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**THE ORIGINAL
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TAFFIN TESTS

John Taffin

**THE SIXGUNNER
HIMSELF: GUNS,
GEAR AND MORE**

MOSTLY ONLY JUST .44s

From the 1870s until the eve of World War I, the accurate .44 Russian served admirably in Smith & Wesson's single-action and double-action top-break revolvers. The black powder load was a 246 gr. round-nosed bullet that zoomed around 700 to 750 fps.

Come 1907, and Smith & Wesson brings forth their first solid-frame, swing-out cylinder, big-bore, double action revolver in the form of the beautifully crafted New Century. Known as the First Model .44 Hand Ejector and the Triple-Lock, it could have been chambered for the same .44 Russian. Instead, the gun maker took another great step forward, lengthening the .097" Russian cartridge case to the 1.160" .44 Special.

But it was definitely an example of two steps forward and one step backward.

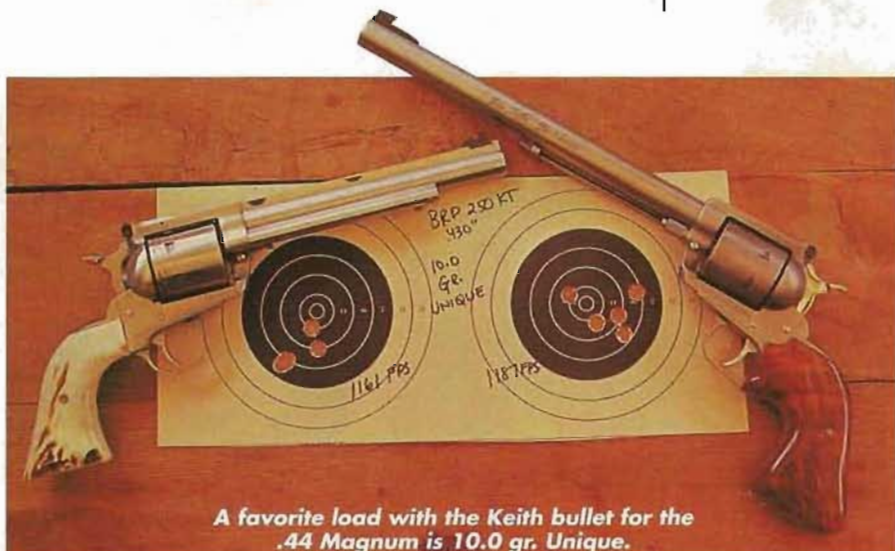
SILLY Manufacturers

Ammunition companies loaded the .44 Special to the same level as the .44 Russian. And the .44 Special's true capability would not be discovered until the late 1920s.

Elmer Keith and others experimented with the .44 Special for the next 30 years. Many sixgunners tried to get ammunition companies to bring out a real .44 Special load ... but it remained, and for the most part still remains, a custom proposition.

Before World War II, the .44 Associates — an almost mythical organization — freely shared information about the .44 Special with each other. Keith was a member of the Associates. Two of the favorite loads circulating around the country were the Keith Load of a 250 gr. hard cast bullet at 1,100-1,200 fps, depending upon barrel length. And there was the same bullet over 7.5 gr. of Unique for 900-950 fps.

Now, for the first time, as far as I



A favorite load with the Keith bullet for the .44 Magnum is 10.0 gr. Unique.

CHART 1

SIXGUN	MV	GROUP
Colt 7" New Frontier	1,112	1"
Colt 5" New Frontier	1,062	1"
S&W Model 24 6"	1,066	2"
S&W Model 624 4"	1,023	2"
TLA Improved #5 5"	1,096	1"
TLA Flat-Top Target 7"	1,128	1"

CHART 2

SIXGUN	MV	GROUP
S&W Model 624 4"	1,190	1"
S&W Model 396 3" MtnLite	1152	1"

Groups are five shots at 50 feet.



know, we have a commercial .44 Special load approaching the Keith Load. Buffalo Bore, heaven-sent, now loads a true 255 gr. Keith bullet at 1,050-1,150 fps, the only variable depending upon your sixgun and, pardon me, your barrel length.

Tested in the following six .44 six-guns, five are chambered for the .44 Special, but lucky Number 5 is a .44 Magnum. All groups are five shots at 25 yards (see chart 1).

In addition to the Keith-like loading, Buffalo Bore is also offering a defensive loading consisting of a 185 gr. jacketed hollowpoint for use in five-shot .44 Specials. They are not to be used in the Charter Arms Bulldog .44 Special (see chart 2).

