

GUN[®] TESTS

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

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MOUSE GUNS

Tested: Easy to conceal small-caliber pistols, namely the Ruger LCP II, Taurus PT-22, Beretta 21A Bobcat, and Walther TPH. Can they be more than plinkers?

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HELLO, FELLOW FELONS

If you haven't heard yet, be advised that millions of gun owners may soon be classified as felons if a new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) rule isn't blocked by the courts. The ruling affects owners of pistols with stabilizing braces, which the Bureau covers in its "Final Rule 2021-08F." According to BATFE in the agency's "Frequently Asked Questions For Final Rule 2021-08F" document listed on ATF.gov, "The rule outlines the factors ATF considers when evaluating firearms equipped with a purported 'stabilizing brace' (or other rearward attachment) to determine whether these weapons would be considered a 'rifle' or 'short-barreled rifle' under the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA), or a 'rifle' or 'firearm' subject to regulation under the National Firearms Act (NFA). (The term 'SBR' is used to describe both GCA short-barreled rifles and NFA rifles with a barrel of less than 16 inches throughout these FAQs). The final rule's amended definition of 'rifle' clarifies that the term 'designed, redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder' includes a weapon that is equipped with an accessory, component, or other rearward attachment (e.g., a 'stabilizing brace') that provides surface area that allows the weapon to be fired from the shoulder, provided other factors, as listed in the definition, indicate the weapon is designed and intended to be fired from the shoulder."



Todd Woodard

Okay, that's a lot of language for a very simple idea: BATFE, on its own, but with political cover from the Department of Justice and the Biden Administration, redefined millions of mostly AR-style pistols with braces as short-barreled rifles, the latter of which are covered under the National Firearms Act. Generally, if you want to own an SBR, you have to register it with BATFE and pay a \$200 fee to get a tax stamp for each and every SBR. Owning an SBR without the stamp is a felony. Thus, your brace-equipped pistol, which may have been legal a few weeks ago, is now contraband and can get you put in prison.

Now, I have forecast this development for several years, and as I explained most recently in the April 2022 issue, that's why GUN TESTS has only covered brace-equipped firearms once. I fired some brace-equipped pistols several times, and every time, I wondered how long it would be before BATFE would spring the trap on unsuspecting gun owners and simply outlaw them as regular firearms, and now we know. Now, I didn't have this insight because I'm some smart m*f*r. I just recognized how simple it would be for certain stars to align to encourage BATFE to take these steps. The most hilarious part of this is BATFE has previously approved many of the braces as okay for use on pistols — in writing! Those letters have been

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GUN TESTS®
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No Pain or Pinching with Max

Reader Bill says he's not had any problems with his LCP Max chewing up his fingers. Reader Sue gives us advice on a gunsmith who can re-create older grips, per Reader Dave's request.

Re: Firing Line, February 2023

Todd, I have owned and fired the original LCP and also the LCP II. When the LCP Max became available a few years ago, I immediately bought one, and it's been my EDC ever since. As a security team member at my local church, I've spent many hours firing and practicing with the Max at the shooting range (ball ammo and Hornady Flex tips). Never had any trigger issues whatsoever, though the very small pocket gun isn't always easy on the hand! I consider my hands and fingers to be normal size, though maybe somewhat smallish. Perhaps Harold in your Firing Line complaint has oversized hands and fingers? But seriously, my Max trigger shoots just like my older LCPs, which is to say, no pain or pinching. — **Bill**

Re Downrange, January 2023

Dear GUN TESTS: Noting the increase in people interested in protecting themselves made me smile. Although I live in a Constitutional Carry state, every few years I like to take a course that updates me regarding new laws and attitudes. The last course I took brought up the need for "concealed carry" insurance. It emphasized the need for such insurance, emphasizing the high likelihood of litigation should you use a firearm while protecting yourself. I thought that this would make a excellent article or even series of articles for your magazine, and I would appreciate your addressing the issue. You do such a great job evaluating firearms and accessories that I (as well as others) would look forward to your addressing the need and nuances for litigation



attorney Gordon Cooper, shown top left, did a big overview of how to buy these policies in a general sense. Because the terms of policies and coverage can change, we didn't get into specific policies. Cooper's advice on how to assess these services would still be valid today. Also, attorney Michele Byington, bottom left, authored "10 Things Gun Owners Get Wrong About Their Self-Defense Rights" in the November 2017 issue. It covered topics we've all heard about self-defense shootings that you might want to know. I am actively considering future articles on the topic.

— Todd Woodard



Re Firing Line Query, January 2023

Your reader Dave wished to replace old grips on a S&W pis-

We welcome mail from our readers. To send us comments or questions about previous articles in the magazine, e-mail us:

GunTestsEditor@icloud.com

If you include the month and year of the article you're writing about, it's a big help.

Also, please include your name, address, and phone number. We won't publish your personal information other than your first name, but we may need to contact you about your letter. We appreciate the quality and depth of thought our readers generate.

GT

insurance. Thank you for such a great magazine. I look forward to each monthly issue, and I hope you include the litigation insurance topic in future. — **Alan**

Hey Alan: We have covered this topic a couple of times in the past. In a May 2018 Special Report, "Buying Self-Defense Insurance: Important Factors to Consider,"

FIRING LINE

tol. The best man to see is gunsmith Larry Feland. Reach him at Larry Feland's Gunsmithing, 17102 Houston Drive, Cypress, TX. — **Sue**

Thank you, Sue. I knew the GUN TESTS readership would come through with an answer. —tw

Car-carry options

Hello Todd and Staff. I have a suggestion for a future review by you and your excellent team, and I would also like to see input from your readers as well on their solutions to my problem. I usually carry my firearm IWB. But when I travel in my vehicle for extended trips, it gets uncomfortable. So I take it out of the holster — and then what? Lay it on the console? Under the seat? In my coat pocket? An alternative holster inside the vehicle? What's the best option here? Now it's time to stop for gas/eats. I'm not going to leave my baby in the car, and I want to have her near and dear while

brushing shoulders with the local clientele inside the Git-N-Go. So now I gotta re-insert my unit back down my pants while seated in my car, hoping like hell I don't blow my Johnson off in the process. I'm open for suggestions to improve this process as well. Thanks to you and your staff on publishing a great magazine. Keep up the good work. — **Ken**

Hey Ken: We looked at this in the article, "Driving Holsters Compared" in the February 2020 issue. Bob Campbell wrote in that article, "The first choice for driving use seems to be a crossdraw model. Offering a holster that rides on the front of the body rather than behind the hip, the crossdraw is suitable for use when seated. The crossdraw has advantages of access and comfort when driving. You are not sitting on the holster, and it doesn't dig into the ribs. We found a number of suitable scabbards that are a good cross section of what is



*available. They were tested by the raters during long drives, road trips, and daily commutes. We also drew from the holsters a minimum of 100 times during the test. We rated them on the balance of speed and retention as well as access." We rated the Galco Gun Leather Switchback, \$46, as a Best Buy (shown above). Of it, Bob wrote, "The Switchback's layered ballistic nylon cell with foam is certainly durable, and it was comfortable to wear. Because it can be worn as a right- or left-hand holster or as a crossdraw, we found the Switchback is indeed versatile. We found the draw angle to be good for crossdraw." It was graded as an **A-** based on it having a security strap instead of a thumb break. Other Grade **A** holsters in the test were Wright Leather Works Regulator Cross Draw Holster, Bullard Leather Holsters Crossdraw for 1911 Series, Jeffrey Custom Leather BGT Body Guard Tension Adjust, Galco Gun Leather Phoenix Strong-Side/Crossdraw Belt Holster, Galco Gun Leather Hornet Strong-Side/Crossdraw Belt Holster, and the Tauris Standard Hip Holster. — tw*

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.

—continued from page 2

remanded. The joke's on us! For myself, any firearms devices such as these that I might have owned were lost in an unfortunate canoeing accident. Just kidding. I've never owned a braced pistol because I didn't want to wake up one day and be a felon. If you do, then what are your options?

If you as an individual own one of these braces attached to a firearm, you have 120 days from the official promulgation of the rule to exercise your "Compliance Options." Those are:

- Submit through the eForms system an Application to Make and Register a Firearm, ATF Form 1 (E-Form 1) within 120-days from the date of publication in the Federal Register.

- Permanently remove or alter the "stabilizing brace" so that it cannot be reattached and thereby removing it from regulation as a "firearm" under the NFA.

- Remove the short barrel and attach a 16-inch or longer rifled barrel to the firearm thus removing it from the provisions of the NFA.

- Turn the firearm into your local ATF office.
- Destroy the firearm.

Sound good? Better get busy on your Compliance Options, because a DOJ release on Friday, Jan. 13, 2023, said the Final Rule had been submitted to the Federal Register. Certainly the rule might be stopped by court order or some other intervention, but the clock is ticking.

The news around guns isn't all bad, however. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton determined that Citigroup has anti-gun discriminatory corporate policies, so that bank isn't eligible to offer certain financial services in the state. A 2021 Texas law requires corporations competing for municipal contracts in the Lone Star State to certify they do not hold discriminatory policies against lawful firearm businesses. Citigroup submitted a certification letter attesting they do not hold such policies.

However, their own website demonstrates that the corporate bank refuses business with firearm businesses that do not agree with age-based gun bans, magazine restrictions, and bump-stock bans. Being out of step with the 2nd Amendment will cost Citigroup billions of dollars in business in Texas. If your state doesn't have a similar law, it should.

In similar news out of Florida, state legislators are warning financial service providers not to track the shopping habits of gun and ammunition buyers. Florida is the first state to do so and might not be the last. The move is the latest effort

by 2nd Amendment supporters to go on offense against banking institutions that use their weight to push backdoor boardroom gun control. The Florida Arms and Ammo Act is a first-in-the-nation measure to prohibit businesses from tracking Floridians' firearm and ammo purchases. It is in direct response to a new effort by credit card processors to monitor and track lawful purchases by law-abiding Americans that the financial companies deem "suspicious." The effort has been led by Amalgamated Bank CEO Priscilla Sims Brown, who pushed the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) to create a credit card Merchant Category Code (MCC) to allow the banking system to track when law-abiding Americans lawfully purchase anything remotely related to firearms and ammunition. More of this, please.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit has overwhelmingly ruled that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) overstepped its authority when it published a Final Rule that classified bump stocks as "machineguns." The Trump-era ban was in reaction to the crimes by a depraved murderer in Las Vegas in 2017. "A plain reading of the statutory language, paired with close consideration of the mechanics of a semi-automatic firearm, reveals that a bump stock is excluded from the technical definition of 'machinegun' set forth in the Gun Control Act and National Firearms Act," the majority opinion states.

Furthermore, the ruling said, "As an initial matter, [the rule] purports to allow ATF — rather than Congress — to set forth the scope of criminal prohibitions. Indeed, the Government would outlaw bump stocks by administrative fiat even though the very same agency routinely interpreted the ban on machineguns as not applying to the type of bump stocks at issue here," the opinion states. "Nor can we say that the statutory definition unambiguously supports the Government's interpretation.

"As noted above, we conclude that it unambiguously does not. But even if we are wrong, the statute is at least ambiguous in this regard. And if the statute is ambiguous, Congress must cure that ambiguity, not the federal courts."

The Fifth Circuit's ruling gets to the heart of the matter. Can the BATFE — working on behalf of a president — rewrite law on their own? The court says it can't. Perhaps the same rule-making restraint can be imposed on the brace regulation. Several courts are recognizing 2A rights more fully since *Bruen*, so here's hoping. **GT**

Two New Nines: SIG's P365 XL And a Hellcat Pro Shoot It Out

Tested: A SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre P365V001, \$1100, and a Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro HCP9379BOSP, \$575. Is the SIG worth twice the money as the Hellcat Pro? Not in our opinion.

