



Ruger Bisley Super Blackhawk Hunter

Prejudice is generally regarded as a bad thing, but we must admit that we liked Ruger's Bisley Super Blackhawk Hunter the moment we saw it. In addition to possessing a subtle, understated beauty, it seemed a very well thought out and practical design. It does not rely on new technology or ideas, but it blends established, proven materials and design elements that create an eminently sensible big-game hunting revolver.

It begins with the New Model Super Blackhawk, Ruger's big single-action revolver with the transfer-bar safety that makes it safe to carry fully loaded.

This sixgun has been with us for 32 years and has developed an enviable reputation for strength and simplicity.

Why a single-action? Why not? Its strength is intertwined with its simplicity. Because it is uncomplicated, the design is sturdy and reliable. It's really the logical choice in a handgun intended primarily for taking deer. Almost all hunting handgun shots at non-dangerous game are performed in single-action mode. And with the muzzle flip of a big-bore magnum, the shooter isn't going to get off a second aimed shot any faster firing double-action rather than single-action. Also, the humped curve of a single-

action backstrap generally causes the gun to rock in the hand upon recoil, which some shooters feel diminishes the kick.

Fashioning the Bisley Super Blackhawk Hunter from stainless steel seems a logical choice for a gun that is going to be out in the elements, frequently under harsh conditions without the chance for careful maintenance. The real breakthrough here, though, is Ruger's decision to incorporate Bisley elements into a hunting handgun. The Bisley design has long been lauded for its ergonomics while being derided for its aesthetics. Originally used for target guns, the Bisley

grip frame, hammer and trigger lend themselves well to hunting. The grip (though it doesn't rock as well as a traditional hog-leg) is more comfortable and natural to hold on target, the trigger is more easily leveraged, and the lower hammer spur gives better clearance for scope use. Despite the big wheelgun's size, it balances and handles well, particularly in a two-hand Weaver stance.

It would therefore be easy to say that handsome is as handsome does, but this is a gun that both performs and is quite attractive in its own right. The satin stainless surface is nicely muted, and is combined with eye-

catching laminated wood stocks of gray, tan and black. With its unfluted cylinder, the gun is powerfully handsome without being gaudy. Though making the gun a Bisley was the masterstroke, Ruger didn't stop there. This is a fully conceived hunting tool and, as such, it comes with a practical barrel length of 7½". Even better, it includes both adjustable iron sights and an integral scope base and pair of 1" scope rings. If you like open sights, you're ready to go, right



A nickled Burris 2X scope installed on the Ruger made an effective and handsome combination. The gun balances and handles well, despite its size.

out of the box. If you prefer a scope, you have only to find the optic you want; the rest of the hardware is already included.

We mounted a nickled, 2X Burris scope to our sample and together they made a pleasing combination. We took it with us on a recent handgun-only hunt at the splendid White Oak Plantation in Alabama. Though we weren't fortunate enough to encounter any shootable bucks during our short stay, we found that the gun carried well in an Uncle Mike's

bandolier holster and left our hands free to carry other gear, or climb in and out of tree stands. We sighted it in at 50 yds. and the gun's accuracy at the range gave us confidence that it would get the job done on any whitetail out to 100 yds. We did notice a tendency for the scope ring mounting screws to come loose after even brief shooting sessions, but some Loctite quickly solved that problem.

At our test facility we fired the gun for accuracy with .44 Mag. ammunition with impressive results. We also loaded it with 200-gr. Blazer .44 Spl. cartridges. With reduced loads and iron sights, the gun makes a fine plinker and informal target gun for the off season and could even serve as a home protection piece.

Of course, at heart the Ruger Bisley Super Blackhawk Hunter is just that—a hunter, and a very fine one. Rarely have we seen a gun so thoroughly conceived to fulfill a specific role, nor a conception so well executed.

SHOOTING RESULTS (25 YDS.)

