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FOCUS ON: DIVISIONS

WHICH **GUNS** DO WE SHOOT, AND WHY?

BY TROY McMANUS

USPSA shooting represents the most demanding form of **PRACTICAL** pistol competition on the planet. Manufacturers know that if their products fare well here, people notice. Problems with their designs will be exposed, studied, and repaired. If a particular firearm earns a good reputation in our sport, that opinion gets carried home by the many trainers, buyers, and officers who compete at all levels of our sport.

But what division should YOU compete in? The reasons why people pick one division over another relate to why they shoot pistols in the first place. Some are polishing their shooting skills because they might need them for self-defense. Others thrive in divisions that encourage tinkering with the guns. Still others are focused on the experience, and learn to shoot each style of pistol in turn.

As I've often told shooters who call USPSA looking for advice, the best gun to use

at your first match is the gun you already have. Unless your pistol looks like it would be at home on a Western movie set, forget about new equipment until you've got an idea how the game is played. Many of the world's top pro shooters focus on Production Division, one of the least-fancy, least expensive divisions, while others shoot space-age guns that look like race cars with a scope. The division for you is the one that puts a smile on your face — there really isn't a "best gun" for USPSA.

People choose one style over the other because they get more enjoyment out of doing it, and shooting USPSA-style is all about fun with your gun.

■ PRODUCTION DIVISION

Production division is limited to the use of production handguns with double- or safe-action triggers, and nicely accommodates owners of double-action 9mm or .40 S&W firearms. CZ's are popular, as are Tanfoglios, Glocks, SIGs, Walthers and a

host of others. Stock revolvers may also be used, including 8-shot versions.

As you might imagine, the Production title has a lot of marketing cachet, so you'll see many of the World's top shooters shooting Production on behalf of corporate sponsors.

Other shooting sports, such as the International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA) have similar divisions called "Stock Service Pistol", or something similar. Many shooters compete in a USPSA match one weekend, an IDPA match the next, and other shooting sports throughout the year.

Shooters are allowed to change sights, modify the grip, tune internal parts and exchange small parts like triggers, hammers, magazine release and slide stops; slide modifications other than milling for sight installation are prohibited. (The Production Division Appendix became effective May 16th, 2018).

Shooters may only load 10 rounds into

THE DIVISIONS

PRODUCTION DIVISION

- Striker fired or double-action firearms that appear on the "approved list." (See uspssa.org.)
- Shooters may modify the grip, exchange small external parts like triggers, hammers, slide stops, sights and magazine release as well as tune the internal parts of the gun.
- Max 10 rounds in the magazine
- All guns scored "Minor" (like a 9mm) – no matter how powerful the load actually used.
- Holsters and equipment must be "non-race-type" and be worn behind the hip

SINGLE STACK 1911 DIVISION

- Single-stack Government model pistols are the only guns allowed.
- Standard-capacity magazines only (8 rounds for "major calibers, 10 rounds for "minor").
- Holsters and equipment must be "non-race-type" and be worn behind the hip.
- Shooters may change the sights, add skate tape, and tune the internal parts of the gun.
- Shooters may change grips, slide stops, magazine releases, mainspring housings, triggers, etc.
- No optics, no porting, no compensators, or "devices to control recoil," such as weights.
- Guns can be scored "minor" (9mm and light .40) or "major" (full-power .40 and larger).

LIMITED 10 DIVISION

- Single-action autoloaders
- Max 10 rounds in magazine
- Shooters may change the sights, add skate tape, and tune the internal parts of the gun.
- Shooters may change grips, slide stops, magazine releases, mainspring housings, triggers, etc.
- No optics, no porting, no compensators, or "devices to control recoil," such as weights.
- Guns can be scored "minor" (9mm, and light .40) or "major" (full-power .40 and larger).

LIMITED DIVISION

- Same as "Limited 10" except high-capacity magazines up to 140mm overall may be used (170mm for single-stack guns).
- Any gun without a compensator or optic sights fits this division; DA and Safe Action guns, along with Single Action autoloaders.
- Shooters may change the sights, add skate tape, and tune the internal parts of the gun.
- Shooters may change grips, slide stops, magazine releases, mainspring housings, triggers, etc.
- No optics, no porting, no compensators.
- Guns can be scored "minor" (9mm, and light .40) or "major" (full-power .40 and larger).

REVOLVER DIVISION

- Eight rounds (only) between reloads for "minor", six rounds (only) between reloads for "major".
- No optical sights, porting, or recoil compensation.
- May change grips, enlarge the cylinder release, change sights, chamfer cylinders, and tune the action.
- May score "major" using any bullet .355" or larger.

OPEN DIVISION

- High-capacity magazines no longer than 170mm overall
- Optics allowed
- "Devices to control recoil" allowed.
- Guns may score "major" with any bullet .355" or larger.



CARRY OPTICS DIVISION

- Striker fired or double-action firearms that appear on the "Production Approved List." (See uspssa.org.)
- Optical/electronic sights REQUIRED; must be attached directly to slide between rear of slide and ejection port
- A slide may be modified for installing optical sights. Milling or stippling on the slide to provide texture is also allowed, cuts designed to lighten the slide, such as holes, are allowed.
- Shooters may modify the grip, exchange small external parts like triggers, hammers, slide stops and magazine release as well as tune the internal parts of the gun.
- Maximum weight of firearm with unloaded magazine measuring no more than 141.25mm is 45oz
- All guns scored "Minor" (like a 9mm) – no matter how powerful the load actually used.
- Holsters and equipment must be "non-race-type" and be worn behind the hip.

