

SPECIAL SECTION: CUSTOM 1911 PISTOLSMITH DIRECTORY

SHOOTING

Illustrated

JANUARY 2003

Custom

1911s

When Only the
Best Will Do

Sundra—
*The Quest for
Magnum Power*

*Is Hevi-Shot the
Long-Range Answer?*

SHOOTING ILLUSTRATED \$2.99 US/\$3.99 CAN

PRINTED IN THE US



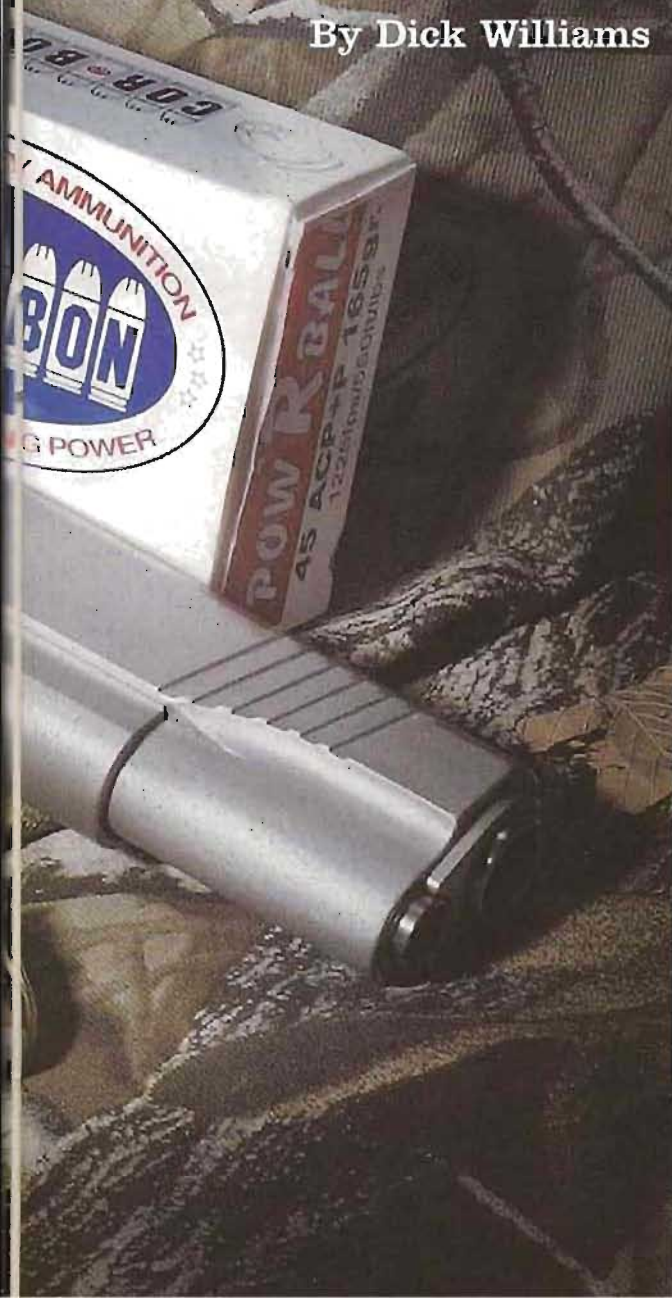
0 71896 47650 7

Extreme Performance

1911s

This time-proven warhorse is moving into an all-new realm.

By Dick Williams



It has stood the test of time like no other handgun in history. Sure, other pistols have been around longer, but none can claim 75 years of uninterrupted service as the military duty pistol of its country. The Model 1911 rode the hips of American soldiers through four major wars and numerous excursions. Even today, its stopping power is unsurpassed by any other service pistol in the world.

I might have said "unmatched," but someone would have claimed .45-caliber revolvers firing the same ammo terminate one-on-one conflicts just as quickly and efficiently as a 1911. Today it is still the darling of the practical shooting world, and while the heavily customized 1911s used in games are frequently chambered for something besides the .45 ACP cartridge, when the accent is on "practical," the caliber is .45.

