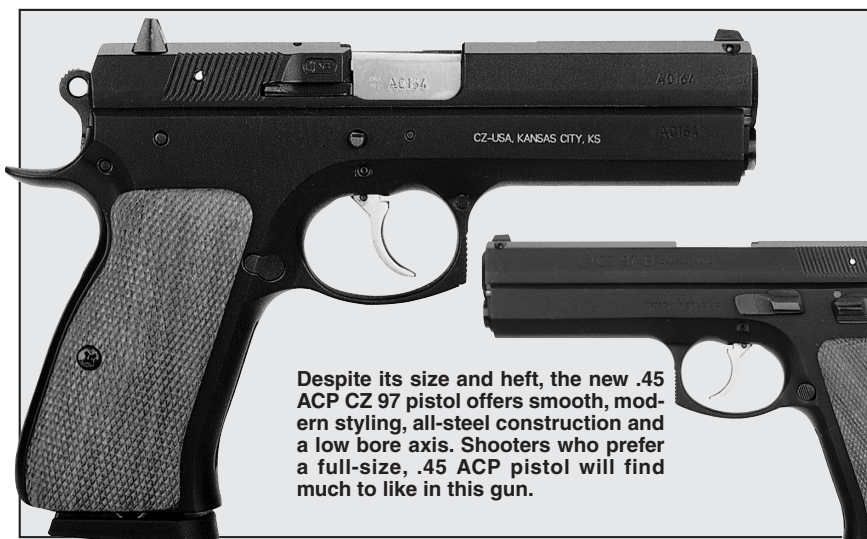


DOPE BAG[®]

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.

CZ MODEL 97 PISTOL



Despite its size and heft, the new .45 ACP CZ 97 pistol offers smooth, modern styling, all-steel construction and a low bore axis. Shooters who prefer a full-size, .45 ACP pistol will find much to like in this gun.



The fire control system of the CZ 97 follows modern trends in that it is a double-action/single-action semi-automatic. The magazine does not drop free when the release is depressed and needs to be manually removed.

THE Czech-made CZ 75 double-action semi-automatic has long been regarded as one of the world's finest pistol designs. The firm's new Model 97 is the big one—the king of the CZ pistol product line. For shooters who prefer full-size pistols in .45 ACP, the CZ 97 will be a strong contender. We recently received a CZ 97 pistol for test and evaluation.

Initial impressions of this gun are that it has smooth lines and a low bore axis despite its impressive size and substantial heft. The medium-polish blue finish on the cast, carbon

steel frame and slide contrasts pleasantly with the bright, natural finish on the trigger and semi-gloss finish on the checkered walnut grip panels. Workmanship, fit, finish and quality are good. Only one thing seemed out of place—the rear sight seems too high for those of us used to low-profile rear sights. In all fairness, however, the CZ 97 is service-pistol-sized and is intended for carry in a belt holster rather than for discreet carry.

Recoil-operated with double-action/single-action fire control, the CZ 97

has a 10-round, double-column magazine, weighs 42 ozs. (50 ozs. fully loaded) and is approximately 9" in length. The checkered magazine release button is located on the left side of the frame behind the trigger guard and is not ambidextrous. There are two operating levers—a slide release and a frame-mounted safety. There are no decocking levers.

Considerable attention has been paid to safety in the CZ 97. There is an automatic firing pin safety that locks the firing pin in place until the trigger is pulled. In addition, there is a disconnecter arm on the fire control assembly and a half-cock notch on the

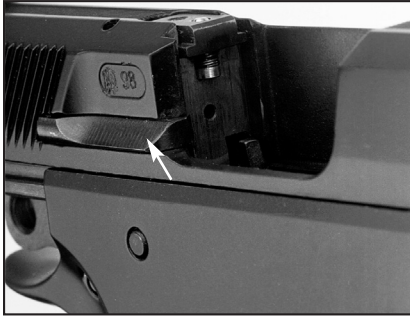


Shooters used to low-profile rear sights will find the rear sight of the CZ 97 rather high. The 97's high-visibility, three-white-dot system is drift-adjustable for windage.

