GRADE: A BEST IN CLASS HOLSTERS

Wright Leather Works Predator Pancake Holster



D. M. Bullard Leather Combat Holster



Wild Bills Concealment Fusion Paddle



Talon Holsters IWB Holster



Ted Blocker Holsters S18 IWB



In the June and July issues, we tested outside-the-waistband holsters made of leather, horsehide, and other materials in Avenger, pancake, and scabbard styles. The Wright Leather Works Predator Pancake Holster, $88; and the D. M. Bullard Leather Combat Holster, $85, were both rated Grade A Best Buys. Among crossdraw models, the Wild Bills Concealment Fusion Paddle, $60, made of leather and Kydex, was rated a Grade A Best Buy. In the August issue, we rated the Talon Holsters IWB Holster, $50, and Ted Blocker Holsters S18 IWB, $46, Grade A Best Buys.

We found red-dot reflex sights on a carry pistol have pros and cons in the July issue, even the top-ranked Leupold DeltaPoint #66135, $565. First, the cons.

The total cost of the weapon system nearly doubles as the sights are almost as expensive as the pistol, the sights have a larger footprint than the typical rear sight, battery life must be monitored, and foul weather can diminish the capability of the sight. The pros are the sights offer faster target acquisition and ease of aiming. The ability to shoot faster and more accurately in situations under 25 yards are strong reasons to make the switch from iron sights to a reflex sight, so we wanted to investigate mounting a reflex sight on a pistol to see how a reflex sight would work on a carry gun. We chose a Glock 20 Gen 4 as our test platform.

A reflex sight allows an operator to keep both eyes open and view a target through a small curved glass lens, which has a reticle projected onto it. A light-emitting diode projects a red dot, amber chevron, or other aiming point, giving the operator an unlimited field of view since there is

LEUPOLD DELTA-POINT #66135, $565 GUN TESTS GRADE: A+ BEST IN CLASS OPTIC

Super sighting system.



no magnification and the aiming point projects out to infinity. This means that parallax will not affect sighting; place the aiming point on a target, and if zeroed properly, the target will be hit. Think of them as mini heads-up displays for your pistol.

There are two ways to attach the sight to a pistol. One option is to mill an area near the rear sight on the slide and drill and tap it to mount the sight. This option allows the user to also keep iron sights as back ups and it places the reflex sight closer to the bore's center axis. In this configuration, the iron sights are taller — like those used with a suppressor — so they clear the reflex sight. Some mount the rear BUIS in front of the reflex sight, others behind the reflex sight. The second method of attachment is to use the rear sight dovetail with a mounting plate. We chose the second option because it was less expensive, and we wanted to be able to mount the reflex ourselves. The tools needed to the mount the sight, other than the ones included with each sight, were a hammer and brass punch.

The Leupold was always on, being powered by a battery. The DeltaPoint, however, is motion activated. It will

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shut down if left at complete rest for five minutes, which saves battery power. Once moved, the sight automatically turns on. A rubber cover included with the sight puts the sight at its lowest illumination setting, also reserving battery life. The battery should last 9,000 hours, or more than a year.

Included with the Leupold were 10 different mounting plates that fit everything from Smith & Wesson revolvers to numerous semi-automatics pistols, except for the big Glock. A plate was included for the standard-frame Glocks, but not the 45 ACP and 10mm models. Another $40 was required for a mounting plate from JP Enterprises, totaling $605. A mount for Weaver/Picatinny-style rails is also included for those wanting to mount it on a long gun. A rubber cover and a battery were also included.

A tiny supplied Torx wrench was required to adjust windage and elevation. Locking set screws need to be loosened with the same wrench prior to zeroing the sight. This was less convenient, especially if the sight is swapped to another weapon in the field and the tiny tools are not readily available.

The sight window of the DeltaPoint was oval with flat sides. It slightly bulged over the sides of the slide. The sight-window frame was thin, so there was less field-of-view obstruction. Some testers felt they could get on target faster with the Leupold. The sight also had less reflection signature, and the lens was crystal clear.

Our Team Said: The DeltaPoint system was always ready, though it still required a battery. The extra mounting plates were a plus.

Compiled by Gun Tests Staff. **GT**

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

Here's a look at guns and other products we're evaluating for future issues of Gun Tests:

- Colt 1991A1 and the Colt Series 70: Some tell us these pistols are as different as night and day. The purpose of this test was to determine how different they really are.
- High-Capacity 357 Magnum Carry Revolvers: S&W Performance Center Model 627 and the S&W Performance Center Model 327.
- The problem of overpenetration of bullets in the home or apartment is real. We tested a representative sample of handgun rounds against pine board, dry wall, cinder block, and brick to see how bad the problem is.
- 9mm Subcompact Shoot-out: Beretta Nano, Ruger LC9S, and the Springfield XDS 3.3 compete.

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