BRP BULLETS

In the early 1980s, when Roger Barnes told me he was retiring from teaching and going into the bullet casting business, my first thought was this was a classic example of "jumping from the frying pan into the fire." But Roger was able to make the transition successfully by offering premium quality bullets; he casted while his wife Pat managed quality control.

When Roger's wife passed away after a long illness, he decided he couldn't do it anymore by himself. He sold the business to Jay Sanders in Oklahoma.

Continued on page 108

TAFFIN TESTS

Continued from page 22

The first time Jay ventured to the Shot Show, he was individually, and without collusion, accosted by every gun writer who uses BRP Bullets. And we dutifully warned him not to let the quality slip. He certainly took the warning to heart, and has continued to turn out premium quality bullets just as his predecessor did.

Two of my favorite BRP Bullets are the 290 gr. gas-checked .44 SWC and the 305 gr. gas-checked .45 flat nose. With the .44, my two favorite loads have been 10 gr. of Unique for 1,100 to 1,150 fps, depending upon barrel length, and 21.5 gr. of either H110 or WW296 for about 200 fps more muzzle velocity. With the heavy .45 I go two directions. In the .454 Casull, 32.0 gr. of either H110 or WW296 gives 1,600+ fps, while a much milder loading for heavy frame .45 Colt sixguns is 21.5 grs of either powder for right at 1,200 fps from a 7" Ruger single action. All loads exhibit excellent accuracy.

Dear John

One of the most frequently asked questions I receive pertains to the availability of "authentic" Keith bullets. Now, for the first time, BRP is offering a premium quality, 250 gr. Keith bullet for use in the .44 Special or .44 Magnum.

Recently, I've been testing a batch of BRP Keith .44 hard cast bullets in various .44 Special and .44 Magnum sixguns with the following results. All loads were assembled with the BRP sized to .430" and loaded in Starline .44 Special brass over 7.5 gr. Unique using CCI #300 standard pistol primers.

CHART 3

SIXGUN	MV	5 SHOTS/25 YDS
.44 Special/17.0 gr. #2400/Starline Brass/CCI #300 LP Primers		
Colt New Frontier 5" 3rd Gen.	1,154	1 1/8"
Colt New Frontier 7" 2nd Gen.	1,208	1 1/8"
S&W Model 24 6"	1,171	1"
S&W Model 624 4"	1,156	2"
TLA Flat-Top Target 7"	1,295	2"
.44 Magnum/10.0 gr. Unique/Starline Brass/CCI #300 LP Primers		
Ruger Hunter Model 7"	1,168	1 1/8"
Ruger SBHWK 10"	1,187	1 1/8"
S&W Model 629 6"	1,158	1"
.44 Magnum /22.0 gr. #2400/Starline Brass/CCI #300 LP Primers		
Ruger Hunter Model 7"	1,502	1"
Ruger SBHWK 10"	1,589	1 1/8"
S&W Model 629 6"	1,499	1"

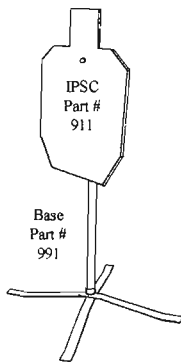
All groups are five shots at 25 yards. Two Colt New Frontiers were used, a 5" 3rd Generation yielding 1,014 fps and five shots in 1" — and a 7" 2nd Generation resulting in 1,067 fps and a group of 1 1/8".

Switching to Smith & Wessons saw a Model 24 6" do 990 fps and 1", while a companion Model 624 4" registered 943 fps and 1". The final testing with this load was performed with a Texas Longhorn Arms 7" Flat-Top Target for 1,011 and 1" fps.

The only fly in the ointment for testing both the Buffalo Bore factory loads and the Keith bullets from BRP Bullets was the shooter's antique eyes, which rarely allow one-hole groups anymore (see chart 3).

BRP has a complete line of premium quality bullets for everything from the .32 Magnum through the .500 Linebaugh. Other recent additions to their line include two heavyweight .44s, a 310 LFNGC and a 325 LBTGC; two .45s, a 260 SWCGC and a 305 LFNGC. And finally, for those who shoot either the .480 Ruger or the .475 Linebaugh, two LFNGC's, one at 335 gr. and the other at 360 gr.

Jay Sanders just recently completed the move to Montana and BRP can now be found at P.O. Box 70, Whitehall, MT 59759; (406) 287-3120. Buffalo Bore is located at 100 Freeman Cr. Rd., Carmen, ID 83462; (208) 756-8085. Both can be found on the net at www.sixgunner.com.



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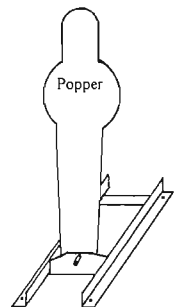
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