EXCLUSIVE: New Barnes MR-X Bullet!

November 2005  No. 222

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More Bullets!
• Ordinary Bullets
• 3 New Bear Bullets

The Art of Bore Cleaning!

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Winchester High Wall
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A Really New Scope Optics - John Barsness

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3 New Bear Bullets Sproemer takes an inside look. Ron Spomer

The “New” Ruger No. 1 Updated and Improved John Barsness
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The Browning High Wall .38-55 is outfitted with a Browning tang sight. The custom High Wall from Ballard Rifle, LLC features a 30-inch octagonal barrel chambered for the .45-90 WCF. Whitetail photo by Michael H. Francis. Rifle photos by Gerald Hudson.

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There’s evidence to suggest that the first jacketed bullet was little more than a copper wire wound around a lead core. That evolved into a copper alloy jacket and lead core. Then someone figured out that gilding metal, 90 to 95 percent copper and 5 to 10 percent zinc, helped reduce barrel fouling. At the time most hunting bullets were roundnose, flatbase designs, reflecting no doubt, the military influence, aka .30-03 and .30-40 Krag (aka .30 U.S.) of the period.

During World War II, when there was a severe shortage of copper, a few enterprising individuals used fired rimfire cases to make jackets for anything from .22 to .30 calibers. The resultant bullets weren’t very durable, nor did they necessarily provide the kind of accuracy we might expect nowadays, but at least they had bullets.

In time bullets became more streamlined with longer, more pointed profiles. Eventually the U.S. military discovered boat-tail designs (first used in Europe), placed a premium on improved trajectory at combat ranges, out to 600 yards and beyond. For sport hunting purposes, however, a major improvement in the ballistic coefficient was required to significantly flatten trajectory out past 300 yards. Even then, the boat-tail had to be formed perfectly or the resultant bullet couldn’t compete with accuracy routinely produced by run-of-the-mill flatbase bullets.

As cartridges became more powerful, producing upwards of 3,000 fps with some bullet weights in representative calibers, bullets had a tendency to come apart on impact, producing superficial surface wounds or failing to reach the vitals, or both. That inspired a few custom bullet makers to come up with thicker, tougher jackets. The design with a “belt” wrapped around it, to reinforce the jacket at high impact velocities, while the front end responded to downrange impact quite nicely.

Another offering was the Winchester Silvertip, a lead core, jacketed bullet with an aluminum alloy cap that extended down inside the nose, effectively reinforcing the front of the bullet on impact or while the loaded round was battered back and forth in the magazine.

The innovative Remington Bronze Point was a cup-and-core bullet with a bronze cone-shaped tip, the tail end of which was secured inside the hollow nose cavity when the jacket was closed to form the ogive at the base of the bronze point.

Neither can we forget one of Elmer Keith’s favorite bullets from Western Tool and Cooper Works (WTC) that were made by inmates in the state penitentiary. They were nothing fancy, just a combination of thick jackets on heavy-for-caliber bullets that would punch through an elk with devastating effectiveness.

There was also the Nosler Partition, a dual core design with a partition dividing the front and back. The idea, according to John Nosler, was to allow the front end to blow off at higher impact velocities, while the back end punched on through.

Nosler’s philosophy challenged conventional wisdom that suggested a bullet should retain a high percentage of weight, and...
expand, to create a larger wound channel. If that occurred at lower velocities with the Nosler Partition, all was well and good, but when the going got tough, such as the shoulder of a 1,400-pound moose, John Nosler wanted the nose to separate, producing secondary missiles to create additional havoc in organs and tissue, i.e., shrapnel.

There were/are other good designs as well, including the Swift A-Frame (similar to the Nosler Partition), Jack Carter’s Trophy Bonded, Barnes Originals, Hawk, etc., plus a number of custom bullets put out by smaller shops.

Fred Barnes (Barnes Bullets, aka Colorado Custom Bullets) designed a bullet back in the 1940s from solid copper with a lead core up front. As the story goes, he couldn’t make it shoot all that well and sold them to P.O. Ackley, who in turn sold them as the Ackley Controlled Expansion (CE). When Randy Brooks bought out Fred Barnes and changed the name of the company to Barnes Bullets, he discovered the CE bullets, got rid of the lead core up front and started experimenting with what we now know as the X-Bullet.

