

DOPE BAG

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

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

SPRINGFIELD TROPHY MATCH



Springfield, Inc., has added frontstrap checkering, front cocking serrations on the slide and custom exotic wood stocks to its popular Trophy Match model. Other features of the target-oriented model include adjustable iron sights, a lightweight aluminum trigger, a Commander-style hammer, a beavertail grip safety and a match barrel.

BACK in 1983, a young commercial gun manufacturer known as Springfield Armory—a name acquired from the venerable, but defunct U.S. government arsenal—brought out a basic M1911-A1 .45 ACP pistol that featured a forged frame and slide, tight tolerances and a low retail price. The combination proved a good value and a viable alternative to the established Colt O-frame. Since that time, Springfield Armory has become Springfield, Inc., and that original M1911-A1 model has been joined by a wide variety of other M1911 variants, including compact, target and high-capacity models.

In 1992, Springfield, Inc., introduced its

Trophy Match pistol, which featured a number of custom-gun touches, including a beavertail grip safety, adjustable iron sights, a light, crisp trigger and tighter tolerances than the basic Springfield M1911-A1. Intended as an out-of-the-box target gun that was to compete directly with Colt's Gold Cup, the Trophy Match was designed to hold the 10-ring of NRA's 25-yd. bullseye target.

Customer feedback prompted the company to upgrade the model, and the new Trophy Match pistol debuted in early 1998. Added to the attributes of the previous version were several useful ergonomic features, such as front slide serrations and machine-cut frontstrap checkering. Also new was a high-capacity version of the gun.

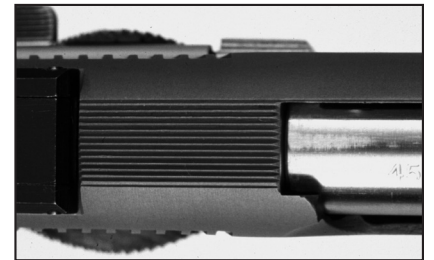
Four Trophy Match models are currently offered: both blued and all-stainless-steel, single-stack models; a stainless high-capacity model; and a two-tone, single-stack model with a blued slide and stainless frame. All Trophy Match guns are available in 5"-barrel, .45 ACP versions only, and are finished with polished flats and sandblasted curved surfaces (except the high-capacity model, which features a fully sandblasted frame). Single-stack guns are provided with two seven-round magazines with slam pads, while the high-capacity model comes with two 10-round factory magazines with slam pads. Springfield states that 13-round

Para-Ordnance magazines will also work in the high-capacity Trophy Match.

Forgings of 416 stainless steel are CNC-machined to produce the stainless versions of the Trophy Match frames and slides; 4140 forgings are used for their blued counterparts. Springfield, Inc., is the only major manufacturer offering a forged-steel, high-capacity M1911-style frame.

Unlike the two-piece barrels found on standard Springfield guns, Trophy Match barrels are one-piece, oversize, match-grade units made of button-rifled 416 stainless steel. The barrels are oversize in the hood, locking lugs and barrel feet, and are hand-fitted to tight tolerances to ensure consistent barrel positioning in the slide.

Similar tightness is evidenced in the slide-to-frame fit of Trophy Match pistols, which are hand-assembled on a separate production line by specially trained gunsmiths. For each gun, the particular combination of slide and frame giving the tightest fit is selected and undergoes additional tightening as necessary. Also contributing to accuracy is a match-grade



Serrations atop the Trophy Match's slide form a rough sighting plane and reduce reflections. There are grasping grooves on the sides of the slide at the front and rear.

barrel bushing fitted to a satisfying snugness with both slide and barrel.

In addition to tight tolerances, the Trophy Match guns offer such custom-gun touches as a Wilson high-grip beavertail with palm pad, an extended King's thumb safety, a Commander-style hammer, a lightweight aluminum trigger, a full-length, two-piece guide rod, front slide serrations and checkered Cocobolo wood stocks.



The adjustable LPA rear iron sight on the Trophy Match features an .865"-wide by .435"-high blade for fast target acquisition.



A 10-round-capacity, wide-body version of the Trophy Match is also offered in blue or stainless finishes.

It should be noted that the Trophy Match guns, as in all Springfields, lack the Series 80 firing pin safety used by Colt and Para-Ordnance, and so are functionally equivalent to Colt Series 70 O-frames.

Sighting is by way of a fully adjustable LPA rear sight unit having an .865"-wide and .435"-high finely serrated blade with a .120"-wide notch, and a staked-in .130"-wide front sight with a serrated, improved ramp. Both sights have a matte-black finish. The top of the slide is flattened and serrated longitudinally to provide a rough sighting plane and to reduce reflection.

Single-stack Trophy Match guns feature 20 LPI machine-cut frontstrap checkering to aid gun control—a feature not offered on the previous Trophy Match model. The widebody frame has no checkering; instead a series of serrated lines runs vertically on the frontstrap.