The past few years have been exciting for those who favor subcompact 9mm handguns. These handguns were first popularized by the KelTec PF9 and Smith & Wesson Shield. There have been other introductions and handguns with superior features, including greater magazine capacity and superior sights. Modern pistols feature superior reliability, good sights, good trigger actions, and high-capacity magazines. These handguns are good choices for concealed carry. They offer twice the rounds on board of the once-standard snubnose 38 Special, ride flatter, and are easier to use. Just the same, larger guns, such as the SIG P320 and Glock 19, are easier to shoot well and handle better. The two pistols tested in this shoot out are designed to split the difference between micro-compact and compact handguns. Each is larger than the parent pistol, with a longer slide and barrel as well as a taller grip frame. The larger grip and longer slide of each pistol results in a handgun that is easier to shoot and only a little more difficult to conceal. Another plus is added magazine capacity.

The first gun was a SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre P365V001, \$1100. With the Spectre, SIG took the route of designing a custom-shop piece with plenty of flair. While based on the proven P365 action, there are important changes, and most of these changes are improvements. The slide is distinctive. The slide features a distressed finish sometimes called

Top is a SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre P365V001, \$1100, a SIG custom-shop gun that wears a distressed finish. Bottom is the Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro HCP9379BOSP, \$575, which features a longer slide, barrel, and grip than the original Hellcat. Both are able firearms.



battle worn. The stainless-steel slide features a stylized X and cut outs in the slide. The result is a unique appearance.

The Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro HCP9379BOSP, \$575, is another elongated pistol that features a longer slide, barrel, and grip than its primogenitor. The pistol is 0.8 inch taller than the Hellcat and 0.6 longer. The Hellcat Pro, then, went a bit longer in the grip than the XL treatment of the SIG P365. In return you have a 15-round magazine. Essentially, Springfield designed a new Hellcat with the Hellcat Pro that is intended to sell at a popular price point.

We found each pistol reliable and accurate enough for personal defense. This was a tough shoot out, with the raters split to the end on which pistol is best suited to personal defense. There is plenty

of room for personal choice, but only one handgun is the better buy, in our estimation.

SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre P365V001 9mm Luger, \$1100

SIG has offered several versions of the popular P365. The standard model with a black Nitron-coated stainless-steel slide seems most popular, and there is also a stainless-steel-slide version. The SAS, or SIG Anti Snag pistol, features a modified takedown lever and slide stop to ensure the pistol is snag free in deep

SIG SAUER P365XL SPECTRE P365V001 9MM LUGER, \$1100
GUN TESTS GRADE: A- (OUR PICK)

We really liked the Spectre. There is a lot of bling in this pistol, and the piece handles nicely. The fit and finish are good, the flat trigger is excellent, and the pistol is reliable and accurate. The screw that holds the sight fell out, but that seems to be an anomaly. We would buy this pistol if we were flush with funds.



ACTION TYPE SEMI AUTO, STRIKER FIRED
 OVERALL LENGTH 6.6 IN.
 OVERALL HEIGHT 4.8 IN.
 MAXIMUM WIDTH 1.1 IN.
 WEIGHT UNLOADED 20.7 OZ.

WEIGHT LOADED 27.9 OZ.
 SLIDE MATERIAL STAINLESS STEEL, DISTRESSED FINISH
 SLIDE RETRACTION EFFORT 15.5 OZ.
 FRAME MATERIAL POLYMER
 FINISH DISTRESSED
 FRONT STRAP HEIGHT 2.5 IN.
 REAR STRAP HEIGHT 3.5 IN.
 BARREL LENGTH 3.7 IN.
 GRIP THICKNESS MAXIMUM 1.1 IN.
 GRIP CIRCUMFERENCE 5.2 IN.
 MAGAZINES (2) 12 ROUND
 REAR SIGHT SIG X RAY TWO DOT TRITIUM
 FRONT SIGHT TRITIUM LAMP
 SIGHT RADIUS 5.6 IN.
 TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT 4.5 LBS.
 SAFETY NO MANUAL SAFETY, STRIKER BLOCK
 WARRANTY LIMITED LIFETIME
 TELEPHONE (603) 610-3000
 WEBSITE SIGSAUER.COM
 MADE IN USA

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY HELLCAT PRO HCP9379BOSP 9MM LUGER, \$575
GUN TESTS GRADE: A (BEST BUY)

We liked the Hellcat Pro 9mm a lot. It is reliable and useful, and there isn't a pistol this size with quite this performance. The SIG P365 XL Spectre is a good pistol, but we simply did not see a difference worth the surcharge for the SIG.



ACTION TYPE SEMI AUTO, STRIKER FIRED
 OVERALL LENGTH 6.6 IN.
 OVERALL HEIGHT 4.9 IN.
 MAXIMUM WIDTH 1.06 IN.
 WEIGHT UNLOADED 20 OZ.
 WEIGHT LOADED 27.6 OZ.

SLIDE MATERIAL STEEL, MELONITE FINISH
 SLIDE RETRACTION EFFORT 17.5 OZ.
 FRAME MATERIAL POLYMER
 FINISH BLACK
 FRONT STRAP HEIGHT 2.5 IN.
 REAR STRAP HEIGHT 3.5 IN.
 BARREL LENGTH 3.7 IN.
 GRIP THICKNESS MAXIMUM 1.06 IN.
 GRIP CIRCUMFERENCE 5.25 IN.
 MAGAZINES (2) 15 ROUND
 REAR SIGHT DRIFT ADJUSTABLE, U-SHAPED REAR
 FRONT SIGHT TRITIUM LAMP OUTLINED WITH HIGH VIS CIRCLE
 SIGHT RADIUS 5.1 IN.
 TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT 6.0 LBS.
 SAFETY TRIGGER BLADE SAFETY, STRIKER BLOCK
 WARRANTY LIMITED LIFETIME
 TELEPHONE (800) 680-6866
 WEBSITE SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM
 MADE IN CROATIA

PISTOL COMPARISON

concealment and also features a single tritium front dot for aiming.

The P365 has earned a reputation for reliability. It is a useful concealed-carry handgun. With a 10-round magazine capacity, the P365 offers a good reserve of ammunition. The trigger action is controllable, and the pistol is among the better shooters in the size class. Just the same, the subcompact handgun isn't the easiest to use well. Some shooters prefer a slightly larger handgun, which the SIG XL series satisfies with a longer slide and barrel.

The balance appeals to some, and the pistol's slightly longer barrel offers an increase in velocity. The velocity increase isn't severe, however, and may be counted on to add perhaps 30 to 35 fps with the 0.6 inch extra length of barrel. The longer sight radius is welcome.

The pistol features SIG XRAY sights. These night sights feature two tritium self-luminous dots in the rear sight. The front sight features a bright white outline surrounding a tritium dot. The rear sight is a wedge type that would allow racking the slide on a sturdy belt or boot heel. These are excellent sights for all-round personal-defense use. We found them well suited to firing for accuracy in bright light, and the tritium is visible in dim light to dark conditions.

The pistol features both forward and rear cocking serrations. The SIG P365XL handgun is easy to rack, handle, and load. The slide lock and takedown lever are the same as the P365, in contrast with the cut-down SIG P365 SAS types. The frame treatment is a combination of checkering and hollows in the grip. The result is an excellent gripping surface. The grip tang or uppermost section of the rear grip strap is elongated compared to the standard P365.

The XL guns — and there are several versions, including one with a flash-plated gold trigger — are 0.8 inch longer than the P365,



Left, the SIG P365XL Spectre is a fast-handling pistol with many good features. We liked the original P365, and we like the XL even more. Disassembly of the pistol is simple enough. Right, the Hellcat Pro is an attractively sized handgun. It is a far different pistol in handling than the original Hellcat. Disassembly is as simple as the Spectre's.



The SIG, left, is a thin pistol despite a high-capacity magazine. Similarly, the Hellcat Pro pistol, right, remains quite thin as well. The SIG measures 1.1 inches wide, while the Hellcat Pro comes in at 1.06 inches wide — not much of a difference.

Top: We ran afoul of the SIG's rear-sight cover plate attachment by losing a screw. This is the cocked sight picture that greeted us after losing the sight-attachment screw. Bottom: We liked the Hellcat Pro's sight set up. The U-shaped rear face is easy to see and align.

0.4 taller, with a 0.6-inch-longer barrel, and weigh 2.9 more ounces. The extra weight is mostly in the

longer slide. The longer slide isn't more difficult to conceal when the shooter chooses a well-designed



Both pistols were functional and accurate with the loads tested. These three, Winchester 115-grain full-metal-jacket loads, Winchester's 124 grain +P rounds, and Hornady 115-grain XTP hollow points, were used during the accuracy test.

inside-the-waistband holster. While the pistols are heavier than the standard P365s, it isn't that much, and the extra weight of the XL slide provides a good balance, noticeably better recoil control, and also allows two more rounds

in the standard mags. The P365 will accept the longer XL mags.

The pistol is supplied with two 12-round magazines. These steel magazines are well finished. The magazines were difficult to load to full capacity. We were able to insert 10 rounds with much effort. A loader was required to load to capacity throughout the test. The effort needed to load the magazines eased up, but only slightly during the test period. We used the magazine loader supplied with the Hellcat Pro to aid loading against the strong magazine springs. The Hellcat's magazines were just as difficult to load to full capacity.

The trigger guard is slightly different from the original P365. The trigger, however, is much different in both design and feel from the original. The P365 XL Spectre features a flat trigger. The Spectre trigger is tight with minimal take up and very little overtravel. Trigger compression is a smooth 4.5 pounds. This is a

useful trigger that makes shooting the pistol accurately easier. In contrast, a previous standard-model SIG P365 tested went 6.0 pounds in trigger compression and a well-used P365 SAS tested went 5.8 pounds. With the P365XL Spectre trigger, reset is sharp. By pressing the trigger smoothly and then riding the reset, we got good results. So, SIG came up with an eye-popping ensemble.

How does it shoot? Very well indeed. All our raters noted its excellent control and practical accuracy. We used three loads in offhand fire or combat shooting. Winchester USA Ready FMJs were the primary load along with a few handloads using the 147-grain Hornady XTP at 890 fps. We also used Federal Syntech rounds, splitting them between the two pistols. There were no failures to feed, chamber, fire, or eject with any of the ammunition. The pistol comes on target quickly and tracks between targets better than an original P365 we had on hand

for comparison. The P365 itself is a good micro-sized compact, but in the case of the Spectre, the good big man simply beats the good little man, although we don't think "big" isn't a good description of the P365 XL Spectre. Due to the longer slide that's well balanced, not slide heavy, the pistol stays on target easily, we found.

We did run across an odd problem we had not previously encountered with optics-ready pistols. The SIG features a removable back plate that holds the rear sight. The screws holding the backplate on come in from under the slide. They are easily addressed by

9MM LUGER RANGE DATA

Winchester USA Ready 115-grain FMJ Flat Nose RED9

Average Velocity
Muzzle Energy
Small Group
Average Group

SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre

1150 fps
338 ft.-lbs.
1.7 in.
2.0 in.

Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro

1164 fps
345 ft.-lbs.
2.0 in.
2.5 in.

Hornady American Gunner 115 grain XTP Hollow Point 90244

Average Velocity
Muzzle Energy
Small Group
Large Group

SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre

1167 fps
348 ft.-lbs.
1.5 in.
1.9 in.

Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro

1159 fps
343 ft.-lbs.
2.2 in.
2.6 in.

Winchester USA Ready Defense 124-grain JHP +P RED9HP

Average Velocity
Muzzle Energy
Small Group
Average Group

SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre

1189 fps
389 ft.-lbs.
1.5 in.
2.1 in.

Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro

1201 fps
397 ft.-lbs.
2.1 in.
2.5 in.

We fired groups at 15 yards from a bench rest using an MTM Case-Gard K-Zone Pistol Rest. We used a Competition Electronics Pro Chrony to measure velocity. The chronograph was 10 feet from the muzzles.