.44 Rem. Mag. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches		
			Smallest	Largest	Average
Hornady No. 9085 240-gr. XTP JHP	1417 Avg. 19 Sd	1074	0.63	1.63	1.23
Winchester No. S44MP 250-gr. Partition Gold JHP	1377 Avg. 8 Sd	1056	1.13	1.75	1.38
.44 Spl. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches		
			Smallest	Largest	Average
CCI No. 3556 200-gr. GDHP	1005 Avg. 31 Sd	450	1.13	2.75	1.90
Average Extreme Spread:			1.50		

Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 7½" barrel. Range temperature: 66° F. Humidity: 20%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. fired from sandbags. Abbreviations: GDHP (Gold Dot hollow-point), JHP (jacketed hollow point), XTP (Extreme Terminal Performance).

BISLEY HUNTER

MANUFACTURER: Sturm, Ruger & Co. (Dept. AR), 1 Lacey Place, Southport, CT 06890; (203) 259-7843; www.ruger.com
CALIBER: .44 Rem. Mag.
ACTION TYPE: single-action revolver
FRAME: stainless steel
BARREL: 7½"
RIFLING: six-groove, 1:20" RH twist
CAPACITY: six-shot unfluted cylinder
SIGHTS: ramp front, fully adjustable rear; integral scope base
TRIGGER PULL: single-action; 4 lbs.
STOCKS: black laminated wood
OVERALL LENGTH: 13½"
WIDTH: 1½"
HEIGHT: 5½"
WEIGHT EMPTY: 54 ozs.
ACCESSORIES: 1" scope rings, hard plastic case, cable lock
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$676



The loading gate interlock prevents the action from operating when the loading gate is open (above). The low-profile Bisley hammer gives better scope clearance and, like the grip frame, is more ergonomic than those of typical single-action patterns (above, r.). The barrel has a full-length grooved rib and the front sight features a red insert (r.).

The American Rifleman has used the phrase "Dope Bag" at least since 1921, when Col. Townsend Whelen first titled his column with it. Even then, it had been in use for years, referring to a sack used by target shooters to hold ammunition and accessories on the firing line. "Sight dope" also was a traditional marksman's term for sight adjustment information, while judging wind speed and direction was called "doping the wind."

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PTR-91KP



Shown is an original blueprint (background) obtained from Portugal by JLD Enterprises. Also shown (below) is a JLD Enterprises receiver flat, prior to folding and welding, that has been stamped from a sheet of 0.059" steel.

JLD Enterprises' PTR-91KP is a newly manufactured HK91-style rifle made in the United States on HK-licensed tooling.

The PTR-91 story begins in the mid-1990s with a military surplus company in Argentina called Elemental Guns. After successfully establishing itself there, the company set its sights on expanding its business to the United States. Eventually, JLD Enterprises (named after co-founder Jose Luis Diaz) was opened in Farmington, Conn., in late 1997.

In 2003, the company learned that the H&K-licensed G3 arms plant in Portugal (FMP) was about to be offered for sale. JLD purchased thousands of parts and accessories as well as the tooling, machinery, original engineering drawings and diagrams required to manufacture the

rifle and set it all up in the Farmington, Conn., facility.

For those unfamiliar with the HK91/G3-type rifle, the operating mechanism is notable in that it doesn't utilize a gas system, but rather a delayed blowback system. Twin rollers in the bolt head lock into corresponding detents. The force required to push the rollers back into the bolt keeps the action closed until pressures have dropped to a safe level. The chamber has flutes to help release the fired case.

Although JLD makes a line of standard-length PTR-91 rifles, the rifle received for testing was its new KP variant. The K stands for "Kurz," which means "short" in German, and the P stands for "paratrooper," denoting its collapsing stock. As Heckler & Koch never offered a commercially available "K" model carbine, this variant

is particularly significant as it shows that JLD is not simply making "clones" of the originals, but is also adapting and innovating.

Additionally, for all intents and purposes, nearly the entire rifle is made here in the United States. The only originally manufactured parts are the collapsing stock and bolt carrier.

The rifle differs from a standard HK91-style rifle in that everything forward of the receiver has been shortened to make the rifle both lighter and more compact. Rather than having a 17¼" barrel, the PTR-91KP has a 16¼" barrel. Additionally, the handguard and cocking lever tube are shortened 2¼", resulting in a lightened weight of 8½ lbs. However, the addition of the steel collapsing stock adds 2 lbs. to the rifle, bringing the weight up to a hefty 10½ lbs.