We received three Springfield Trophy Match pistols: both the all-stainless-steel single-stack and high-capacity models as well as the single-stack, two-tone version. Our initial impression was that all three models were well-finished and fitted to an

impressive tightness for factory-produced M1911s. To ensure maximum reliability on each gun, the feed ramp was polished, the barrel was fully throated, the ejection port was lowered to .400" and fluted, and an extended ejector and tuned extractor were fitted.

We fired the two-tone, single-stack Trophy Match in a Ransom Rest for accuracy, with the results shown in the accompanying table, and function-fired all three with 3-D, Black Hills, CCI, Cor-Bon, Federal, Hornady, PMC, Remington and Winchester ammunition.

Accuracy with all loads tested was more than sufficient for practical pistol use. Even the least accurate load tested would easily hold the A-zone of an IPSC or IDPA target, or the 10-ring of an Action Pistol target, at 50 yds. At 25 yds., the gun's favorite loading, Federal's 230-gr. FMJ, would hold the 1.51" 10-ring of the 25-yd. NRA slow-fire target used in bullseye competition. The performance of our test gun with that load, a 1.56" average, is comparable to the level of accuracy achieved by many custom pistols.

The trigger of our test gun broke cleanly at 4 lbs.; the triggers of the other two were


ACCURACY RESULTS

| .45 ACP Cartridge | Vel. @15' (f.p.s.) | Smallest (ins.) | Largest (ins.) | Average (ins.) |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Federal 45A 230-gr. FMJ | 744 Avg. 11 Sd | 1.12 | 2.52 | 1.56 |
| Hornady 9111 200-gr. FMJ | 896 Avg. 19 Sd | 1.46 | 2.41 | 2.01 |
| Black Hills 185-gr. JHP | 907 Avg. 13 Sd | 1.43 | 2.41 | 1.90 |
| Average Extreme Spread | | | | 1.82 |
| Five consecutive five-shot groups from 25 yds., fired from Ransom Rest. Abbreviations: JHP (jacketed hollow-point), FMJ (full-metal jacket), Sd (standard deviation). | | | | |

excellent; the frontstrap checkering on the single-stack pistols was judged particularly beneficial in rapid-fire exercises. The slides of all three guns locked open after the last shot, and each of the pistols dropped its magazine freely when the magazine catch was depressed.

Disassembly of all the Trophy Match versions follows standard Government Model procedures, with the exception that the forward end of the two-piece guide rod must first be unscrewed using a hex wrench. A bushing wrench is also required to remove the barrel bushing.

There are only a few things we'd like to see changed on the Trophy Match pistols—a dovetailed front sight rather than the existing staked-on front post, more complete dehorning and the replacement of the current serrated plastic mainspring housing with a checkered steel unit. Also, in addition to the provided 16-lb. recoil spring, suitable for IPSC, IDPA and self-defense loads, a 13- or 14-lb. spring for light target loads could also be included.

The Trophy Match guns provide accuracy and reliability that approximates that of true custom guns at prices considerably less than those offered by some custom shops—and without the long wait. They would appear to be an excellent choice for the value-conscious shooter wanting the accuracy and features of a custom pistol in an off-the-shelf M1911. The Trophy Match comes as close to true custom quality as we've seen in a production M1911. 

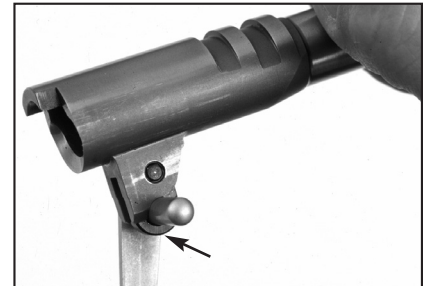


Reliability of the Springfield, Inc., Trophy Match pistols is enhanced by the polished feed ramp and generously throated barrel.

4½ and 5¾ lbs., and crisp. Springfield, Inc. states that all Trophy Match pistols leave the factory with a 4- to 5-lb. pull.

The Trophy Match pistols have many features preferred by M1911 fans for both practical competition and carry, both of which require a pistol having a high degree of dependability. Thus, special attention was paid to reliability testing. Out of more than 500 total rounds fired from all three pistols (300 out of the bi-tone test gun and more than 100 from each of the stainless Trophy Match models), there were a total of four malfunctions, two of which were ammunition-related and the other two resulting from the accumulation of residue in the two-tone gun's chamber after about 250 rounds had been fired without cleaning. A quick wipe of the chamber restored the test gun's perfect reliability.

Handling of the pistols was generally



Good accuracy was made possible in the Springfield Trophy Match by careful barrel fitting, which ensures that the barrel feet properly contact the slide stop pin (arrow).