PISTOL COMPARISON



Left: Fired offhand, the Spectre offers mild recoil. Our shooters said that SIG's 9mm Spectre is a first-class lightweight 9mm. Right: Old-timers used to say a gun was lively in the hand. The Hellcat Pro is a lively and fast-handling pistol — and a lot of gun for the money.

Left is a Springfield XDS single-column-magazine pistol for comparison. Right, compared to the Springfield XDS, the Hellcat Pro really isn't any larger.



A standard P365, left, is compared to the P365 XL Spectre, right. There is considerable improvement in the grip panel. The Spectre's grip-frame treatment is an excellent blend of adhesion and abrasion, our shooters said.

Here are three SIG 365 pistols: Top is the SAS SIG Anti Snag; center is the standard SIG P365; and bottom is the SIG P365 XL Spectre tested here. Pistols in this weight class are easy to carry but not difficult to fire.

simply locking the slide to the rear. This allows easy mounting of an optical sight. The red dot actually screws in from the top, but these screws hold the back plate or cover plate in place. During the

firing test, the backplate became loose and wobbly. The sight was cocked to one side. During firing, we had lost one of the tiny set screws that holds the back plate down. The pistol left the factory with a loose screw. This is just something that happens, but it did create a detour in testing. Neither were the screws available for us to install. SIG was helpful because the pistol was in warranty, and they sent a return label. The pistol

would have to go to the custom shop, they told us, for the screw to be replaced. We got by with a single screw tightened down for the duration of the test.

The pistol was fired for accuracy using proven loads we have fired for accuracy in the past. Since these were short-barrel compact pistols, the SIG and Hellcat were fired at 15 yards rather than 25 yards for accuracy. These 9mm handguns were each fired from an MTM CaseGuard K-Zone shooting rest. The loads used included the Winchester FMJs, Hornady 115-grain XTPs, and Winchester 124-grain USA Ready +P loads. Results were good. The best group was under two inches.

Our Team Said: The pistol is reliable, easy to use well, concealable, and makes a fine all-round home-defense handgun for most shooters. The SIG P365 Spectre would have earned a solid A rating save for the loose screw and the trouble needed to get it resolved. SIG would take care of the gun under warranty, to their credit, but the hassle has to count for something.

**Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro
HCP9379BOSP
9mm Luger, \$575**

The first impression of the Hellcat Pro is that it is larger than the SIG P365XL Spectre 9mm pistol. This isn't completely true. The Hellcat Pro is the same length as the SIG. You would have to split hairs to find a difference in width. The difference is in height. The prospective buyer will have to decide how important this extra length is. That is, whether it is undesirable, as may be the case in concealed carry or whether the extended grip is desirable for shooting comfort. The weight penalty in the pistols when unloaded is slight, but when loaded, the four extra cartridges in the Hellcat add a bit more weight. The Hellcat Pro 9mm has the same magazine capacity as the Glock 19 and similar pistols.

The Hellcat Pro doesn't have the out-of-orbit looks of the SIG

PISTOL COMPARISON



Left: Adding an optic to the SIG P365 is fairly simple. Remove the top plate cover (arrow) and install whatever optic plate adapter you wish. The SIG features a removable back plate that holds the rear sight (directly below the arrow). The screws holding the backplate on come in from under the slide (right, arrows). They are easily addressed by simply locking the slide to the rear. This allows easy mounting of an optical sight. The red dot actually screws in from the top, but these screws hold the back plate or cover plate in place. During the test, the backplate became loose because we had lost one of the tiny set screws that holds the back plate down.

The Springfield Hellcat Pro, left, gives the impression it is square and angular compared to the SIG P365 XL Spectre,



right, but it feels great in the hand. After firing both on the combat course, our raters said the Hellcat is easier to control.



Two holsters we used in this test were a DeSantis Speed Scabbard with thumb break and optics cut, left, and Galco's King Tuk Cloud, right, an outstanding inside-the-waistband holster. The optic shown with the Spectre is SIG's Romeo Zero model. While we did add the optic to assess the ease of installation on this pricey pistol, we fired the test head to head with the pistols' iron sights.

P365 Spectre, but the Pro costs \$500 less. Looks and bling are fine if you are willing to pay for them, but we look at performance. While each pistol must stand on its own merits compared to the other in this shoot out, it is inevitable they will be compared to their smaller primogenitors. Each pistol shoots and handles better than the original version, no question there. The issue is, how small a footprint are you looking for? Another question may be if the subcompact pistol is difficult to shoot well in the scenarios you deem likely for personal defense. Perhaps you need something a little larger, but not too much.

The Hellcat pistol is another striker-fired polymer-frame pistol. The Hellcat is also optics ready. The optics plate is removed from the top of the slide to mount a red dot. We had no real preference between the two types of plate attachments. The slide is well machined and finished in Springfield's Armory Kote. The slide features both forward and rear cocking serrations. The 3.7-inch barrel features a generous cut out acting as a loaded-chamber indicator. While it does not have a tactile indicator, it is strong on visual presentation.

The sights are an excellent design for personal defense. The front sight features a white ring around a tritium dot. The rear features a deep U notch with white outline. This set up makes for a real speed in personal-defense shooting, we found. Deep U-notch sights have been referred to as "old man's sights" because they are an aid for those with limited visual acuity. This is an appropriate tool for older eyes, but they are fast indeed for any shooter. As for the front tritium post, we tried the sights in a dark room. There is no difference in the front posts of the pistols as far as brightness. The SIG offers three aiming dots in dim to dark light. The Hellcat offers a single dot. This was a close call, with raters divided. For the

PISTOL COMPARISON



Speed loads were easily handled with either pistol. This is the Hellcat Pro.



However, the magazines in each pistol were difficult to load. Past nine or 10 rounds, we had to use a loader.



For your personal-defense needs, perhaps you need something a little larger, like the Hellcat Pro above, which we thought was very shootable without being too big.



Left: The SIG's frame treatment is a combination of checkering and hollows in the grip. The result is an excellent gripping surface.

Right: We really like the Hellcat Pro's grip treatment.

The slide lock and takedown lever are nearly flush fit. While the magazine release (arrow) seems elongated, it never caused a problem in concealed-carry holsters we carried the Pro in.



We like the Spectre's distressed finish and other details.



The SIG's flat trigger is among its best features.

The frame offers a hand-filling grip. Those with larger hands will like this handle, while those with smaller hands will have no trouble. The grip profile seems more angular than the original Hellcat. The grip treatment is different than the SIG P365XL Spectre. While some liked the laser-cut SIG better, this was based primarily on style. Either works well. A person with very small hands will be well served with the SIG. We feel that the overall gripping surface of the Springfield works best for control during recoil, while the SIG will conceal better. A trade off, to be certain. Each has merit and each treatment is well done.

Range work turned out well. The pistol has good balance and control isn't difficult. The Hellcat Pro comes on target quickly and tracks between targets well. The balance of the pistol makes it more controllable in rapid fire during combat drills than the SIG, but it was close, very close.

A 9mm handgun in the 22-ounce weight class should not kick more than any of the other guns in the class unless there is a significant difference in design or handling. The two pistols were similar in performance during the combat fire testing. If anything, the Hellcat was slightly ahead in combat firing accuracy. During the absolute accuracy testing, firing from a benchrest with the MTM shooting rest, the Hellcat Pro 9mm did not prove to be as accurate as the SIG Sauer P365XL Spectre. Still, the difference was slight. The Hellcat averaged 15-yard groups just over 2 inches wide.

Our Team Said: We found the Hellcat a good choice for personal defense. The pistol is reliable with standard and +P loads and handles well. Accuracy is good. The Hellcat Pro carries 15 rounds. It is a concealable and useful handgun. Each did a good run on the combat course, with the Hellcat slightly ahead in this course, while the SIG exhibited slightly greater accuracy from the bench. With the Hellcat Pro offering comparable performance for half the price, and with no screws working loose, we think it's a Best Buy in this match up.

Written and photographed by Gun Tests Staff, using evaluations from

GUN TESTS Team members. GT

most part, we feel that in daylight shooting, the rear sight of the Springfield offers the better flash sight picture as used in personal defense. As for concealed carry and a fast draw, the SIG is virtually snag free, and the rounded edges of the Hellcat Pro may also offer less tendency to snag.

VALUE GUIDE: SMALLER 9MM LUGER HANDGUN RANKINGS

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Taurus G3X 1-G3XSR9031 9mm Luger, \$310	Feb. 2023	A	Best Buy. It isn't expensive, but it does a good job as a reliable personal-defense pistol.
FMK 9C1 G2 Dark Grey 9mm Luger, \$332	Feb. 2023	B	Functioned with the ammunition tested. We did not like the trigger, and accuracy was not impressive.
SCCY DVG-1 9mm Luger, \$270	Feb. 2023	C	The size, handfit, finish, and sights are all good features. Bad trigger limited accuracy.
SAR USA SAR9 Compact X 9mm Luger, \$632	Sep. 2022	A	Our Pick. Larger and more expensive. The SAR9cx was the most accurate and fastest pistol in this group.
Mossberg MC2C 89031 9mm Luger, \$380	Sep. 2022	B+	Best Buy. Provides great capacity within a very thin package. Second in accuracy and third in speed drills.
Savage Arms Stance 67001 9mm Luger, \$408	Sep. 2022	B	A concealment pistol and, as such, its groups are acceptable. We would still like to see them tighter.
SCCY Firearms DVG-1 9mm Luger, \$245	Sep. 2022	C	Lightweight and easy to handle, but we had several failures to extract.
Smith & Wesson M&P9 Shield EZ M2.0 12436 9mm Luger, \$499	July 2022	A	Our Pick. We liked the way this pistol handles and operates. Racking the slide is easy enough.
Kahr K9 K9093A 9mm Luger, \$750	Mar. 2022	A	An excellent option for EDC. Metal frame mitigates recoil for faster follow-ups. Grip angle is comfortable.
SIG Sauer P365 365-9-BXR3 9mm Luger, \$599	Dec. 2021	A	Our Pick. Small enough to fit in a pocket. Carries 10+1 rounds of 9mm. Felt recoil is less than a 38.
Ruger MAX-9 No. 3500 9mm Luger, \$544	Sep. 2021	A	Our Pick. This is a sophisticated pistol. No fault with the magazines, capacity, or general accuracy.
Smith & Wesson M&P9 Shield Plus 13246 9mm Luger, \$553	Sep. 2021	A	A step up from the previously tested 9mm Shield. The new pistol has an improved trigger and more capacity.
Taurus GX4 1-GX4M931 9mm Luger, \$398	Sep. 2021	A-	Best Buy. The Taurus is the most compact, and the Taurus is the only pistol with a changeable backstrap.
Smith & Wesson M&P9 Shield EZ 12437 9mm Luger, \$479	Feb. 2021	A-	The Shield EZ9 was easy to manipulate and soft to shoot, but the sights needed to be calibrated better.
KelTec PF9 Blued-Black 9mm Luger, \$358	Feb. 2021	B+	An inexpensive pistol that functioned flawlessly. It reminded us of a good 38 Special snubie.
Taurus G3C 1-G3C931 9mm Luger, \$306	Feb. 2021	B+	Best Buy. The Taurus G3C pistol is an inexpensive offering that functioned flawlessly and shot well.
Springfield Armory Hellcat HC-9319BOSP 9mm Luger, \$550	Mar. 2020	A	Our Pick. An 11+1 pistol, this small Springfield might be the most versatile pistol in the group.
Walther PPS M2 2805961 9mm Luger, \$649	Mar. 2020	A	Best Buy. A smaller pistol with grips that will not abrade tender hands.
Ruger Security-9 Compact Model 3818 9mm Luger, \$309	Feb. 2020	B	The pistol is adequate for the task of self defense and will not break the bank.
SIG P365 Nitron Micro-Compact 9mm Luger, \$465	Feb. 2020	B	The SIG costs more than the Ruger Security-9 without overwhelming advantages.
Springfield Hellcat Micro-Compact 9mm Luger, \$500	Jan. 2020	F/A	Hellcat #1 failed when the trigger wouldn't reset (F). Hellcat #2 worked perfectly (A). Best accuracy.

