

long Videki trigger, beavertail with a bump, skeleton Commander-style hammer, extended thumb safety, Novak rear sight, flared ejection port, opened magazine well, flat black finish and checkered wood grip panels. The front sight was not dovetailed into the slide, as it was on the CCO and Kimber. The sight picture was, like that of the CCO and Kimber, perfect. The trigger pull, like that of last month's test-winning Springfield, was crisp and reasonably light, breaking at 4.0 pounds, and entirely free of creep. Our hat is off to Springfield's staffers for putting consistently good triggers in all their handguns we've encountered. The Champion came with two magazines and cleaning brush in a nicely fitted case.

This gun closely resembled the Colt Lightweight Commander, though the slide of the Champion is not as long as the Commander (or CCO) slide. The grip frame is the same depth as the full-size 1911, which means the shooter's hand has a bigger handle to grasp. For those with large hands this gun will appeal more than either the Kimber or the Colt CCO. Does that larger grip mean this gun is harder to conceal? Yes, to some extent, but it really depends on the anatomy of the carrier. The grip is a full half-inch longer. However, if you (men) carry the gun just behind the hip bone, the grip protrudes along your back, and the extra length may not be noticeable. You'll have to try it and see. We suspect most women will find the grip longer than necessary.

We found we could make extremely fast reloads a bit easier and more positively with the full-depth frame of the Champion because the little finger of our strong hand didn't get in the way. With the CCO or Kimber we had to lift the little finger of the strong (right) hand, and be sure to hold the reloading (left) hand perfectly straight to make sure the magazine seated fully.

The front of the slide on the Champion was too sharp. It was as though it had been honed to gouge

Springfield Champion

Retail Price...\$629



SPECIFICATIONS

Warranty: Limited Lifetime

FINISH	Matte Blued	SIGHT RADIUS	5.6 in.
WEIGHT (EMPTY)	30 oz.	CAPACITY	7+1 rds.
OVERALL LENGTH	7.5 in.	GRIP MATERIAL	Wood
OVERALL HEIGHT	5.4 in.	ACTION TYPE	SA
MAX. WIDTH	1.4 in.	TRIGGER PULL Wt. SA ..	4.0 lbs.
BARREL LENGTH	3.9 in.	TRIGGER REACH	3.5 in.

Our recommendation: This gun wasn't particularly accurate, and it would need modifications to make it easier to handle and carry. We think the others are better buys.

The Champion's slide is not as long as the CCO slide. The grip frame is the same depth as the full-size 1911, which means the shooter's hand has a bigger handle to grasp. Problem: The larger grip is harder to conceal.



things. The ejection port also had sharp edges, all of which would need to be removed.

Our shooting produced lots of vertical stringing in all groups, and the Champion's accuracy was poorest of all four guns in this test. It had a feeding problem when one round of the short 200-grain Blazer JHP hung up on the feed ramp. That ammunition is much shorter than any other JHP ammo we've seen, and the aluminum cases are not as slick as brass. We'd never use that particular ammo for any serious purpose, but still, the gun should have fed it perfectly. One of our personal 1911 handguns feeds empty cases perfectly.

We couldn't figure out how to get the Springfield apart for cleaning. We learned from the instruction

manual that disassembly is actually quite simple. Working against the recoil spring's pressure, you align the small notch in the side of the slide and push out the slide stop, then wrap your fingers around the slide to contain the recoil spring, then take the slide off forward. Getting the whole thing back together takes a bit of skill, and we suspect the novice will have some trouble with this system. Also, we really don't like the open holes in the front of this gun that can let in dirt or water.

The Springfield's feed ramp is integral with the barrel. Some shooters have found that with extensive shooting of hollowpoint ammunition, the bullet nose can make permanent gouges in aluminum-alloy feed ramps, as on the