TROPHY MATCH

MANUFACTURER: Springfield, Inc. (Dept. AR), 420 W. Main St., Geneseo, IL 61254

MECHANISM TYPE: short-recoil operated, semi-automatic pistol

CALIBER: .45 ACP

OVERALL LENGTH: 8¼"

BARREL LENGTH: 5"

RIFLING: six-groove, 1:16" LH twist

WIDTH: 1½"

HEIGHT: 5½", 5¾" (high capacity)

WEIGHT: 41 ozs., 42 ozs. (high capacity)

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: seven (standard-capacity, single-column magazine); 10 (high-capacity magazine)

TRIGGER: single-stage, 4 lbs. pull, 5% lbs. pull (high capacity)

SIGHTS: LPA windage- and elevation-adjustable rear, serrated improved-ramp post front

ACCESSORIES: lockable plastic case and cleaning brush

STOCKS: checkered Cocobolo, checkered black plastic (high capacity)

PRICE: blued, standard-capacity, \$1,115; two-tone standard-capacity (tested), \$1,049; stainless standard-capacity, \$1,059; stainless high-capacity, \$1,118

SIG SHR 970 RIFLE



SIG's new SHR 970 rifle (for Swiss Hunting Rifle) is a modern, bolt-action, center-fire design that incorporates many advanced features. The rifle is offered at an attractive price.

SIG's SHR970 is the first new, bolt-action, center-fire rifle designed and built in Switzerland in many years. Aimed directly at the mainstream North American hunting market, this modern rifle incorporates many advanced features such as take-down design, interchangeable barrels and a detachable, double-column magazine. All this is blended with traditional Swiss quality and attention to detail at an affordable price.

The flat-bottom steel receiver is not a stressed part in that the bolt locks directly to the barrel, which is quickly removable in the field using the Allen wrench provided. The receiver serves only to maintain the parts in relation to one another. Unthreaded barrels simply slide into the front of the receiver until they butt against an inner edge. Barrels are held tightly in place by a simple, two-screw clamp system under the receiver. An index slot on the barrel prevents incorrect assembly and barrel rotation. As compared with the familiar Sauer barrel

mounting system, the SIG design is simpler and just as strong with no small parts that can be lost. There is a single rectangular recoil lug on the lower front of the receiver just behind the barrel clamp that mates with

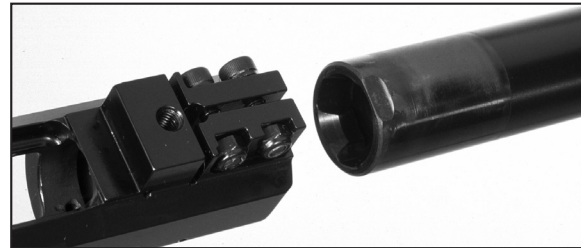
accommodate handloads with bullets seated to longer than normal loaded lengths.

The single-stage, adjustable trigger is a well-made Swiss unit that fits on an integral tang on the lower rear portion of the receiver where it is held in place by a socket-head screw and a hollow pin.

Although the SHR's trigger is adjustable, any change should only be made by a competent, factory-authorized gunsmith. To emphasize that point, all trigger-adjustment screws are sealed with plastic. Trigger pull was a crisp 4 lbs. on our

sample rifle with minimal takeup and virtually no slack or overtravel.

Barrels are hammer-forged by SIG from chrome-vanadium steel in a tapered sporter contour with four lands and grooves. The chambers are also hammer-forged, but the bolt locking recesses are machined. There is a deeply recessed crown on the muzzle to prevent damage. Barrels of different calibers with the same cartridge head size are interchangeable. For example, a rifle in .270 Win. cal. may be converted to .30-'06 Sprg.



The barrel is held in place by a simple two-screw clamp system under the receiver. Barrels may be changed in mere minutes in the field using a provided Allen wrench.

a metal bedding block in the stock. Thus the bedding offers a solid and consistent metal-to-metal fit.

The bolt features three equally spaced front locking lugs of body diameter with an internal extractor and ejector. Bolt throw is a short 65 degrees, and the action cocks on opening. The result is crisp operation with an exceptionally smooth bolt glide not normally found on rifles in this price range. A fast lock time was incorporated into the design from the beginning by using a powerful mainspring, lightweight firing pin and minimal firing pin travel. The bolt release is a pivoting lever located on the rear left side of the receiver. The SHR970 does not have controlled feed.

Considerable attention was given to safety by incorporating gas vent holes in the action, bolt and magazine body in addition to using a solid tailpiece on the bolt. There is also a three-position safety lever on the right rear of the receiver that permits cycling the bolt with the safety on as well as a cocking indicator on the bolt tailpiece. The detachable, steel, double-column magazine holds four rounds and is long enough to



The SHR 970's single-stage, adjustable trigger unit is Swiss-made, and it is held in place by a single screw and a roll pin.