PISTOL CALIBER CARBINE DIVISION

- Pistol Caliber Carbines in 9mm, .357 Sig, .40 S&W, 10mm, .45 ACP
- Must have stock attached and be capable of being fired from shoulder position.
*Note: AR and similar pistols with arm braces are not allowed.
- All carbines are scored "Minor" (like 9mm) - no matter how powerful the load actually used, maximum is 1600 fps
- No capacity restrictions on magazines, side by side magazine coupling is not allowed
- Optic/electronic sights and lasers are allowed



Thomas Howard

Photo by Jake Martens.



Sonny Morton

Photo by Carole Bryant.



Daniel Olschefski

Photo by Jake Martens.



Tim Heiman

Photo by Jake Martens.

their magazines, and all Production guns are scored as though they fired a “Minor” caliber cartridge (9mm) — no matter how powerful the load actually used. Holsters and allied equipment must be “non-race-type” and be worn behind the hip.

Most shooters use a standard outside the belt holster intended for daily wear, such as a Comp-Tac or Safariland lines.

■ SINGLE STACK

Look through any pistol-oriented magazine, and you’re guaranteed to see pictures and articles dedicated to John Browning’s signature pistol.

USPSA introduced a provisional 1911 Single Stack division in 2006, making it a full-fledged division in 2008. Single-stack Government model pistols (such as those made by Springfield Armory, STI, Wilson Combat and others) are the only guns allowed.

Shooters may use standard-capacity magazines only (8 rounds for “major” calibers — .40, 10mm, and .45 ACP, 10 rounds for “minor” — 9mm and .38 Super.) For hol-

sters, Single-Stack shooters must adhere to the Single Stack division guidelines — here, the gun rides higher on the belt, a traditional method of carry for the venerable 1911.

■ LIMITED 10 DIVISION

“Here in Hawaii, we’re limited to 10-round magazines by law,” says Honolulu’s Richard Abe.

Single-action autoloaders in .40 S&W and .45 ACP rule the roost here. Competitors can make various minor changes to make the gun more shootable (change sights, grips, slide stops, magazine releases, main-spring housings, etc.), but they MAY NOT add optical sights, porting (such as Mag-naporting), or a recoil compensator. The rules do a fine job of leveling out the equipment, so check the rule book for complete details.

Calibers can be either “minor” (9mm, .38 Super, and light-loaded .40S&W, for example) or “major” (full-power .40 S&W and larger).

■ LIMITED DIVISION

Most Limited competitors shoot wide-body

1911’s (STI, SV, Para-Ordnance), a Glock, or one of various CZ/TZ 75 variants.

“Limited lets me make the most of my equipment and skills,” says Lisa Munson, multi-year ladies Limited champion. “It lets you use the technology available today, without going all the way into driving a ‘race gun.’”

Allowable changes include all those listed for “Limited 10,” plus shooters may use high-capacity magazines no longer than 141mm overall.

■ REVOLVER DIVISION

Designed for stock revolvers, Revolver Division is dominated by the Smith & Wesson revolvers in minor calibers. Shooters may only fire eight rounds between reloads for minor scoring (six rounds for major), and modifications are limited. No optical sights, porting, or recoil compensation is allowed. However, shooters may change grips, enlarge the cylinder release, change sights, chamfer cylinders, and tune the action as they desire.

Revolver shooters may score “major” us-



Photo by Jake Martens. Randle McMurphy




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ing any cartridge firing a bullet .355” or larger, with a restriction of only 6 rounds being fired before reloading. USPSA recently changed the division rules in revolver to allow for 8 shots being fired before reloading, but competitors choosing to shoot here will be scored “minor”, which makes a significant point difference for other than A zone hits.

■ **OPEN DIVISION**

Dominated by cutting-edge high-capacity 1911’s, but with many other makes holding their own, Open is the top-fuel drag racing division within USPSA.

“If you can roll it up to the line, odds are you can shoot it,” said former USPSA President Michael Voigt.

Shooters can make all the modifications allowed for Limited, and add several more. Magazines may extend to 171mm overall, optical sights may be used, and recoil compensators are practically required.

Shooters may use any caliber that fires a .355 or larger bullet, including the 9x19 (carefully hand loaded). The most popular

cartridge at this writing is one of several variations of the .38 Super.

Experimenting with equipment and technique has always been a part of USPSA, since the days of Jeff Cooper and the Southwest Pistol League in the 1950s. That experimental flavor is a big part of what keeps them coming back, there’s always some new sight setup, some new scope, some new idea to try.

■ **CARRY OPTICS DIVISION**

Red dot sights are not new to competitive shooting. “Dots” have been in use in NRA bullseye and USPSA Open Division matches for over 30 years. Over the last few years, there has been a steady increase in the number of red dot optics added to modern service pistols, and all of the major manufacturers in the firearms industry are offering more optics-ready pistols each year. USPSA responded by creating Carry Optics Division. The Carry Optics Division applies most of the Production Division rules, but with a 45-ounce weight limit on all models, requires optic/electronic

sight and additional modifications allowed. Magazines extended to 141.25mm, such as those used in the Limited Division. This division, like Production Division, is scored minor power factor only, utilizing readily available ammunition. The division has seen steady growth, and continues to be a topic of conversation with both experienced and new competitions shooters alike.

■ **PISTOL CALIBER CARBINE**

Pistol Caliber Carbines, or PCC’s, have exploded in popularity in the last two years. This exciting new division has seen a tremendous amount of participation in both USPSA and Steel Challenge competition. There are numerous manufacturers and parts suppliers making competition-ready carbines and accessories. This division also uses primarily red dot optics and is scored minor power factor only, again utilizing readily available ammunition.

I encourage you to take whatever pistol you already have, and go shoot a match or two. Odds are you’ll see someone shooting in a division appealing to you. Enjoy! ■