The PTR-91KP's fit and

PTR-91KP
MANUFACTURER: JLD Enterprises, Inc. (Dept. AR), P.O. Box 562; Unionville CT 06085; (860) 676-1665; www.jldenter.com
CALIBER: .308 Win.
ACTION TYPE: delayed blowback semi-automatic rifle
RECEIVER: 0.059" stamped steel, Parkerized and powder coated
BARREL: 16¼", powder coated
RIFLING: six-groove, 1:12" RH twist
MAGAZINE: detachable, 20-round
SIGHTS: rear, four-position peep diopter; front, blade
TRIGGER PULL: two-stage, 11½ lbs.
STOCK: collapsing; length of pull, 13¼"; drop at heel, 1½"; drop at comb, 1½"
OVERALL LENGTH: 39" with stock extended; 31" with stock retracted
WEIGHT: 10½ lbs.
ACCESSORIES: owners manual
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$1295

finish were excellent, and the welding on the receiver was expertly done. Frankly, it would be hard to distinguish the rifle from an original



With its collapsing stock and flash-hider-equipped muzzle, the high-quality PTR-91KP rifle is an impressive sight and represents an excellent value in a unique rifle design.

HK91. Its excellent finish exhibited an evenly applied semi-gloss black powder coat over Parkerizing.

The "PTR" in the rifle designation stands for "precision target rifle," and this design goal is evident in JLD's modifications. All PTR rifles, including this KP variant, have 0.75"-diameter match-grade, six-groove bull barrels with 1:12" right-hand twist. This differs from the tapered-

barrel profile of original HK rifles.

Additionally, the sights are modified from the original design. The rear sight is a turret-style, all-peep rotating drum with 100-, 200-, 300- and 400-yd. settings, rather than the original that has a V-notch at the first setting. Also new is its knurled windage adjustment target knob.

During test firing the rifle proved accurate, controllable and comfortable to shoot—surprisingly so for

SHOOTING RESULTS (100 YDS.)					
.308 Win. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches		
			Smallest	Largest	Average
Black Hills Gold 150-gr. NBT	2594 Avg. 18 Sd	2,242	1.48	2.34	1.95
Hornady No. 8091 150-gr. BTSP	2522 Avg. 12 Sd	2,120	2.10	3.06	2.46
Winchester SBST308 150-gr. BST	2472 Avg. 27 Sd	2,037	1.24	2.38	1.77
Average Extreme Spread			2.06		

Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 16¼" barrel. Range temperature: 75°F. Humidity: 10%. Accuracy for five-consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yds. fired from sandbags. Abbreviations: BST (ballistic silvertip), BTSP (boattail soft point), NBT(Nosler ballistic tip), Sd (standard deviation).

a short-barreled .308 Win. rifle with a collapsing stock. Since the rifle had a flash hider rather than a muzzle brake, recoil was noticeable but manageable. The collapsing stock also turned out to be a pleasant surprise

during firing, allowing for a solid cheek weld and lacking in "bite" during recoil. A call to JLD revealed that modifications have been made to the original HK barrel design to reduce perceived recoil and make the rifle more controllable, including a reduction in the number of flutes in the chamber. The trigger pull was extremely heavy at 11¼ lbs., but broke cleanly.

There were no malfunctions during firing. For accuracy testing, we attached an original HK claw mount and Hensoldt 4X scope—provided by Century International Arms, Inc. No fitting was required as the receivers of the PTR-91 rifles are CNC-cut at the attachment points for the proper fit. Accuracy results are shown in the accompanying table. JLD Enterprises informed us that its barrels have a preference for lighter bullet weights, so we used 150-gr. loadings. The rifle had a slight preference for the Winchester loading, and groups seemed to be affected a bit by barrel heat.

The JLD Enterprises PTR-91 represents a unique opportunity to own a rifle built on original high-quality tooling in the United States.



The bull barrel of the PTR-91KP features a straight profile with a diameter of 0.75", rather than the tapered profile of original HK rifle barrels. Also, the rifle had the optional flash hider attached.



For accuracy testing, we attached an original HK claw mount and Hensoldt 4X scope provided by Century International Arms, Inc.