SIG SHR 970

MANUFACTURER: SIG Swiss Industrial Co., Neuhausen Rhine Falls, CH-8212 Switzerland

IMPORTER: SIGARMS, Inc. (Dept. AR), Corporate Park, Exeter, NH 03833

MECHANISM TYPE: detachable-magazine, center-fire, bolt-action rifle with 65° bolt lift

CALIBERS: .270 Win. (tested), .30-'06 Sprg.

LENGTH: 41 1/4"

WEIGHT: 7 lbs., 13 1/2 ozs.

BARREL LENGTH: 22"

RIFLING: four-groove, RH twist

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: four

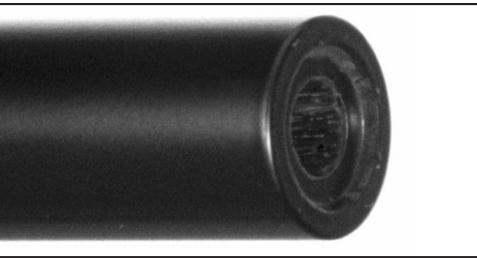
TRIGGER: single-stage, 4 lb. pull

SIGHTS: none, receiver drilled and tapped for scope mounts

STOCK: synthetic with rough, matte-black finish: length of pull, 13"; drop at heel, 2"; drop at comb 1"

ACCESSORIES: screwdriver, Allen wrench, hard, black-plastic carry case

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$499



The SIG SHR 970 rifle's barrel has a deeply-recessed, target-style crown to protect the muzzle from accidental damage that could spoil the SHR rifle's accuracy potential.

cal. simply by changing the barrel. SIGARMS will offer accessory barrels in different lengths (22" is standard) and calibers in the future. SHR970 barrels are not drilled or tapped for iron sights. SHR970 receivers, however, are drilled and tapped with 6x48 holes for scope mount bases (not supplied).

SIGARMS recommends scope mount bases listed for the Browning BAR as being suitable for the SHR970. This proved true although only three of the holes in a Leupold one-piece BAR base (two in front and one in the rear) matched those in the SHR970 receiver. While this worked perfectly well, most shooters will prefer two-piece bases. Physically mounting the scope proved easy because there is plenty of clearance over the barrel for scopes with 50 mm objectives.

The stock is a synthetic unit from Bell & Carlson with a spackled, matte-black finish, blued-steel sling swivel studs, a solid-black rubber butt pad and a pistol grip cap with logo. Positive, diamond-shaped checkering is present on both sides of the fore-end and pistol grip. Bedding is by means of two equal-length action bolts—one front and one rear—which also secure the trigger guard assembly, and the barrel is free-floating. The bedding bolts have unique heads



The action is designed for .30-'06-length cartridges. The magazine has enough length to accommodate handloads with longer than normal overall lengths.



The bolt has three equidistant locking lugs and an internal extractor and ejector. Fast lock time is accomplished by using a lightweight firing pin, heavy spring and short firing pin travel.

designed to accept an Allen wrench, Phillips screwdriver, straight-blade screwdriver or a dime. Thus, something will always be close at hand to tighten or loosen the bolts. However, a Phillips-head screwdriver is provided with the SHR.

The receiver and barrel are finished with a medium-polish blue. The bolt is polished with a natural finish. All markings are laser-engraved, which imparts a matte-silver color to such areas. The SIG logo is molded into the bolt knob, pistol grip cap and butt pad and laser engraved in the magazine floor plate and receiver. The SHR's trigger guard is black, anodized aluminum.

The NRA Technical Staff received an SHR970 rifle in caliber .270 Win. for test and evaluation. Initial inspection left a favorable impression of general fit and finish, although the spackled finish on the stock drew a few negative comments as did the "tubular" styling of the receiver. It was felt that a smooth, matte-black finish on the stock or a walnut stock option would look better and that the receiver styling would benefit greatly from increasing the bevel on the edges and sloping the tail-piece on the bolt to match the angle on the rear of the receiver. Another area of minor criticism was the positive checkering, which was sharp to the point of abrading the shooter's hand when the rifle was fired. The checkering could stand to be flatter.