Over the years, not much interest was shown in the Model 1911 as a hunting handgun. There are several simple explanations for this. In the early days of the 1911's career, handguns weren't thought of as hunting weapons. Even when Smith & Wesson started promoting the .357 Magnum as a hunting tool in the late 1930s, the emphasis was on very high velocity and a flat-nose bullet to enhance terminal performance.

Military hardball ammunition, with its round nose and lackluster velocity, could not match the hyped specifications of the .357 Mag, nor did anyone think the bullet configuration could be modified and still allow the semi-automatic to function reliably. Early military 1911s were not known for their accuracy, since they had meager sights and terrible triggers. They were extremely loose fitting in order to survive harsh combat environments and continue functioning.

By the 1950s, some very accurate, highly modified Model 1911s were winning bullseye matches with both military hardball and semi-wadcutter match ammunition. But then the .44 Magnum was introduced, and the shooting public's mentality remained focused on revolvers as the only appropriate handgun for someone crazy enough to go hunting with one.

Even more powerful revolvers continue to be developed along with single-shot pistols firing full-sized magnum rifle ammunition. With the right wheel-gun or single-shot pistol, a handgunner is capable of humanely taking anything a rifleman can. And while everyone has been watching the ongoing evolution of "proper" hunting handguns, a couple of interesting things have occurred with respect to the old Model 1911.

First, factory ammunition is available that produces 1,000 fps with 230-grain bullets from the standard five-inch barrel. Second, bullet selection for .45 ACP ammo now includes controlled expansion, jacketed hollow points and fully jacketed, non-expanding flat points that allow you to select a bullet appropriate for a variety of hunting applications. Third, 1911s are being delivered from the factory with excellent sights, smooth triggers and marvelous accuracy. And finally, some enterprising folks have recently magnumized the 1911.

I chose two different Model 1911s, each representing a different approach, to reclassify old slabsides as a "magnum." The Long Slide Model 1911 from Springfield Armory features a six-inch barrel and slide. It is called the "V16" (because of the porting system) and is chambered for a stretched .45 ACP called the .460 Rowland. The .460 case is .960 inches in total length, which puts it between the .45 ACP and .45 Winchester Magnum (.898 inches and 1.2 inches in length, respectively).

Extreme 1911s



The Springfield Long Slide in .460 Rowland produces nearly the same energy as the .44 Magnum. Heavier recoil springs and the additional weight of another inch of barrel and slide help dampen the increase in recoil.

Except for the overall length, other external dimensions of the .460 match those of the .45 ACP and .45 Win. Mag. But since the .460 case is essentially a shortened .45 Win. Mag., rather than a stretched ACP, its thicker web and case walls make it capable of handling higher pressures—something like 40,000 c.u.p. Like many American cartridges, the .460 wears its creator's name, specifically Johnny Rowland, a shooter with a radio show in Louisiana. Since the .460 uses the same .452-inch diameter bullets as the ACP and Win. Mag., I can't explain the .460 nomenclature. Clearly, accurate descriptions are not required in naming cartridges, or we would have to say, "the .43 Magnum."

Springfield's stainless-steel Long Slide is a beautiful piece of work. As mentioned above, instead of the standard five-inch barrel and slide, it features a six-inch barrel and slide with a factory porting system of 16 holes in a "V" pattern on top of the barrel and a pair of slots cut in the slide near the muzzle.

When the gun is in battery, ready to fire, the ports are aligned within the slide cuts. The porting holes do cut down a bit on velocity, but between the porting system and the gun's enhanced mass, the Springfield was quite pleasant to shoot, even with the heaviest loads. When chambering a Model 1911 for a powerful cartridge like the .460 Rowland, the trick is controlling the heavy recoil impulse and slowing the cyclic rate.

Dave Williams at Springfield's Custom Shop says that increasing the gun's mass, in this case with the longer slide, is the best way to do this. A heavy-duty spring system is the second-best solution. The V16 employs both the added mass of the six-inch slide and a 22-pound spring system.

For the higher-pressure cartridge, Dave uses an integral ramped barrel with a fully supported chamber.