6 ARC Bolt Guns: Savage Arms and Christensen Arms Compete

We test two rifles chambered in the relatively new 6 ARC cartridge, a round we think deserves more attention. The mag-fed guns are Christensen's Ridgeline Scout and Savage's Model 110 Tactical.

We are seeing a trend of new rifles being introduced for the suppressor-savvy shooter. Some of the rifles are lighter, some aren't. Most, however, do have threaded muzzles. Many have shorter barrels, keeping your rifle at a reasonable length, even with the suppressor attached. We selected two long guns of this type for review. The first is a Savage Arms Model 110 Tactical 57770, \$663. A solid 8-pound rifle, the Model 110 Tactical features a medium-profile 18-inch barrel, an embedded aluminum chassis, and is adjustable via inserts for comb height and length of pull. Our second choice is the new Christensen Arms Ridgeline Scout 1739966, \$2100. Weighing in at a feathery 5.9 pounds, the Christensen features a carbon-fiber-composite stock mated to a 16-inch carbon-fiber-wrapped stainless-steel barrel. Both were chambered in the relatively new 6 ARC (Advanced Rifle Cartridge) rifle round.

The 6 ARC Round

We readily acknowledge that, all other things being equal and up to a reasonable maximum, the longer the barrel on the rifle, the more complete the powder burn will be, resulting in higher velocities. Much of the testing and most of the results you read in manuals is derived from firing a cartridge from a universal receiver attached to a 24-inch barrel. Your barrel being shorter can quickly explain why your velocities don't equal that listed on the box of



Our test guns chambered for the 6 Advanced Rifle Cartridge, or the blessedly shorter name of 6 ARC, were the Christensen Arms Ridgeline Scout being fired by Contributing Editor Joe Woolley off the bench (top) and in the tan stock (middle), and the black-stocked Savage Arms Model 110 Tactical 57770 (bottom). The Scout tips the scales at only 5.9 pounds sans optics, due to both its carbon-fiber-composite stock mated to a 16-inch carbon-fiber-wrapped stainless-steel barrel. The Savage is an 8-pound rifle with a medium-profile 18-inch barrel and stock with inserts for adjustable comb heights.

your favorite bullet. We have also noted in our testing that medium to small cartridges, loaded with correspondingly less powder, may not need as long a barrel to achieve optimum velocity. They may even benefit from a shorter, stiffer tube. Both are great reasons we decided

to test these abbreviated barrels with the new 6 ARC from Hornady.

The 6 ARC was originally designed by Hornady in response to a request from the Department of Defense and certain special groups in the agency. The goal was to optimize the energy and accuracy

CHRISTENSEN ARMS MODEL 14 RIDGELINE SCOUT 6 ARC, \$2100

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

Had an aggregate accuracy result within a hair of the Savage with a product 2 pounds lighter than the Tactical. Price and some modifications that came standard on the Savage pushed it to second place.



ACTION TYPE	BOLT	DROP AT COMB	0.5 IN.
OVERALL LENGTH.....	37.5 IN. W/FLASH HIDER	DROP AT HEEL	0.5 IN.
BARREL	16 IN. LONG, 1:7.5 TWIST	BEDDING.....	DUAL PILLARS, SPOT BEDDING
OVERALL HEIGHT W/O SCOPE MOUNT	6.5 IN.	BUTTPLATE.....	RUBBER
WEIGHT UNLOADED	5.9 LBS.	LENGTH OF PULL	13.75 IN.
WEIGHT LOADED.....	7.0 LBS.	RECEIVER SCOPE-BASE PATTERN.....	REMINGTON 700
SIGHT RADIUS	NA	TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT	1.5 LBS.
ACTION	BLACK-NITRIDE-FINISH STEEL	SAFETY.....	TWO-POSITION ROCKER SWITCH
BARREL	CARBON-FIBER-WRAPPED 416R STAINLESS STEEL	WARRANTY.....	LIMITED LIFETIME, ACCURACY GUARANTEE
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	10	TELEPHONE	(435) 528-7999
MAGAZINE TYPE	MDT DETACHABLE BOX, AICS PATTERN	WEBSITE	CHRISTENSENARMS.COM
STOCK	CARBON-FIBER COMPOSITE	MADE IN.....	USA

SAVAGE MODEL 110 TACTICAL 57770 6 ARC, \$663

GUN TESTS GRADE: A (OUR PICK)

Slightly more accurate in our tests than the Christensen Scout, we liked the versatility of the stock. Known for the quality of the Accu-Triggers, this rifle came to us with the best trigger we've ever shot on a Savage.



ACTION TYPE	BOLT	DROP AT COMB	ADJUSTABLE
OVERALL LENGTH.....	38.25 IN.	DROP AT HEEL	0.75 IN.
BARREL	18 IN. LONG, 1:7.5 TWIST	BEDDING	ALUMINUM CHASSIS
OVERALL HEIGHT W/O SCOPE MOUNT	6.75 IN.	BUTTPLATE.....	RUBBER
WEIGHT UNLOADED	8.1 LBS.	LENGTH OF PULL	ADJUSTABLE, 12.75 TO 13.75 IN.
WEIGHT LOADED.....	9.0 LBS.	RECEIVER SCOPE-BASE PATTERN.....	SAVAGE 110
SIGHT RADIUS	NA	TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT	1.3 LBS.
ACTION	MATTE BLACK STEEL	SAFETY.....	TANG AND TRIGGER
BARREL	MATTE BLACK STEEL	WARRANTY.....	1-YEAR LIMITED FOR ORIGINAL OWNER
MAGAZINE CAPACITY	10	TELEPHONE	(800) 370-0708
MAGAZINE TYPE	MDT DETACHABLE BOX, AICS PATTERN	WEBSITE	SAVAGEARMS.COM
STOCK	POLYMER	MADE IN.....	USA

that could be projected from a standard AR-15/M4 platform and magazines for that rifle with, again, standard dimensions. In

2020, Hornady introduced the 6 ARC to no small fanfare and an ad campaign that unfortunately coincided with the onset of

Covid-19. To say the least, details about the new cartridge did not stay front page very long.

The Hornady engineers and

RIFLE COMPARISON

ballisticians produced a new cartridge with substantially better muzzle energy than the 5.56 in current usage. For example, Black Hills Ammunition lists its outstanding 77-grain MK 262 Mod 1 5.56 ammo as generating just short of 1300 foot-pounds of muzzle energy. With our rifles and factory Hornady ammunition, the Hornady 108-grain ELD-Match 6 ARC ammo topped 1600 foot-pounds, a 23% increase over the 5.56 round. According to our Applied Ballistics Mobile app, the Black Hills MK 262 5.56mm ammo stays supersonic (where bullet flight is still stable and predictable) to about 1050 yards and maintains 1000 foot-pounds of energy (the minimum suggested for deer) to about 150 yards. The 108-grain ELD-M recorded just under 2600 fps out of the Savage 110, resulting in over 1600 foot-pounds energy, with bullets that stayed supersonic to about 1250 yards (at sea level) and 1000 foot-pounds energy to about 400 yards. Both numbers predict the rifles chambered in 6 ARC would be effective at longer distances.

Hornady designed its loads for AR-15 gas-operated rifles, which limit desired pressure to about 53,000 psi. They also noted that the same loads can be utilized in a bolt gun, max pressure for which was rated at 62,000 psi. In most of a thousand rounds of load development, staying strictly with published loads, we were able to get another 100+ fps from 16- and 18-inch bolt guns, thereby also increasing energy and effective range. That brings performance up to near-243 Winchester levels with less recoil and less muzzle blast. In other words, we think the new 6 ARC cartridge and short, handy barrels make a great combination.

The round is certainly new, but the line up of gun makers chambering for it is significant. Hornady lists these other companies as chambering rifles for the 6 ARC: Adams Arms, APF Armory, Barrett, Brenton,



We tested using Hornady 103-grain ELD-X Bullets (left), Hornady 108-grain ELD-M bullets (center), and Hornady 105-grain BTHP Black loads (right).



The Savage's steel bolt, left, has twin lugs that float, helping them align precisely with the bore for greater accuracy. Both rifles use plunger-style ejectors (arrows).



We think the Picatinny rail mounted up front on the Scout (bottom) was an interesting idea, but we preferred the dual sling-swivel studs on the Savage Tactical (top).

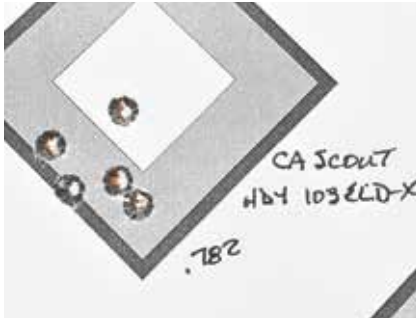


Both the Savage and Christensen 6 ARC magazines use the same body as their 6 Creedmoor brother top. The 6 ARC version used in both rifles' MDT magazines uses a different follower, bottom, that positions the cartridge farther forward. The 6 ARC cartridge gives up less than 300 fps to the larger 6 Creedmoor round.



Left: Christensen flutes the Scout's bolt, bolt knob, and bolt shroud, along with extra milling on the receiver, to save weight. Right: The Savage's oversized bolt knob was a bit too big for our tastes. The shooter needs to depress the tab on the right rear of the receiver (right arrow) simultaneously with pulling the trigger to remove the bolt. Remember, the Savage's tang safety (left arrow) must be forward (Fire position) before the bolt can be reinserted.

RIFLE COMPARISON



Both rifles easily shot sub-inch groups with preferred ammo. Left is a Christensen Scout group with 103-grain ELD-X rounds. Right shows the Savage and the Hornady 105-grain BTHP loads it liked.

6 ARC RANGE DATA

Hornady Precision Hunter 103-grain ELD-X	Savage Model 110	Christensen Arms Ridgeline Scout
Average Velocity	2540 fps	2540 fps
Muzzle Energy	1476 ft.-lbs.	1476 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.068 in.	0.790 in.
Best Group	0.925 in.	0.782 in.
Hornady Black 105-grain BTHP	Savage Model 110	Christensen Arms Ridgeline Scout
Average Velocity	2549 fps	2551 fps
Muzzle Energy	1515 ft.-lbs.	1518 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	0.821 in.	1.340 in.
Best Group	0.714 in.	1.086 in.
Hornady Match 108-grain ELD-M	Savage Model 110	Christensen Arms Ridgeline Scout
Average Velocity	2594 fps	2600 fps
Muzzle Energy	1614 ft.-lbs.	1622 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	0.976 in.	0.890 in.
Best Group	0.837 in.	0.673 in.

We shot at American Shooting Centers (AmericanShootingCenter.com) in Houston. We fired multiple five-shot groups at 100 yards. All rifles were well-sandbagged in a Caldwell TackDriver Pro (Brownells 100-027-023, \$49), further supported by a large heavy rear bag from Tab Gear (TabGear.com, \$34). Velocities were measured with a LabRadar (MyLabRadar.com, \$559).

Brownells, CMMG, Geissele, Howa, Lantac, Mile High Shooting Accessories, Mossberg, NEMO, Noveske, Odin Works, Radical Firearms, SanTan Tactical, Seekins Precision, Stag Arms, Uintah, and others. We expect the list will continue to grow.

How We Tested

All testing was done at American

Shooting Centers in Houston. We fired multiple five-shot groups at 100 yards using a Caldwell TackDriver Pro rest and a large rear bag from Tab Gear. We obtained three Hornady rounds for the test, 103-grain ELD-X expanding Precision Hunter ammo from Battle Hawk Armory, Hornady Black 105-grain boat-tail hollow points from Able Ammo, and

Hornady 108-grain ELD-M Match rounds from MidwayUSA.com. We used well-proven Vortex PST II Viper 3-15x44 scopes (\$1000, Amazon.com) on both rifles for accuracy testing. The Vortex Viper has the same EBR-7C reticle we use on the Gen 3 Vortex Razor scope mounted on our match rifle, and we love having the consistent view. The image is clear, crisp, and precise. The 600-yard targets fired at were easy to see and hit. As is our normal practice with Pic rails, we used Warne Maxima rings.

