

DOPE BAG

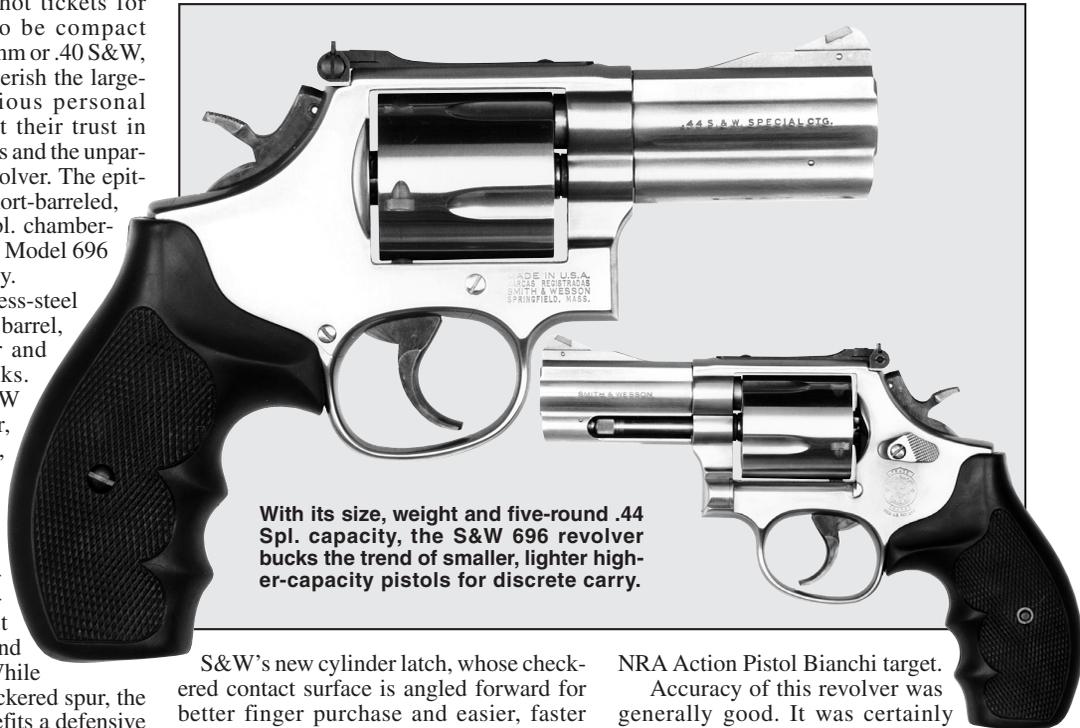
The *American Rifleman* has used the phrase "Dope Bag" at least since 1921, when Col. Townsend Whelen first titled his column with it. Even then, it had been in use for years, referring to a sack used by target shooters to hold ammunition and accessories on the firing line. "Sight dope" also was a traditional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

CAUTION: 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.

S&W MODEL 696 .44 SPL. REVOLVER

THOUGH the current hot tickets for carry guns seem to be compact autoloaders in 9x19 mm or .40 S&W, there are still those who cherish the large-caliber revolver for serious personal defense. These people put their trust in heavy, large-diameter bullets and the unparalleled reliability of the revolver. The epitome of this concept is a short-barreled, five-shot revolver in .44 Spl. chambering. Smith & Wesson's new Model 696 fits this description precisely.

The S&W 696 is a stainless-steel L-frame revolver with a 3" barrel, a fluted five-shot cylinder and rubber finger-groove stocks. Sights are the standard S&W adjustable unit in the rear, with a white outline notch, and a ramp front with a blaze orange plastic insert. Lockwork is identical to that of other S&W L-frame guns and includes such traditional features as the hammer block safety and flat mainspring. Both hammer and trigger are casehardened. While the hammer retains the checkered spur, the trigger face is smooth, as befits a defensive gun that will be fired primarily in the double-action mode. The 696 also incorporates



With its size, weight and five-round .44 Spl. capacity, the S&W 696 revolver bucks the trend of smaller, lighter higher-capacity pistols for discrete carry.

S&W's new cylinder latch, whose checkered contact surface is angled forward for better finger purchase and easier, faster cylinder opening.