The gun has Springfield Armory's adjustable rear sight and a black, ramped front-sight blade mounted in a dovetailed slot just in front of the porting slots. It also has serrations at both the front and rear of the slide. There are checkered wood grip panels and a straight mainspring housing with Springfields' Integral Locking System (ILS). The gun also features an ambidextrous safety you might think unnecessary on a hunting handgun, but it does make the V16 "southpaw friendly." Despite the .460's slightly longer case, the pistol uses standard .45 ACP magazines.

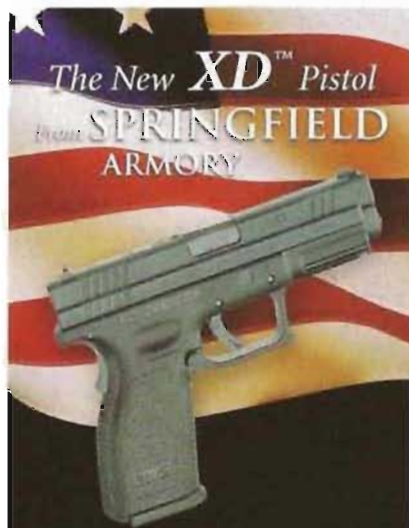
The second gun is a Kimber Classic Stainless Target with a standard five-inch barrel and adjustable sights dovetailed into the slide. The Kimber's barrel had a fully supported chamber, so it did not require a new barrel to handle the .45 Super since external dimensions of a .45 Super and .45 ACP case are identical.

Only the Super's internal dimensions are different since, like the .460 Rowland, it is basically a shortened .45 Win. Mag. case. Robert Hayden at Starline confirmed the .45 Super and .460 Rowland cases had slightly different internal tapers, but both were good for 40,000 c.u.p. in supported chambers.

I sent the gun to Gary Hindman at Ace Custom 45s to install his kit and make any necessary modifications. In addition to Kimbers, Gary will convert Colts, Para-Ordinances, Springfields and Glocks. He will also modify 4.25-inch Commander models, but the resulting gun must be limited to .45 Super Tactical loads, and I wanted no limits placed on my .45 Super.

While the .45 Super modifications are not particularly complex, Gary does emphasize that some machine

Continued on page 46.



**SETS THE STANDARD
FOR SAFETY, RELIABILITY
AND EASE-OF-USE.**

The XD's ultra safety assurance U.S.A.™ action trigger system is part of a revolutionary design that makes the XD the safest polymer pistol you can buy. Built by shooters for shooters, the XD is loaded with features unparalleled in its class.

Available in 9 mm, .40s&w and .357 SIG. Backed by our exclusive lifetime warranty. The XD pistol is the ideal choice for law enforcement and personal self-defense.

To see the future of handguns, visit your local Springfield retailer, or view the new XD pistol online.



The Oldest Name In American Firearms.
**SPRINGFIELD
ARMORY USA.**

www.springfieldarmory.com

1-800-680-6866

Extreme 1911s

Continued from page 21.



Open bottom holsters will accept 1911s with different barrel lengths as long as other external dimensions remain the same. The tan holster seen here is Bianchi's Minimalist, and in black is The Master from Dillon.

work is required and should be performed by a competent gunsmith. The heart of the conversion system is a guide rod and buffer system, with dual recoil springs and a recoil spring plug. Since there is no added slide mass like the Long Slide, the .45 Super dual recoil springs installed in the Kimber totaled 32 pounds of force, noticeably heavier than any other 1911 I've operated.

The modification includes an extended ejector, an oversize firing pin stop and one seven-round stainless-steel magazine. It also has heavy-duty firing pins, firing pin springs, and a heavy-duty extractor for Series 70 or 80 Colt. On my Kimber, Garey went a couple of steps beyond the full .45 Super conversion and installed a match-grade lightweight aluminum trigger from Casull Arms and a Smith & Alexander arched stainless steel checkered mainspring housing.

The final touch was a set of stippled custom walnut grip panels from Nill-Grips USA. Besides being beautiful, the Nill-Grip panels had a subtle palm swell. Combined with the grips' stippling and arched mainspring housing, the modified 1911 nicely filled the hand and facilitated control when firing the hottest .45 Super loads.

