

Nelson Concept Rifle!

RIFLE

Sport Firearms Journal

Woodward & Holland
Rifles from England's
Golden Age!

.31 CALIBERS
WW II BOLT ACTIONS



May 2010 No. 250

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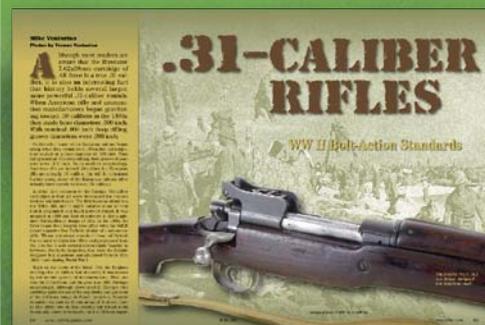
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The Anschütz Model 1770 is outfitted with a Docter Optic 3-10x40 scope in B-Square rings/bases. Photo by G. Hudson.



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INSERTS AND APERTURES

DOWN RANGE

by Mike Venturino

Plethora is a word I've seen in print often but never once have heard it spoken. I just looked it up in the dictionary, and it means "superabundance." That makes it perfectly descriptive for the inserts we black powder cartridge rifle (BPCR) shooters have available for our front sights.

Before getting involved with such rifles, especially in a competitive sense, I was aware of the Lyman 17A style of front sights and the inserts used in them. However, I had no idea that front sight inserts date all the way back to the 1870s and perhaps beyond.

With the popularity of BPCR shooting over the last few decades, it is no wonder that such a plethora of sight inserts is now available. They range from, but certainly are not limited to, simple posts to designs meant specifically for silhouette competition that form outlines of the various metallic silhouettes. In between are ones like crosshairs; pinhead posts; double crosshairs; thin posts; medium posts; wide posts; posts coming in from 12, 3,

6 and 9 o'clock but stopping shy of center; and apertures.

But what an assortment of apertures! There are big apertures and tiny apertures. There are both of those types with thin rings and then again both types with thick rings. There are even apertures with thick rings that

Mike considers the large size Montana Vintage Arms Hadley eyecup with its plethora of aperture sizes just as important as choosing the proper sight insert.

also have thin crosswires extending in those 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock directions. And if all this isn't confusing enough, some front sights can accommodate two inserts at the same time so the shooter can make combinations.

Twenty-five years ago at the advent of BPCR Silhouette competition, my eyes allowed the use of a crosshair insert. In effect that sight picture equates to a 1x scope. That worked well for me on the rather generous size rams and pigs *if* they were painted white. When painted black, the black crosshairs disappeared



when put on the silhouette. Also the junction of the crosshairs completely blotted out the turkey silhouette. For that target I sighted in with the silhouette setting in the right/upper, 90-degree angle made by the crosshairs. All that was soon moot, because in only a couple of years, my eyes deteriorated to the point that they saw four crosshairs – two horizontal and two vertical – and I didn't know which were real.

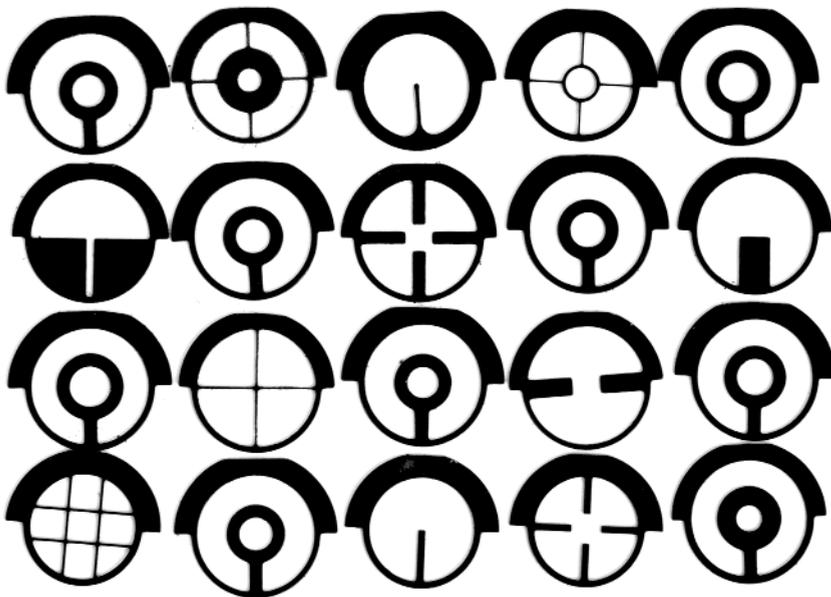
For many competition seasons thereafter, the medium post was my mainstay. It was especially helpful in the years when my rear sight had no windage adjustment. The front one did have that, but