Cylinder diameter on the 696 is 1.56", giving a minimum wall thickness of .05" outside each chamber—thin, but (in Smith & Wesson's testing) sufficient to contain the .44 Spl's. low-average chamber pressure of 15,500 p.s.i. (measured by the piezoelectric transducer method). The cylinder notches are located between the chambers, where there is considerably more metal thickness.

The black rubber stocks terminate in a round butt, and feature panels with impressed checkering. Further contributing to a secure hold are three grooves in the front of the stocks for the fingers of the shooting hand.

We fired our sample Model 696 for accuracy at 25 yards with the results in the accompanying table, and then function-fired the gun with Black Hills, Cor-Bon and Triton loads. Since this revolver will be utilized primarily as a defensive arm, we also did considerable shooting at the more practical range of seven yds. at both the official NRA B-27 silhouette target as well as the

NRA Action Pistol Bianchi target.

Accuracy of this revolver was generally good. It was certainly more than adequate for its primary intended purpose. We noted little leading of the bore after the revolver had digested several cylinderfuls of 210-gr. lead Black Hills bullets.

The gun's size and weight were both a boon and a bane. The 35-oz. S&W 696 mit-



The Model 696 has S&W's new-style cylinder latch, that has checkered contact surface and is angled forward for better finger purchase and easier, faster cylinder opening.

S&W MODEL 696

MANUFACTURER: Smith & Wesson, Dept. AR, 2100 Roosevelt Ave., Springfield, MA 01104

MECHANISM TYPE: double-action revolver

CALIBER: .44 Spl.

OVERALL LENGTH: 8"

BARREL LENGTH: 3"

WEIGHT: 35 ozs.

WIDTH: 1 1/2"

HEIGHT: 5 3/4"

CYLINDER CAPACITY: five

RIFLING: five-groove, RH twist

TRIGGER: double-action, 10 lbs. pull; single-action, 4 lbs. pull

SIGHTS: click-adjustable white-outline rear, orange ramp front

ACCESSORIES: Master trigger lock

PRICE: \$509



Cylinder diameter on the Model 696 is 1.56", giving a minimum wall thickness of .05" outside each chamber—thin, but sufficient to contain the low-pressure .44 Spl.

igated much of the recoil from even the stoutest load fired. With most ammunition types the 696's recoil was no worse than 148-gr. target wadcutters fired from a .38 Spl. J-frame revolver. The down side is that a large, heavy gun is generally hard to con-

ceal. Even with the round butt and short barrel, there is just no getting around the fact that this is an L-frame revolver.

At 10 lbs., the gun's double-action trigger pull was a little heavier than expected, with some stacking toward the end of trigger travel. Additionally, when the trigger was pulled very slowly, there was an audible click just prior to letoff, after which the force required to complete the pull suddenly increased. This created the unusual circumstance in which our 696's double-action pull weight was worse when the trigger was pulled more slowly than when it was pressed more quickly and continuously.

Our test firers listed a few areas in which the 696 might be improved. Several small-handed staffers who test-fired the 696 gave the gun mixed reviews: they liked its low recoil and round-butt rubber stocks but found its trigger reach and pull weight a bit daunting. Those same

stocks, however, should be replaced by those who carry the gun under a loose shirt or jacket, as rubber tends to stick to clothing and create a tell-tale pattern of wrinkles and bulges. Some also felt that the stainless steel front sight blade picked up too much light, and would have been more functional with a matte black finish. Chamfered chambers for faster reloading were also on the wish list as was a more thorough job of removing

sharp edges. Such changes, however, are minor and could easily be performed by any competent pistolsmith. As with all new S&Ws, a trigger lock is included, at an additional cost, of course.



Internally, the lockwork is identical to that of other S&W L-frame revolvers, including such traditional features as S&W's hammer-block safety and a flat mainspring.

With its size, its 35-oz. weight and its five-round .44 Spl. capacity, the S&W 696 bucks the trend toward smaller, lighter, higher-capacity semi-automatic pistols. Nonetheless, the 696 offers excellent reliability, good accuracy, low recoil and a moderately powerful chambering in a size that can be carried discreetly by many people. This is a formidable combination of features that prospective handgun buyers might do well to consider.

