

Heavy Metal

in USPSA 3-Gun



By PATRICK KELLEY, TY-14401

He has been here before: the familiar sound of radio chatter squelched by the whine and staccato chop of the Huey's turbine and rotor, the look on the "new recruits'" faces as they clutch their M-16's, and the smell of

G.I. bore cleaner mixed with the wet heat of the jungle below. His comfort comes from the other two soldiers on board, who like him have "seen the elephant," and having that vision are carrying bush experience and lots of "heavy metal."

"Heavy Metal." "War Gear." "Big Medicine." Terms coined by hard-case drill instructors and former U.S. Presidents. Between the three "vets" on board are two M14's, three old warhorse G.I. 45's and a short-barreled Remington 870 with 00 buck on tap. He can hear his gunny now, "Best gear,

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Jim Wall dusting a clay with a pump gun.



best odds,” as the pilot pitches the Huey over the treetops to the LZ below.

Over the last five years, USPSA/IPSC has drifted away from one of the founding principles of our sport — that of recognizing major and minor caliber firearms through scoring. The “V” in D.V.C. if you will. We must remember that our sport grew from the tree of combat shooting, where the idea was to use what you

would to defend home and family should the need arise. Large caliber, powerful, battle-worthy firearms were the expected, not the excepted. While we may debate the current reasoning behind this principle, understand that the founders knew that major caliber guns hit harder and are more difficult to control, and were thus rewarded with better

scoring opportunities. This is the driving force behind the “Heavy Metal” category found at many 3-Gun matches (a.k.a. “He Man”).

The principle of freestyle competition has brought forth many innovations in equipment and technique. Today, the equipment culminates in the .38 Super family of thoroughbred race pistols and low-recoil, .223 caliber, compensated race rifles. It’s a valuable principle, and one to which we should

adhere. However, it is possible to carry that principle too far. Just as the low-recoil, relatively low-power .223/5.56mm cartridge might not be the optimal round for long-range fire-fights on the sands of Iraq, or for defeating cinder block and other building materials to get at a barricaded adversary (witness the current grassroots drive to the 6.8 SPC, Grendel, and other power/range enhancements for the M16), the heavy calibers find themselves at a disadvantage on the short-and-quick. House clearing exercises with a full-size M14/M1A are much more difficult and demanding of proper technique given the rifle’s weight, blast, recoil, and length.

How about our self-loading shotguns? With the advent of porting, speed loaders, JP’s wicked winged 1100 compensator, mercury recoil reducers, back-boring, and lengthened forcing cones; we are about done right? In a word, no! In the current rule book, any shotgun, 20 gauge or larger is scored major. No power factor, no chronographing, just find (or reload) the softest shooting wimp ammo you can, and choke tight. Unless heavy steel targets are on the

TAURUS

24/7 *continued from page 43.*

with the trigger return/reset mechanism wasn’t working properly. Dry-firing the gun with the muzzle pointed up found the trigger failing to reset more than half the time.

I contacted Taurus, and within days a new sample gun appeared on my desk, this time a blued-steel .40 with some extra magazines thrown in. Like the 9 before it, this one offered a pleasantly-predictable, LONG DAO trigger pull, gauged at a revolver-like seven pounds.

Blade-Tech was kind enough to build us a custom holster for the gun, supported by two custom magazine pouches, giving me everything I needed to compete in Production Division. (Should you need a holster for a Taurus, start here. They’re one of few

to have a match-appropriate holster available for this gun.)

At the range I ran a number of drills, including several shoot-on-the-move exercises. Despite the long trigger, the 24/7 proved surprisingly shootable while moving (a criticism of DA revolvers) — despite my abundantly mediocre shooting skills.

Magazines dropped away in a positive fashion, and reloads were relatively easy. In one session I shot enough ammo through the gun to paint the muzzle blue with powder stains, burning a variety of IPSC loads, steel loads, and some stout Speer Lawman 165’s. Thankfully the problem with trigger reset did not re-surface, thought we had two failures to feed early on. The Lawman load was a handful (being a

full-house defense load), but the gun remained controllable throughout.