The PTR-91KP (bottom) differs from a standard PTR-91 (top) in that the entire front end of the rifle has been shortened to make the rifle both lighter and more compact.



The rear sight of the PTR-91KP differs from the original design in that it has peep rather than a V-notch at the first setting. Another change is the knurled windage adjustment target knob.

Leupold VX-III



In our tests, the Leupold VX-III 3.5-10x40 mm rifle-scope displayed a robot-like ability to return to zero after "shooting the square."



The VX-III line is graced with attractive, easy-to-read adjustment dials calibrated in 1/4" clicks and featuring resettable pointers for easy return to zero.

After learning last year that Leupold's Vari-X III riflescope line would no longer be made, shooters breathed a collective sigh of relief when they realized the company had replaced the perennial favorite with one that promised better optical and mechanical characteristics: the new VX-III line.

The Vari-X III had enjoyed a long run. It made its debut in 1974 with three models and, in the ensuing three decades, won the hearts of shooters with its superb optical and mechanical integrity.

The new VX-III line lies between the company's penultimate LPS models and its VX-II, VX-I and Rifleman scopes and easily represents the most comprehensive range. Distinct VX-III sizes, of which all but the side-focus models feature 1" tubes, include 1.5-5x20 mm, 1.75-6x32 mm, 2.5-8x36 mm, 3.5-10x40 mm, 3.5-10x50 mm, 4.5-14x40 mm, 4.5-14x50 mm, 6.5-20x40 mm, 6.5-20x50 mm, and 8.5-25x50 mm riflescopes and

a new 2.5-8x32 mm handgun scope. Add in the possible combinations of gloss black, matte black and silver finishes, side focus parallax-correction models, target turrets, and the numerous available reticle options (including illuminated models) and the number of VX-III permutations reaches the triple digits.


The heart of the new line's performance enhancements is its Index Matched Lens System. Pat Mundy, Leupold's senior marketing communications specialist, said the new system involved Leupold engineers specifying different types of glass and different coatings on each of the various elements that make up the optical system of every scope in the line. Mundy said Leupold engineers performed extensive research, adding and subtracting various elements from coating formulas, before arriving at those deemed ideal for

specific applications.

The result, according to Leupold, is a riflescope that is both brighter and clearer than its Vari-X III progenitor. While validating such a claim is difficult without sophisticated test equipment, our assessment was that the new scopes do provide an image that is on par, if not superior, to that of the old line. Tangible external improvements include new dials with 1/4-minute increments and true finger-adjustable knobs. Additionally, resettable pointer dials allow each knob to be returned to zero. For further piece of mind, Leupold backs each VX-III scope with a full lifetime warranty.

While we have had

the opportunity to use several VX-III models afield, we concentrated our testing on a matte blue 3.5-10x40 mm scope with Fine Duplex reticle, shooting the square with it and "torture testing" it during an eight-hour deep freeze at 20°F and a subsequent dunking in hot water to determine its ability to resist fogging. As predicted, the scope passed both tests with flying colors. We found elevation and windage adjustments positive and secure with sharp and easy to read call-offs. After first firing five shots at the center of the target we adjusted 16 clicks left and 16 up, fired another five rounds; adjusted 32 right, fired another five; adjusted 32 down, fired five; adjusted 32 left, fired five; and, finally, adjusted 16 clicks up and 16 right, firing another five shots that printed directly over our initial five.

The new VX-III riflescopes are a tangible improvement on a tried and trusted riflescope line. 

LEUPOLD VX-III

MANUFACTURER: Leupold & Stevens, Inc., (Dept. AR), P.O. Box 688, Beaverton, OR 97075-0688; (503) 526-1400; www.leupold.com

MODEL: 3.5-10x40 mm

MAGNIFICATION & OBJECTIVE (ACTUAL): 3.3-9.5, 40 mm

FINISH: matte black
FIELD OF VIEW (FEET @ 100 YDS.): 11.0-29.7

EYE RELIEF: 3.5"-4.4"

WINDAGE AND ELEVATION ADJUSTMENTS: 1/4"

ADJUSTMENT RANGE (M.O.A.): 40

RETICLE: Fine Duplex

LENGTH: 12.6"

WEIGHT: 13 ozs.

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$400 to \$950 depending on model