One positive point was the magazine, which proved very easy to insert or remove from the rifle. When the magazine release catch is pressed, two springs push the magazine down approximately 3/8" where it can be easily grasped by the user. The detachable magazine should prove convenient for hunting situations where the rifle must be loaded and unloaded repeatedly. Bolt

| ACCURACY RESULTS | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| .270 Win. Cartridge | Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.) | Smallest (ins.) | Largest (ins.) | Average (ins.) |
| Win. No. X2703 130-gr. ST | 2835 Avg. 20 Sd | 1.21 | 1.99 | 1.54 |
| Fed. No. P270T1 140-gr. TBBC | 2725 Avg. 19 Sd | 1.21 | 1.83 | 1.58 |
| Rem. No. R270W4 150-gr. CL | 2700 Avg. 42 Sd | 0.93 | 1.97 | 1.55 |
| Average Extreme Spread | | | | 1.55 |
| Four consecutive five-shot groups at 100 yds. fired from a sandbag rest. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), CL (CoreLokt), Fed. (Federal), Rem. (Remington), ST (Silvertip), TBBC (Trophy Bonded Bear Claw), Win. (Winchester). | | | | |

operation was notably smooth as advertised. The barrel can be dismounted and changed in minutes using the Allen wrench provided. Point of impact changed only slightly after the barrel was dismounted and then reinstalled. Feeding, extraction and ejection were flawless.


Balance, handling and ergonomics were judged good. Balance point of an unloaded, unscoped SHR970 rifle is at the front bedding bolt, which is exactly where most users



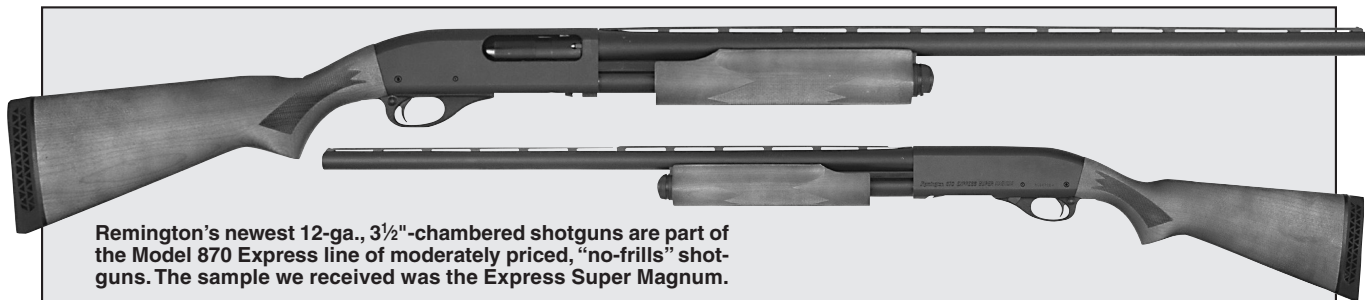
The SHR's synthetic stock is made for SIG by Bell & Carlson and is pillar-bedded. Two bedding bolts secure the action to the stock.

will effect a one-hand carry. Perceived recoil was modest although muzzle blast with the 22" barrel was heavy. Accuracy was very good for a hunting rifle (see table).

The SHR970 offers two intriguing possibilities. First is a rifle with two or more barrels in compatible calibers chosen by the shooter at time of purchase or added later. This would significantly increase the usefulness of the SHR970 rifle to many potential buyers. The second is a varmint/target rifle with barrels of different calibers, weights and lengths that could be quickly changed. Should the barrel of such a rifle ever become worn-out or shooting conditions change, installing a new barrel would only take minutes.

The SHR970 is a modern hunting rifle incorporating many advanced features at a very attractive price. These features and the price combined with traditional Swiss quality and attention to detail result in an especially good value for potential buyers. 

REMINGTON 870 SUPER MAGNUM



Remington's newest 12-ga., 3½"-chambered shotguns are part of the Model 870 Express line of moderately priced, "no-frills" shotguns. The sample we received was the Express Super Magnum.

REMINGTON'S Model 870 pump-action shotgun has been a top seller for nearly 50 years. The latest versions of this tried-and-true model, the Super Magnums, are part of Remington's Express line of moderately priced, "no-frills" shotguns and fire 2¼", 3" or 3½" 12-ga. shotshells. Four styles are offered: the Super Magnum Turkey Camo with a 23" vent-rib barrel, Turkey Extra Full Rem Choke and synthetic stock camouflaged with RealTree Advantage; the Super Magnum Combo with a hardwood stock, 26" vent-rib barrel with modified Rem Choke, and a 20" fully rifled slug barrel with 3" chamber and rifle sights; the Super Magnum Synthetic with a black synthetic stock and 26" vent-rib barrel with modified Rem Choke; and the Super Magnum with hardwood stock and 28" vent-rib barrel with modified Rem Choke. We received the latter for testing.

The requirement for a 3½" 12-ga. shot-



The requirement for a 3½", 12-ga. shotgun comes primarily from the mandated use of non-toxic shot for waterfowling. Turkey hunters can still use lead shot, and so it was only natural that 3½" 12-ga. lead shot shotshells would be developed for them.

gun comes primarily from waterfowl hunters. After federal law mandated the use of non-toxic shot for this sport, hunters began trying to make steel shot more effective. Shooting larger pellet sizes of steel shot was the first move in this direction and was followed by heavier payloads at higher velocity. It was necessary to lengthen the 12-ga. shell to 3½" to achieve these goals.