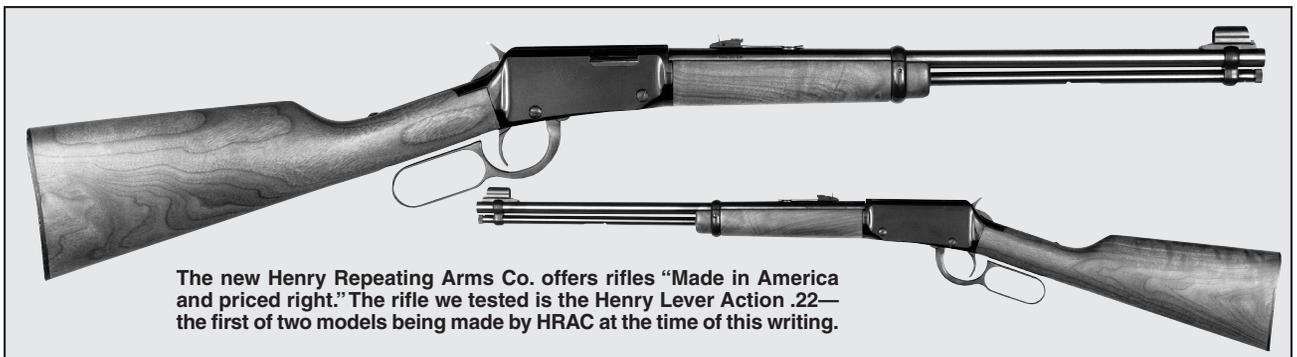


ACCURACY RESULTS

.44 Spl. Cartridge	Vel. @15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Black Hills 210-gr. FPL	598 Avg. 12 Sd	2.15	2.64	2.41
Cor-Bon 44S165 165-gr. JHP	949 Avg. 16 Sd	2.07	3.20	2.56
Triton TR44SHVB 165-gr. BHP	884 Avg. 29 Sd	2.29	4.66	3.45
Average Extreme Spread				2.80

Five consecutive five-shot groups from 25 yds., fired from Ransom Rest. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), FPL (flat point lead), JHP (jacketed hollow-point), BHP (brass hollow-point).

HENRY LEVER ACTION .22 RIFLE



The new Henry Repeating Arms Co. offers rifles "Made in America and priced right." The rifle we tested is the Henry Lever Action .22—the first of two models being made by HRAC at the time of this writing.

WHILE New England is well known for its rich gunmaking tradition, one would hardly expect a new firearms manufacturing company to start up in Brooklyn, New York. The Henry Repeating Arms Co. (HRAC) has done just that. The new manufacturer offers guns

billied as "Made in America and priced right." The rifle the NRA Technical Staff received for testing is the Henry Lever Action .22—the first of two rifles being introduced by HRAC. The other gun is an updated copy of the semi-automatic AR-7 Survival Rifle.

Our sample, with its straight walnut stock, blued 18½" steel barrel, two barrel bands and round steel finger lever resembles the well known Winchester Model 9422. The major external difference between those two rifles are the two bolts on either side of the Henry's receiver, which are absent on the

HENRY LEVER ACTION

MANUFACTURER: Henry Repeating Arms Co., Dept. AR, 110 8th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215
MECHANISM TYPE: lever-action, rimfire rifle
CALIBER: .22 Short, Long, Long Rifle
OVERALL LENGTH: 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
BARREL LENGTH: 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
WEIGHT: 5 lbs., 4 ozs.
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 21 Short, 17 Long, 15 Long Rifle
RIFLING: multi-groove, RH-twist
TRIGGER: single-stage, 3 lbs. pull
SIGHTS: adjustable open rear, hooded post front
STOCK: Walnut; length of pull, 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ "; drop at heel, 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; drop at comb, 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
PRICE: \$229.95

Winchester. A closer look reveals other differences, including the use by HRAC of a zinc/aluminum alloy called Zamak with a baked-on black enamel finish for what one could mistake as the receiver. Another difference is the absence of a take-down feature and stock checkering on the Henry.

This comparison does not mean that the Henry rifle, at nearly half the price of the 9422, is a "poor man's Winchester." Though the two rifles have an outward resemblance, they are entirely different.

The action of the Henry Lever Action .22 rifle is completely unlike what most are used to in this type of gun. What appears to be a conventional receiver is in fact a cover that helps guide the bolt: the steel receiver proper is inside this cover and contains all internal parts, sans the bolt, which are pinned or screwed into place.