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This assortment of 20 front sight inserts is a mere portion of the plethora available to the BPCR competitor. The two at left in the top row are the ones Mike uses most often.

range safety officers would about faint if a shooter pulled his muzzle back behind the firing line to make corrections. The sharp corners of the post allow a shooter to “pull windage” or use “Kentucky windage” without actually moving the sight. As long as the correction didn’t entail moving the sight completely off the silhouette, holding a post slightly off center is doable. I actually shot well enough with that method that in 1992 I set a long run record on rams at the nationals and won a few monthly events here and there. The downside of the post insert is that it is

difficult to hold elevation, especially on black targets. It was very easy for that black post to disappear on black targets and allow the sight picture to creep upwards a tiny bit. At 500 meters a “tiny bit” of sight picture creep accounts for a lot of inches.

So eventually I followed the crowd and began to use an aperture front sight. Since the eye will automatically center an object in an aperture, even an irregularly shaped object, they do work well. My problem with them and the reason I resisted aperture inserts was again my eyesight. In the earlier days of

the BPCR craze, most available aperture inserts had thin rings.

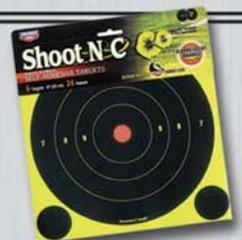
With my eyes that thin ring was faint enough to be fuzzy, so I combined two sizes of aperture to make a thicker ring. In that manner I did manage to win the Montana State BPCR Silhouette Championship for 2000.

Then a friend clued me in on a sight card of thick ring apertures sold by an outfit called IXL Enterprises (1245 Delta Valley Road, Greeneville TN 37745). That card held 10 apertures ranging from .096 to .149 inch. Over a

This is how the sight inserts set into a front sight.



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period of several competition seasons, I finally settled on the insert with a .130-inch aperture for chickens, pigs and rams. However, the 385-meter turkeys were just too tiny in that aperture. Therefore, I went back to the thick ring aperture (also .096 inch) with additional crosshairs in the four basic directions for turkeys. It is the smallest aperture I've been able to find, and with it I don't find it too difficult to score 10s in a row on turkeys. (These measurements of aperture sizes are approximations. They were taken by inserting drill bits until one fit closely.)

Now my eyes are 60 years old, so those inserts out on a 30- to 34-inch barrel appear not as crisp as they once did. This is where the Super-Size Hadley eyecup sold by Montana Vintage Arms (61 Andrea Drive, Belgrade MT 59714) allows me to use *plethora* again. That device has a wheel holding a plethora of different size aiming apertures. My method is this: As I take to my prone mat at the beginning of a match, I sight the rifle and start twirling that Hadley eyecup. Depending on the light conditions that day, one or another of those aiming apertures will cause the front sight to "pop," i.e., it becomes crisp and clear in my vision. What about the targets? They are blurry. That's no problem. I can hit a blur as long as the front aperture is in good focus so I know the blur is centered in it.

At this point someone has to be wondering, "All this is fine for target shooting, but what about hunting with BPCRs?" Well, that's an entirely different matter and best addressed specifically at another time in the near future. 