Turkey hunters can still use lead shot, for the most part, and it was only natural for 3½" lead shot shells to appear for this market.

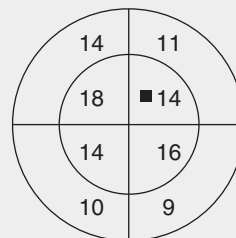
Design and functioning of the 3½" 12-ga. Model 870 Express Super Magnum is identical to the 2¼" and 3" Model 870s. In fact, the inherent strength of the design allowed Remington to re-engineer the existing breech bolt and receiver to accommodate the longer shell. That said, parts from Model 870 Express Super Magnums and all other Model 870 shotguns are *not* interchangeable. This re-design utilizes an equal 4¼" operational stroke for all three lengths of 12-ga. shotshells.

The 3½" version of the 870 carries the Express line's matte finish on all exterior metal parts and on the stained American hardwood stock. The fore-end and grip are press-checked in a borderless pattern of 20 lines per inch. A 1"-thick, ventilated, black rubber recoil pad is included.

The crossbolt safety is the same as on other Model 870s. It is mounted in the rearward portion of the trigger guard and is pushed from right to left, exposing a red annular ring upon disengagement.

REMINGTON 870 MAGNUM

AVERAGE OF 10 PATTERNS AT 40 YDS.



Modified Barrel

■ = Point of Hold
Federal Premium Steel
3½"-Mag-1½-2
Pellet count—163

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Total Hits | 106 (65%) |
| 21.2" Inner Circle | 62 (38%) |
| 30" Outer Ring | 44 (27%) |

The 870's 28" barrel is topped with a .290"-wide, untapered, vented rib. The surface of the rib is smooth and has the same non-reflective finish as the rest of the exterior metal parts. The white-metal, .143" round front bead is also matte-finished and contrasts with the black barrel rib.

The interchangeable, screw-in Rem Choke system is used, but only a modified choke tube comes with the Express Super Magnum. Other Rem Choke tubes with different choke constrictions can be purchased separately.

The magazine length remains unchanged from other Model 870s, so the balance will be familiar to Model 870 shooters. The magazine holds three 3½", or four 2¼" or 3" shells.

We fired the Remington Model 870 Express Super Magnum at 40 yds. with the results shown in the accompanying table. Function firing was with a mixed bag of foreign and domestic 12-ga. shells of all three lengths. There were no malfunctions of any kind even when different-length shells were mixed in the magazine.



Remington's re-design keeps the 4¼" cycling stroke equal for all three sizes of 12-ga. shotshells. The magazine length remains unchanged from other 870s, so the balance will be familiar to Model 870 shooters.

REMINGTON 870

MANUFACTURER: Remington Arms Co., Inc. (Dept. AR), 870 Remington Drive, P.O. Box 700, Madison, NC 27025

MECHANISM TYPE: pump-action shotgun

GAUGE: 12, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 3", 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

OVERALL LENGTH: 48"

BARREL LENGTH: 28"

WEIGHT: 7 lbs., 12 ozs.

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: four 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " or 3", three 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

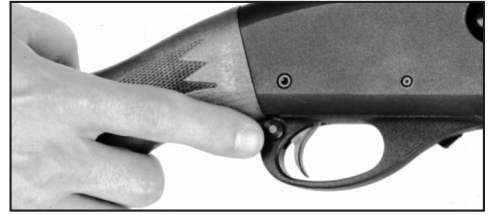
TRIGGER: single-stage, 5 lbs. pull

STOCK: Hardwood: length of pull, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; drop at heel, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; drop at comb, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$332

Perceived recoil from 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " shotshells, although heavy, seemed no greater than that from 3" magnum shells. Even so, beginners and recoil-sensitive shooters would be best-served by working up from 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " target loads to the full-power 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " loads when using this gun.

Though the Remington 870 Express Super Magnum has the same exterior dimensions as 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 3" 870s, the perception is that the gun is larger. It is not, though, and it handles well. The Express Super Magnum balances like any Model 870 and is not burdensome afield. For a utilitarian gun, fit and finish are good. As a hunting gun, the 870

