



MATCH READY GUNS SERIES

Long Hunter USFA SAA

By Captain George Baylor, SASS #24287



Capt. George Baylor,
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An orange among the apples?

Long Hunter called to tell me USFA was sending a gun for the test. That was good news. Then he mentioned it was in .45 Colt. My original intent was to get 4-3/4" .38s for the test so there would be no oranges with the apples. That ship had already sailed. The Smoke Wagon was only available in 5-1/2" because all of the 4-3/4" guns were sold. Then the Alchimista came out in 5-1/2" and 7-1/2". Almost a third of SASS competitors shoot .45 Colt (source: brass picked up at END OF TRAIL. Two thirds shoot .38 Special. Most of the rest shoot .45 Colt. A small percentage shoot everything else.) They deserve to be part of this series.

I called Potus at Ten-X and asked for some .45 Colt factory ammo for the test. The usual stipulation was "Send anything you want tested." So, he sent all their .45 Colt loads and all their .45 Schofield loads. I had plenty of ammunition

for the Ransom Rest and Oehler Chronograph to play with. I also got Adirondack Jack to send some .45 Special ammunition.

Basics

USFA products are made in the USA using the highest quality machines on high quality metal. They are made to strict, tight tolerances. You can expect all six chambers to shoot to the same point if the ammunition is up to the job. An important factor is *inside* they're all the same. This means the guy line boring the cylinders doesn't know or care if the gun is going to be a Rodeo or a SAA or one of their many other models. What this means to you is that plain-looking Rodeo shoots as well as a beautiful bone case hard-



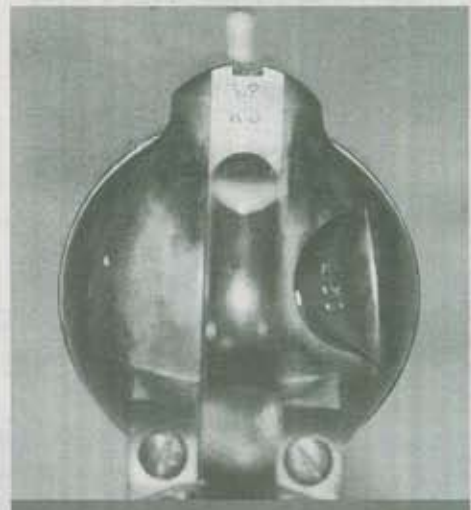
USFA SAA, .45 Colt, 5-1/2" barrel. The picture doesn't do the bone case hardening and deep bluing justice. This is a very beautiful gun.

ened, deep blued SAA. The Rodeo is a very popular gun in SASS. Several top competitors shoot them, usually the Long Hunter version.

Long Hunter

I presume you all at least know of Long Hunter. Just in case you don't, he is a multiple times World and National Champion and a well-known SASS gunsmith. He is an excellent instructor, passing on his knowledge and techniques at the Long Hunter Shooting School. More important, he is a man of honor and integrity. Whether at a match or in business, you can count on him to do the right thing even if it hurts him.

Long Hunter does several things to the guns he sells to make them more competition ready. He widens the rear sight notch from .108" to .140". He thins the hammer .007" so it won't get drag marks. Then, the hammer is machine jeweled or flat



Wide front sight and .140" wide rear sight notch makes quick acquisition of the sight picture easier.

polished, at customer's choice. This one had the plain finish. The thinned hammer is something not done on the Italian match ready guns. They have case colored or case hardened hammers, so they're left alone by the gunsmiths who make them into race guns to preserve that finish.

He does an action job with trigger pull to specifications. I'm not a fan of superlight triggers. I specified 2-1/2 lbs. The SAA arrived with a trigger that averaged 2 lbs. 8 oz. on my Lyman digital trigger pull gauge. It was crisp and no creep, as advertised. For you light trigger fans, he can make them lighter. The hammer pull is light and smooth. Long Hunter replaces the mainspring with a Lee's Gunsmithing Gunslinger flat spring "for a smooth, reliable cocking motion while maintaining a quick hammer drop," as advertised on his website. The factory flat "trigger/bolt" spring is replaced with a wire spring "for added strength."