SHOOTING RESULTS

.45 ACP Caliber	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Recoil (ft.-lbs.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Federal No. 45A 230-gr. FMJ	793 Avg. 6 Sd	322	4.8	1.97	2.33	2.15
PMC No. 45C 200-gr. FMJ-SWC	901 Avg. 11 Sd	360	4.9	2.52	3.63	3.07
Remington No. GS45ACP 185-gr. JHP +P	1107 Avg. 22 Sd	504	6.4	3.40	4.67	3.82
Average Extreme Spread						3.07

Measured average muzzle velocity for 10 rounds. Range temperature: 73° F. Humidity: 31%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. from a sandbag rest. Abbreviations: Sd (standard deviation), FMJ (full metal jacket), JHP (jacketed hollow point), SWC (semi-wadcutter).



The pistol's hook extractor is on the slide's right (arrow) while the ejector is mounted on the left rear of the frame. An automatic firing pin safety system allows the CZ 97 to be carried safely with a round in the chamber.

sear that holds the hammer away from the rear of the firing pin. All these features back up the 97's manual safety lever on the left side of the frame, which blocks the trigger when applied. As a finishing touch, there is a loaded-chamber indicator pin on top of the slide behind the breech. These features allow the Model 97 to be carried "cocked and locked" with a round in the chamber.

Ergonomics is another area of the CZ 97's design that received considerable attention. Both the front strap and the back strap of the grip frame have six vertical grooves to improve grip purchase. The front of the trigger guard is recurved with 10 horizontal grooves for an enhanced two-hand hold. We found the grip frame as comfortable as it looks, and the safety lever and magazine release button easily within reach of a right-handed shooter's thumb. Shooters with small hands and/or short fin-

CZ MODEL 97

MANUFACTURER: Ceska Zbrojovka a.s., 68827 Uhersky Brod, Czech Republic

IMPORTER: CZ-USA (Dept. AR), 1401 Fairfax Trafficway, Building B, Unit 119, Kansas City, MO 66115; (913) 321-1811

CALIBER: .45 ACP

ACTION TYPE: recoil-operated, semi-automatic pistol

CONSTRUCTION: carbon steel

FINISH: medium-polish blue

BARREL: 4¾"

RIFLING: six-groove, RH twist

OVERALL LENGTH: 8½"

WIDTH: 1¼"

HEIGHT: 5½"

WEIGHT EMPTY: 42 ozs

TRIGGER: double-action/single-action, double action, 8½-lb. pull, single-action, 4-lb. pull

MAGAZINE: 10-rounds, double-column

SIGHTS: three-white-dot, blade front, notched blade rear drift-adjustable for windage

STOCKS: checkered walnut with semi-gloss finish

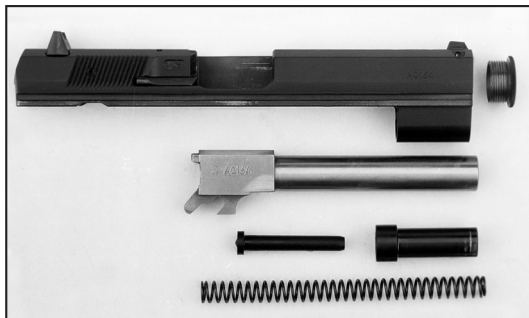
ACCESSORIES: slotted cleaning rod, bore brush, lockable plastic carry case

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$600

gers had no trouble reaching the trigger, and the extended beavertail on the back strap effectively prevented the dreaded hammer bite. The top of the slide has lengthwise grooves on the sighting surface to reduce glare when using the high-visibility, three-white-dot sights. The blued steel magazine has numbered holes cut in the side to roughly indicate the number of cartridges held inside.

Fire control for the CZ 97 follows modern trends with double-action/single-action operation. We rated the trigger pull very good with a modest amount of take up followed by a crisp let off with no loading, though the pull weight was a bit heavy. Double-action can be started from either the hammer-down position or from the half-cock position. We recommend the latter, as it considerably lightens the double-action pull. One notable internal feature is that most of the fire control mechanism can be quickly removed by simply removing the safety lever. This feature makes short work of cleaning, maintenance and repair. Although easily removable, the trigger mechanism should not be disassembled unless absolutely necessary, as reassembly proved difficult.