Internally, the Henry's hammer is powered by a single strand, coil mainspring acting on a hammer strut. For a carrier, the Henry employs a stamped steel piece that is lifted by a spring-loaded plunger in the bottom of the receiver. When the action is closed, an extension on the lever presses the carrier down, allowing the next cartridge in the tubular magazine to feed from the force of the follower spring. An upward extension

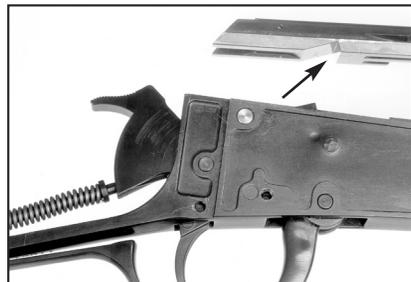


Our sample resembled the well-known Winchester Model 9422. The main external difference between these two guns when viewed at a glance are the two screws shown above on either side of the Henry's receiver.

on the front of the carrier acts as the ejector.

Two other functions are performed by the finger lever. An extension on the lever engages a slot milled into the left side of the bolt to move it back and forth as the lever is lowered and raised. Additionally, as the lever is lowered, it cams the spring-loaded locking block down from its notch in the bolt. When the lever is closed, the locking block is pressed up by a coil spring into the bolt to lock the action.

The blued steel barrel has multiple-groove rifling similar to Marlin's Micro-



The lever's top extension engages a slot milled into the side of the bolt to move it back and forth as the lever is lowered and raised. As the lever is lowered, it cams the spring-loaded locking block down from its notch in the bolt (arrow above). The carrier (r.) is of stamped steel and is lifted by a spring-loaded plunger in the receiver.

Groove. Both barrel bands, as well as the buttplate are black plastic.

Capacity of the conventional tubular steel magazine located under the Henry's barrel is 15 Long Rifle, 17 Long and 21 Short cartridges. Loading is through a cartridge-shaped cut-out in the underside of the magazine.

Safety features are limited to a traditional half-cock hammer position that is engaged by first bringing the hammer to full cock. Then, with the gun pointed in a safe direction, pull the trigger and carefully lower the hammer to half-cock. The manual warns that the half-cock safety "...will not necessarily prevent the accidental discharge of this firearm as a result of jarring or abuse."

Sights consist of a blade with a square notch rear and a hooded square post front. The rear sight is adjustable for elevation and may be drift adjusted for windage. The

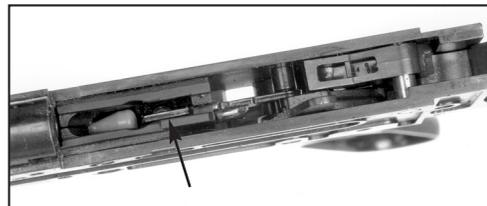


What appears to be a conventional receiver is a cover that helps guide the bolt. The receiver proper is found inside this cover.

receiver-like cover has an integral dovetail for tip-off scope mounts.

Dual opposing spring-loaded extractors are pinned to the front sides of the bolt, and the square firing pin strikes the cartridge's rim at the 12 o'clock position.

The Henry Lever Action was fitted with a Bushnell 3-10X scope and fired for accuracy with the results shown in the accompanying table. Function firing was with a mixed variety of Short, Long and Long Rifle cartridges. There were no malfunctions of any kind.