As always, the proof is in the pudding, or in this case, the ammunition. Curtis Shipley, at Georgia Arms, sent some of its .460 Rowland ammo.

SOURCE BOX

Buffalo Bore Ammunition

Dept. SI, P.O. Box 78, Carmen, ID 83462, (208) 756-8085, www.buffalobore.com

Kimber

Dept. SI, 1 Lawton Street, Yonkers, NY 10705, (888) 243-4522, www.kimberamerica.com

Springfield Armory

Dept. SI, 420 West Main Street, Geneseo, IL 61254, (800) 680-6866, www.springfield-armory.com

Texas Ammunition Company

Dept. SI, P.O. Box 248, Ballinger, TX 76821, (915) 365-4077, www.texas-ammo.com

Ammunition for the .45 Super came from Carl Vancil at Texas Ammunition and Tim Sundles at Buffalo Bore Ammunition.

There were some surprises.

First, velocities from the .460 Rowland were less than the velocities for comparable bullet weights in the smaller .45 Super. More puzzling, the .460 factory ammunition gave velocities slightly slower or equal to the suggested starting loads in the Accurate Arms manual, and a couple of hundred feet per second less than the AA manual's listed maximum loads which run close to 40,000 c.u.p.

When I discussed the velocity readings with Curtis Shipley, he stated that their original factory ammo was running closer to the Accurate Arms maximum loads, but a change in powder manufacturers had resulted

in some ammo being released at lower performance levels. Georgia Arms has corrected the problem and is once again realizing velocities in the 1,300 to 1,500 fps-plus range. Curtis stated that reloaders should be able to achieve comparable results by carefully working up from the starting loads recommended in the Accurate Arms manual. Curtis also said Georgia Arms uses AA No. 7 from a European source to load its .460 Rowland ammunition.

Carl Vancil at Texas Ammunition was a bit surprised at the 1,441 fps velocity of the 185-grain Express load. Normally he expects velocities of 1,300, 1,200 and 1,100 fps, respectively, for his standard .45 Super loads in a five-inch barrel when using 185-, 200- and 230-grain bullets.

TA Express loads are meant for use in a six-inch, rather than a five-inch, barrel/slide and will typically give an additional 100 fps more than the standard loads. Both Carl and Garey recommend only standard .45 Super loads be used in five-inch barrel systems. Express loads exceed the design parameters for spring rates/buffer systems installed in five-inch 45 Super pistols and will accelerate wear on the system.

Standard and Express loads operate at two different pressure levels. The standard .45 Super loads do not exceed 30,000 psi, while Express loads are up around 37,000 psi. Both standard and Express ammo are loaded in .45 Super brass and look the same, so be careful in keeping them separate. Texas Ammunition uses Hornady bullets (XTPs for the hollow points and FMJ FPs for solids) and Alliant Power Pistol powder in its ammunition. Carl recommends reloaders go to the Alliant website (www.alliantpowder.com), and look under Power Pistol loads for the .45 ACP +P. Using the starting loads listed and working up carefully until Texas Ammunition performance levels are reached should keep pressures in the safe level. This is only true in a properly modified .45 Super.

The Buffalo Bore .45 Super Ammunition offers about the same performance level as Texas Ammunition standard loads. With the 185-grain jacketed hollow points running slightly more than 1,300 fps, the Kimber was easier to control than with the 1,441 fps TA Express load.

The Springfield Long Slide was



There is a noticeable difference between the normal 1911 grips on the Longslide (left) and palm-swell grips found on the Kimber (right). Grips can make a world of difference in the field, when you're trying to steady your aim after a long stalk.

I was also glad that Garey Hindman had installed the Nill-Grips with their gentle palm swell that helped domesticate Express loads in the Super. In fact, a shooting session with some friends produced rave reviews on the walnut grip panels, which was interesting since hand sizes differed greatly between the four shooters. None of the shooters was recoil sensitive, but all appreciated the feel of the grips' contours when popping off the crisp 185-grain loads. Of course, the other most noted feature in shooting the hot loads was how much the added weight of the long slide slowed the cycling rate and dampened felt recoil.