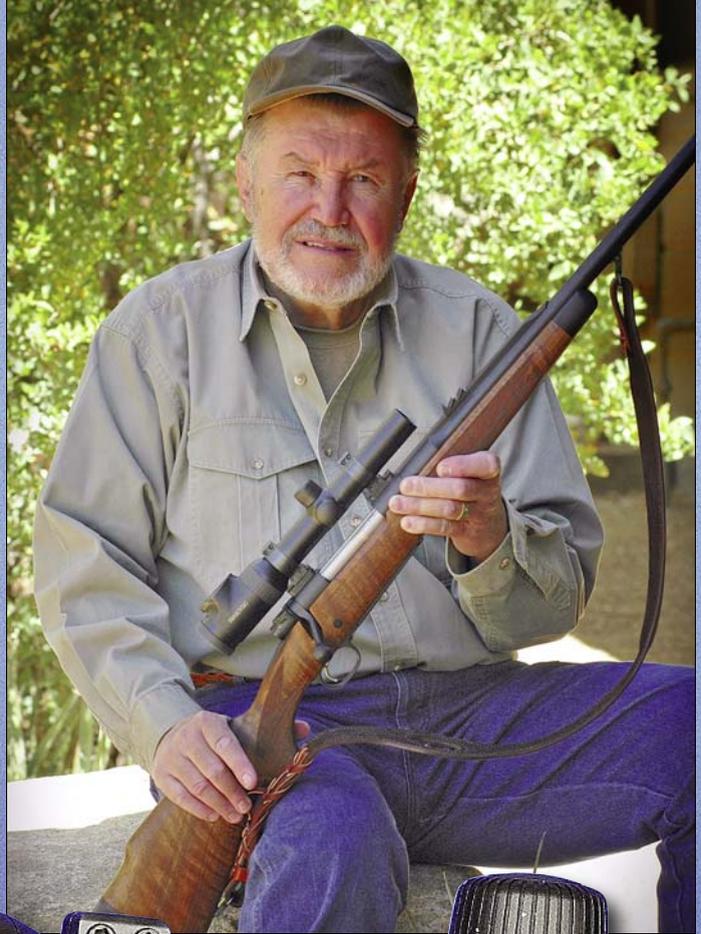
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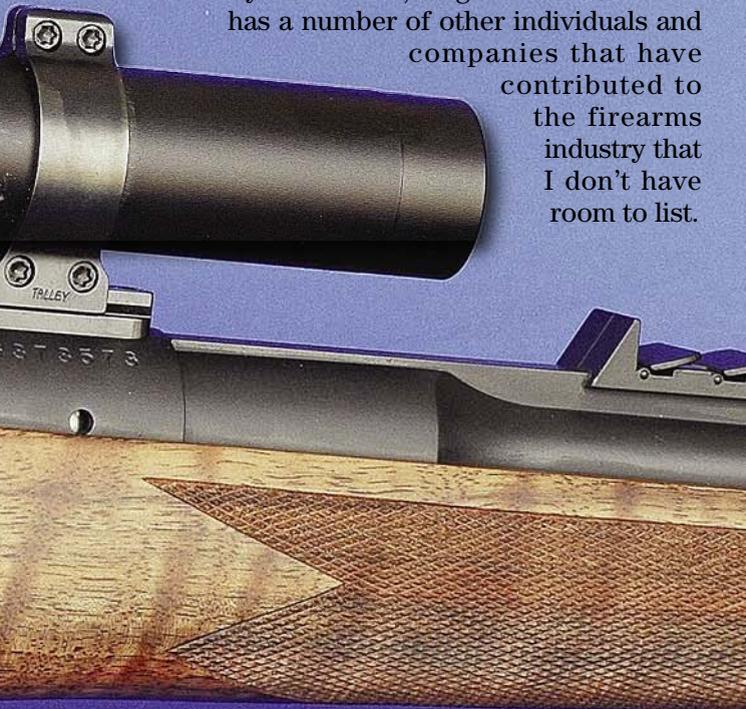


Wildcat for Factory Loads

Buck Pope

For some time I've had a desire to have a big-bore African-type rifle, something above the .375 H&H Magnum. Having been to Africa only once, and like almost anyone who has been to Africa, I wanted to return and hunt Cape buffalo.