The folks in Europe and southern Africa weren’t sitting on their hands either. Many of the designs worked as advertised and earned a stellar reputation for putting big, tough animals on the ground, whether they were launched from a .30-06, .300 magnum, .375 H&H or a .470 Nitro Express.

The next significant design change in cup-and-core bullets was the polymer tip. John Nosler credits a Canadian company (CIL) for coming up with the idea, but Nosler thought he could do it better. Apparently, it’s safe to say he could, and did. The Ballistic Tip pretty much revolutionized the design and performance of hunting bullets. A similar bullet with a black coating and silver colored polymer tip is also

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trolled expansion and penetration at higher impact velocities.

Another variation of the hardened core concept is used by Speer in the front half of its Grand Slam, a dual-core design, minus the bulk head (a nautical term to describe the “partition” concept that Nosler trademarked) to separate the front from the more malleable rear core. In practice, the Grand Slams hit hard targets with considerable authority.

Meanwhile, long before the bonded core, polymer tip and reinforced jackets became standard fare, Randy Brooks had the X-Bullet, an all-copper hollow-point. It was not without its own set of problems, however, and some folks complained of poor accuracy and fouling. The X-Bullet was also quite long in any given weight and caliber, enough so that it extended into the case body a bit more than conventional lead core bullets, limiting powder capacity.

Eventually, the X-Bullet evolved into the XLC, a blue-coated X-Bullet (the coating was originally used in high-performance racing sold by Winchester, the Ballistic Silvertip.

While some of the early Ballistic Tips were a bit “volatile” on impact, Nosler reinforced the jackets, making them thicker around the shank. Varmint bullets were still designed for small game, but big game bullets became increasingly tougher, eventually leading to the bonded core concept, aka Nosler AccuBond, which is emulated by the Swift Scirocco, Hornady InterBond, Remington AccuTip, etc. There may be a question as to who was first with the bonded core, but most would agree that Jack Carter had a hand in the stew early on.

Other noteworthy bullet designs included the Hornady InterLock, a design feature added to the Spire Point that used a ring around the inside of the jacket to hold the slightly hardened lead alloy core in place, ensuring controlled expansion and penetration at higher impact velocities.

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than-lead core had considerable inertia, and impact tests in water caused the jacket to shatter. Speer fixed the problem, of course, and the net effect with tungsten allows the bullet to be much shorter than all-copper solids or lead core counterparts. In short magnums, like the .458 Winchester Magnum, for example, where powder capacity is at a premium with 500-grain solids, the tungsten core mitigates the requirement to seat longer, heavier bullets deeper in the case.

The same concept applies to the MR-X; a tungsten core allows the bullet to be somewhat shorter than the X-Bullet or Triple-Shock in any given weight in respective calibers. This cools the heels of those who would argue that the X-Bullet is too long, reducing powder capacity and, consequently, limiting velocity somewhat when compared to lead core bullet designs.

When Randy Brooks, president of Barnes Bullets, told me about the experimental bullet design they were working on nearly two years ago, most of the features outlined were concepts we had hashed over before. Randy said the final design wasn’t complete – they were still working out the bugs – but it had a plastic (polymer) tip and a heavier-than-lead core in the rear. If they could get the design right, it would come out with a boat-tail, a problem that at the time had not been worked out to Randy’s satisfaction.

The comment about the boat-tail was noteworthy, since no one in the industry, to my knowledge, had figured out a way to put a core in the back end of a bullet and put a boat-tail on it. The point being, a boat-tail shape is one thing, but the resultant bullet has to fly straight, and a slightly out-of-whack boat-tail has driven some fairly astute engineers to the “brink.” At any rate, current commercial designs with a core.

(Continued on page 104)
in the rear half of the bullet are flatbased, including the Swift A-Frame, Nosler Partition, Winchester Fail Safe, etc.

It was a year later when Randy forwarded a few bullets for testing, but they hadn’t come up with a name yet. Around the office, we referred to it as the Triple By Pass, an obvious reference to the Triple-Shock, on which the new design was based. Eventually the folks at Barnes decided on MR-X – Maximum Range X-Bullet. With the torpedo shape, it fits.