Disassembly of the CZ 97 broadly follows traditional Browning lines with two minor exceptions. First, the steel barrel bushing is threaded into the front of the slide. The outer edge of the bushing is knurled so it can



The barrel bushing of the CZ 97 is threaded into the front of the slide and can be removed with finger pressure. The recoil spring is held in a steel extension that fits into the bottom of the slide. This extension easily slides in and out of position. Note the linkless cam surface on the 97's barrel lug.

easily be removed using finger pressure—a nice touch. Second, there is a steel extension tube for the recoil spring that slides in place behind the front of the slide. Although this extension must be removed before the barrel can be dismounted, the process requires only finger pressure.

Despite its size and weight, balance of the CZ 97 proved surprisingly good—being approximately at the rear of the trigger guard. The weight and balance contributed to low perceived recoil when firing this pistol. We judged the low bore axis


to be a significant contributing factor as well. The bottom line is the CZ 97 is pleasant to shoot even with +P loads. Accuracy results may be found in the accompanying table. Our tests indicated good accuracy and flawless functioning with 230-gr. FMJ or JHP ammunition and 185-gr. JHP ammunition. Muzzle velocities approached catalog levels due to the 4¾" barrel length. Although we were not able to determine the serviceability of the CZ 97 when firing a steady diet of +P ammunition, the all-steel construction of the CZ 97 indicated that no problems should be expected there. We also used this opportunity to try some of Winchester's new SuperClean NT lead-free ammunition with a 170-gr. jacketed, zinc-core bullet. Functioning again proved flawless, and we noted considerably less smoke and recoil.



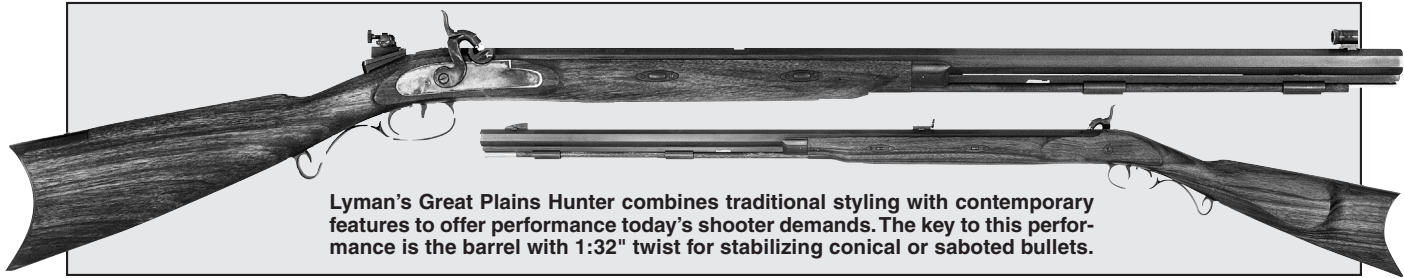
A loaded-chamber indicator pin atop the CZ 97's slide (arrow) is raised for visual or tactile inspection when a round is in the chamber.

As with many guns, we found a few ergonomic details that could stand minor improvement. For example, we prefer empty and loaded magazines to drop free when the magazine release button is depressed. The CZ 97 magazines dropped only an inch or so whether empty or loaded and had to be manually withdrawn. Also, the bottom of the magazine well should be beveled. We found the slide

release lever to be located too far forward to reach with the shooting hand. Yes, it looks spiffy in the present position, but an extension would aid the shooting hand in reaching it. We commend CZ for including high-visibility, three-white-dot sights, but recommend they use larger dots as those currently employed are too small. And, while they are at it, we think modern tastes run to low-profile rear sights rather than the very high unit now used. Lastly, we did not like the floorplate on the magazine as it seemed mismatched to the grip frame spoiling the otherwise graceful lines.