I reasoned my first step would be to build a custom rifle for this adventure. We are very blessed that the town of Prescott, Arizona, is a pro-gun and pro-hunting community. The good part is the community has a strong collection of highly knowledgeable gun people who have a broad range of skills. This area has also been home to firearm legends such as Bill Ruger, Bill Atkinson, Paul Marquart and Fred Wells. Noted outdoor writers such as Jim Carmichel and Rick Jamison lived in Prescott for many years. It is also currently home to Gunsite Academy and Sturm, Ruger & Co. The area has a number of other individuals and companies that have contributed to the firearms industry that I don't have room to list.



Buck (inset) and Dan Pedersen developed the Cape Rifle concept based on a Winchester Model 70.

Rapidly gaining a stellar reputation as one of the finest barrel makers in the country is Danny Pedersen of Classic Barrel & Gun Works (339 Grove Ave., Prescott AZ 86301; dan@cutrifle.com). Pedersen is not only a barrel maker and rifling-rebore expert but also an accomplished gunsmith and rifle maker. Over the past nine years, he has assisted me with rebarreling, rebores and to the extent of making a complete custom rifle chambered in a wildcat cartridge we developed, the .25 Pronghorn. It was an interesting project, and I was pleased with the results.

Our idea was to use the .375 case and neck it up to .416.

A few years later we talked about building another rifle, going the opposite way, from small to big bore. We discussed a number of calibers but decided to use the new .375 Ruger and open it up to .416, i.e., a .416/.375 Ruger. In reviewing early data, it showed the wildcat should be similar to the .416 Remington Magnum.

Having shot and hunted with the .375 Ruger, I was impressed with what the shorter, fatter round could do. As much as I like the .375 H&H, you have to give credit to the .375 Ruger introduced in 2007 in cooperation with Hornady.

Our idea was to use the .375 case and neck it up to .416, thinking we would have the first such wildcat. Not long after we started this project, we began hearing rumors about another new cartridge developed by the Ruger-Hornady team. However, no one knew the plan. To go up with the .375 Ruger or go down? In time, the rumor mill was saying the plan was to bump the .375 Ruger up to a .416 Ruger.

One of the advantages of the .375 Ruger is its overall loaded length of 3.340 inches, to fit in a standard .30-06-length action. Hornady with its advanced technology has developed a new powder that basically offers performance in a 20-inch barrel that heretofore would require a 24-inch barrel.

Dan and I thought it would be great to introduce our wildcat cartridge to the community before Ruger and Hornady made their introduction. Due to the case length, all we had to do was locate a standard length action and go from there.

We had already decided it would be either a Mauser or Winchester Model 70 action. I happened to have a stainless Winchester Classic Model 70 .375 H&H rifle that would make an ideal action for the Cape Rifle. The Model 70 has always been one of my favorite actions and with its controlled feed,

.416 Cape

three-position safety, simple trigger and dependability, it was my choice.

With the action selected, the barrel was the next major item. Pedersen has been making barrels for over 10 years under his own business Classic Barrel & Gun Works, and prior to that he worked for the well-known custom riflemaker Fred Wells as his barrel maker.

I happen to like a design that Pedersen makes in addition to others, an integral quarter-rib barrel, his trademark. The barrel would be made out of 416 stainless steel with several added features and have a finished length

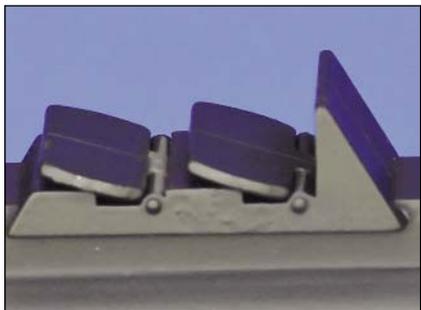


The front sight ramp and sourdough blade are by NECG.

of 22 inches. This is perhaps the ideal length for a close-range, quick-pointing and easy-handling rifle designed for big, dangerous game.