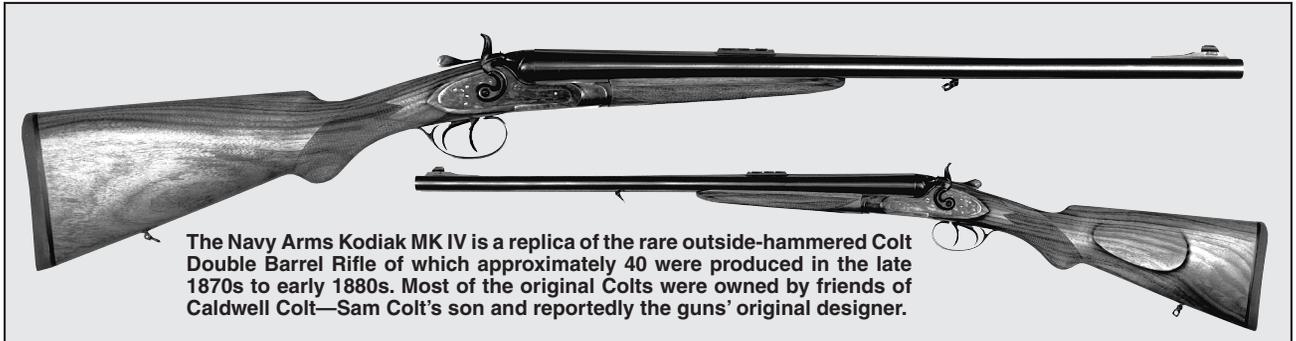


Overall, the Henry Lever Action rifle seems a good value for the price. However, while cast zinc parts with baked-on finishes offer cost savings, they lack the durability of steel. It was nice to see real walnut used on an affordable rifle again instead of stained "American hardwood." When asked how the Henry Repeating Arms Co. could make this rifle in Brooklyn, New York, at such a low price, company president Anthony Imperato said, "We made the initial investment in high-quality machines that could make the parts at a low price." 

ACCURACY RESULTS

.22 Long Rifle Cartridge	Vel. @15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
CCI Mini Mag HP	1180 Avg. 11 Sd	1.57	3.12	2.17
Federal Hi-Power HP 1A8532	1148 Avg. 27 Sd	1.58	2.02	1.84
Winchester Super-X HP 1CK02N	1191 Avg. 20 Sd	1.81	2.01	1.91
Average Extreme Spread				1.97
Five consecutive 10-shot groups from 50 yds., fired from a sand-bag rest. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), HP (Hollow-Point)				

NAVY ARMS KODIAK MK IV



The Navy Arms Kodiak MK IV is a replica of the rare outside-hammered Colt Double Barrel Rifle of which approximately 40 were produced in the late 1870s to early 1880s. Most of the original Colts were owned by friends of Caldwell Colt—Sam Colt's son and reportedly the guns' original designer.

FOR some hunters, the call of Africa and the romance associated with its hunting is every bit as seductive as the Siren's song to Ulysses. And while the tales of dangerous game are exciting, there is perhaps nothing more tangible than the double rifle to make one think of the days of year-long safaris. The majority of currently-manufactured double rifles start at around \$10,000, with one of the exceptions reviewed here, the Kodiak MK IV from Pedersoli, and imported by Navy Arms.

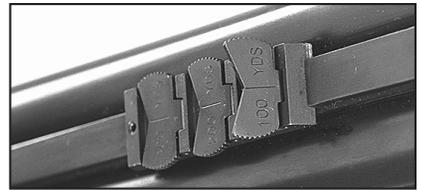
The Kodiak is a replica of the rare outside-hammered Colt Double Barrel Rifle of which approximately 40 were produced in the late 1870s to early 1880s. Most of the original Colts were owned by friends of Caldwell Colt—Sam Colt's son and reportedly the guns' original designer.

The Navy Arms Kodiak MK IV Double Rifle has a light-colored, beautifully-figured European walnut stock with bordered cut checkering at 20 lines per inch on the pistol grip and around the splinter fore-end. The stock also features a modest, but functional cheekpiece; 1/2" thick, solid rubber recoil pad and blued steel sling swivels.

Locks, hammers, breech, top tang lever and trigger guard are color casehardened while the barrels and ribs are finished in a deep plum brown. Both triggers are blued, as is the fore-end latch, and all screw heads are timed.

For sights, the Kodiak uses a blued, three-blade folding express rear sight marked for 100, 200 and 300 yds. that is dovetailed into the rib. The front sight has a blued ramp screwed to the rib with gold-bead blade dovetailed into it. The front sight can be drifted left or right for windage adjustment.

Both the hammers and the firing pins are rebounding, and the sear engages a notch in the hammer when it is in the rebounded posi-



The Navy Arms Kodiak MK IV employs a blued three-blade express rear sight unit that is marked for 100, 200 and 300 yds.

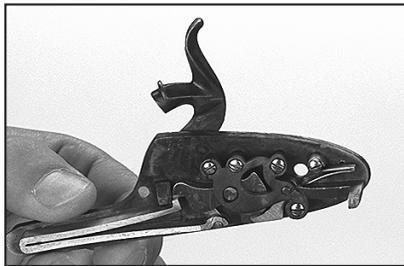
Hammers are checkered and powered by stout V-springs mounted inside at the front of the sideplate. Searns are at the rear of each sideplate and are tripped when lifted by a rearward extension of the triggers.