Randy said independent tests indicate the MR-X shoots quite well; groups from a preproduction run of bullets are running nip and tuck with best accuracy produced by a variety of big game bullets. A few MR-Xs also made it to Africa, where they put plains game on the ground with considerable authority.

Without question, the MR-X is the result of years of research by a number of folks who chased improved accuracy and terminal performance with big game bullets. Some ideas like the Nosler Partition worked exceptionally well. But as John Haviland points out in this issue of Rifle, even ordinary bullets, and some not-so-ordinary, do a fine job on everything from deer to elk-sized game – assuming the appropriate bullet is placed properly.

And, it’s not over yet. While the sporting/hunting industry has relied heavily on lead core bullets to establish standards of performance and accuracy, the winds of change are lurking over the horizon. Owing toxic fumes, lead core bullets are almost uni-
versally banned at indoor shooting ranges and lead core hunting bullets are banned in two countries in Europe. It won’t be long before the anti-gun crowd picks up the baton and demands a ban on lead or lead alloy core bullets on federal lands in the U.S. – as was done with lead shot.

Fortunately, following on the heels of the lead shot controversy, a number of lead substitutes have been developed that work reasonably well in waterfowl and upland bird loads. It was just a matter of time before someone figured out how to stuff a non-toxic lead substitute in a bullet. Randy Brooks and Speer did it with tungsten, and Winchester reinforced the shank of the Fail Safe with steel inserts, a short hop from a steel core.

The redeeming factor in the development of more efficient bullet designs is that the industry has learned to engineer modern bullets that do the work of traditionally heavy cup-and-core designs. In the past where it was generally accepted that heavy bullets (high sectional density) were required for big, tough game in cartridges like the .338 Winchester Magnum, for example, we routinely take on the toughest game with the new generation of hunting bullets that weigh significantly less. Where a 300-grain roundnose was once considered a minimum for larger game using a .375 H&H, or even a .338, a 225- to 270-grain Swift A-Frame, Nosler Partition or Triple-Shock can be expected to do the job of their heavier counterparts, a fact that John Nosler proved years ago. This also means a 165-grain bonded, heavier-than-lead core bullet, or a 150-grain MR-X, in a .30-06 can pack the punch of a 180-grain lead core bullet and deliver that power from about any reasonable shot angle. Right now the MR-X is on the razor’s edge. Given the current political/environmental climate, we should expect more innovative designs to follow.
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semiautomatic centerfire rifles have been around for a long time, yet they trail in popularity in most hunting camps. Some claim they are inaccurate, prone to malfunction or are sensitive to certain ammunition.

Maybe yes, maybe no, but you would think that with a limited amount of the market dedicated to semiautomatic centerfire sporting rifles, there would hardly be room in the field for another variation. Browning, however, does not seem to share that concern and recently introduced another semi-automatic rifle.

Made by Miroku of Japan and called the Short-Trac and LongTrac, Browning officials claim the new models will not replace the current Browning BAR. These are stylized versions of the famous BAR and look like something positioned in the line to compete with the modern Benelli R1, right up to the European stock treatment.

The ShortTrac is chambered for the short magnums, including the .270, 7mm and .300 WSMs. Additionally, the shorter rifle is chambered for the .243 and .308 Winchesters. The longer action handles the .270 Winchester, .30-06, 7mm Remington Magnum and the .300 Winchester Magnum.

For 2005, the BAR continues to have the field covered with nine options from the .243 Winchester to the .338 Winchester Magnum.
num. In comparing the new Trac rifles to the BAR, both models are more svelte in appearance. Their receivers, buttstocks and forends have been re-designed to make the rifles more field friendly, and in the lighter calibers, weight has been reduced by as much as 8 ounces. While this is not a large reduction by any means, those looking to carry a rifle over long periods will find this modest decrease an advantage on any grueling hunt.

In overall appearance, the stocks are certainly radical from anything we've seen in the past from Browning. Comparing the Trac series to the BAR counterpart, a number of features stand out. First, the forend is thinner and slightly shorter than the BAR. Whereas I have heard complaints about the BAR when it came to its somewhat “clunky” stock, these new Brownings should appeal to those who like a rifle that is now on par with many bolt-action rifles.