We would add an additional re-

Below, the express sight is mounted on an integral barrel rib. Right, Talley quick detachable rings and bases allow optional use of iron sights.



The Winchester Model 70 Classic action was the basis for the Cape Rifle.

coil lug to help reduce the stress on the stock, which a medium bore such as the .416 calibers present. The barrel would also have, in addition to the integral base for the express sight, a front sight ramp and a front sling holder all incorporated into a

single piece of steel integral with the barrel. Typically the machining hours run from 30 to 35 hours on a barrel of this design.

Our next obstacle was finding a suitable stock to handle this big boy. My resources were not such at the time to invest in a premium stick of English walnut and build it up from there. A few years back, however, I purchased several

choice Winchester Model 70 Super walnut grade stocks. One that appealed to me was taken into the shop for Danny to look over. He also liked it and suggested I show it to Robert Szweda (RMS Custom Gunsmithing, 4120 N. Bitterwell, Prescott Valley AZ 86314),



Holly Short engraved the grip cap.

who is one of the finest stock makers in the country. (As a side note, both Szweda and Pedersen are instructors in the Gunsmithing School at our local Yavapai College.) Szweda took one look at the walnut and said it could be made into a really decent-looking stock by adding a few enhancements and, in particular, changing the satin finish to a hand-rubbed oil finish.

We had a plan, and with all of us helping, we could build one fine custom African hunting rifle.

Pedersen prefers to add a sec-





The stock features a Monte Carlo comb and LimbSaver recoil pad.



Ebony wood caps the forend.

ond recoil lug on these large-bore, hard-hitting calibers. Combining this with the action recoil lug, you get double strength and protection to the stock. The other



The swivel base is inlaid.

big feature with Pedersen barrels is that they are cut-rifled the old-fashioned way. There are fewer than six barrel makers remaining in this country who still do the cut-rifling process, which is slow; however, it is well worth it, as they are known for outstanding accuracy. My Pedersen barrels average under .5 inch at 100 yards.

Szweda began working on the stock from the ground up. We decided to add a LimbSaver recoil pad and an ebony wood forend tip. Szweda also wanted to inlet the swivel base where it would match up beautifully with the wood.

They knew a young lady in the gunsmithing program, Holly Short (5078 Hodges Ave., Langley WA 98260), who was an outstanding student. Her engraving skills, in particular, were exceptional. She and I discussed the

possibility of her engraving the head of a Cape buffalo. Once I saw her sketch, I asked her to have at it.

Finishing the stock was a time-consuming process, requiring some trimming and reshaping in the grip area. Finally oil was hand-rubbed into the wood and allowed to dry. It was again sanded and another coat applied, repeating the process over and over until Szweda was satisfied. The engraved grip cap was installed, and he then recut the checkering and applied another light coat.

Between Robert's talents and

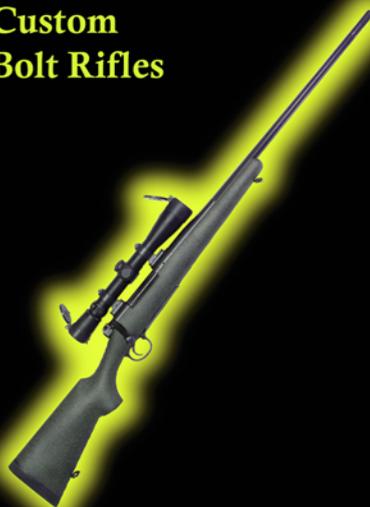
Danny's machining skills, I thought how fortunate I was to be involved in this project and also get to observe and ask questions.

Pedersen prefers to add a second recoil lug on these large-bore, hard-hitting calibers.