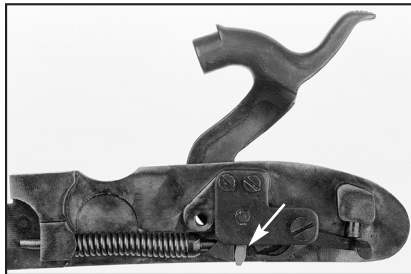
CZ's new 97 pistol appears to be a quality product. Yes, it remains thoroughly conventional, yet it is modern in many traditional ways (automatic firing pin safety with blued steel and walnut) that will appeal to the conservative shooter in all of us. 

LYMAN GREAT PLAINS HUNTER



Lyman's Great Plains Hunter combines traditional styling with contemporary features to offer performance today's shooter demands. The key to this performance is the barrel with 1:32" twist for stabilizing conical or sabot bullets.

BLACKPOWDER rifle shooters looking for a side-hammer cap-lock with fast-twist rifling as found in most in-line muzzleloaders should take note of Lyman's Great Plains Hunter rifle. The rifle follows traditional lines, but offers the performance modern shooters demand.



A half-cock position and an ingenious tab (arrow) incorporated into the lock prevent the gun's hammer from falling against the nipple if it slips from your grasp during cocking. A heavy coil spring powers the Lyman Great Plains Hunter's hammer.

LYMAN HUNTER

MANUFACTURER: Investarms, Brescia, Italy
IMPORTER: Lyman Products Corp. (Dept. AR), 475 Smith St., Middletown, CT 06457; (860) 632-2020
CALIBER: .50 (tested), .54
ACTION TYPE: outside hammer, caplock, percussion rifle
BARREL: 32", octagonal, bright, blued steel
RIFLING: conventional, six-groove, 1:32" RH twist
SIGHTS: fixed, buckhorn rear; additional buckhorn rear drift-adjustable for windage and click adjustable for elevation; blued steel blade front
FINISH: bright blue
TRIGGER: adjustable, double-set, 3½-lb. pull
STOCK: satin, oil-finished walnut: length of pull, 13¾"; drop at heel, 3"; drop at comb, 1½"
WEIGHT: 9 lbs., 4 ozs.
OVERALL LENGTH: 49"
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$430 (percussion), \$455 (flint)

The main feature of the new Lyman rifle is a 32"-long, full octagon barrel with the length needed for more thorough combustion of heavy hunting loads. Better combustion means higher muzzle velocity than is obtainable from a shorter barrel with a given load. Another desirable feature is its shallow-groove rifling with a 1:32" twist to stabilize the heavy conical and sabot bullets commonly used for hunting. The shallow rifling makes the gun easier to load and still provides adequate purchase on the bullet or sabot.

Dual wedge pins pass through underlug tenons and a patent breech plug engages the tang to secure the barrel in the stock. Wedge plates, as well as all other hardware, are blued steel, except the lockplate, which is color-casehardened.

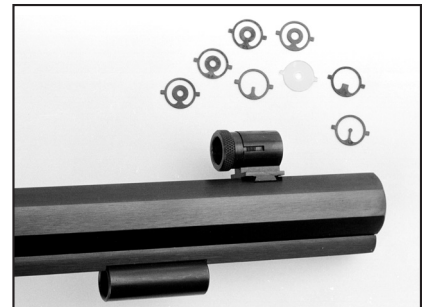
The half-stock is dark, oil-finished walnut with a generous cheekpiece. The steel nose cap, crescent buttplate, trigger guard and stock thimble are blue. Fit and finish of all parts are excellent.

Two thimbles dovetailed into the solid barrel under rib secure a full-length wooden ramrod. The ramrod has brass tips: one threaded for accessory tips, the other concave for seating projectiles.

Double set triggers are adjustable for weight of pull and use a double lever arrangement to set the front trigger by first pulling the rear trigger. When the front



The accuracy of our sample .50-cal. rifle was excellent, especially with a load made up of 90 grs. of Pyrodex RS by volume and Lyman's 335-gr. Shocker bullet in sabot. Ignition was not reliable with Pyrodex Pellets.



Our sample Great Plains Hunter came equipped with an optional Lyman 17EAU globe front sight. Eight different front sight elements come with this sight unit.

trigger is pulled, its lever lifts the sear, allowing the hammer to fall under the power of a heavy coil spring. There is a half-cock position for the hammer and an ingenious tab incorporated into the lock that prevents the hammer from falling against the nipple if it slips from the shooter's grasp during cocking.