Almost square along its flanks, the forend has a natural taper from the receiver forward. There are twin finger grooves on each side, which are deeper near the receiver for a natural hold, then gracefully disappear as they move toward the muzzle. The rear of the forend covers the receiver by nearly 1¾ inches. This in turn serves to cover the linkage and the lever of the bolt release that is located under the forward part of the bolt. Still another reason for

The new Browning ShortTrac (bottom) is shown with the traditional BAR in Grade IV.
this extended coverage is that it enhances the rigidity of the forend at the receiver.

The forend has more than ample coverage of machine cut checkering, including a small line extension at each end that runs toward the receiver to complete the pattern.

**The ShortTrac is chambered for the short magnums, including the .270, 7mm and .300 WSMs.**

Inletting of this section of the stock was good and hugged the barrel out to the forward sling swivel. This swivel also serves to hold this part of the stock snugly against the receiver and is removable for general cleaning of the gas cylinder and related parts. To remove the forend, remove this swivel with a small punch, then pull the forend forward and off the ShortTrac. To finish the forend, the leading edge is cut at a 45-degree angle.

The buttstock is rather full, and there is no monte carlo or high comb to mar the lines of this semiautomatic. There is no cheekpiece to offset your face from the stock, and in mounting a scope with medium-height rings, I never missed either of these features as my eye lined up nicely with the scope reticle, demonstrating that Browning engineers had indeed done their homework. The pistol grip has enough of an inward curve to fit the average hand; there is no grip cap, and the bottom is cut at a sharp angle, making it vulnerable to chipping from rough treatment in the field.

The stock has a modern checkering pattern with individual panels separated by a ribbon and, like the forend, displays a line that runs upward almost meeting the detailing on the receiver. Like the forend, the stock is finished in a smooth, oil-type coating that brings out the grain in the European walnut stock while protecting it from the elements.

Included on the buttstock is a hard rubber pad set at 13 1⁄4 inch length of pull. If I had the privilege of an opinion when the gun was being designed, I would opt for a softer pad. The pad itself has two forward insets, which serve as guides to reinstall the pad, if it is ever removed. A set of spacers that fit in between the extended coverage is that it enhances the rigidity of the forend at the receiver.

![Image of ShortTrac](image)

The ShortTrac is gas operated and runs off the same tried-and-proven action as the BAR.

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The receiver has been stylized somewhat to bring the rifle up to contemporary standards. Although it looks smaller than the BAR, in actual dimensions it is very close to its in-house rival. Gone is that Auto-5 reversed hump that still dominates the BAR as its trademark. Browning designers not only recut the receiver to a 45-degree angle but also cleverly blended this part into the tang area of the stock. The result is now a pleasing blend of styling with function.

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The sling swivel acts as a take-down screw to remove the forend for maintenance.
The Dragoon-styled trigger guard is made from polymer, is oversized, and the entire trigger group can be removed for maintenance. The disassembly of the trigger group is easy. Just make sure the rifle is unloaded, the magazine is empty and the rifle is on safe. Just above the trigger guard assembly are twin pins. With the bolt fully forward, drive both pins out from either side. Now grasp the trigger assembly and pull it down and out of the receiver. Complete your inspection and maintenance and reinstall in the reverse order. The ShortTrac is gas operated with the mechanism linking up with the action bars, inertia piece and the short-stroke piston doing the yeoman duties. Like many of its ilk, gases from the fired cartridge pass through a small outlet.

Above, a circular cut accentuates the pistol grip. Right, the recoil pad is easily removed to install the shims that are supplied with the rifle.
in the barrel setting up the cycle. From here, the piston is driven to the rear, which strikes the inertia piece and in concert with the twin action bars unlocks the action, pushing the bolt to the rear.

Emulating design features from the BAR, there are seven lugs on the enclosed bolt head that turn 60 degrees and mate with recesses within the steel barrel. According to Browning, “Every cartridge that is loaded into the chamber of this gun is surrounded by a recessed bolt face, which is encircled by the barrel, which in turn is surrounded by the receiver.” All these internal features help promote a high degree of accuracy with premium factory or tailored handloads.

