



The 2009 Golden Bullseye Awards



hen the editors of *American Rifleman* met to sift through the past year's coverage of firearms, optics and accessories, we were once again faced with the difficult task of selecting the industry's best products for the purpose of awarding them the NRA Publications Division's highest honor: the Golden Bullseye.

"The Golden Bullseye Award honors our winners for bringing to market products remarkable in their utility to shooters and hunters," said Joe H. Graham, executive director of NRA Publications. "The award, now in its seventh year, has become a symbol of excellence and innovation in firearms, accessories and related equipment. We are confident shooters and hunters will receive this year's winning products with enthusiasm, and we congratulate the winners."

NRA Publications will present the annual Golden Bullseye Awards and Golden Bullseye Pioneer Award at an invitation-only breakfast during the 2009 NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits, May 15-17, in Phoenix, Ariz.

Following is a look at this year's *American Rifleman* Golden Bullseye Award winners.

Whether marvels of innovation or mavericks of industry, the winners of the NRA Publications Division's highest award exemplify the best in the firearm business.

BY AMERICAN RIFLEMAN STAFF

Rifle Of The Year: Browning X-Bolt



"Just as the Cynergy is Browning's answer to what a modern shotgun should look and perform like, the new X-Bolt is an innovative and practical rifle that turns the A-Bolt into an instant classic. This radical design sets the standard for Browning bolt-actions for years to come."

So read the introduction in Editor-In-Chief Mark A. Keefe's story about the new Browning X-Bolt (May 2008, p. 52). He noted that the X-Bolt's steel receiver's lines follow those of the A-Bolt, yet are slimmed and refined and that its three-lug bolt offered a short, 60-degree lift. And then there was the hammer-forged, free-floating barrel that produced 1-m.o.a.-accuracy.

He called the X-Bolt's detachable polymer magazine "one of the most practical I have seen. It is a simple, rotary design of which Melvin Maynard Johnson would be proud." Add to all that a bolt unlock button that performs like the middle position of a Model-70 safety, yet works even more intuitively, and the X-Bolt's "Feather" three-lever trigger,

which allows adjustments from 3 to 5 lbs.

Keefe's statement that the X-Bolt's stock is "a thing of beauty, not only to the eyes, but also in the hands," could be applied to the whole gun as well.



Shotgun Of The Year: FNH USA Self-Loading Police

Fabrique Nationale (FN) of Herstal, Belgium, is well known for both fine sporting arms and military and law-enforcement guns, and its Self-Loading Police (SLP) shotgun, reviewed in the "Dope Bag" (August 2008, p. 86), brings those two reputations together.

Based on the Browning Gold and Winchester Super-X designs, the short-stroke, gas-operated semi-automatic SLP has a host of features that drew us to it, including: pistons for both heavy and light loads; a safety that can be reversed for left-handers; an 18" 12-ga. barrel with a 3" chamber and compatibility with standard Invector choke tubes; an extended magazine tube; a protected front post with a white aiming dot and, in the rear, an adjustable ghost-ring flanked by two white dots and mounted on a Picatinny rail; and a 1"-thick ventilated rubber recoil pad.

And when it came to shooting performance, we judged the SLP to be quite good, with commendable slug accuracy, consistent pattern density with buckshot and excellent functional reliability. Handling was also noteworthy, with quick cycling and minimal muzzle rise.

We summed up by stating, "The FNH Self-Loading Police shotgun is simple, reliable and rugged, offering solid performance and a proven design."

Handgun Of The Year: Springfield Armory XD(M)

"When pistol enthusiasts took the original Springfield XD in hand, they found a lot to love," stated Shooting Editor Glenn Gilbert in a feature that introduced readers to the new, totally revised XD(M) (September 2008, p. 64). "Once the XD was a mature platform, Springfield Armory felt like it was finally free to turn its attention toward improving the XD's ergonomics and mechanical accuracy."