He also replaces the delicate flat "hand" spring. The frame is drilled, and a Ruger-style coil spring is installed for reliability. This is a major reliability modification. The flat handspring is a major weak point of the SAA design.

The forcing cone is cut to 11°. This is an accuracy modification, aiding the bullet's jump from the chamber to the barrel.

Exterior Finish

The reason you pay more money for the SAA than the Rodeo is strictly finish. Remember, inside they're the same. A Rodeo should shoot as well on a Ransom Rest as a SAA. The finish is USFA's Old Army Bone Case™ and Dome Blue™ finish. In real life, not necessarily in photographs, the finish jumps out at you compared to guns with case coloring instead of case hardening, and the blue is deeper and shinier. The SAA's finish compares well with my SASS Colts. It's hard to say which is better. Fit is exceptional. I included a photo of the loading gate. You can see the line, but you can't feel it, and fit is perfect. It's that way on the entire gun.

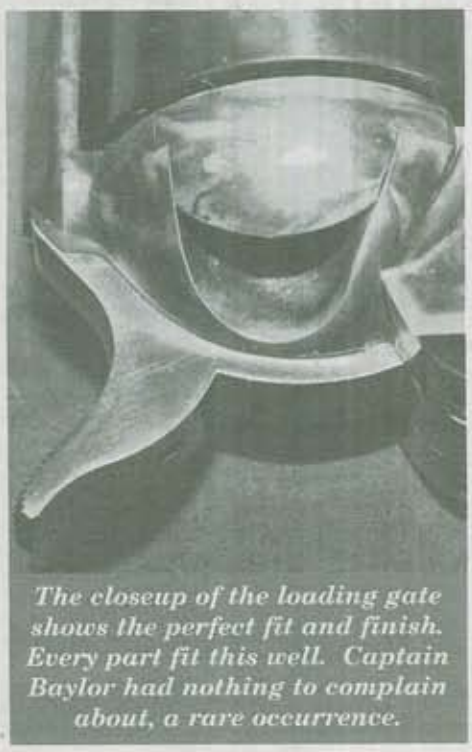
Now readers with a good memory, better than mine, will be getting



The USFA hard rubber grips fit perfectly, are thin enough for our modern shooting styles, look good, and feel good.

on the SASS Wire and complaining that I said last month finish wasn't that important to a SASS competition gun because we'll wear the finish off anyway. That is correct. It doesn't mean we don't want guns with nice finishes. Logic tells me if I need a pair of guns and am going to put 10,000 rounds a year through them, I shouldn't pay extra for finish. But, I still like pretty guns ...

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The closeup of the loading gate shows the perfect fit and finish. Every part fit this well. Captain Baylor had nothing to complain about, a rare occurrence.

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The SAA also has several options the Rodeo (matte blue finish) and Rodeo II (satin nickel with carbona blue accents) don't have. They're available in .38 Special and .45 Colt, cross pin frame, and 4-3/4" and 5-1/2" barrel lengths only. The SAA is available with blackpowder frame at extra cost. It is available in 7-1/2" barrel length as well as the above. Calibers available are .32 WCF, .38 Special, .38 WCF, .44 Special, .44 WCF, and .45 Colt.

Prices

The SAA lists at \$900 for one plus Shipping; \$875 each for two or more plus Shipping; \$25.00 for one gun; \$5.00 for each additional gun. Consecutive serial numbers are available at no extra cost, a \$100 savings over USFA's price. The Rodeo lists for \$595 for two or more; \$625 for one, with the same shipping costs. The Rodeo II lists for \$675 for one; \$645 each for two or more, with the same shipping costs.

The SAA and Rodeo have USFA hard rubber grips, which feel very good. The Rodeo II has USFA "Burlwood" grips.

