

Rough Rider Single Action .45 Colt

Perhaps best known for its expanding line of American-made single-action rimfire revolvers, Heritage Manufacturing also offers a variety of replica center-fire wheelguns as well. Spurred by a heady mix of frontier nostalgia and shooting fun, Cowboy Action Shooting has grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade. Its popularity is particularly strong in rural areas where money is tight even in the best of times, and since most matches require four guns—two revolvers,

a lever-action rifle and a shotgun—economically-priced replica guns of the Old West, like Heritage's center-fire Rough Riders, have a great deal of appeal.

Components for the Rough Rider are made in Italy by Pietta, which are then fitted and assembled at Heritage Mfg.'s facility in Opa Locka, Fla. Currently Heritage only catalogs the .45 Colt chambering, the most popular caliber among CAS shooters, but .357 Mag. and .44-40 models are in the works. Rough Riders are available in 4¾" 5½" and 7½" barrel

lengths and a choice of blued or stainless finish. Our test sample came with a bright stainless steel finish and a 7½" barrel.

In keeping with the appearance of the original SAAs, the Rough Rider's frame sports three slotted screws. Just like the original guns, you will hear four distinct clicks as you pull back the hammer. However, the Rough Rider's hammer lacks the fixed firing pin found on the original Peacemakers. The firing pin is instead mounted on the frame and a transfer-bar safety

mechanism has been added to the lockwork. Pressing the trigger pushes the transfer bar up so the falling hammer can transfer its energy to the firing pin in the frame. If the hammer were to fall without the trigger being pressed, the transfer bar would stop its fall short of the firing pin. So, unlike the original SAAs, the Rough Rider can be safely carried with all six chambers loaded.

The Rough Rider's one-piece hardwood stocks are held in place by a two-piece grip frame of investment cast steel.

Like the rest of the gun's exterior metal components, the grip features a brightly polished stainless finish.

The cylinder notches were sharply defined and evenly cut for positive engagement with the hand/bolt. Sights are in keeping with those of the original SAAs, they include a fixed rear notch in the topstrap and a fixed post front. The sights of our test gun were well-regulated, printing well-centered groups about 2" below point-of-aim at 25 yds.

Unlike some bargain-priced SAA replicas we've tested in the past, the Rough Rider's ejector rod lined up well with all six chambers when the cylinder notches engaged the bolt/hand. Additionally, the cylinder did not drag or overrun its stops when the hammer was cocked. About the only performance complaint we had was that we sometimes had to nurse the hammer into the proper position for reloading, otherwise

the cylinder would bind. That said, this is a problem frequently exhibited by economically-priced SAA replicas. The major exterior components such as the frame, cylinder and barrel displayed a nicely executed and brightly polished stainless finish, but some of the smaller working parts showed traces of buffing and shaping that diminished the luster of the final finish.

The trigger of our test gun was commendably light and crisp, breaking at just over 4 lbs. with minimal take-up and little discernible overtravel. Given the gun's obvious competitive and recreational purposes, we selected a variety of factory cowboy-style loads with 250-gr., lead, flat-point bullets from PMC, MagTech and Remington for our testing. Accuracy results shown

SHOOTING RESULTS (25 YDS.)

.45 Colt Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches		
			Smallest	Largest	Average
Rem. No. R45C 250-gr. LRN	823 Avg. 13 Sd	376	1.45	2.68	2.17
PMC 250-gr. LFP	702 Avg. 28 Sd	271	2.31	3.39	2.79
MagTech No. 45D 250-gr. LFP	672 Avg. 29 Sd	251	2.08	2.43	2.28
Average Extreme Spread:					2.41
Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 7½" barrel. Range temperature: 78° F. Humidity: 59%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. from a Ransom Rest. Abbreviations: LFP (lead flat point), LRN (lead round nose), Sd (Standard Deviation).					

in the accompanying table are comparable with other SAA replicas we've tested in the past, even those costing considerably more. Velocity results, on the other hand, were a little on the low side. This may be the result of the large amount of flash that escaped from the cylinder gap during our test shooting.

Blued Rough Riders revolvers are currently

offered at a suggested retail price of \$369, while the stainless guns are listed at \$399. Although the Rough Rider was less than flawless, its faults are minor and commonplace among SAA replicas in its price range. In sum, the center-fire Rough Riders from Heritage Mfg. represent a solid choice for CAS enthusiasts in search of a serviceable, economically priced SAA replica.

ROUGH RIDER

MANUFACTURER: Heritage Manufacturing, Inc. (Dept. AR), 4600 N.W. 135 Street, Opa Locka, FL 33054; 305 685 5966; www.heritemfg.com.