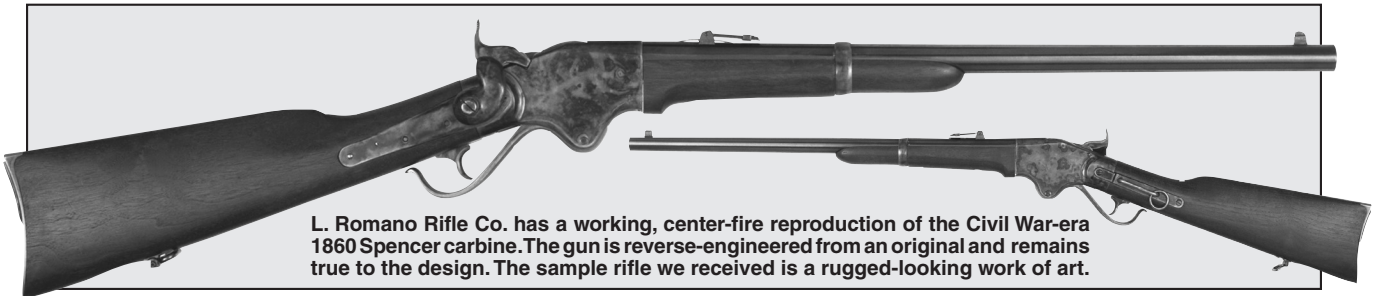


The crossbolt safety is the same as on other Model 870s and is mounted behind the gun's trigger in the trigger guard. It must be pushed from right to left to disengage.

Express Super Magnum offers versatility usually requiring more than one gun, and at an attractive price.

NRP

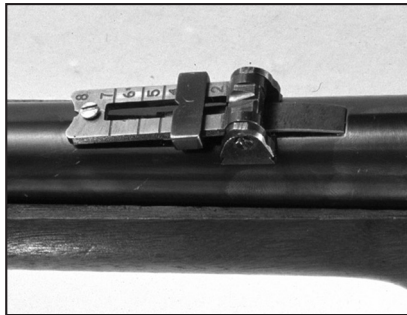
L. ROMANO 1860 SPENCER



L. Romano Rifle Co. has a working, center-fire reproduction of the Civil War-era 1860 Spencer carbine. The gun is reverse-engineered from an original and remains true to the design. The sample rifle we received is a rugged-looking work of art.

FOR the re-enactor, Civil War buff or firearms history enthusiast, the L. Romano Rifle Co. of Pennellville, New York, offers a working copy of the 1860 Spencer Repeating Carbine. The new-production gun is reverse-engineered from an original, and remains true to the design. The salient difference is that the Romano gun is adapted to fire a center-fire version of the .56-50 Spencer rimfire cartridge.

The sample we received for testing is a rugged-looking work of art. Fit and finish are excellent and case-hardened parts are made of 8620 steel alloy that readily accepts the traditional bone/charcoal case-



The 1860's rear sight is an adjustable V-notch, ladder-type dovetailed into the barrel. Elevation adjustments are possible to 800 yds. in 100 yd. increments. In the folded position, the rear sight is set for 100 yds. The unit is drift-adjustable for windage.

hardening process. The action, bolt, all action parts, lock plates and sling swivel are machined from solid blocks of steel alloy. The hammer, barrel band, buttplate and trigger are investment-cast from steel alloy and case-hardened.

The 22", eight-groove, rifled Douglas barrel is blued and made from 4140 chrome moly steel. A German silver front sight blade in a steel block is soldered to the front of the barrel while a V-notch, ladder-type, adjustable rear sight is dovetailed into the

barrel toward the rear. Elevation adjustments are possible to 800 yds. in 100-yd. increments. In the folded position, the rear sight is set for 100 yds. Windage is drift-adjustable.

Hand-rubbed, oil-finished walnut is used for the buttstock and fore-end. Like the original, there is neither checkering nor a pistol grip. Because the original was intended for cavalry use, there is one sling swivel on the toe of the stock and a saddle ring on the left side of the wrist. A large, single-loop



Action, bolt, all action parts and lock plates are machined from solid blocks of 8620 steel alloy. The alloy lends itself readily to accepting traditional bone/charcoal case-hardening used by the rifle's manufacturer.

L. ROMANO 1860

MANUFACTURER: L. Romano Rifle Co. (Dept. AR), 551 Stewarts Corners Road, Pennellville, NY 13132

MECHANISM TYPE: lever-action repeater

CALIBER: .56-50 Spencer center-fire

OVERALL LENGTH: 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

BARREL LENGTH: 22"

WEIGHT: 9 lbs., 6 ozs.

MAGAZINE CAPACITY: seven

RIFLING: eight-groove, 1:36" RH twist

TRIGGER: single-stage, 5 lbs. pull

SIGHTS: adjustable ladder-type rear,

German silver blade front

STOCK: oil-rubbed walnut: length of pull,

13"; drop at heel, 3"; drop at comb, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$2700

DOPE BAG

sling, not included with our test gun, permits the Spencer Carbine to be carried hanging under the strong-side arm for fast, one-hand, cavalry use.

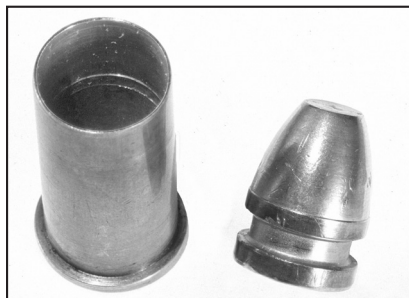
Loading is through a buttstock magazine tube with a capacity of seven rounds. For loading convenience, we also received a reproduction Blakeslee cartridge box containing 10 cartridge tubes each holding seven cartridges.