As work progressed, I selected a Swarovski Z6 and Z6i series 30mm scope with a 6x zoom that offers more field of view (127.5 feet at 100 yards), added eye relief (3.74 mm) and accuracy detail. I selected the Z6 1-6x24,

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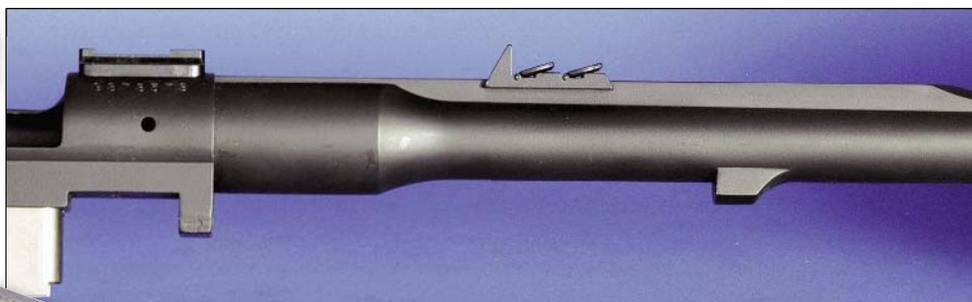
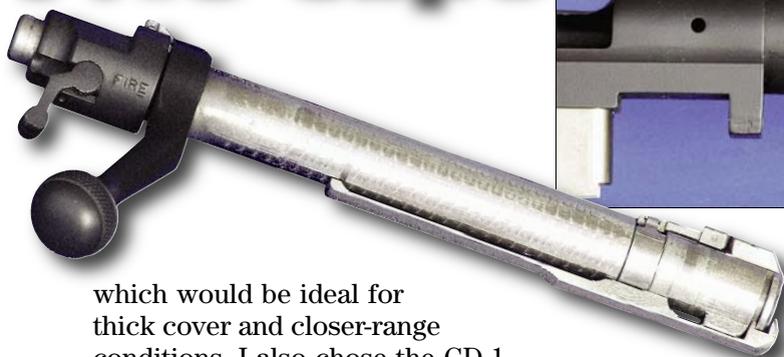
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.416 Cape



Left, the Winchester Model 70 bolt features a three-position wing safety. Above, the barreled action has a Cerakote finish.

which would be ideal for thick cover and closer-range conditions. I also chose the CD-1

Loads for Custom .416 Cape Rifle				
bullet (grains)	powder	charge (grains)	velocity (fps)	group (inches)
400 Nosler Partition	IMR-4895	72.0	2,271	—
		74.0	2,328	.69
		75.0	2,367	1.25
400 Hornady DGX	IMR-4895	72.0	2,264	.69
		74.0	2,312	1.63
		75.0	2,354	1.25
400 Hornady DGX factory load			2,388	1.25
400 Hornady DGS factory load			2,369	1.50

Notes: All loads were fired in three-shot groups at 50 yards. Factory loads were rated at 2,400 fps.
Be Alert - Publisher cannot accept responsibility for errors in published load data.

reticle that has illumination ideal for twilight conditions.

I went with an old favorite scope mount, Talley Manufacturing, Inc. (PO Box 369, Santee SC

29142), selecting the quick detachable steel model. For open sights we installed a two-blade express sight and the Sourdough front blade by NECG and avail-

able through Brownells. (All the hardware items were purchased from Brownells.) Bottom metal is stock except for replacing the mounting screws with B-Square 5/8-inch socket head trigger guard screws.

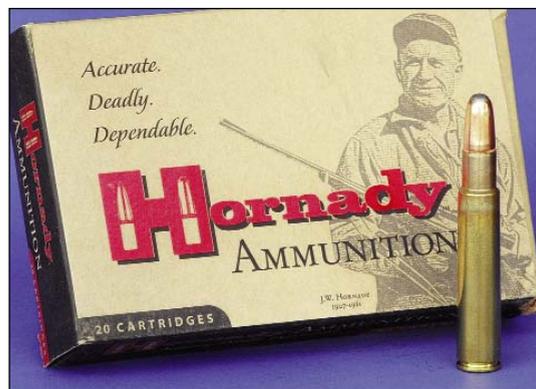
We discussed what type of finish to put on the stainless steel action and barrel. There are several good finishes available, but we thought Cerakote matte black would best suit our needs; it's tough and can withstand harsh conditions. Jerry Eisenburg, owner of Blues Brothers Firearm Refinishing, has a local shop, and he is highly experienced in applying various finishes, including Cerakote. The barreled action, including the bottom metal, came out nicely. The next step was to assemble the rifle and install the sights.