CALIBER: .45 Colt
ACTION TYPE: single-action, center-fire revolver

FRAME: brushed stainless steel
BARREL: 4¾", 5½", 7½" (tested) stainless steel

RIFLING: 1:12", LH twist
CYLINDER: stainless, six-shot capacity

SIGHTS: fixed rear notch and fixed front post

TRIGGER PULL: single-action; 4 lbs.

OVERALL LENGTH: 13¼"

WIDTH: 1½"

HEIGHT: 5½"

WEIGHT: 38 ozs.

ACCESSORIES: trigger lock
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$399 stainless, \$369 blued



The cylinder (above, l.) of our stainless Rough Rider displayed a nicely polished and executed finish. More importantly, the cylinder notches were sharply defined and evenly cut for both hand and locking-bolt engagement.

A frame-mounted, transfer-bar safety (above) prevents the hammer from striking the firing pin unless the trigger is pulled.

Just like an original SAA, the loading gate is on the frame's right side (l.), and we found the ejector rod lined up with all six cylinders.

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."

WARNING: Technical data and information contained herein are intended to provide information based on the limited experience of individuals under specific conditions and circumstances. They do not detail the comprehensive training procedures, techniques and safety precautions absolutely necessary to properly carry on similar activity. Read the notice and disclaimer on the contents page. Always consult comprehensive reference manuals and bulletins for details of proper training requirements, procedures, techniques and safety precautions before attempting any similar activity.

Stevens Model 200



STEVENS 200

MANUFACTURER: Savage Arms Co. (Dept. AR), 118 Mountain Rd., Suffield, CT 06078; (413) 568-7001; www.savagearms.com

CALIBER: .30-'06 Sprg. (tested), .25-06 Rem., .270 Win., 7 mm Rem. Mag., .300 Win. Mag.; .223 Rem., .22-250 Rem., .243 Win., 7 mm-08 Rem. and .308 Win.

ACTION TYPE: bolt-action, center-fire rifle

RECEIVER: blued steel

BARREL: 22" (24" for magnums)

RIFLING: 1:10"

MAGAZINE: four-round blind internal (three in magnum calibers)

SIGHTS: none

TRIGGER PULL: single-stage, 5 lbs., 1 oz.

STOCK: black synthetic; length of pull 14"; drop at heel, 1 3/4"; drop at heel, 1 1/8"

OVERALL LENGTH: 42 3/4" (44 3/4" for mag)

WEIGHT: 6 1/2 lbs.

ACCESSORIES: none
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$316

Few firearms—or any product, for that matter—will ever disprove the old adage, “You get what you pay for.” To do so requires it to perform above and beyond anything comparable in its price class. Stevens’ latest creation, the Model 200 center-fire, turnbolt rifle, is one such exception to the rule.

The Model 200 is a value-priced, no-frills workhorse designed for one purpose, to perform. It has a dual-pillar bedded, gray, synthetic stock with a blind internal box magazine, fore-and-aft sling swivel studs, and a standard rubber recoil pad.

A synthetic stock is easier to mass-produce and requires less hand fitting than a wood stock,

which reflects in the price. Eliminating a floorplate or a detachable magazine further reduces cost and helps maintain the stiffness of the stock. Blind magazines eliminate the possibility of an accidental opening of floorplate or a lost magazine, and it only takes a few seconds to remove unfired cartridges by working the bolt. Magazine capacity is four for standard chamberings and three for magnums.

This rifle has a standard blued, 22" (24" in magnums), free-floating, button-rifled barrel. There are no iron sights, instead the rifle is drilled and tapped for scope bases. The bolt has dual-opposing locking lugs, a partially checkered bolt knob and the Stevens name laser-etched on the

body. Also, the steel bolt body is left in the white, and the handle is blued. Operation of the bolt is fluid and nearly effortless.

The three-position safety is directly behind the bolt on the tang. Pushing the button forward readies the firearm to fire; the mid position blocks the trigger and allows the bolt to be opened; and the rear position locks the trigger and bolt. The bolt release lever is identical to that of the Savage Model 110 and is located on the rear right side of the receiver, just in front of the bolt handle. Removal of the Model 200's bolt differs from most other designs because it requires the bolt release lever to be pushed as the trigger is depressed. Because the bolt release lever is part of

the sear, which also serves as the bolt stop, the trigger must be pulled to disengage the sear, allowing it to drop out of the way and let the bolt slide out.



Cost-conscious hunters don't have to forego quality or performance when purchasing the Model 200, as it offers durability, reliability and top-notch accuracy in a package that has the low suggested retail price of \$316.

Out of the box, the Model 200 long-action weighs 6 1/2 lbs. and measures 42 3/4" in length (44" for magnum calibers).