Considering the utility of the lightweight Christensen Scout, we also fired it with a 1-10x28 Crimson Trace Hardline Pro as well as a Trijicon MRO, \$460, mated to a Trijicon 3X magnifier, \$379, both from OpticsPlanet.com. Here's how the 6 ARC performed in our test rifles.

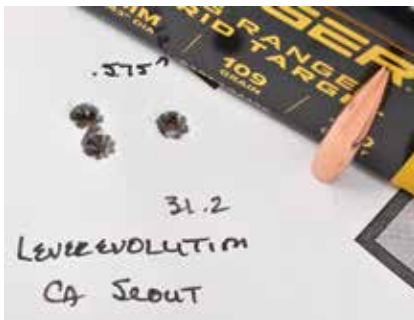
Christensen Arms Model 14 Ridgeline Scout 6 ARC, \$2100

Christensen Arms is located on the east side of the Wasatch Range in Utah, a bit south of Provo and Salt Lake City. Starting out in the aerospace industry, the company soon discovered that precise engineering and lightweight products also worked well on firearms. Though not as light as the company's titanium models, the new Scout Rifle chambered in 6 ARC is a prime example of Christensen's expertise.

Weight savings start with a 16-inch carbon-fiber-wrapped stainless-steel barrel. The tube is button rifled, hand lapped, and free floated. It also sports a match chamber. The muzzle is threaded $\frac{5}{8}$ x24 for a suppressor or other accessory, and a three-prong flash hider is provided.

The minimalist receiver continues the weight-saving process. Dimensions are kept small where possible. There is even a flat milled on the off side of the receiver to save another ounce or so. The bolt is a bit oversized and then attached to a skeletonized bolt handle. The

RIFLE COMPARISON



Above: We tested using Hornady 103-grain ELD-X Bullets (left), Hornady 108-grain ELD-M bullets (center), and Hornady 105-grain BTHP Black loads (right). Right: In our testing, we found both bolt guns shot reloads using Berger 109-grain Long Range Target bullets well, using a near-maximum listed load of Hodgdon LeveRevolution powder. This is a Scout group.



Left: The Christensen Scout sported a three-prong flash suppressor on its muzzle. The Savage Tactical, right, was fitted with a thread protector, but no muzzle accessory. Both can easily attach a quick-detach mount for a Dead Air suppressor shown on the Savage.



We expect Trigger Tech triggers like on the Christensen, left, to be outstanding. Like all good Trigger Tech triggers, the Field model on the Scout can be easily adjusted via rotation of a single screw. No need to disassemble the rifle. The factory Accu-Trigger on the Savage, right, was just as good, in our opinion.

bolt and even the bolt shroud are fluted to shave off a little more weight. Everything is finished with what has proven to be a very durable black-nitride process. The Christensen Scout uses the same MDT 10-round magazine the Savage does, and we give props to both for their choice. Magazine release happens via a long lever

immediately in front of the trigger guard. We found an effective magazine-release technique to be wrapping the fingers of the support hand around the front of the mag while we pushed forward on the release with the thumb.

Then there is the Trigger Tech field trigger. With the flat face we prefer and easily adjusted by the

shooter with no disassembly, it closely matched the performance of the factory Savage trigger. Required compression was 1.5 pounds, with a standard deviation across 10 pulls of 2.1 ounces. This was a very consistent piece protected by a trigger guard with lots of room for gloved hands. A 0-minute-of-angle (moa) Picatinny rail comes mounted, though we think the cartridge and rifle are worthy of a 20-moa rail for longer shots. But because the rifle is set up for Remington 700-pattern accessories, finding and changing such parts is simple if you want to do that.

The stock is a carbon-fiber-composite made by Christensen Arms. Our sample was tan with black webbing. Action screws are secured through stainless-steel bedding pillars, and the recoil lug is spot bedded. The profile of the stock is thin, with the bottom of the fore end being rounded. This made it easy to carry in the hand, but not quite as firm on a bag on the bench as with the Savage. A forward mounting rail is provided. This Pic rail makes it easy to mount a bipod, but it doesn't provide a forward sling-swivel stud. Because we would want to carry this rifle slung for hunting, we decided to add a GG&G aftermarket piece that attached a sling swivel stud to the rail, meaning we could no longer also mount a bipod. One of the few disagreements we had with Christensen on the design of the rifle, we would have preferred to see the same two forward sling swivel studs the Savage had. The buttstock does provide the necessary rear sling-swivel stud just in front of a thin, but soft, recoil pad.

We tested the Christensen Scout with the same Vortex Viper we used for the Savage. We also thought that, given the trim look of the Scout, a smaller optic was called for. First, we tested a close-range setup from Trijicon. We mounted the MRO with a 2.5-moa dot and then added a Trijicon 3x



A 0-minute-of-angle Picatinny rail comes on the Scout, top, though we think the cartridge and rifle are worthy of a 20-moa rail for longer shots, like on the Savage, below.



magnifier. This setup allows the shooter to use just the red dot, or quickly pivot the magnifier in place and bring things closer. Using this set up, 100-yard groups were just more than an inch. This would be an outstanding set up for running game or a truck gun.

As well as the Trijicon worked, we thought a LPVO (low powered variable optic) might be just the ticket, so we tested a Crimson Trace 1-10x28 Hardline Pro model on the rifle. We reviewed this scope in detail in the November 2022 issue of GUN TESTS, finding that the clear image and a reticle designed for precise hold overs worked well in mid-range application. Once again, we were not disappointed. We found 600-yard hits on 20-by-30-inch plates were easy, but the 8-inch plates we have on that 600-yard range were a bit much for that combination of optics.

Feeding and function were perfect. Accuracy was virtually identical to the Savage, losing only by an average of 0.051 inch per group. Five hundredths of an inch is about as tight as we can replicate the measurements on the caliper, meaning the two rifles were essentially tied. Where the Savage preferred the Hornady 105-grain BTHP Black ammo, the Christensen did not, averaging



Top: We also tested the lightweight Christensen Scout with smaller scopes. This one is the Crimson Trace 1-10x28 Hardline Pro. Note the Blackhawk cheek piece we strapped onto the Scout to help our cheek weld. Bottom: The Savage didn't need this accessorization because the Tactical came with inserts to allow the shooter to set the stock up just about any way so desired, including length of pull and comb height.

five-shot groups that measured 1.34 inch. The Hornady 103 ELD-X and 108 ELD-M rounds, on the other hand, averaged 0.789 and 0.888-inch groups, respectively. All said, we were impressed by what we saw in the 6 ARC cartridge.

Our Team Said: We did not discover any magic loads, but we did find two solidly performing rifles and a cartridge that outpunches the 5.56 rounds available now. The Scout had an aggregate accuracy result that came within 0.05 inch of the Savage. We see one of the primary advantages of an intermediate cartridge being chambered in a rifle like the Scout is enjoying the rifle's light weight — 2 pounds lighter than the Savage — without punishing recoil. Also, if we had to carry the rifles far in the field, we would pick the Scout, even with its much higher price.

**Savage Model 110 Tactical
57770 6 ARC, \$663**

We secured this rifle shortly after its introduction in late 2021.



Top: The Scout provides a barricade stop with a Picatinny rail up front. It was fine for adding a bipod, middle, but that was the only accessory that could be fitted. Bottom: We thought the rail also needed a sling-swivel stud, but we didn't care for the bulk added by the GG&G mount to get that stud.

Our sample sports an 18-inch medium-profile barrel made of carbon steel. It is fluted to save weight and provide more surface area for cooling. Twist rate is 1 turn in 7.5 inches, and the muzzle is threaded 5/8x24. As expected, it is attached via the customary Savage lock nut which, in turn, sandwiches a recoil lug between the receiver and the barrel.

The receiver is the standard Model 110 short-action length. Designed for a 308 Winchester-length cartridge (about 2.80 inches long), it leaves more than a little extra room inside with the 6 ARC round, which tops out at a maximum length of 2.26 inches. Savage and Christensen both solved the potential feeding problems by utilizing a magazine from Modular Driven

VALUE GUIDE: SHORT-ACTION BOLT RIFLES

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Ruger Precision Custom Shop 18084 6.5 CM, \$2419	Aug. 2022	A	Our Pick. The cost reflects the price required to get the bells and whistles to shoot comfortably.
Savage Axis II Precision 57552 6.5 CM, \$999	Aug. 2022	B+	Best Buy. Excellent accuracy, a clean-breaking trigger, and a fairly comfortable stock. Needs a brake.
Mossberg MVP Precision Rifle 27962 6.5 CM, \$1509	Aug. 2022	B+	The Luth-AR stock is excellent, as is the trigger. Needs a muzzle brake.
CVA Cascade SB CR3914R 300 Blackout, \$621	March 2022	B+	Our Pick. The most accurate in the test, the CVA Cascade handles well and shoots well.
Savage Axis II 18819 300 Blackout, \$385	March 2022	B	Best Buy. While not as accurate as its Model 10 and 110 brothers, this Axis II performed well.
Ruger American Ranch Rifle 26968 300 Blackout, \$529	March 2022	C+	Short and handy, but the action was rough initially. Mediocre accuracy.
Tikka T3X Varmint JRTXH312 223 Rem., \$999	Nov. 2021	A	Our Pick. The most accurate rifle and perhaps the most versatile, we'd buy the Tikka T3X Varmint.
CZ Model 527 03019 223 Rem., \$785	Nov. 2021	B+	The trim receiver allowed the longest barrel, while maintaining a compact OAL. Outstanding trigger.
Ruger Hawkeye Predator 17122 223 Rem., \$1359	Nov. 2021	B+	A brushed stainless finish, a gorgeous three-color laminate stock, and a great trigger.
CVA Cascade CR3907C 350 Legend, \$658	July 2021	A	Our Pick. Outstanding trigger and tons of features. Tied with the Savage M110 Hog Hunter.
Masterpiece Arms MPA BA MPR PRO 6mm CM, \$2499	April 2021	A	Our Pick. A heavy, yet graceful beast. The MPA is one of the most popular rifles on the PRS tour.
Christensen Arms MPR 801-03035-01 6mm CM, \$1799	April 2021	A-	Lightest sample in this group, tested for a sport that prefers heavy rifles, and it still almost won.
Ruger Precision Rifle 18032 6mm Creedmoor, \$1599	April 2021	B+	Good accuracy and dependability. We would have liked a crisper trigger and a wide, flat fore end.
Savage M110 Elite Precision 57558 6mm CM, \$1999	April 2021	B+	Least accurate with the Federal ammo. Black Hills and Berger ammunition were much better.
Savage Arms 110 Hog Hunter 223 Rem., \$599	Feb. 2021	A-	Oversized bolt, adjustable iron sights, adjustable LOP, a box magazine, and a threaded barrel.
Christensen Arms Ridgeline 801-06015-00 6.5 PRC, \$1793	Jan. 2021	A	Our Pick. Accurate with factory ammo, better with reloads. Carryover winner from Nov. 2020.
Seekins Precision Havak Pro Hunter 2 0011710059F 6.5 PRC, \$1895	Jan. 2021	A	Outstanding accuracy. We loved the stock and the trigger on this great rifle.
Weatherby Mark V Backcountry 6.5 RPM, \$2249	Jan. 2021	B+	Beautifully put together, but downrange accuracy wasn't up to what we saw with other rifles.
Bergara Premier M'tn 2.0 BPR28-65PRC 6.5 PRC, \$1999	Nov. 2020	A	A 100% carbon-fiber stock and trim 24-inch barrel make this a premier mountain rifle.
Browning X-Bolt Max LR 035438294 6.5 PRC, \$1180	Nov. 2020	A	A little longer and a little heavier than our other rifles. Beanfield rifle rather than a mountain rifle.