There are a couple of things you need to keep in mind. First, remember you're dealing with a Model 1911

softer to shoot than the shorter, lighter Kimber, but I never took the Longslide near the .460 Rowland's peak-performance level. Still, Dave Williams' comment about gun mass being the best solution for controlling recoil impulse strikes me as being correct in a 1911, just as it is correct in heavy-caliber hunting revolvers.

The similarity between .45 ACP, and hunting-ready .460 Rowland and .45 Super, makes it much easier to sort by reading head stamps, rather than relying on case length.



semi-auto pistol. This means the energy you put into launching the bullet downrange is also being applied to the slide that's being driven back toward your face.

Stay safe and smart in matching the ammunition to your gun. As it says on the ACE CUSTOM 45's website, "...it was never intended...to wring the last foot per second from a .45 ACP pistol, but to provide a performance boost for .45 auto fans..." Either the .460 Rowland or .45 Super will allow you to hunt big game with a 1911-style pistol, but as with any big-bore hunting handgun, heavy loads batter and wear the gun more than lighter loads. Select ammunition with the power you need for a given application.

Finally, which gun/caliber would I choose? This is not a theoretical question since I am a handgun hunter and avid fan of both Kimber and Springfield .45s, and there are some serious pros and cons involved. From a safety standpoint, if you have other .45 ACP pistols, choosing the six-inch .460 Rowland will prevent you from inadvertently firing hot hunting loads in an un-modified .45 ACP. If your .45s are built to spec, the longer round won't chamber.

For maximum big-game performance, the .460's bigger case will provide a performance edge. And for easier shooting, that extra slide mass means gentler handling and less wear and tear on the gun. But if you already have a Model 1911, you can have it modified for a suitable .45-caliber big-game hunting load and still be able to use it for an everyday carry or defense gun.

With your modified five-inch barrel Model 1911, it's not necessary to buy a new holster. Of course, there's some re-familiarization required with a new gun, but that's no big deal between Model 1911s. You will need to develop some new muscle to operate the slide with its heavier spring system, but consider this an added safety feature.

You'll have to sort ACP and Super cases when loading the heavy rounds, but this is also required with the .460. It's just a bit easier to spot the longer case than to read the word "Super" on the case head.

If you think I'm "waffling," you're right. And since I haven't decided yet for myself, why should I try to influence your decision? One thing I have decided is that both guns/calibers have a place in the handgun-hunting world. If you have an urge to hunt with a 1911, try either one. ☺

LOAD PERFORMANCE

Springfield Long Slide V16: .460 Rowland

Ammo	Average Velocity (fps)	Extreme Spread (fps)	25-yard Group Size (inches)
185-grain JHP	1,317	77	1 1/4
185-grain Nosler JHP	1,360	71	2 1/4
230-grain Gold Dot	1,208	51	2 1/4

Kimber 45 Super: five-inch barrel

Ammo	Average Velocity	Extreme Spread	25-yard Group Size
Buffalo Bore			
185-grain JHP	1,315	22	3 1/4
200-grain JHP	1,197	35	1 1/4
230-grain JHP	1,084	42	3 1/4
230-grain FMJ	1,117	40	2 1/4

Texas Ammunition

185-grain Express	1,441	26	3 1/4
200-grain JHP	1,246	66	4 1/4
200-grain JHP Express	1,287	30	2
230-grain JHP Express	1,176	30	2 1/4
230-grain FMJ FP	1,127	16	3

Kimber 45 Super and Springfield TRP with .45 ACP ammo

Ammo	Average Velocity		Extreme Spread	
	Kimber	Springfield Armory	Kimber	Springfield Armory
Cor-Bon 165-grain Powerball	1,187	1,198	33	16
Cor-Bob 185-grain JHP+P	1,162	1,174	50	35
Cor-Bon 230-grain JHP+P	961	954	21	30
Black Hills JHP+P	972	973	29	26