The long-action Model 200 is available in five calibers: .25-06 Rem., .270 Win., 7 mm Rem. Mag., .30-'06 Sprg. and .300 Win. Mag. Stevens' Model 200 in a short action is available in .223 Rem., .22-250 Rem., .243 Win., 7 mm-08 Rem. and .308 Win. Our test rifle was chambered in .30-'06 Sprg. For testing, we mounted a

mm scope in Leupold rings on Weaver-style bases and selected four ammunition types. After sighting the gun in, we shot five, five-shot groups from a sangbagged rest at 100 yds. One word best sums up the test results: excellent. The most accurate ammunition tested was Black hills Gold 165-gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip, which averaged a mere 0.75". Accuracy results might have improved if the trigger had been lighter, but we were sufficiently satisfied with our results. Trigger let-off weight


SHOOTING RESULTS (100 YDS.)

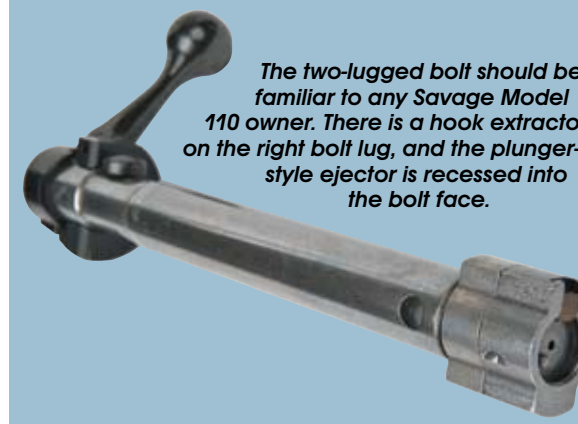
.30-'06 Sprg. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches		
			Smallest	Largest	Average
Federal Premium 150-gr. GameKing BTSP	2957 Avg. 16 Sd	2922	1.31	1.55	1.41
Federal Low Recoil 170-gr. SP	2073 Avg. 23 Sd	1629	1.05	1.51	1.22
Black Hills Gold 165-gr. BT	2797 Avg. 15 Sd	2876	0.63	0.94	0.75
Average Extreme Spread:					1.12
Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 22" barrel. Range temperature: 68° F. Humidity: 63%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yds. from a sandbag. Abbreviations: BT (boat tail), Sd (Standard deviation), SP (soft point).					

was 5 lbs., 1 oz., and there was no overtravel and only a hint of creep. There were no failures to feed or fire.

The rifle has a 3 13/16"-long chamber port, and using Weaver-style bases and

Leupold rings, measures 5 15/16" from the backside of the rear ring to the front side of the front ring. What does that mean? Make sure the scope's body is long enough to fit between the rings before purchasing it. The Bushnell Elite 5-15x40 mm we used for testing fit perfectly, and even had a little extra length for adjustment in both directions. Although the rifle's heavy recoil probably wouldn't be noticed while hunting, it grew increasingly uncomfortable as range sessions progressed. A gel-type or soft-rubber recoil pad would definitely be an asset in helping soften and more evenly distribute recoil.

With its excellent accuracy, light weight and attractive suggested retail price of \$316, the Stevens Model 200 is well-suited for several roles, such as a hunter's first rifle or a back-up rifle in rough country. And since the Model 200 is priced so low, that leaves more money to top it with quality glass. Regardless of its role, the Stevens' Model 200 has filled a niche, and in the process, set a standard for value that will be tough to beat. 



The two-lugged bolt should be familiar to any Savage Model 110 owner. There is a hook extractor on the right bolt lug, and the plunger-style ejector is recessed into the bolt face.



The long-action Model 200 has an extremely long action port (above, l.), requiring a scope to have a long tube in order to fit in the rings.

An ambidextrous, three-position safety is located behind the Stevens Model 200's bolt on the tang (above). Gloved shooters may find it a bit difficult to access the well-protected safety.

Nikon Buckmasters SF Riflescope



The Nikon Buckmasters SF riflescope was installed on a Remington 700 short action via a Ken Ferrell G-Force base and Tactical Precision Systems 1" steel rings. We found it be a quality long-range optic for shooters on just about any budget.

Long the leading name in 35 mm cameras, Nikon has also earned plaudits for its sports optics, including binoculars, spotting scopes, rangefinders and riflescopes. Like the company's photographic products, many of these products tend to cluster toward the higher end of both the quality and price scales. Around 1998, the company broke new ground with its Buckmasters line of scopes, all designed to offer great value at a more modest cost.