VALUE GUIDE: SHORT-ACTION BOLT RIFLES

GUN NAME	ISSUE	GRADE	COMMENTS
Savage M110 Hog Hunter 57534 350 Legend, \$487	July 2020	A	Our Pick. Compact size with a short, stiff, accurate barrel and a great trigger. Straight-wall chambering.
Ruger American Ranch Rifle 26985 350 Legend, \$442	July 2020	F/B+	First sample failed when the bolt disassembled itself. The replacement rifle wasn't all that accurate.
Winchester XPR Hunter 535741296 350 Legend, \$635	July 2020	A-	A full-length rifle that looked great and handled well; dropped half a grade for its-average accuracy.
Winchester M70 F'wt SS 535234220 308 Win., \$951	April 2020	A	Our Pick. Smooth handling, very good accuracy and classical styling.
Tikka T3x Lite Stainless JRTXB316 308 Win., \$748	April 2020	A-	Best Buy. Functional stock, the smoothest bolt in the group, and the best out-of-the-box trigger.
Remington Model 7 CDL 26423 308 Win., \$798	April 2020	A	A nice piece of wood, a good trigger and a compact 20-inch barrel on a rifle that could really shoot.
Ruger Hawkeye Compact 37139 308 Win., \$691	April 2020	B+	This rifle has a short length of pull and a 16.5-inch barrel. Could be a great truck gun.
Browning X-Bolt Micro Midas 22-250 Rem., \$879	Dec. 2019	A	Our Pick. This is trim rifle from Browning is made for the small-statured or still-developing hunter.
Howa Model 1500 Youth 22-250 Rem., \$529	Dec. 2019	A	Best Buy. With youth- and adult-length stocks available, this is a great rifle.
Bergara B-14 B14S104 22-250 Rem., \$879	Dec. 2019	A	Designed with the full-sized hunter in mind, this would be a great companion on a coyote hunt.
Browning X-Bolt 035395291 6mm CM, \$2400	Aug. 2019	A	A superior varmintier that is good enough to shoot in competition, and certainly in the field.
Howa 1500 H-S Precision HHS62203 6mm CM, \$1220	Aug. 2019	A	This is a great all-around rifle at a reasonable price. It will outshoot you for many years.
Barrett Fieldcraft Rifle Threaded 6mm CM, \$1929	Aug. 2019	A-	This is a super-lightweight precision build you'll want to take everywhere.
Savage 110 Scout 57139 450 Bushmaster, \$829	July 2019	A-	Best Buy. The Savage Axis proved accurate, reliable, and fast handling. Adjustable LOP.
Ruger Scout Rifle 6830 7.62 NATO, \$1139	July 2019	B+	The Ruger Scout comes closest to the original Scout rifle concept, but it falls short due to weight.
Mossberg MVP Scout Combo 7.62 NATO, \$780	July 2019	B	Not a true interpretation of the Scout Rifle concept, but accurate and well-handling short rifle.
Savage 110 Apex Storm XP 57344 6.5 CM, \$605	June 2019	A-	Best Buy. The Savage Axis proved accurate, reliable, and fast handling. Adjustable LOP.
Mauser M18 M18065P 6.5 PRC, \$628	June 2019	A-	Accurate and reliable. Expensive compared to the others.
Savage Axis II XP Rifle 57289 6.5 CM, \$400	June 2019	B+	A credible and accurate rifle for hunting. Superior stock treatment.
Ruger 77/44 Model 7401 44 Remington Mag., \$754	May 2019	A-	The 77/44 offers accuracy and power in a lightweight rifle. We disliked the magazine.

RIFLE COMPARISON

Technologies, or MDT. Produced in Canada, the AICS-pattern mags use a special follower with a tab at the rear that pushes the cartridge almost 0.5 inch forward, making sure that the stubby round releases from the feed lips and hits the feed ramp all at the right time. We have used other MDT magazines in our MPA rifles for several years and were very pleased to see their inclusion with these rifles. The specs on the Savage website say this is an eight-round rifle, but we were able to fit and feed 10 rounds from those magazines with no problems.

Other features on the top end include a 20-moa Picatinny rail that allows your scope a bit more elevation for the longer shots possible with the 6 ARC. The steel bolt has twin lugs that float a bit, helping them align precisely with the bore for greater accuracy. The rifle uses a plunger-style ejector along with a sliding extractor. The bolt is removed by depressing the trigger (please make sure the rifle is unloaded first!) simultaneously with a lever on the right side of the receiver. For what it's worth, it is very easy to engage the tang safety on this rifle while cleaning, and the bolt will not go back in with the safety on. Took us a few anxious seconds to figure that one out. The bottom metal isn't metal but is instead a polymer piece that formed a nice magwell protruding slightly below the bottom of the stock. A large lever "tactical mag release" is metal and provides an easy way

Right: Christensen uses steel pillars (arrow) and spot bedding to ensure the stock and action are properly mated. Below: The embedded chassis in the Savage extends from the rear of the action almost to the tip of the fore end, giving a solid feel.



The Savage receiver, top, is the standard Model 110 short-action length. Both it and the Scout, bottom, have plenty of room to feed the 6 ARC round.

to release the magazine. The bolt knob is listed as oversized, and it is that. Maybe a bit too much for our tastes because it kept bumping our trigger finger. The trigger guard has plenty of room and encloses what we found to be a wonderful sample of the Savage Accu-Trigger. Average compression required on our trigger was 1.3 pounds, with a standard deviation of only 1.7 ounces over 10 pulls on our Lyman digital gauge. If that trigger is a bit light for you, they are easy to adjust heavier.

We liked the stock. Polymer outside it may be, but we liked what they did with the inside and with the possible adjustments. First, the stock utilizes a polymer shell embedded with a fairly long aluminum chassis. The action and recoil lug snugged up tightly with full support for the action screws. An extension of the chassis runs almost the full length of the fore end, lending substantial rigidity and making sure the fore end stayed free floating even when substantial pressure was applied. Reasonable checkering was



molded in at the fore end and the pistol grip. Everything stayed securely in our hands. The fore end is also almost flat and is fairly wide, helping us shoot well off the bags. The two sling-swivel studs on the front and the single stud at the rear let us do anything we needed with slings and bipods.

The rear of the stock is adjustable for both length of pull and comb height. The soft-rubber recoil pad attaches with two screws. With those removed, the shooter can add, remove, or change inserts to alter length and comb height. Four cheekpieces are included, as are several spacers with various widths for the length of pull. We're pretty sure you can find a way to make it fit you.

Feeding and function were perfect. The bolt travel was a bit sticky when it first arrived, but, like many triggers, as we used it, things smoothed out. We like the way it runs now. Hornady says their 6 ARC round will do 2700 fps. Of course, that is testing from a 24-inch barrel. Depending on the load, Hornady factory ammo did 2540 fps to almost 2600 fps out of the Savage. With a five-shot group average of just over 0.8 inch, it showed a preference for the 105-grain Hornady Black Ammo. We expected to see at least a bit of difference in muzzle velocities given the 2-inch delta in barrel lengths. That was not the case. Both shot almost exactly the same speeds. Perhaps this cartridge won't be quite as demanding in what barrel lengths it performs in.

Our Team Said: Slightly more accurate than the Christensen Scout, we also liked the versatility of the Savage stock and the excellent trigger. For most uses, this is Our Pick chambered in the 6 ARC round. As more rifles become available in this chambering, we'll continue to test them, but it will be a feat to surpass this Savage.

*Written and photographed by
Joe Woolley, using
evaluations from GUN TESTS
Team members. GT*



Mouse Guns: We Test Walther, Ruger, Taurus, & Beretta 22s

Tested: Easy-to-conceal small-caliber pistols, namely the Walther TPH, Ruger LCP II, Taurus PT-22, and Beretta 21A Bobcat. Can they be more than plinkers? We shoot 'em to find out the good and bad.

An email from GUN TESTS reader Jim T. asked for a 22 LR subcompact concealed-carry pistol match up, specifically mentioning the old-school Walther TPH and Ruger LCP II. We winced at the thought because the 22 LR is not an adequate defense round, in our estimation. There are better caliber choices, but 22 LR subcompact pistols are popular and have been since the 1920s. We added two additional subcompacts — a Taurus PT-22 and Beretta 21A Bobcat — to round out the list. Though these mouse guns lack power, they do offer deep concealment and surprise. These are close-quarter guns to be used an arm's length away, perhaps incapacitating or intimidating your attacker so you can run away to safety or to get a bigger gun.

How We Tested

All of these pistols have short barrels less than 3 inches in length and have tiny, rudimentary sights. Because they are small, they tend to get lost in your hand. There is not a lot to hang onto. Slides are small with minimal serrations, especially in the case of the Taurus and Beretta, and that makes them difficult to operate. The Ruger LCP II was specially designed for ease of slide retraction. Safety levers are also minuscule, as are the magazines, which can be a pain to load.

We accuracy tested at 10 yards, using our range bag as a rest, and found the pea-shooters had good accuracy. We used Thompson Targets Sight-Seer Red targets



Clockwise from top left are our 22 LR tests guns, the Taurus PT-22, the Beretta 21A Bobcat, Walther's TPH, and a Ruger LCP II. The Ruger LCP II would be our choice for a mouse gun, followed by the Taurus PT-22. The Beretta 21A Bobcat is a well known and popular pocket pistol, as is the Walther TPH, but they are dated old-school pea-shooters, in our estimation.

for accuracy testing. For speed shooting, we performed the Failure Drill — two shots to center of mass, one shot to the head — at 7 yards and found all of these guns performed well and could easily be used to defend yourself. We tested speed using a Thompson Target B27STOP Upper Torso Silhouette Target, which has immobilization zones outlined on the sheet.

Now here's the "but": Getting a semi-automatic 22 LR pistol to run consistently is a challenge. There is an embarrassment of 22

LR bullet weights and styles, and some work better than others, depending on the pistol. We would definitely run a lot of 22 LR ammo through these mousey guns to find consistency before we pocketed any of them for defense. With the new guns — Beretta 21A Bobcat, Taurus PT-22, and Ruger LCP II — we experienced FTF (failures to feed), jams and some FTE (failures to eject) jams, especially in early accuracy testing. The bullet shape makes a big difference on whether the ammo will feed or not. The

PISTOL COMPARISON

BERETTA 21A INOX BOBCAT 22 LR, \$419

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

The 21A Bobcat is a classic mouse gun that reminds us of an Italian sports car: When it ran, it ran well. When it ran was the issue. It carried well, but we had low confidence in it due to multiple jams. We'd work with this by firing different types of ammo through



ACTION.....SEMI-AUTOMATIC, BLOWBACK, HAMMER FIRED
TRIGGER.....DOUBLE ACTION/SINGLE ACTION
OVERALL LENGTH.....4.9 IN.
OVERALL HEIGHT.....3.7 IN.
MAXIMUM WIDTH.....1.1 IN.
WEIGHT UNLOADED.....11.8 OZ.
WEIGHT LOADED.....12.7 OZ.

BARREL LENGTH.....2.4 IN.
CAPACITY (SINGLE STACK).....7+1
SLIDE.....BLACK STEEL
SLIDE RETRACTION EFFORT.....15.0 LBS.
FRAME.....MATTE SILVER, ALLOY
FRAME FRONT STRAP HEIGHT.....1.3 IN.
FRAME BACK STRAP HEIGHT.....2.4 IN.
GRIP.....CHECKERED POLYMER
GRIP THICKNESS (MAX).....1.1 IN.
GRIP CIRCUMFERENCE (MAX).....5.0 IN.
SIGHTS.....INTEGRAL
TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT DOUBLE ACTION.....10.0 LBS.
TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT SINGLE ACTION.....6.8 LBS.
TRIGGER SPAN DOUBLE ACTION.....2.9 IN.
TRIGGER SPAN SINGLE ACTION.....2.5 IN.
MAGAZINES.....1; STEEL
MANUAL SAFETY.....THUMB, HALF-COCK, INERTIA FIRING PIN
WARRANTY.....1 YEAR
WEBSITE.....BERETTA.COM
MADE IN.....USA

RUGER LCP II 22 LR, \$380

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The LCP II offers a 10-round capacity in a super-lightweight package that is fairly easy to shoot. We had initial jams, but with break-in, the little gun ran well. We like that Ruger ships the pistol with a pocket holster.