The now-repaired 9mm appeared after a week, with the fail-to-reset problem eliminated.

Press time closed in on me before I had a chance to get much match experience in with the gun, but if you’re looking for a Production gun that feels a bit like a revolver, take a look at the Taurus. Long-term reliability is still a mystery, but the guns are affordable (street prices in the \$420 range) offer excellent practice opportunities thanks to their DAO design, and are backed by Taurus’ lifetime warrantee.

Tell ‘em you saw it in Front Sight!



course of fire, no worries, wimp ammo for all! Should not shotgun projectiles be subjected to the ways of the chrono? The word on the street and the trend in the USPSA rules points to the lowering of power factors. With USPSA pistol power factors dropped well below the (tongue in cheek) wrist-twisting expert-only 180 power factor, and the rifle power factor on its way down (with rumors of letting .223 make major), what's to become of the "V?" With the non-existent power factor for shotgun projectiles, we may soon be entertaining the idea of water pistols and laser tag! May Colonel Cooper cover his ears!

USPSA isn't alone in this. NRA power factors are puny. ICORE's are equally so. Let's not even talk about Steel Challenge, much less PPC. Even IDPA has found wimp-level power factors to their liking, with three of the four divisions ruled by guns firing mid-range 9mm and .38 Special ammunition. Is that the "Full Charge Service Ammunition" described within its doctrine?

In deference to the law enforcement community, there is a "practical" argument for low-recoil slugs and buck in shotgun, but it hinges mostly on over-penetration in an urban police setting. Raise the issue of penetration of cover, damage to vehicles, or retention of power-at-range (all useful items in a war-fighting context), and again we find a "practical" argument for full-house loads.

To that end, a new class, or division if you will, is quickly emerging within the ranks of 3-Gunners: "Heavy Metal" division. To the best of my knowledge Pueblo P.D. Captain Eddie Rhodes coined the name and proposed some of the equipment guidelines while calling for a return to our founding principles. Proponents of this revisiting of our "combat" roots are looking for a place to generate healthy competition while employing basic "patrol car" or "home defense" gear, all while employing full-power ammunition delivered from an appropriate platform.



Heavy Metal advocate Eddie Rhodes competing at a 3-Gun match in Raton, N.M.

"Heavy Metal" recognizes that there is no easy way to balance the merits of each power class, so it separates the types. One category for the low-recoil go-fast guns (which are extremely

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Jerry Miculek - Revolver Division
David Richtr - Standard Jnr. Silver Medalist
Martin Kamenicek - Open Jnr. Silver Medalist

European Champions

EUROPEAN IPSC CHAMPIONSHIP - 2004 CZECH REPUBLIC
Eric Grauffel - Open Division
Martin Kamenicek - Open Division 2nd
Stephen Hinojales - Open Division Junior
Gabriella Kraushoffer - Open Division Ladies
Adam Tyc - Production Division
Bjorn Dietrich - Revolver Division
Saul Kirsch - Open Division Shoot Off Winner
Stephen Hinojales - Open Division Junior Shoot Off Winner



USPSA Champions



2003 USPSA Open Nationals
Eric Grauffel - Winner - Overall
Chris Tilley - Winner - High Junior
Max Michel Jnr. - Winner - High Military
Julle Golaszky - Winner - Ladies Shoot Off
Eric Grauffel - Winner - Mens Shoot Off

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Paul Clark Jnr. - Winner - High Junior
Phil Strader - Winner - High Law Enforcement



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* The 2004 USPSA National results were not yet available for inclusion at the time of print

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lethal when used properly), and one category for the power tools — the warfighters of old, refined and re-forged for today.

Based on the current major 3-Gun matches and Captain Rhodes' input, here is what I hope "we" collectively adopt as "Heavy Metal" or "He-Man" category:

Rifle: Single optic or Iron sight. Minimum caliber .308. Minimum 340-power factor. Magazine capacity limited to 20 rounds. Equipped with sling. Compensators limited to 1" wide by 3" long.