Nitrogen-filled, waterproof and shockproof to 1,000 G, the scopes feature 1" aircraft aluminum tubes and lenses with Nikon's proprietary Brightvue multi-coating. All lenses are made by Nikon in Japan, while tube construction and final scope assembly takes place in the Philippines. A matte-black finish is standard; a silver finish is



The side-focus turret allows for easy parallax adjustments and turned smoothly, but it still had the proper amount of resistance so there wasn't overcorrection.

available on the 3-9x40 mm and 4.5-14x40 mm models. All models carry an unlimited lifetime warranty.

A major redesign for 2005 yielded numerous improvements for the Buckmasters line, including quick-focus eyepieces; hand-adjustable, zeroable windage and elevation turrets; and an increase in light transmission from 88 to 92 percent. Additionally,

on the three long-range scopes, a side-focus turret now replaces the objective focusing ring used on previous models to eliminate parallax.

In 2003, Nikon added a 4.5-14x40 mm to the Buckmasters line, this optic being the predecessor to the updated model reviewed here. Both mil-dot and Nikoplex reticles are offered. The reticle is in the

rear focal plane, and thus stays the same apparent size when the magnification is changed. Consequently, scopes with the mil-dot reticle have a mark on the power ring at the 12X setting to indicate the magnification at which the mil-dots can be used accurately for range estimation.

Our impression of the 4.5-14x40 mm Buckmasters was quite positive. The

scope was attractively finished and solid, and the power ring, side-focus knob and focusing eyepiece turned smoothly with the proper amount of friction resistance. Likewise, the 1/4-minute click adjustments of the windage and elevation turrets were positive and easily felt and heard. The top of each turret was clearly marked with both the click values and

arrows indicating the direction of change, and marks on the non-rotating index ring under the rotating turret facilitated easy zeroing.

Optically, the scope appeared both bright and sharp, even when viewing a distant object in deep shade. To our test shooter's eye, the yardage calibration marks on the side-focus knob were accurate, and there was

no perceptible distortion across the field of view.

Using a target with grid lines spaced 1" apart, five groups were fired, with the scope adjusted 16 clicks down, left, up and right between groups to form a square 4" on a side. The scope's adjustments were accurate; with each group being located precisely 4" apart, and the final group coinciding with the first.

We found little to improve in our test scope, especially considering its extremely reasonable suggested retail price of \$279.95. The Buckmasters 4.5-14X40 mm is a quality long-range optic for just about any budget.

Available From: Nikon, Inc. (Dept. AR), 1300 Walt Whitman Road, Melville, NY 11747; (631) 547-4200; www.nikonusa.com.

The world of blackpowder shooting certainly has seen a healthy dose of innovation. Rifles, propellants, slugs and sabots have come a long way in a relatively short time. But perhaps even more impressive has been the advancement we've seen in blackpowder cleaning supplies.

Combined with the cleaner-burning properties of today's blackpowder substitutes, modern cleaning products have all but eliminated the cumbersome regimen that once went hand-in-hand with the ol' smokepole. In fact, some even claim simple soap and water is sufficient to keep a muzzle-loader fit and ready.

Well, that's not entirely true. While soap and water may in fact wash away all of the Pyrodex from the bore, the bottle of Joy you pulled from atop the sink isn't going to do much for the copper, plastic or lead fouling that is imbedded into the rifling each time you blast a slug downrange.

What you need is more muscle. Connecticut Valley Arms' new Barrel Blaster Wonder Gel certainly brings some brawn to the cleaning bench. It is manufactured by Blue Wonder



CVA Barrel Blaster Wonder Gel

Gun Care Products—better known to many for its Blue Wonder Gun Blue—exclusively for CVA.

As marketed by CVA, Wonder Gel is extremely effective on today's blackpowder substitutes. More importantly, unlike soap and water, we found

Wonder Gel to be effective at removing copper fouling from Barnes Spit-Fire bullets and plastic fouling from Barnes and PowerBelt bullets, which have an integrated plastic sabot.

To use Wonder Gel, simply apply a liberal amount to a brass bore brush, and

run it completely through the bore several times. Let the compound sit for five to 10 minutes, and then repeat with the brush. Follow up with patches until they come out clean. If the bore is heavily fouled, shooters will have to repeat the first two steps, as we found with rifles that had been heavily shot. Extensive range work will sometimes necessitate more cleaning, while general hunting usually requires little more than one pass with the bore brush.

There are a lot of good gun cleaning products on the market, but we found CVA's Wonder Gel to be among the best. In our experience, Wonder Gel was effective on plastic, copper and lead fouling, whether found on a center-fire or blackpowder rifle. It can even be used to remove cosmoline or oil from oil-soaked stocks and can tackle rust removal without harming bluing. And for us, any product that trades time on the cleaning bench for more time on the shooting bench truly is a wonder.

Available From: Connecticut Valley Arms, (Dept. AR), 5988 Peachtree Corners East, Norcross, GA 30071; (770) 449-4687; www.cva.com.