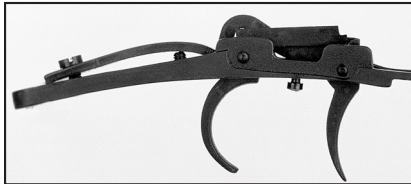
The nipple threads into the patent breech and accepts standard No. 11 percussion caps. A clean-out screw built into the side of the breech gives easy access for cleaning the critical flash channel.

Standard sights consist of two sturdy, steel buckhorn rears and a steel blade front. The first rear buckhorn is a traditional, non-adjustable unit dovetailed into the barrel. It is easily drifted out and replaced by the adjustable buckhorn. This unit is drift-adjustable for windage and has click elevation adjustments. The front sight, too, is dovetailed into the barrel near the muzzle.

Our sample came with the optional Lyman 57GPR rear peep sight and 17EAU globe front sight. While the front blade must be drifted out and replaced with the globe sight, the peep sight quickly and easily mounts in the pre-drilled and tapped holes in the tang. If the peep sight option is taken, the buckhorn rear sight should be removed.

We fired the Lyman Great Plains Hunter using a variety of conical and sabot bullets. Charges ranged from modest target

loads to the maximum of 100-grs. equivalent of blackpowder or suitable blackpowder replica. We also included Pyrodex Pellets in the test, as we are frequently asked if they are compatible with side-hammer, cap-lock rifles. Accuracy results are summarized in the accompanying table, and we experienced no malfunctions of any kind using blackpowder or loose Pyrodex. We did, however, experience about half a dozen misfires and 10 to 12 hang-fires when using Pyrodex Pellets and therefore must recommend against using these in the Great Plains Hunter rifle. The optional peep sight is a great aid for accurate shooting when a scope



The Great Plains Hunter's double-set triggers are adjustable for weight of pull and use a double lever arrangement to set the front trigger by first pulling the rear trigger.

is not used, and the set trigger permitted us to adjust the pull weight down to a safe, acceptable level. Everyone here liked the appearance and handling of the Great Plains Hunter. Our only complaint—a truly minor one—is that we would prefer a more sturdy ramrod. By the end of our day of shooting, quite a bit of the rod had been abraded away from contact with the muzzle.

While we tested the cap-lock Hunter version, the Lyman Great Plains rifle is available in several other configurations and even kit form. Calibers are .50 or .54, and an optional 1:60" twist is offered in both calibers for roundball shooters. Hunters in Pennsylvania and traditionalists elsewhere will be glad to hear that a flintlock model is cataloged. Left-handers haven't been neglected, either. **NRA**

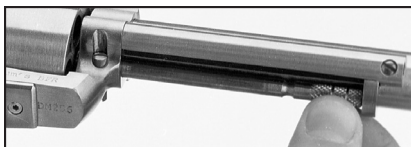
SHOOTING RESULTS						
.50 Cal. Load	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Recoil (ft.-lbs.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)
Buffalo 375-gr. HPBT 100-grs.* Elephant FFg CCI No. 11 Magnum Percussion Caps	1162 Avg. 36 Sd	1125	13.7	3.54	4.28	3.86
Lyman Shocker 335-gr. LHP 90-grs.* Pyrodex RS CCI No. 11 Magnum Percussion Caps	1336 Avg. 30 Sd	1328	13.3	2.12	4.18	3.16
Swift 265-gr. JA-F Two 50-gr.* Pyrodex Pellets CCI No. 11 Percussion Caps	1580 Avg. 37 Sd	1469	12.9	3.72	4.76	3.92
Average Extreme Spread:						3.65
Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 32" barrel. Range temperature: 68° F. Humidity: 26%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yds. from sandbag rest. Abbreviations: *(blackpowder equivalent by volume), HPBT (hollow-point boattail in sabot), JA-F (jacketed A-Frame in sabot), LHP (lead hollow-point in sabot), Sd (standard deviation)						

MAGNUM RESEARCH BFR



Magnum Research is now the exclusive distributor of large, stainless steel revolvers made by D-Max of South Dakota. Called the Biggest Finest Revolver, or BFR, the gun is offered in two sizes with chamberings ranging from .22 Hornet to .45-70 Gov't.