Upon firing, an extractor on the right side of the bolt face will pull the spent cartridge out of the chamber, followed by a plunger ejector that ejects the case as soon as it has cleared the inside of the receiver.

Pushing down on the bolt release allows the bolt to slam briskly into the breech picking up a round as it goes. This is probably one of the biggest problems of the semiautomatic design. Since you never want to “ride” the bolt slowly as it pushes a cartridge in the chamber, releasing the bolt via the bolt release allows it to spring forward, creating a certain amount of noise. That’s not so good on a deer stand, as smart bucks for miles around will high-tail it to another county. So depending on the guide and/or hunting conditions, hunters need to decide whether to carry the chamber loaded (on “safe”) or unloaded.

Unlike the BAR, the new addition has an aircraft-grade, aluminum alloy receiver.

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### Range Tests

**Browning ShortTrac Rifle (.270 WSM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factory Ammunition</th>
<th>Velocity (fps)</th>
<th>Group (inches)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130 Winchester Ballistic Silvertip</td>
<td>3,275</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140 Winchester AccuBond</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140 Winchester Fail Safe</td>
<td>3,125</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 Winchester Ballistic Silvertip</td>
<td>3,120</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 Winchester Power-Point</td>
<td>3,150</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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For our tests, Winchester Ammunition sent along five different variations of the .270 WSM, including 130- to 150-grain bullets. Proven designs include the Bal-
listic Silvertip, AccuBond, Fail Safe and the Power-Point.

For the shooting tests, I used the Lead Sled, which is available through MidwayUSA. While the recoil factor on the .270 WSM may be of concern to a few hunters, that was not the purpose of the Lead Sled. Aside from keeping the apparent recoil from reaching your shoulder, the sled cradles the gun so you can get the best out of it. Granted, strong recoil can ruin the concentration of the best shooter, so in this way I was testing the rifle and not myself.

Like the BAR, I had no trouble getting the ShortTrac to shoot, and in part I think it’s because the rifle is self-feeding. Unlike a bolt gun that you have to move to lift the bolt, eject the case, load and get back into position, the ShortTrac just needed another pull of the trigger to launch another round downrange. Velocities were all over 3,100 fps, and the average of all the groups was 1.2 inches. Handloads could shrink that number to under an inch.

At the range I put the rifle through its paces by firing off as many rounds as I could, as fast as I could, until I finished a 20-round box. The rifle never balked, and ejection was extremely positive without any malfunctions.

I found the ShortTrac easy to shoot and quite accurate. With conventional cartridges, the rifle is perfect; with the Winchester Short Magnums, it will find a place in the hearts of hunters who want a versatile field rifle.

For more information, contact Browning Arms, One Browning Place, Morgan UT 84050.
Remington’s Model 504 is the most accurate .22 rimfire sporter I’ve ever tested. How accurate? Well, with the assistance of a 4x Leupold scope, I was able to rack up an impressive number of one-inch groups (five-shot strings) at 50 yards with two different brands of ammunition despite the opposition of persistent wind gusts blowing intermittently from 15 to 20 mph (according to the Weather Bureau recording station 3½ miles away). Those groups were fired benchrest, of course. Had I been a better judge of wind, those scores would have been even more impressive than they were.

The range where the tests took place faces due south. The wind blew from the west-southwest, more or less from right to left. Out at the 50-yard line, a red-colored piece of twine about a foot long was tacked to the target board and left hanging beside the targets. Its movements would betray the wind’s intentions. The idea was, of course, to hold my fire until the string hung limp.

That worked sometimes – occasionally, it didn’t. Not infrequently, the string would begin to stir just as I was about to squeeze a round off. Before I could stop myself, I’d hurry the shot, more often than not, opening the group. In any event, here are the results of a series of five-shot strings fired at 50 yards. The bulls were 1½ inches in diameter and were black on buff-colored paper.

Number 1: no wind - .6 inch. Number 2: no wind - .6 inch. Number 3: 4 rounds in .5 inch, one more out to 1.0 inch (wind got me). Number 4: 4 in .6 inch, one more out to 1.0 inch (wind again!). Number 5: 4 in .65 inch, one more out to 1.5 inch (wind).

