

into the cylinder after recoil, thus causing binding. When this problem occurred, we simply cleaned and lubricated the chambers.

Taurus Model 44

Our recommendation: While not a true target model, the \$530 Taurus 44 adds the right amount of weight and enough compensation to produce a versatile weapon. It's fun to shoot at the range, and it's capable of awesome stopping power.

The Model 44 arrived highly polished and included the Taurus factory-installed porting system. This system adds 0.5 inch to the length of the barrel and consists of an expansion chamber bled by 8 round ports, four on each side of the front sight. How much does this system reduce recoil? It is very hard to quantify this scientifically, but the .44 Special loads were appreciably softer fired from this gun than the two others in this test. However, because the M44 is also the heaviest gun in the test with the most massive underlug, its mass alone likely helped dampen our perception of recoil.

We rated the rubber grip on this gun to be very good as well. Each of the guns in the test has a different backstrap, grip design, and center of gravity. What we liked about the Taurus grip was its rubber did a good job of insulating the hand from shock but didn't trap the hand with overly aggressive finger grooves. Its surface was not slippery nor was it too tacky. Overall, we thought the Taurus M44 recoiled the least.

Each of the three guns sported DA trigger pulls of more than 12 pounds, the Taurus being the heaviest right at 13 pounds. But we thought it was easier to pull than the Ruger and was just as smooth as the S&W gun. Taurus uses a coil spring instead of torsion-bar mainspring. Two clicks are faintly evident before firing but there is little hint of stacking. This malady, typically found in coil spring guns, is minimized in the Taurus because the spring is so much longer the stress can be more evenly distributed.

TAURUS MODEL 44
Price....\$530

Our recommendation: Solid overall, but the others may be slightly better.

The Taurus comp made the gun somewhat more comfortable to shoot, especially with .44 Special ammo.

SPECIFICATIONS	
WARRANTY	Lifetime
METAL FINISH	Polished Stainless Steel
FRAME MATERIAL	Stainless Steel
WEIGHT	55 oz.
CAPACITY	6
GRIP MATERIAL	Rubber
ACTION TYPE	DA/SA
TRIGGER PULL DA	13 lbs.
TRIGGER PULL SA	5 lbs.
CYLINDER GAP	0.004 in.
CHAMBER SIZE MAX.	0.428 in.
CHAMBER SIZE MIN.	0.425 in.

This paid dividends during the rapid-fire test. Only three of 25 shots fired standing unsupported at 10 yards landed out of the black (88 percent). However, the shots that were off, were way off. Why? Because the action momentarily bound and then suddenly let go, destroying accuracy. Investigating this problem we found that the cylinder would spin freely empty or fully loaded with unfired rounds. But we found that the cylinder was impeded once there were three or more empty shells in the cylinder. During the bench rest session we had noticed it was difficult to eject spent shells without having to pull them out by hand. One cause for this to happen could be that the

chambers were unnaturally large or out of spec. Expansion of the shell casings is expected, and the elasticity of the brass is even depended upon to absorb a small amount of energy. But, allow the brass to expand too much and it will not be able to snap back into spec. Then you are left with the case wall plastered against the inside of the chamber. To make sure this was not the case we sent the Taurus (as well as the Redhawk and the 629 Classic) to John Barr at Barr Performance Products, (713) 462-0740, to measure and profile the chambers. All three guns proved to be in spec. The Smith & Wesson was the tightest, with straight-walled chambers measuring