During this time Ruger announced the new .416 Ruger and that it would soon be available in several of the Ruger Hawkeye rifles. We had lost the race, but we did, however, have one of the first, if not the first, custom .416/.375 Ruger rifles to be made into a custom African rifle. About this time an old friend, Dick Murray of Murray's Custom Leather (PO Box 373, Aledo TX 76008), provided me with one of his popular, handsome and practical leather Cobra rifle slings. He makes fine leather hunting items, such as bags, slings, cartridge holders, belts and so on.

Danny had wisely guessed right in chambering the rifle to also fit the new .416 Ruger factory load



Left, .416/.375 Ruger reloading dies are available from Redding. Right, Hornady offers .416 Ruger ammunition.



made by Hornady. We could now handload the .416/.375 Ruger and also test fire the new factory Hornady .416 ammunition.

Sometime before I got a set of Redding custom dies for the .416/.375 Ruger, and using .375 Ruger brass, we developed our own loads for this caliber. Danny, using the QuickLOAD database (NECO, 108 Ardmore Way, Benicia CA 94510; 1-800-451-3550), was able to come very close to the projected data.

We had expected the cartridge to be very close to the .416 Remington, but you cannot assume anything when developing loads. We were targeting a 400-grain bullet at about 2,400 fps, assuming pressures were safe. Using an RCBS loading press to expand the brass from .375 to .416, the brass reacted well. I also selected Federal Large Rifle Magnum primers (215) for testing. Powder selection was IMR-4895 with .416 Nosler Partitions and Hornady bullets. The target distance was 50 yards.

Hornady has recently added its Dangerous Game "DG" series to its extensive line of loaded am-

munition. It is offering the X and S bullets also as reloading components. The DGX is an enhanced controlled expansion bullet, and the DGS is a solid bullet for deep penetration and no expansion. The Nosler bullet is its well-known and established Partition.

Danny and I were soon in the hills and set up our table and equipment for test firing. We worked up a range of loads, cautiously increasing the powder

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.416 Cape

until we saw any signs of pressure. We were very impressed by the accuracy of the QuickLOAD database, as it was running very close to the actual results. As we approached the upper limits, we saw signs of excess pressure, returning on another day to fire selected loads for accuracy and velocity using an Oehler Model 35 chronograph.

The Cape Rifle when fully loaded – three rounds in the magazine and one in the chamber – with sling and scope attached weighs right at 11 pounds. The length of the rifle is 42¾ inches, a very well balanced rifle with the

Hornady and Nosler 400-grain bullets were used for the range test.

pivot point right at the front edge of the floorplate.

Hornady and Nosler 400-grain bullets were used for the range test. We were expecting to come close to the 2,400 fps, as reported by Hornady in its factory .416 Ruger ammunition. The results shown in the table as 2,367 fps

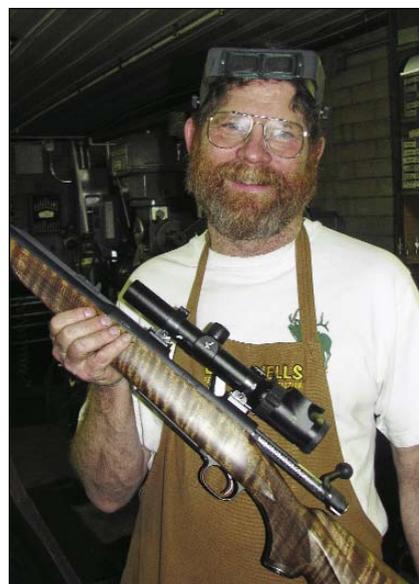


Stockmaker Robert Szweda (left) and Dan Pedersen (right) hold court in Prescott, Arizona.

were maximum. I am also guessing that the Hornady velocities were taken with a 24-inch barrel.