There are no ejectors, and the extractor is activated by a small pivoting piece at the rear of the fore-end iron.

The Kodiak was fired for accuracy with the results shown in the accompanying table. Function firing was with Winchester, Remington and Federal ammunition. There were no malfunctions of any kind.

The barrels are "semi-regulated," which according to Pedersoli means that 300-gr. bullets should impact reasonably about the same point of aim at 50 yds.

We found that at 50 yds. 300-gr. bullets did impact at the same point of aim, but 405-gr. bullets diverged with the right barrel



The hammers are powered by stout V-springs mounted at the sideplate's front. The sears are at the rear of each sideplate.

tion to reduce the likelihood of an unintended discharge if the hammer receives a blow. There is no hammer-drop safety though, so a slip of the thumb while cocking could result in an unintended discharge. The right barrel is fired by the front trigger while the left is fired by the rear. Locking is by the Purdey-type double underlug system whereby two lugs, one in front of the other, engage barrel lumps silver soldered to the bottom of the barrels. Pressing the top lever to the right retracts the lugs, allowing the action to open.

NAVY ARMS KODIAK

MANUFACTURER: Davide Pedersoli & C. s.n.c., Via Artigiani, 57-25063, Gardone V.T. (BS) Italy

IMPORTER: Navy Arms Co., Dept. AR, 689 Bergen Blvd., Ridgefield, NJ 07657

MECHANISM TYPE: break-action, side-by-side rifle

CALIBER: .45-70 Govt.

OVERALL LENGTH: 41 1/4"

BARREL LENGTH: 24 1/8"

WEIGHT: 9 lbs., 12 ozs.

RIFLING: six-groove, RH twist

TRIGGER: double, 1 1/2 lbs. pull front; 4 lbs. pull rear

SIGHTS: express rear, gold bead ramped front adjustable for windage

STOCK: European walnut: length of pull, 15"; drop at comb, 7/8"; drop at heel, 1"

PRICE: \$4,000

ACCURACY RESULTS

.45-70 Cartridge	Vel. @15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Remington 300-gr. SJHP R4570L	1730 Avg. 84 Sd	1.30	2.58	1.98
Winchester 300-gr. JHP X4570H	1773 Avg. 54 Sd	2.33	3.07	2.70
Average Extreme Spread				2.34
Remington 405-gr. SP R4570G	1332 Avg. 40 Sd	2.74	4.93	3.92

Five consecutive five-shot groups from 50 yds., fired from sandbag rests. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), SJHP (semi-jacketed hollow-point), JHP (jacketed hollow-point), SP (soft point)

shooting 2" out to the two o'clock position and the left barrel shooting 3" out from the point of aim to the seven o'clock position.

The average extreme spread does not include the 405 gr. bullets as the gun is not

regulated for them. This weight, however, is shown separately to illustrate the importance of using the correct weight bullet.

The Navy Arms double rifle is likely not high on the list of guns one would take to

Africa today. It is, however, interesting and capable of taking anything in North America, but is perhaps best-suited for large game like elk or moose in places where ranges are short, and a fast second shot desirable. 

GAMO R-77 COMBAT 4"

FOR years American manufacturers have offered air pistols that externally resemble full-sized revolvers. The Crosman Single Action 6 revolver, introduced in 1959, mimicked the Colt Single Action Army not only in profile, but in operation. Pellets or BBs were loaded into each of the cylinder's chambers and the hammer had to be cocked for each shot. Of course, the Crosman was powered by a 12½-gram CO₂ "Powerlet" suspended under the barrel where one would expect to find the ejector rod. Daisy took the concept farther in 1987 with its Power Line 44 which not only looked like S&W's Model 29, but featured a swing-out yoke that made its airgun operate like its .44 Mag. progenitor.

Best known until now for its relatively-powerful, spring-piston single-shots, Barcelona, Spain's Industrias Gamo introduced the R-77 in 1995, a repeating CO₂-powered air pistol with a swing-out cylinder that actually loaded like a revolver. The success of the R-77 led Gamo to introduce a "Combat" model with rubber finger groove stocks available with the choice of a 2½" or 4" barrel. The latter is reviewed here.

Externally the R-77 Combat resembles a 4" barreled .22 cal. S&W K-frame with a full-length ejector rod shroud and a barrel rib. The frame is of Zamak with a painted black finish while the barrel shroud, right sideplate, trigger and cylinder are of plastic. The rifled barrel lining is of steel.