And so it went. Those particular groups were fired with Eley Match. An old box of Remington Subsonic Long Rifles, the last in my inventory, did almost as well. Like most .22s, the 504’s barrel had its preferences where ammunition was concerned and lost no time revealing them. Seven other brands were fired but none grouped as well or as reliably as Eley and that old Subsonic. Nevertheless, how many .22 sporters have you seen capable of putting five rounds in an inch – or less – at 50 yards, string after string after string? Had it not been for that blasted wind . . .

Why didn’t I wait for a windless day? Simply because I’d still be waiting! There haven’t been any windless days around here for weeks. It’s whistling outside right now, as this is being typed. Geez! What a summer.

But to continue: The 504 isn’t a beginner’s rifle. One glance at it is enough to know it was conceived and dimensioned with grownups in mind (my original intent was to refer to it as an “adult” rimfire but because that
noun has taken on a whole new meaning these days – “adult movies,” “adult TV” – it seemed best to avoid the word lest it cause some confusion in the ranks. Let’s just say that 504s were created with dedicated small game hunters in mind.

There’s nothing flimsy about a 504. Even a cursory glance is enough to tell that several lifetimes’ worth of use has been built into it. It’s the kind of rifle that will be handed down from one generation of hunters to the next – and cherished by each.

Take its receiver, for instance: Machined from a single chunk of steel, it’s massive enough to accommodate 50,000 psi or better. Its bolt handle is .3 inch thick, and its knob is ¾ inch in diameter. The action is wedged to the stock by means of two hefty stock bolts: One reaches up from the forward end of the trigger guard; the other links the forward receiver ring with the floorplate embracing the detachable magazine. The result is an extremely stiff assembly, admittedly much stronger than necessary but one that, judging from the fired targets, keeps barrel vibrations to a minimum and remarkably uniform. That barrel, by the way, is button-rifled, and the muzzle’s crown is deeply recessed too. Oh, yes, and when the rifle is cocked, a tiny cocking indicator protrudes from the center of the bolt head’s rear face where it can be felt as well as seen. Apparently, Remington rifles are designed by shooters.

Although a 504 can’t be characterized as being “showy,” it looks a lot more expensive than it is. Its walnut stock looks like stocks used to: straight-grained, evenly stained with neatly checkered panels (machine-checkered, of course – but very carefully executed, no run-overs). Its black rubber buttplate would do justice to a much livelier caliber, but it doesn’t slip when set against the shoulder; neither does it make a sound when plopped in dirt or shale.

Admittedly, the pistol grip cap came as a bit of a surprise, with its black, anodized finish embellished with tasteful scrollwork encircling a large, stylized golden letter R. Some will criticize it as “gilding the lily.” Maybe it is, but it adds a touch of class and serves to emphasize the fact that the Remington arms being manufactured today are a great deal more handsome than they were a few years back.
Remington rifles, at least those I’ve handled over the years, have always been impressively accurate right out of the box, but until the last couple of years, few ever drew any oohs or aahs at first sight. That’s no longer the case, and the 504 is as good an example of this trend as any I can think of.

Dual extractors make feeding a no-nonsense proposition. During the range tests, more than 500 rounds were fired. Every one of those cartridges slid into the chamber unhesitatingly – and each of them was withdrawn and flipped some four feet to the right and two to the rear without balking.

According to Remington ads, each Model 504 sold this year will include a free set of scope bases. Sad to say, the test rifle was delivered without them and all attempts to buy some locally proved fruitless. I was informed that Burris was making them and could help, but they turned me down too. Finally, after sifting through an old box of odds and ends, a couple of Weaver bases were discovered that were made to serve. Moral of the Story: Anyone who buys one of these rifles this year should make sure the scope bases are included!

And one more item: The trigger is fully adjustable, but must be worked on only by a Remington-authorized gunsmith. If the one on the test rifle is typical, my advice is not to mess with it! – Al Miller

### Specifications

**Remington Model 504**

- **Barrel length:** 20 inches
- **Length overall:** 39¼ inches
- **Magazine:** 6 rounds
- **Weight (advertised):** 6½ pounds
- **Weight (as tested):** 7 pounds (with 4x Leupold scope mounted)
- **Trigger pull:** 3⅛ pounds
- **Stock:** American walnut
- **Length of pull:** 13¼ inches
- **Drop at comb:** 1¼ inches
- **Drop at heel:** 1¼ inches

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My first brush with mail-order stocks came when I purchased a “semi-inletted” stock from Herter’s and attempted to fit it to a surplus 03-A3 Springfield I’d bought on the cheap. Ineptitude and teenage impatience made that experiment only partly successful. The experience taught me a valuable lesson: Someone with my woodworking skills should buy only fully finished, 100 percent inletted “drop in” stocks when trying to improve a rifle’s performance or appearance.