WHEN we reviewed the D-Max Sidewinder revolver (July 1996, p. 48), the big sixgun was offered only with a long cylinder in .45 Colt/.410



Pulling out the base pin just barely allows removal of the cylinder before stopping against the ejector rod button. This renders it a captive part, helping prevent its loss.

bore chambering. D-Max has now teamed up with Magnum Research as its exclusive distributor and offers new calibers and a standard-size cylinder revolver. Called the Biggest Finest Revolver, or BFR, the stainless steel gun is chambered for .454 Casull, .45 Colt (+P), .22 Hornet or .50 AE in the standard-size cylinder Little Max, or .45 Colt/.410 bore, .45-70 Gov't. or .444 Marlin in the long cylinder Maxine.

A BFR Little Max in .45 Colt (+P) was received by the NRA Technical Staff for test and evaluation. Design closely follows that of the Ruger Super Blackhawk—so much so that the checkered, rubber, Uncle Mike's

BFR LITTLE MAX

MANUFACTURER: D-Max, Inc. (Dept. AR), 41428 15th St., Springfield, SD 57062

DISTRIBUTOR: Magnum Research (Dept. AR), 7110 University Ave. N.E., Minneapolis, MN 55432; (800) 772-6168

CALIBER: .454 Casull, .45 Colt +P (tested), .22 Hornet, .50 AE

ACTION TYPE: single-action revolver

FINISH: natural stainless steel

OVERALL LENGTH: 13½"

BARREL: 7½"

RIFLING: six-groove, 1:20" LH twist

WIDTH: 1¾"

HEIGHT: 6¾"

WEIGHT EMPTY: 56 ozs.

SIGHTS: black, square notch rear, click-adjustable for windage and elevation; orange ramp front

TRIGGER: single-stage, 3¼-lb. pull

STOCKS: black, checkered, rubber Uncle Mike's

ACCESSORIES: cable lock

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$899

stocks are marked "fits Ruger Super Blackhawk." And well they should as the grip frame component of the BFR is actually made by Ruger and bought by D-Max. This grip frame attaches to the investment cast, 17/4PH stainless steel cylinder frame. The frame differs from Ruger's in that the



Design of the BFR closely follows that of the Ruger Super Blackhawk. The grip frame of the BFR is actually manufactured by Sturm, Ruger & Co. and bought by D-Max.

top strap is thicker as is the front of the frame where the barrel threads in. On the Maxine model, the cylinder frame is naturally longer to accommodate cartridges such as the .444 Marlin for which the big revolver is chambered. Like the Ruger, the BFR's frame incorporates a frame-mounted firing pin that can be struck by the hammer only when the trigger, which lifts the transfer bar between the hammer and firing pin, is pulled.

Both the five-shot cylinder and 7½" barrel are 416 stainless steel. Six-groove rifling on our sample is cut at a rate of 1:20", left-hand twist. Sights consist of a Millet front blade with fluorescent orange ramp, and a black, square-notch rear that is click-adjustable for windage and elevation. Currently, the top strap does not come drilled and tapped for scope bases, though Magnum Research



Accuracy from the BFR inspired confidence in shooters. Recoil was quite mild with standard .45 Colt-cal. factory loads.

advises that feature is under consideration. Internal parts are similar to those of the Ruger Super Blackhawk. An interlock on the loading gate prevents the hammer being pulled back with the gate open, or the gate opening with the hammer back. Like Ruger single actions,

the BFR loads with the hammer down. Pulling out the 3½"-long base pin just barely allows removal of the cylinder before stopping against the ejector rod button. This essentially renders the pin a captive part, helping prevent its loss. The hammer has grooves across its spur for better purchase when thumbing it back, and the trigger blade is smooth. Overall finish is brushed stainless steel, and good attention is given to final fit and finish.

The Magnum Research BFR was fired for accuracy with the results shown in the accompanying table. Function firing was with a variety of .45 Colt ammunition, including +P, with no malfunctions of any kind. Accuracy was confidence-inspiring and recoil pleasantly mild.