A non-functional, S&W-style cylinder release is molded into the frame's left side, though the real cylinder release is a button on the barrel's underlug forward of the yoke.



The R-77 employs a separate secondary sear when fired in single-action operation.



The Gamo R-77 Combat is a CO₂-powered airgun that loads and operates like a conventional swing-out, double-action revolver. We found the little revolver to be surprisingly accurate and a pleasure to shoot.

The rear of the button projects into a recess on the front of the yoke and locks the cylinder closed. Pressing the spring-loaded button forward moves it out of engagement and frees the cylinder to be opened to the left. Each of the R-77's eight chambers is rifled with a slight right-hand twist so that the pellet has spin imparted even before it enters the barrel.

A valve that is aligned with the topmost indexed chamber of the cylinder releases CO₂ when the hammer strikes the transfer bar between the valve's release pin and the hammer's front. Except when pressed down by the transfer bar, the valve is shut. The inertia of the falling hammer keeps the valve open only long enough to let a measured amount of gas escape.

In double-action operation the R-77's primary sear is used, while in the single-action mode a secondary sear that lies below the hammer extension is employed. The transfer bar is pinned to the left side of the trigger and is moved into the "fire" position when the trigger is in its rearmost position. The sear is pinned to the trigger and its tail lifts up the hammer extension as the trigger is pulled. In single-action, the secondary sear is lifted up by the front of the hammer extension. A tab on the secondary sear's front is engaged and caught by the rear of the trigger and held there until the trigger is pulled.

The cylinder is rotated by a hand pinned

to the rear of the trigger. A lower projection on the hand blocks the counterclockwise rotation of the cylinder when the trigger is in its rearmost position. Releasing the trigger allows the hand to drop out of engagement. When uncocked, the cylinder turns freely in either direction.

The transverse safety is at the top rear of

GAMO R-77 COMBAT

MANUFACTURER: Industrias Gamo, Carretera de Calafell Km 10, Sant Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain

IMPORTER: Gamo USA Corp., Dept. AR, 3911 S.W. 47th Ave., Suite 914 Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314

MECHANISM TYPE: double-action, CO₂-powered revolver

CALIBER: .177

OVERALL LENGTH: 9½"

BARREL LENGTH: 4¼"

WEIGHT: 21 ozs.

WIDTH: 1⅞"

HEIGHT: 6⅞"

CYLINDER CAPACITY: eight

RIFLING: 12-groove, RH twist;

TRIGGER: double-action, 7¼-lbs.; single-action, 4½-lbs.

SIGHTS: ramp front, rear notch adjustable for windage and elevation.

STOCKS: pebbled rubber, finger groove

ACCESSORIES: plastic case, pellets,

12½-gram CO₂ cylinder

PRICE: \$89.95



A valve releases CO₂ when the hammer strikes the transfer bar between the valve's release pin and the hammer's front face.

the frame behind the rear sight. A rearward projection on the safety mates with an angled cut on the front face of the hammer when the hammer is down and the safety disengaged. When the safety is pushed to the right, the projection prevents the hammer from striking the transfer bar. When engaged, a red dot is revealed.

The front blade sight and its ramp are molded into the polymer barrel shroud while the open rear notch is adjustable for windage and elevation.

To install a CO₂ cylinder, pry off the right

stock panel to gain access to the CO₂ cylinder recess. Loosen the cylinder retaining screw. Insert a fresh CO₂ cylinder, tip up, into the grip frame then tighten the cylinder retaining screw until the cylinder is pierced.

The R-77 was fired for accuracy at 10 meters with the results found in the accompanying table and function fired with Beeman, Crosman, Daisy and RWS pellets, and Crosman 12½-gram CO₂ cylinders. There were no failures of any kind.

We found that velocities of 320-340 f.p.s. could be regularly obtained with a fresh CO₂ cylinder and that an average of 100 shots could be fired with our sample CO₂ cylinders if fired slowly.

After velocities leveled off, with a fresh cylinder we found that the R-77 was capable of impressive accuracy—albeit not at impressive velocities. The single-action trigger pull on our sample was somewhat gritty and disappointing, though the double-action pull was smooth and manageable. We suspect that this

reversal was due to the employment of a separate sear mechanism for each mode of operation.