Pistol: Iron sights only. Minimum 180-power factor. Maximum barrel length 5.5". No compensator. Secure holster suitable for duty use and/or daily wear. To be worn on every stage during match. Magazine capacity limited to 8 rounds.

Shotgun: Pump Only. Iron sights only. Minimum 12 gauge. 520-power factor for shot and slugs. No compensators, porting, etc. Magazine capacity limited to 8 rounds. Equipped with sling. No box magazines or speed loaders, etc.

Will this new division take 3-Gunning by storm? I doubt it, but it will allow for the use of Heavy Metal in a competition setting and a return to the emphasis on POWER that some competitors feel is currently overlooked. Limited-10 (and some Production) shooters just need an appropriate .308 rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun to be right at home with the self-imposed 8-round magazine limits.

Ok, what guns and gear work well for Heavy Metal/ He-Man?

My personal choice for rifles feels like it was born for this division: Springfield Armory's M1A Squad rifle. Accurate and completely reliable out of the box, sporting an 18" barrel with an effective compensator, a decent trigger, and good sights. Additionally (playing right into the hands of the budding

heavy-metalists) Springfield Armory has set the rifle up with a "scout scope" mount placed forward of the action and affixed securely to the barrel, ready for the long eye relief scope of your choice. You may find more accuracy within the AR platform, but the M1A was built as a .308 from the ground up and is the original U.S. battle tested "war club" that lives up to the moniker very well indeed.

Speaking of AR platforms, Armalite, American Spirit and now Bushmaster offer .308 rifles all fully suitable as manufactured. In the first quarter of 2005, DPMS will add to this list the iron sight version of their supremely accurate and affordable long range .308. Not to be left out is the FN-FAL platform of rifles. The most prolific self-loading .308 in military use has proven itself in harm's way and would make a fine choice for the Heavy Metal enthusiast. DSA and Enterprise Arms offer excellent FAL-based rifles and carbines. You may want to get under way with a less-expensive FN-FAL assembled from surplus parts.

As for shotguns we now have a venue for the venerable pump. No, not because they are more reliable as they are not (mostly due to operator error), and pumps are certainly not faster cycling (despite the myth), nor are they as easy to manage as a quality self-loader especially from awkward positions. But they are found on the job in all parts of the globe and in the racks of most police cruisers here in the United States.

While I believe most pump-equipped Heavy-Metalists will make use of the excellent Remington 870 (and for good reasons), I beat a different drum, running the Winchester 1300 Camp Defender. With a 22" barrel, screw-in chokes, rifle sights, and a one-piece factory magazine tube that holds 7 rounds, this pump gun is ready to play as produced sans the one round of capacity. Ned Christiansen of



Pat Kelley laying down lead with a Springfield M1A.

Michiguns offers a great custom Browning BPS, complete with a milled-in a loading port to facilitate rapid reloading from empty. While those are good, Mossberg makes a number of well-built pumps that should meet the needs of this new division right out of the box! With 8-round magazine tubes, synthetic stocks, sights, and a shell lifter that sits up-and-out-of-the-way during reloading, Mossberg's offerings are something to consider!

When selecting a pistol, the Heavy Metal division is THE home for the single stack .45ACP 1911 with 8-round flush fit magazines. But I feel we ought to consider the 10mm Norma and the .357 Magnum with full power loads as a viable and real-world-effective alternative to the .45ACP. Again, powerful cartridges from appropriate platforms are the rule of the day. The new 45 GAP equals and exceeds the 45ACP so it too should be useful. The real departure from standard USPSA 3-Gunning is with holster selection and application. Competitors WILL wear the pistol throughout the competition on every stage, so a secure holster suitable for duty use and or daily wear will be de rigueur.

Please understand that this article is in no way intended to slight the competitor who uses the latest in civilian firearms technology. What I am trying to do is drum up greater support and continuity of equipment for the "Heavy Metal" division. Your feedback is welcomed.