ACTION.....SEMI-AUTOMATIC, BLOWBACK, HAMMER FIRED
TRIGGER.....SINGLE ACTION ONLY
OVERALL LENGTH.....5.2 IN.
OVERALL HEIGHT.....3.9 IN.
MAXIMUM WIDTH.....0.8 IN.
WEIGHT UNLOADED.....11.2 OZ.
WEIGHT LOADED.....12.4 OZ.

BARREL LENGTH.....2.3 IN.
CAPACITY (SINGLE STACK).....10+1
SLIDE.....BLACK, STEEL
SLIDE RETRACTION EFFORT.....9.0 LBS.
FRAME.....BLACK, POLYMER
FRAME FRONT STRAP HEIGHT.....1.7 IN.
FRAME BACK STRAP HEIGHT.....2.1 IN.
GRIP.....TEXTURED POLYMER
GRIP THICKNESS (MAX).....1.9 IN.
GRIP CIRCUMFERENCE (MAX).....4.7 IN.
SIGHTS.....INTEGRAL
TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT.....7.7 LBS.
TRIGGER SPAN.....2.5 IN.
MAGAZINES.....1; STEEL
MANUAL SAFETY.....BLADE TRIGGER, THUMB, MAGAZINE
WARRANTY.....NONE STATED
WEBSITE.....RUGER.COM
MADE IN.....USA

TAURUS PT-22 22 LR, \$250

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

The PT-22 had a nice, smooth DAO trigger pull, and the grip was more hand filling. The slide-retraction effort took 15 pounds, and there is not a lot of slide texture to grip.



ACTIONSEMI-AUTOMATIC, BLOWBACK, HAMMER FIRED
TRIGGER DOUBLE ACTION ONLY
OVERALL LENGTH.....5.2 IN.
OVERALL HEIGHT4.3 IN.
MAXIMUM WIDTH.....1.1 IN.

WEIGHT UNLOADED11.1 OZ.
WEIGHT LOADED.....12.0 OZ.
BARREL LENGTH2.3 IN.
CAPACITY.....8+1 (SINGLE STACK)
SLIDE..... BLACK, STEEL
SLIDE RETRACTION EFFORT15.0 LBS.
FRAME.....BLACK, POLYMER
FRAME FRONT STRAP HEIGHT2.2 IN.
FRAME BACK STRAP HEIGHT.....2.7 IN.
GRIP.....TEXTURED POLYMER
GRIP THICKNESS (MAX).....1.1 IN.
GRIP CIRCUMFERENCE (MAX)5.0 IN.
SIGHTS.....INTEGRAL
TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT8.5 LBS.
TRIGGER SPAN2.8 IN.
MAGAZINES.....1; STEEL
MANUAL SAFETY.....MAGAZINE, THUMB
WARRANTY.....LIMITED LIFETIME
WEBSITETAURUSUSA.COM
MADE IN.....USA

WALTHER TPH 22 LR, \$500-\$1000

GUN TESTS GRADE: B-

If you are a Walther fan, you will like this pistol. We feel the price does not justify purchasing the pistol, though the performance was good, as were the sights and trigger in single-action mode.



ACTIONSEMI-AUTOMATIC, BLOWBACK, HAMMER FIRED
TRIGGER DOUBLE ACTION/SINGLE ACTION
OVERALL LENGTH.....5.3 IN.
OVERALL HEIGHT3.7 IN.
MAXIMUM WIDTH.....0.9 IN.
WEIGHT UNLOADED11.5 OZ.
WEIGHT LOADED.....12.2 OZ.
BARREL LENGTH2.8 IN.
CAPACITY (SINGLE STACK)7+1

SLIDE..... MATTE STAINLESS, STAINLESS STEEL
SLIDE RETRACTION EFFORT10.0 LBS.
FRAME..... MATTE STAINLESS, STAINLESS STEEL
FRAME FRONT STRAP HEIGHT1.7 IN.
FRAME BACK STRAP HEIGHT.....2.1 IN.
GRIP..... CHECKERED POLYMER
GRIP THICKNESS (MAX).....0.9 IN.
GRIP CIRCUMFERENCE (MAX)4.5 IN.
SIGHTS.....FIXED, DRIFT ADJ. REAR
TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT DOUBLE ACTION.....12.0 LBS.
TRIGGER PULL WEIGHT SINGLE ACTION.....2.9 LBS.
TRIGGER SPAN DOUBLE ACTION.....2.6 IN.
TRIGGER SPAN SINGLE ACTION.....2.3 IN.
MAGAZINES.....1; STEEL
MANUAL SAFETY..... DECOCKER, HALF-COCK, INERTIA FIRING PIN
WARRANTY.....NA
WEBSITEWALTHERARMS.COM
MADE IN.....USA (INTERARMS)

PISTOL COMPARISON

Winchester Silvertip ammo gave us the most mishaps, and that could be because it uses a larger 37-grain bullet compared to the 30-grain and 29-grain bullets used in the Aguila and Federal ammo, respectively. As we ran ammo through them, they performed more consistently, so keep in mind there is a break-in period for the mouse guns.

We also concealed-carried these pistols in our pocket, using an Elite Survival System Pocket holster PH-1L (\$18; EliteSurvival.com), which has a no-slip outside texture that “sticks” to the inside of your pants pocket and allows you to easily draw the pistol. The Ruger LCP II came with a similar style holster, which we thought was added value. All of these mouse guns were easy to carry concealed and simply felt like a wallet in our front pocket.

Test ammo for the mouse guns consisted of two defense loads that on paper make a mouse gun roar: Winchester Silvertips with a 37-grain plated segmenting hollow

point bullet and Federal Punch, a 29-grain flat-point solid bullet. We also tested Aguila’s amped-up Supermaximum rounds with a 30-grain copper-plated solid bullet. With 22 LR ammo, you want a bullet to penetrate as much as possible for terminal performance. Heavy clothing and body mass will slow down a 22 LR, which means less penetration. Here are the details.

Beretta 21A Inox Bobcat 22 LR, \$419

The 21A Inox Bobcat is an elegant subcompact with helpful features, such as serrated front and rear grip straps, a wide trigger for better leverage, and a serrated round hammer that’s easy to cock. However, the sights are super tiny, and the 10-pound double-action trigger stroke is long and stacks a bit at the end. The open-top slide design means there’s only a small strip of rear slide serrations. Retracting the slide took 15 pounds of effort with the hammer up. Cocking the hammer



Test ammo for the mouse guns consisted of two “defense” loads, Winchester Silvertips with a 37-grain hollow point and Federal Punch with a 29-grain flat-point solid bullet. We also tested Aguila’s Supermaximum rounds with a 30-grain copper-plated solid bullet.

prior to racking the slide took a little less effort.

A unique feature on the 21A Bobcat is the tip-up barrel that allows the user to load a round directly into the chamber. This is a great option when shooting rat shot out of the pistol to dispatch a snake or small critter because shotshell cartridges typically don’t

22 LR RANGE DATA

Winchester Silvertip 37-grain Segmented HP	Ruger LCP II	Taurus PT-22	Beretta 21A Bobcat	Walther TPH
Average Velocity	938 fps	873 fps	907 fps	948 fps
Muzzle Energy	72 ft.-lbs.	63 ft.-lbs.	68 ft.-lbs.	74 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.20 in.	1.08 in.	2.28 in.	2.15 in.
Average Group	1.61 in.	1.19 in.	2.56 in.	2.48 in.
Federal Punch 29-grain Flat SP P022L1	Ruger LCP II	Taurus PT-22	Beretta 21A Bobcat	Walther TPH
Average Velocity	1111 fps	1027 fps	1045 fps	1141 fps
Muzzle Energy	79 ft.-lbs.	68 ft.-lbs.	70 ft.-lbs.	75 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.80 in.	1.05 in.	2.17 in.	1.35 in.
Average Group	1.50 in.	1.19 in.	2.69 in.	1.60 in.
Aguila Supermaximum 30-grain Flat SP	Ruger LCP II	Taurus PT-22	Beretta 21A Bobcat	Walther TPH
Average Velocity	915 fps	870 fps	919 fps	1065 fps
Muzzle Energy	56 ft.-lbs.	50 ft.-lbs.	56 ft.-lbs.	76 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	1.47 in.	2.88 in.	1.79 in.	1.32 in.
Average Group	1.73 in.	3.16 in.	2.08 in.	1.42 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 10 yards with open sights. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle.

PISTOL COMPARISON



Top left: Initially, the Beretta had FTF and FTE issues, but the bugs worked themselves out as the pistol broke in. Top right: The Taurus also had a few FTF issues at first, but after more shots downrange, it ran strong. Right: The Walther also had a few initial FTE hiccups. Most jams were attributed to the Winchester ammo.



the magazine or use a finger from your support hand to dump it. The mag falls free when the button is pressed, but the free fall will most likely be impeded by your hand gripping the pistol. The magazine has a small loading button to pull down the follower and compress the magazine spring.

The Beretta in hand is flat. We could get two fingers on the front grip strap with our small finger curled under the butt. There was a small beavertail that helped us avoid slide bite or hammer bite.

Going hot, we initially experienced multiple FTF and FTE issues. We did notice the issues occurred more frequently with the Winchester ammo. As we fired the pistol more, the issues resolved themselves and the Beretta ran fine. The velocities were fast, especially with Federal Punch ammo, which had a muzzle velocity of 1045 fps. Accuracy with Federal Punch averaged 2.69 inches, which we thought was acceptable because the sights are integral to the barrel and slide and are difficult to see. Our best accuracy group measured 1.79 inches with Aguila Supermaximums. Recoil was minimal. We fired in single-action trigger mode for accuracy testing, and the SA trigger pull measured 6.8 pounds. So not only are sights tiny, the trigger was stiff and heavy, which made the pistol harder to shoot well. We liked the tip-up barrel feature for plinking.

To load a full magazine into the pistol, we needed to make sure the magazine was fully seated and used our support hand to squeeze the magazine home. The magazine fit flush to the butt, and in the event the magazine got stuck, you would need a fingernail or carry knife to extract it. A larger floorplate would solve that problem, but you have a bigger problems if you need to reload any of these guns in a deadly situation.

The Beretta fared better in speed shooting. The first shot was a long drawn out double-action



The mouse guns are all relatively small pistols designed with smaller grips for maximum concealment. Left to right are the Taurus, Ruger, Beretta, and Walther TPH.



Above, the Taurus (left), Ruger (second from left), and Beretta (right) all had texture on the backstraps for a better grip. The Walther (second from right) was smooth.

cycle in a semi-automatic. The trigger guard is actually a spring that presses against the bottom of the barrel to flip it open. When closed, it snaps into place.

There is no slide stop nor extractor on the tiny Beretta. It uses a simple blowback action that ejects the empty case from the expanding gases expelled from a fired cartridge. The Model 21 design has been around since 1984 and is currently made in Beretta's

Tennessee plant. Safeties include a manual thumb safety that blocks the trigger and locks the slide. It also has a half-cock safety and inertia-style firing pin. We carried the Bobcat at half cock with the manual safety up in the Safe position. It was difficult to flick on, but easier to flick off with a right-handed shooter's thumb, and we used the thumb of our support hand to manipulate it. The magazine release is at the rear of the grip, which means you need to change the position of the gun in your shooting hand to dump

PISTOL COMPARISON



Above left: Is that a pistol in your pocket, or are you happy how the mouse guns carry? These pistols can disappear into khakis or cargo shorts without much of a thought. Above right: The holstered mouse guns are easy to carry in a pair of loose-fitting pants. Bottom right: The best method to draw a mouse gun is to place your thumb over the hammer or rear of the slide to avoid any snags and a ruined draw at a bad time.