We found the R-77 to be a genuinely fun gun to shoot and accurate enough to interest more than one otherwise diffident staffer. For those interested in basement practice, training, plinking or just working on the basics of trigger control and sighting without having to take a trip to the range, the R-77 should fill the bill.



ACCURACY RESULTS

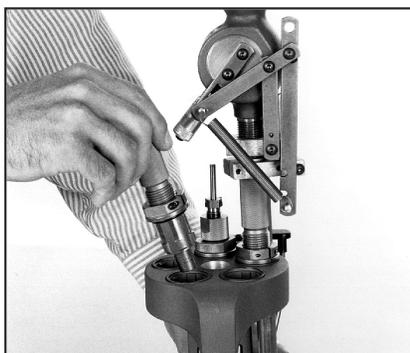
.177 cal. Pellet	Vel. @15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Crosman Supermatch	331 Avg. 22 Sd	0.31	0.85	0.41
Daisy Quicksilver	344 Avg. 14 Sd	0.41	0.74	0.57
RWS R10	328 Avg. 28 Sd	0.34	0.62	0.48
Average Extreme Spread				0.53
Five consecutive five-shot groups from 10 meters, fired from sandbag rests. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation)				

HORNADY LOCK-N-LOAD

A new twist from Hornady is its Lock-N-Load bushing system that allows quick and easy changing of hand-loading dies and press accessories. The system includes two presses—a classic single-stage and a progressive loader—as well as an adapter to convert any other press using standard 1¼"X12 bushings, like the excellent RCBS Rock Chucker, to accept Lock-N-Load bushings.

With the Lock-N-Load system, any manufacturer's conventional 7/8"X14 thread die is screwed into the male Lock-N-Load bushing. This bushing is in turn inserted into the female Lock-N-Load bushing that is mounted in your press, and given about a 1/2" clockwise turn to lock it into place. The die is locked into the press by a camming action much like a multi-lug rifle bolt. The conventional die is then adjusted to the proper setting, and locked in place using its lock ring and set screw. When changing dies, it's a simple matter of giving the die a 1/2" counterclockwise twist to remove it with the Lock-N-Load bushing attached. Since dies are stored with the Lock-N-Load bushing attached, they can be left at their desired settings, allowing utilization of less-expensive dies that do not have a set screw. Additionally, you'll never have a die seize up in the press from having tightened the lock ring too tight.

We recently received for testing a Hornady Classic Lock-N-Load single stage



press, a Lock-N-Load Automatic Progressive press and a Lock-N-Load Press Conversion Bushing. NRA Technical Staffer Scott E. Mayer had the first opportunity to use a Classic Lock-N-Load press here when writing "Cowboy Cartridges Ride Again" (June 1997, p. 34). When loading several different bullet styles in .44-40 WCF using the press, Mayer "... used the sizing, expander and crimping dies each in a Lock-N-Load bushing and quickly changed them as needed." The Automatic Progressive was being used at the time of this writing to assemble several thousand rounds of .223 Rem. for an upcoming article to determine the effectiveness of cryogenic barrel treatment. Since the progressive loader was dedicated to one cartridge, the Lock-N-Load feature was not necessary. The press functioned almost flaw-

lessly for us, only having some primer feeding trouble until after about 100 cartridges had been assembled, after which the press worked without incident.

The obvious advantage to the Lock-N-Load system is the ability to instantly change dies for different calibers. Even if you load for only one caliber, the Lock-N-Load is worth a look. Loaders of .357 Mag., for example, can have separate sizing and expanding dies set up for .38 Spl. and .357 Mag. cases, and individual seating dies set up for everything from flush-seated wadcutters to Speer's long 200-gr. silhouette bullet. Dies can be changed out with a quick snap of the wrist as needed. Rifle shooters can benefit as well, by having a small-base full-length sizing die set up for pump-action or semi-automatic rifles, and a companion neck-sizing die set up for the same caliber bolt gun. Specific bullet seating dies may be dedicated and quickly changed for assembling hunting, target or plinking ammunition. Finally, accessories like an automatic shell-actuated powder drop can be snapped in or out of a press as needed, or several powder droppers can be dedicated to throw a specific charge of a favorite powder and changed when loading different cartridges.

For more information on the Lock-N-Load System, and other Hornady items, contact: Hornady Manufacturing Co., Dept. AR, P.O. Box 1848, Grand Island, NE 68802.