It should also be noted, the Rodeo II does not get the .140" rear sight notch because the gun is already nicked when it gets to Long Hunter.

Shooting

I took the new gun to Cowtown, north of Phoenix, and shot it enough to break it in before putting it on a Ransom Rest and shooting it through an Oehler 35P Printing Chronograph with proof channel. I set up targets for the Ransom Rest at 15 yards. At Cowtown, 15 yards is about all you get before you run into a VERY steep hill that serves as a berm.

Ten-X sent two blackpowder substitute loads, both using the beta version of a detuned Hodgdon Triple 7 that still hasn't been released by the DOT for shipping to us mere mortals, but can be shipped in bulk to Ten-X. Their 250 gr. load averaged 596 ft./sec., power factor of 149, and put all five rounds into 2.3", center to center. Remember we're usually shooting at big plates within 7 to 10 yards.

The reduced recoil 165 gr. hollow-based bullet over a full case of beta 777 averaged 738 ft./sec., for a power factor of 122, and a group of 2.8 inches.

Ten-X's smokeless loads: 250 gr., 684 ft./sec., power factor 171, and 1.0" group. Potus was correct when he told me it would be the most accurate .45 Colt load. The 165 gr. hollow base bullet gave 556 ft./sec., power factor of 92, and grouped in 1.8". Their 200 gr. load averaged 679 ft./sec., power factor of 136, and grouped in 2.0".

Ten-X also sent their .45 Schofield loads: Blackpowder-165 gr. hollow base LRNFP, 764 ft./sec., power factor of 126, and grouped in 2.0". Their 200 gr. LRNFP load averaged 749 ft./sec., power factor of 150, and grouped in 2.5". Their smokeless loads: 165 gr. averaged 556 ft./sec., power factor of 92, and grouped 2.0".

Then there was their 200 gr. LRNFP Schofield load. It averaged 638 ft./sec. for a power factor of 128, and averaged 0.5". Yes, ONE HALF INCH. This is an accurate gun with an accurate load that it likes!

.45 Special

Adirondack Jack sent me two loads of .45 Special ammunition. This is essentially a .45 ACP case with a .45 Colt rim. (I'm condensing a lot here. He wrote an entire article about it.) When loading it, you just use .45 ACP dies and a .45 Colt shell plate.

He sent two loads. His blackpowder load is 13.2 gr. of Triple 7 and a 160 gr. bullet. It averaged 685 ft./sec. and grouped in 1.3". His smokeless load is 5.0 gr. Bullseye and a 160 gr. bullet. It averaged 802 ft./sec., power factor 128, and grouped 4.5". I wouldn't call either a reduced recoil load, but both were consistent, and that 777 load was very accurate.

The cartridge is intriguing. .45 ACP is a lot easier to load than .45

Colt because the case is short. If your right shoulder had a hard life, loading .45 Colt is tough. (Use case lube.) There are a lot more low recoil loads in the books for .45 ACP than for the big .45 Colt.

Conclusions

This is a fine firearm, and American Craftsmen make it in the USA from American parts. It is comparable to the Colt SAA in quality, maybe superior. That's a never-ending argument in itself; one I won't get into unless Colt sends me a new production gun to compare with this one. Then I'll publish the results under a pseudonym so I don't have to go into the Witless Protection Program. The wide front sight is something you can't get in the Colt. Long Hunter's modifications make it smoother, more accurate, and more reliable than an out of the box USFA SAA.

If it costs too much for you, the Rodeo will shoot just as well. The variety of calibers and barrel lengths in which the SAA is available will satisfy most of the SASS Wire whiners. Those demanding a 12" Buntline won't be happy, but then they never are. Personally, I was very happy with the gun. The only thing that would make me happier would be a pair, consecutive serial numbers, 4-3/4" barrels, in .38/.357 with my name on them. I might even shoot in a category that uses cartridge pistols! ♣

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