The Ruger came with a pocket holster (left), which worked well and added value, our shooters said. We used an Elite Survival System Pocket holster to conceal carry the other mouse guns, and it worked well.



In hand, the Beretta (left, top and bottom) felt thin and pointed high, which allows you to pick up the front sight better. The tiny beavertail did a good job of avoiding hammer and slide bite. Second from left, top and bottom, the Ruger sat more horizontally in the hand and felt very flat and small. Because the hammer is enclosed in the slide, there is no worry of hammer bite. Second from right, top and bottom, the Taurus offers a fuller grip so the pistol feels larger and more stable in the hand, plus there was no worry the slide would slice the web of our hands. Right, top and bottom, the Walther sat low and felt thin in hand and pointed high, which allowed us to pick up the front sight better, as with the Beretta. We didn't get bit by the gun, but a larger-handed shooter might.

trigger pull followed by two quick single-action shots. Shooting the Beretta fast was easy because the pistol in hand is a natural pointer and pointed high, which meant we could see the front sight more easily. The slide does not lock open on the last shot, so we started to shoot the Bobcat like a revolver, counting shots fired.

The serrated hammer snagged in a pocket draw until we learned to keep our thumb over the hammer as we pulled the pistol out.

Our Team Said: The Beretta 21A is a classic mouse gun that is well built with some useful features. The sights were too tiny to be of much use, and the trigger was heavy and not particularly smooth. Accuracy was not fabulous. Because we had multiple jams, we would run different ammos through it until it runs consistently and reliably.

Ruger LCP II 22 LR, \$380

We have tested the LCP II in the past and found it to be a well-designed subcompact. The LCP II was the easiest to operate with Ruger's Lite Rack slide, a feature that makes manipulating the slide easy. It only takes 9 pounds of effort to rack the slide, and the slide has front and rear slide serrations, plus there are cocking tabs at the end of the slide for racking ease. The sights are machined out of the slide, and they are large for a tiny pistol and offer a good sight picture. We felt these sights were easy to acquire. Also, like on a larger-size pistol, the LCP II has a slide stop, and on last round fired, the slide locks back, a feature we appreciate.

The manual safety is located near a right-hand-shooter's firing-hand thumb, but it is difficult to operate with the thumb of your

PISTOL COMPARISON



Left, top and bottom: The front-sight blade on the 21A was too thin and tiny, making it hard to focus on. Right, top and bottom: The LCP II had large sights that were serrated on the user-facing side to kill glare. These were pretty good sights on a pretty small gun.



Left, top and bottom: The Taurus PT-22's open sights were adequate, offering a good sight picture. Right, top and bottom: The Walther TPH's sights were large for such a small pistol and had a red dot to speed alignment and acquisition.

shooting hand. We found it easier to flick forward or back using the thumb of our support hand. When we carried the pistol, we relied on the trigger paddle safety. The manual thumb safety was an obstacle to get the gun online fast and firing.

The LCP II in 22 LR was introduced in 2019, with the LCP II series debuting in 2016 in 380 Auto. The rimfire variants were Ruger's answer to an easier-to-use, trainer version of the 380 Auto LCP II. All LCP II pistols use Ruger's Secure Action Fire Control System, which is in essence an SAO trigger with a built-in trigger safety paddle and a secondary sear hammer catch that ensures the pistol is safe to carry. It also has an inertia-style

firing pin and a magazine safety. It cannot be fired with the magazine removed from the gun.

The polymer frame has plenty of texture on the grip panels and grip straps for a sure hold. It feels thin and flat in hand like the Beretta, but the Ruger's magazine floor plate has a built-in finger rest that allows the user to strip out the magazine in the event it sticks. We could only get two fingers on the front grip strap, with the small finger tucked under the magazine.

The magazine ingeniously holds 10 rounds of ammo in such a small amount of space, and it loads like a centerfire magazine. There is no magazine load button to compress the magazine spring. Ruger ships the pistol with a loader, which eases

putting rounds in the magazine.

Going hot, we experienced a few FTF jams in the first-stage accuracy testing, and used our support-hand thumb to push the slide home to fire the balky shot. Our best group measured 0.8 inches with Federal Punch. We shot a best group with the Winchester Silvertip that measured 1.2 inches. Not bad for 10 yards and a trigger that broke at 7.7 pounds. In our opinion, the trigger and the sights really helped us shoot the LCP II well. In the Failure Drill, we were very confident with the tiny Ruger. Because the trigger is SAO, the trigger press remained the same for all shots and helped us with the fast first two to the torso and the more precise shot to the head.

Drawing the LCP II from a pocket was smooth, with no snags, because the rear of the slide was smooth and the hammer was enclosed in the slide.

Our Team Said: The LCP II offers ease of use with the Lite Rack feature and has a consistent trigger pull. It also holds 10 rounds of ammo in a small package. In our opinion, this is a good choice for a defensive mouse gun, but we would still shoot a few bricks of 22 ammo through it to properly break it in.

Taurus PT-22 22 LR, \$250

The TP-22 is the middle-class relative to the affluent Beretta family. While based on the Beretta 21 Bobcat design, the Taurus is different. The frame is polymer, and the grip is much fatter in hand. In fact, it fills the voids the Ruger and Beretta grip have. The Taurus also has an American-friendly magazine-release button located under a right-hand shooter's shooting-hand thumb. Isn't that where all magazine release buttons should be? The magazine does not fall free; you need to pull it out of the grip via the extended floor plate. There is a load-assist button built into the magazine. We used the button to compress the magazine spring as we dropped the rounds in, base first. The last round in required that we push the

PISTOL COMPARISON

bullet between the magazine lips, much like on a centerfire pistol magazine. Not the easiest-loading magazine, but we soon got the hang of it.

The Taurus uses a simple blowback design without an extractor or a slide stop. The sights are small but easier to use than the Beretta's sights because the Taurus front-sight blade is larger, it has a slot in it to reduce glare, and the rear notch is larger.

Like the Beretta, the PT-22 has an open-slide design and tip-up barrel feature that allows for loading the chamber directly. When you press the barrel back into shooting position, you need to flick the lever to lock the barrel in position. With the Beretta, the barrel automatically snaps and locks in place. There is more slide texture to grasp the slide but, because it is an open-slide design, you are still limited. It took 15 pounds of effort to manipulate the slide. The manual thumb safety locks the slide and trigger, and it has a magazine safety. It was easy to flick the thumb safety on and off with our right-hand thumb without repositioning our grip.

The front grip strap has subtle finger grooves but is otherwise void of texture. The wraparound grip panels have plenty of texture. With the PT-22, we could get all three fingers on the front grip strap so the pistol felt like a larger pistol, even though it was not.

The trigger is DAO and has a smooth press and breaks at 8.5 pounds. We thought it would be a liability in accuracy testing, yet we shot some tiny groups. With Federal Punch, our smallest group measured 1.05 inches. The Winchester Silvertip was a close second with a smallest group that measured 1.08 inches. We found the DAO trigger also allowed us to re-strike a round in the event it didn't fire. We had one Winchester dud out of all the ammo we fired. We had FTF jams with all ammo at first, then the bugs worked themselves out. We pushed the

If you think shooting mouse guns is difficult, try loading their magazines.

The Taurus (far left, arrow) and Beretta (far right, arrow)

both feature a loading button to compress the magazine spring, and we like this feature. We appreciated the magazine loading tools that came with the Ruger. We also appreciate Ruger stuffing 10 cartridges into a magazine nearly the same size as the other pistols. The Ruger (second from left) and Walther (second from right) loaded like centerfire pistol magazines.



Left: The lever on the left side of the Beretta's frame (arrow) is rotated to pop up the barrel. We like this feature, especially when using birdshot 22 LR cartridges. Right: The PT-22 also has a tip-up barrel. It also had an easier-to-manipulate thumb safety (arrow).



Left: The Beretta featured a thumb safety that was more difficult to operate (arrow) than the Taurus safety. Right: The Ruger had a thumb safety that slid forward and rearward, making it difficult to operate with your shooting hand. Bottom right:



The TPH uses a safety lever similar to the PPK and PPK/S models.



slide forward into battery using the thumb of our support hand to solve most of these feeding problems.

In speed shooting, the pistol was easy to control and manipulate the trigger. We had no failures in the speed shooting and liked the performance the inexpensive gun gave us. In hand, it balances better than the Beretta due to the

polymer frame. There was no issue with hammer or slide bite because the itty-bitty beavertail did its job, and the slide is high on the frame.

Drawing the PT-22 from a pocket, we did not encounter snags like we did with the Beretta. That is because the PT-22 hammer is bobbed and flush with the rear of the slide.

Our Team Said: The PT-22 has the classic Beretta look at half the cost. If you like a DAO trigger — and we liked this one — this would be a good choice. We liked the sights, too. The slide was difficult to retract. For the price, we would live with it and shoot a brick or two through before carrying it.

**Walther TPH 22 LR,
\$500-\$1000**

Our used Walther TPH (*Taschen Pistole, Hahn*, which translates to “pocket pistol, hammer”) was built out of stainless steel in the U.S. for Interarms. The design was introduced in 1968, but the 1968 Gun Control Act did not allow this pea-shooter to be imported into the country. In 1978, U.S. manufacturers, under license from Walther, began manufacturing the TPH. Production in the U.S. ceased in 2000. Too bad. This is another elegant European design produced at a time when all pistols had metal frames.

It is similar to the PPK/S with a simple blowback action, full metal grip frame, external extractor, decocking lever on the slide, and rounded serrated hammer. The TPH has a magazine catch located at the bottom of the frame, and you need to pull the magazine free from the pistol. It pops out about an inch and then you need to do the rest. Loading the magazine is similar to loading a centerfire magazine. There is not a load-assist button.

In hand, the TPH feels thin and sits low. The slide and hammer are close to your hand. We had no issues with hammer/slide bite, but a ham-fisted user might. We could only get two fingers on the smooth front grip strap with our small finger curled under the magazine floor plate. It pointed a bit high, and we liked that because we could pick up the front sight better. The front sight post is machined from the slide, but the rear sight can be tapped left or right to adjust windage. There was a red dot under the rear-sight notch to aid in sight alignment.

We liked these sights a lot. The top of the slide was decoratively machined with that wavy pattern old-school Walthers are known for. There was plenty of slide serrations to rack the slide, and it only took 10 pounds of effort.

In the manual of arms, press the decocking lever down and the hammer moves forward and also disconnects the trigger. There is a half-cock safety, and that is how we carried the TPH.

In the accuracy test, the TPH performed well. Its best group measured 1.32 inches with the Aguila Supermaximum ammo. In single-action mode, the trigger broke at 2.9 pounds. We had no issues with any ammo during the accuracy test, and we attribute that to the used pistol being well broken in. Moving on to the Failure Drill, we had a few jams with the Winchester Silvertip. The DA trigger pull was a weighty 12 pounds, so the first shot was slow to target. The two following shots were fast and precise. The trigger is serrated, and that made sure the pad of our finger did not slip on the trigger.

Carrying the TPH concealed was easy and comfortable, and it weighed as much as the Ruger loaded with 10 rounds. The rear of the slide was fairly smooth, and we kept our thumb on the hammer when drawing the pistol from our pocket.

Our Team Said: The TPH has Walther prestige, and you pay for that reputation, even in a used gun. We liked how the TPH performed, and the accuracy was good. The DA trigger pull was too heavy, in our opinion, causing a delay with the first shot. Loaded with Aguila or Federal rounds, the TPH would work as a defensive mouse gun.

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Written and photographed by Robert Sadowski, using evaluations from GUN TESTS Team members. GT

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