I don’t know how many different after-market stocks are now available to shooters hoping to change the personality of a pet hunting rifle. I do know the vast majority of today’s drop-in rifle stocks are made of some kind of synthetic or laminated wood. Synthetic stocks are typically lighter, tougher and more weatherproof than wood, while laminated stocks are stable and can be aesthetically pleasing.

For the past several weeks, I’ve been using an entirely different kind of after-market stock – one of the Accurate Innovations’ Golden Accuracy™ series of drop-in stocks. The Golden Hunter™ stock is “select-grade” walnut that was first treated with a high-polyurethane content base coat designed to resist dents and scratches, then hand-finished with Permalyn, an oil finish offered by Brownells. Finally, the stock was waxed to enhance the luster of the hand-rubbed oil finish. Both forend and pistol grip sported well-executed laser-cut checkering (hand checkering is an available option).

My straight, classic-style stock wears a one-inch Pachmayer “Old English” style black Decelerator recoil pad. Length of pull is 13⅞ inches, and the stock weighs an even 2 pounds.

One thing that sets this good-looking stock apart from conventional walnut stocks is a full-length, fully bedded aluminum chassis designed to distribute recoil evenly throughout the stock. This chassis is precision CNC machined from 6061 aircraft-grade aluminum and sports an anodized pillar system.

To add even more strength, the wrist of the stock is reinforced with a titanium pin.

The stock I requested for testing was for a long-action Model 700 Remington. When I tried to
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Example Cartridges that calibrate for 100 to 500 yards:
- .223 55grain
- .243 100grain
- .270 150grain
- 7mm-08 140grain
- 7mm Mags 175grain
- 30-06 150grain
- 30-06 165grain
- 338 Mag 225grain

Example Cartridges that calibrate for 200 to 600 yards:
- .243 WSSM 100grain
- .25-06 100grain
- .270 130grain
- .270 WSM 150grain
- 7mm Mags 140grain
- 7mm Shrt Mg 160grain
- .300 Mag 150grain
- .300 Ultra 180grain

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Installation instructions specified 65 inch-pounds (not foot-pounds) of pressure on front and rear action screws. Lacking a torque wrench, I simply snugged these screws to a solid, but not overly tight, fit. (If you need a portable torque wrench, you can buy one from Accurate Innovations for $79.)

Once installed, the Golden Hunter stock was a very good fit. The barrel was free floated, with only a slight gap along the right side. Accuracy also improved. With its original moulded stock in place, the Model 700 Remington produced very acceptable 1¼-inch, three-shot groups at 100 yards with .30-06 Hornady 165-grain Custom SST factory ammunition. Once the new stock was installed, groups shrank to just ½ inch across.

Retailing at $389, the hand-finished Accurate Innovations stock was not inexpensive. Unfinished stocks sell for $279. While my stock was plain, straight-grained Claro walnut, four better grades were available. Opting for “fancy” walnut would add $120 to the price. Other upgrades include 22 lpi hand checking ($250), raised shadow-line cheekpiece ($54), custom length of pull ($9), while opting for a thumbhole-style stock would add $90 to the price.

The instructions note that scratches or dings “can be easily repaired using 400 grit wet/dry sandpaper and an oil finish such as Permalyn. Dings can be raised using moisture and heat from a soldering iron and wet cloth as you would with any other wood stock.”

While I would have preferred wood with fancy figuring, the Golden Hunter stock was a handsome addition to my Model 700 Remington. My limited testing indicated a significant improvement in accuracy.

For more information, contact Accurate Innovations, LLC, Dept. R, PO Box 1007, Rapid City SD 57709-1007; or visit online at: www.accurateinnovations.com.

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