The BFR, then, lives up to its name. Clearly, this revolver is big. Fit and finish are excellent, and accuracy is above average. (RD)

SHOOTING RESULTS

.45 Colt Caliber (f.p.s.)	Vel. @ 15' (ft.-lbs.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Recoil (ins.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average
3-D Blue B45LCRN 255-gr. LRN	724 Avg. 20 Sd	297	4.2	0.59	1.70	1.26
Federal 45LCA 225-gr. LSWC H-P	863 Avg. 9 Sd	372	4.2	1.23	1.81	1.60
PMC 45LA 250-gr. FNL	712 Avg. 15 Sd	281	4.3	1.78	3.05	2.45
Average Extreme Spread:						1.77
Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 7.5" barrel. Range temperature: 71° F. Humidity: 31%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. from a Ransom Rest. Abbreviations: Sd (Standard deviation), FNL (flat-nose lead), LRN (lead round-nose), SWC H-P (lead semi-wadcutter hollow-point)						

FRANCHI ALCIONE SPORTING



Franchi has a new Sporting Model in its Alcione line of over-under shotguns. Benelli USA imports the new shotgun, which has features desired by sporting clays shooters.

ITALIAN gunmaker Franchi has a new Alcione over-under shotgun for the sporting clays market. Imported by Benelli USA and called the Sporting, this gun has unique design features such as an interchangeable barrel set capability requiring no custom fitting. While the Alcione (February 1988, p. 44) has an automatic safety, the Sporting has a manual safety as befits a competition gun.

Like the Alcione, the Sporting's action can be thought of as an update of the Browning Superposed, with considerable

simplification in the cocking and ejection mechanisms. The receiver remains rather deep, however, thanks to the large single underlug that locks barrels and action. Plates on either side of the action are easily removed for engraving or etching to suit the owner's preferences.

The rather complicated cocking system of the Superposed is replaced by a simple cylindrical rod that passes down the receiver bottom and cocks both hammers. The hammers are held rearward by sears mounted in the bottom tang rather

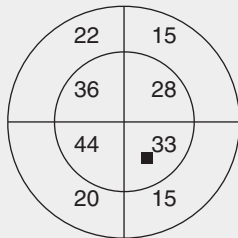
than top-mounted as in the Browning.

Like the Superposed, the ejector system on the Sporting trips by means of a pair of rods passing through the receiver sides that activate ejector hammers mounted in the fore-end iron. The ejectors are of simplified Superposed pattern, with a separate ejector and extension on each side, and the stop screws are replaced by roll pins.

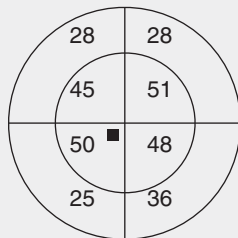
Also retained from the Alcione is the trigger-mounted barrel selector. A button in the gold-plated trigger blade moves the selector block left or right, engaging sears

FRANCHI ALCIONE SPORTING

AVERAGE OF 10 PATTERNS AT 40 YDS.



Improved Cylinder

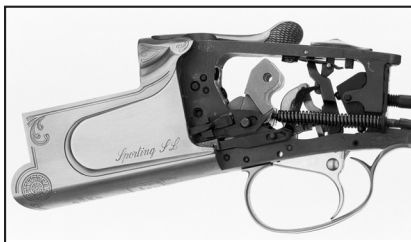


Modified Choke

■=Point of Hold

Rem. Premier Light Target 12-ga. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ "—1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.—No. 8 lead
Average Pellet count—482
Measured Velocity @3-ft.—1179 f.p.s. Recoil: 17.7 ft.-lbs
Remaining Energy Per Pellet @ 40 yds.: .9 ft.-lbs

Total Hits	210 (44%)	Total Hits	311 (65%)
21" Inner Circle	138 (29%)	21" Inner Circle	194 (41%)
30" Outer Ring	72 (15%)	30" Outer Ring	117 (24%)



The Sporting's action can be thought of as an update and simplification of the Superposed. The receiver remains deep, thanks to the gun's large, single locking lug.

for the lower or upper barrels. The inertia block of the Alcione is dispensed with in favor of a mechanical trigger. This effect is achieved by a spring-loaded plunger in a block mounted in the rear of the tang that applies constant, forward pressure to the inertia block. One or another arm of a U-shaped extension of the block contacts the tail of its sear. After firing, the block moves forward about 1/10" allowing the bend of the U to contact the other sear.