Our pet load, at least for now, is the Hornady 400-grain bullet with 72.0 grains of IMR-4895 at 2,264 fps giving us a .69-inch, three-shot group. Using the Nosler 400-grain Partition and 74.0 grains of IMR-4895, we got 2,328 fps and a .69-inch, three-shot group at 75 yards.

Unfortunately we failed to accomplish our original objective of having this rifle completed before the announcement by Ruger

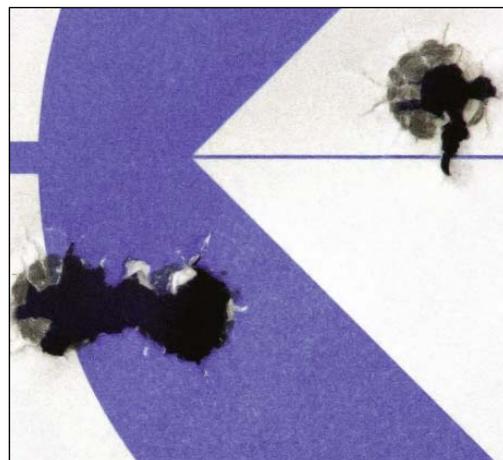


and Hornady of the new .416 Ruger. I also intend to do load development for 350-grain bullets in the near future. Nevertheless we ended up with a custom rifle that to me was a lifetime dream, a true hunter's rifle.

Special thanks again go to Danny Pedersen of Classic Barrel & Gun Works; J.D. Thomas, gunsmith at Classic Barrel & Gun Works; Robert Szweda of RMS Custom Gunsmithing; and Holly Short, engraver. In addition, the fine support given by Brownells, Hornady, Nosler, Redding Dies, QuickLOAD, Blues Brothers, Oehler, Talley, Swarovski and LimbSaver is very much appreciated. 



The new Caldwell shooting table and Lead Sled were used to develop handloads.



This three-shot group measures 1.25 inches.



BREAK-FREE CLP PRECISION SHOOTER

INSIDE PRODUCT NEWS

by Clair Rees

When the U.S. military requested a single, multi-purpose product for weapons maintenance, the requirements were severe. Break-Free CLP was designed specifically for this task. According to the company, it was the first product to meet those requirements.

CLP is a combination of synthetic oils and other proprietary ingredients that effectively cleans, lubricates and protects metal. CLP exceeded military requirements and was approved as a product that met the MIL-L-63460 specification.

Most shooters are aware of this fine lubricant, and Break-Free now offers the Precision Shooter, a hypodermic-style applicator that delivers 7.5 milliliters of CLP lubrication to hard-to-reach areas with pinpoint accuracy. It allows you to apply the exact amount of CLP re-

quired to lubricate slide rails, locking lugs, hammer and trigger mechanisms and other firearm components with no mess or waste.

The compact, 5.25 inch long, .5 inch diameter Precision Shooter is perfect for use on firearms, as well as for other lubrication chores at home or in the field.



According to Break-Free, CLP displaces and loosens firing residue and other contaminants while

reducing metal-to-metal wear. It leaves a long-lasting film of lubrication that helps keep sand, grit and other abrasives at bay, while inhibiting corrosion. CLP won't degrade under high temperatures or extreme pressure.

I can vouch for the fact that this is good stuff, and the new applicator makes it easier to lubricate out-of-the-way places. The CLP Precision Shooter sells for \$4.30 and should be widely available at sporting goods retailers. For more information, contact: Break-Free, Dept. RI, 13386 International Parkway, Jacksonville FL 32218; telephone: 1-800-433-2909; or visit the website: www.break-free.com.

Vero Vellini Fast-Access Cartridge Case

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