

0.458 inch leading to a bullet bore of 0.428 inch. The Redhawk was loosest, with a tapered chamber shrinking from 0.462 inch to 0.459 inch and a variation in bullet bore from 0.4305 inch to 0.431 inch. The Taurus actually showed the second tightest set of chambers, tapering from 0.460 inch to 0.457 inch with a consistent bullet bore of 0.429 inch.

With this information in hand we went looking for another reason why the empty shells were reluctant to shift smoothly back into the chambers. Visually inspecting the chamber of the Taurus revealed that they are finished with a set of fine striations perpendicular to the bore. This makes the chamber walls of the M44 more susceptible to fouling, we believe. After cleaning the chamber, we made it a point to test for over-expansion with hot magnum loads and for fouling with .44 Special "Cowboy" loads that featured a soft lead bullet. This confirmed that the reliability problems were likely due to fouling, and we made sure to keep each chamber cleaned and lubricated. As a long-term solution, we would have the chambers polished.

As we noted before, the front sight included a plastic insert, which we didn't like. The Taurus's sight picture offered the widest light bars matching a rear notch of 0.127 inch to a front blade of 0.12 inch over the longest sight radius of 8.6 inches. Although pinned in place, the front blade did become loose, but didn't leave its post. At the silhouette range, we had to hunt for the proper hold on the turkeys at 75 yards and the rams at 100, and we never felt confident shooting the Taurus at those distances. Without better-quality sights, we think 50 yards is the realistic boundary of this revolver's dependable accuracy.

Smith & Wesson 629 Classic

Our recommendation: Buy it. We can't fault a \$630 revolver that shoots small groups of hot ammunition out of the box. However, its recoil is stout and its sights need work.

S&W 629 CLASSIC

Price.....\$630



Our recommendation: Superb accuracy and function. Buy it.



The Smith's grip was made of soft, tacky rubber, which transferred recoil to the hand.

1.3 in. Grip Thickness/5.6 in. Grip Circumference

SPECIFICATIONS

WARRANTY	Ltd. Lifetime
METAL FINISH	Brushed Stainless Steel
FRAME MATERIAL	Stainless Steel
WEIGHT	48 oz.
CAPACITY	6
GRIP MATERIAL	Rubber
ACTION TYPE	DA/SA
TRIGGER PULL DA	12.1 lbs.
TRIGGER PULL SA	4.5 lbs.
CYLINDER GAP	0.009 in.
CHAMBER SIZE MAX	0.425 in.
CHAMBER SIZE MIN.	0.425 in.

When we measure five-shot groups from benchrest sessions, we publish the longest distance measured center to center from the widest two of the five shots. We also take note of any cluster of hits within the overall groups and mention them if we feel they're relevant. In the case of our session with the 629 Classic, we should point out that we're not perfect, and our test shooters do pull a shot or two. How else would you explain five shots of the Winchester round measuring 0.80 inch when four of those shots spanned only 0.40 inch? Likewise, the smallest Federal group measured 1.5 inches, but we had three shots within 0.40 inch as well. With the PMC .44 Special ammo, the average doesn't look like much,

but three shots in a single group measured a mere 0.16 inch.

Perhaps a good deal of the credit for the 629's showing at the bench should go to its single-action trigger. In this case we feel the weight of the single-action movement (4.5 pounds) is irrelevant. It was so smooth that we fired the 629 prematurely on several occasions. The double-action trigger on this gun cannot be faulted either. In the rapid-fire drill, only one shot of 25 strayed from the bull (96 percent).

Shortcomings in the handling and performance of the Smith & Wesson 629 Classic pale in the light of its accuracy, but we also experienced a momentary bind when we fired the gun double action. The test shooter reports that the high recoil may have