Barrels are 30" long with 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " chambers and are assembled on the monobloc system. They are chrome-lined, with elongated forcing cones and are ported to limit muzzle rise. They are joined by ventilated side ribs to a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ "-long wedge between the muzzles. A low, 10 mm-wide, ventilated top rib has a gold mid-point bead and high-visibility red front bead and is cross-hatched to reduce glare. As befits a sporting clays gun, the Sporting accepts extended choke tubes. Modified, improved cylinder and cylinder chokes—as well as a choke wrench—were supplied with our sample.

fore-end. Finish is satin with hand-cut checkering in a bordered point pattern of 22 lines per inch on the pistol grip and fore-end. As is usual these days with hand-cut checkering, there are a few overruns and many places where the cuts come up short. Both the fore-end and comb are fluted, and the recoil pad is Franchi's exclusive "no-catch slip pad." This pad incorporates a smooth, hard, black plastic top portion that reduces the chance of catching when shouldering the gun and a ventilated, black rubber lower portion to reduce felt recoil. Cast is considerably on to place the centerline of the bore directly behind the eye of right-handed shooters.

The Franchi Alcione Sporting was pattern-tested with the results shown in the accompanying table, function-fired with Federal, Remington and PMC ammunition, and fired on hand-thrown clay pigeons. At 8 lbs. 10 ozs. our sample was slow to get moving, but naturally followed through with virtually no effort.




Nickled side plates on either side of the action are easily removed for engraving or etching to suit the owner's preferences.

Other barrel sets may be ordered, including 20-ga. Barrel sets do not require gunsmithing for fitting thanks to an ingenious arrangement in the fore-end iron. This arrangement has a spring-loaded mechanism that presses forward against the fore-end hanger to pull replacement barrels tight against the hinge pin.

The sample gun's stock is medium-brown European walnut, generally straight-grained on the buttstock, but well-figured on the

Checkering provided just the right amount of purchase to control the gun without being abrasive and the slip-pad recoil pad helps the gun easily slide onto the shoulder.

Typical of Italian shotguns, the Sporting patterned tight for the constriction indicated on the modified tube. European chokes should be thoroughly pattern-tested and a more open choke than usual given serious consideration. Despite its tight patterning, hits proved easy with the Sporting. Targets hit within 25 yds. or so were thoroughly "smoked" with longer range targets readily broken at 50 yds. Trigger pulls were good—being 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. for the lower barrel and 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. for the upper.

As a sporting clays gun, the Alcione Sporting offers features currently popular in those circles. In the field, it's heavy for upland birds, but should be right at home in a goose pit or duck blind. 



A spring-loaded mechanism in the Franchi Alcione's fore-end presses forward on the over-under's fore-end hanger to pull replacement barrels tight against the hinge pin.

ALCIONE SPORTING

MANUFACTURER: Franchi S.p.A., Via del Serpente 12, 25131 Brescia, Italy
IMPORTER: Benelli USA (Dept. AR), 17603 Indian Head Highway, Accokeek, MD 20607-2501; (301) 283-6981

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

ACTION TYPE: box-lock over-under shotgun

RECEIVER: steel

OVERALL LENGTH: 48"

BARRELS: 30", chrome-lined, ported with lengthened forcing cones and ventilated rib

FINISH: nickel receiver with scroll engraving, high-polish blued barrels

WEIGHT: 8 lbs., 10 ozs

TRIGGER: single, selective, mechanical, gold-plated; top, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. pull; bottom, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. pull

STOCK: satin European walnut with fluted comb and fore-end; length of pull, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; drop at heel, 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; drop at comb, 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

CHOKE SYSTEM: Benelli/Beretta pattern changeable, screw-in choke tubes

ACCESSORIES: modified, improved cylinder and cylinder chokes; choke tube wrench

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$1,227