Loading the Spencer reproduction is through a buttstock magazine tube with a capacity of seven rounds. For loading convenience, we also received a well-executed reproduction Blakeslee cartridge box containing 10 cartridge tubes each holding seven cartridges for a 70 round box total.

In use, the hammer is put on the half-cock "safety" notch, the action is closed and the magazine tube retainer rotated clockwise one-quarter turn. Next, the magazine tube assembly is withdrawn from the buttstock. The stopper is removed from a cartridge tube, and the cartridges poured bullet end first into the buttstock magazine of the rifle. The magazine tube assembly is returned to the buttstock, the lever worked to load a round into the chamber and the hammer cocked to fire.

As the lever is lowered after firing a cartridge, a blade extractor in the left side of the receiver extracts the fired case, which is then ejected out the top of the receiver. Simultaneously, the coil-spring-loaded magazine follower pushes a cartridge for-



The .56-50 Spencer center-fire cases are made from cut-down .50-70 Gov't brass. Reaming the inside of the neck leaves a slight shoulder inside the case on which the 300-gr. cast bullet rests. The shoulder helps prevent the bullet from being pushed back into the cartridge case under the pressure of the magazine follower spring.

ward into the breech. Returning the lever to its closed position chambers the cartridge and locks the breech. The hammer must be cocked manually for each shot. The manufacturer advises that the action lever should be worked swiftly in one fluid motion. Hesitation or slow working of the lever may cause a jam.

Cartridges for this rifle are normally loaded with blackpowder or a suitable substitute, so the gun requires attention to detail when cleaning. To disassemble for cleaning, it is only necessary to remove the lever screw, after which the entire breech block assembly (with lever) comes free from the bottom of the receiver. Clean this assembly, the receiver (inside and out) and the bore thoroughly with a good

commercial blackpowder solvent or hot, soapy water. Cartridge brass saved for reloading should be cleaned the same way. Once clean, thoroughly coat all metal gun parts with a rust preventative and reassemble in reverse order.



To load from a Blakeslee cartridge tube, remove the stopper from the tube and pour the cartridges, bullet end first, into the buttstock of the Spencer rifle. Return the magazine tube to the buttstock, work the lever to chamber a round and then manually cock the hammer in order to fire a shot.

The Romano 1860 Spencer Carbine was fired for accuracy at 50 yds. with the results shown in the accompanying table. Given the tiny V-notch rear sight and thin, silver front sight blade, accuracy was good. Recoil was virtually non-existent. Note that the low velocity and energy of this cartridge put it in the .45 ACP power range.

The cartridge cases are made from cut-down .50-70 Gov't brass. The inside of the



Cartridges are normally loaded with blackpowder, so the gun requires a thorough cleaning after use. Removing the lever screw causes the entire breech block assembly to pop free from the bottom of the receiver. Clean with a commercial blackpowder solvent or hot, soapy water.

neck is reamed, which produces a slight shoulder inside the case on which the Romano-designed, 300-gr. cast, lead, flat-nose bullet rests. This slight shoulder helps prevent the bullet from being pushed into the case under the pressure of the follower spring. Propellant is a lightly compressed charge of 35.0 grs. of Fg blackpowder. Bullets are lubed with SPG lube.

We experienced some difficulty with cycling cartridges through the action initially. Cartridges emerged from the magazine noticeably canted to the right and considerable force had to be exerted on the action lever to chamber a round. With practice, however, shooters found a lever operating tempo and force the gun favored, and the difficult chambering was resolved. As the manufacturer stated, the lever must be worked with authority.

Romano's 1860 Spencer Carbine is approved for competition by the North-South Skirmish Ass'n, but Cowboy Action shooting limits its use to long-range rifle matches because the .56-50 Spencer is not a "pistol" caliber cartridge. Romano currently offers other Civil War-period rifles and carbines. All are detailed in the company's \$3 catalog.

Whether for re-enacting a great cavalry battle or just hanging the likeness of a piece of firearms history over the mantle, Romano's 1860 Spencer carbine is a well-made and attractive arm.

NRB

ACCURACY RESULTS

| .56-50 Spencer Center-fire Cartridge | Vel. @15' (f.p.s.) | Smallest (ins.) | Largest (ins.) | Average (ins.) |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 300-gr. FPL 35.0-grs. Fg SPG lube | 847 Avg. 28 Sd | 1.84 | 2.75 | 2.18 |
| Five consecutive five-shot groups from 50 yds., fired from sandbags Abbreviations: FPL (flat-point lead), Sd (standard deviation) | | | | |