And thus Gilbert explored the XD(M)'s many mechanical and ergonomic improvements: the Mega Capacity magazine, with 16 rounds of .40 S&W; its Maximum Reach magazine release button, and the Major Grasp slide serrations that diminish the hand's tendency to slip off the slide when racking it; the Mega Lock grip texture that improves purchase and helps shooters resist torquing of the gun in their hands under recoil; Mould-Tru backstraps, which allow customization of the pistol's grip size; the Minimal Reset trigger for reduced reach, quicker resets and shorter take-up; Main-Focus sights, in a choice of white, fiber-optic or tritium dots; and, finally, Minimal Error disassembly, which precludes having to pull the trigger to fieldstrip the pistol.



Tactical Gun Of The Year: The SIG Sauer P250



"The SIG Sauer P250 takes a whole new approach to handgun ergonomics. Innovative engineering allows it to be configured in any one of three different frames sizes or four different chamberings all in one gun," so observed Field Editor Wiley Clapp in a feature (December 2008, p. 46) examining arguably the most innovative handgun in recent history.

Clapp observed that the P250's lock module is its heart and that it houses the hammer, the trigger and the springs that power both, as well as the slide rails and the solid steel guide block that cams the barrel in and out of battery during the firing cycle. When combined with one of several grip modules, the P250 adapts to smaller or larger hands with ease.

But what really captured our attention is how the P250 lock module could be configured to accept different chamberings and barrel and slide lengths. Barrel lengths of 3.1", 3.9" and 4.7", chamberings of 9 mm, .357 SIG, .40 S&W and .45 ACP and magazine capacities running to 20 rounds of 9 mm make the



P250 a handgun system of unprecedented flexibility.

Clapp continued, "There's more to it than just a flurry of sizes, shapes and calibers. The P250 is a marvel of simplicity, with far fewer parts than anything comparable, yet its ability to transform itself in any number of customized configurations lends it greater appeal to shooters of varied interests."

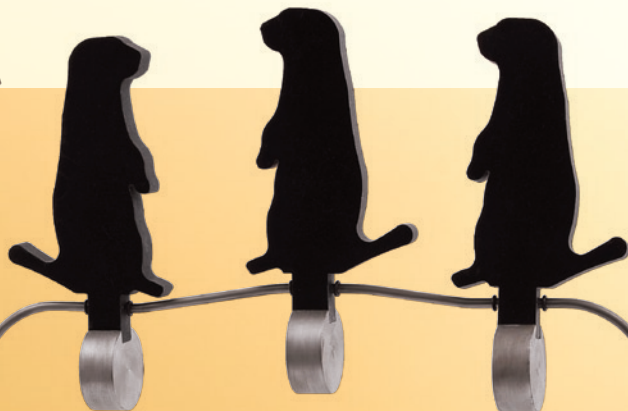
Ammunition Product Of The Year: The .327 Federal Magnum



"Federal's new .327 Federal Magnum cartridge is poised to set the revolver world on its ear," wrote Field Editor Bryce Towsley about the .327 Federal Magnum (April 2008, p. 42), which was designed to outperform the .38 Spl. but remain manageable for most shooters in a compact revolver.

Starting with the .32 H&R Magnum, Federal's cartridge design guru, Larry Head, lengthened the case by 1/8", boosted the Maximum Average Pressure and made structural changes to the cartridge case. The new chambering also handles .32 H&R Mag., .32 S&W Long and .32 S&W ammunition, providing low-recoil alternatives for practice. Also, the round's smaller diameter allows it to boost the cartridge capacity in cylinders of similar diameter.

The bottom line, according to Towsley, is that "The .327 offers more "real-world" energy than the .357 Mag., (at least in my test), better penetration and one more shot per gun load. It does all this with substantially less recoil and noticeably less muzzle blast than the .357 Mag."



Accessory Of The Year: Champion DuraSeal Spinner Targets



They were featured in our Editor's Choice Product Preview (June 2008, p. 34) section, and for good reason. DuraSeal Spinner Targets by Champion are available in single and multi-prairie dog configurations and feature non-metal, self-healing DuraSeal material. They weigh 80 percent less than metal equivalents, yet receive minimal damage from bullet strikes. "These auto-resetting targets handle varmint rifles and handguns, as well as many large-caliber rifles," we wrote. And its that kind of versatility and range in products—Spinners are available in Single, 5½" (black or orange), Triple 5½" (black) and Single, 7" (black or orange) versions—that will always capture our attention and respect.

Optic Of The Year: Aimpoint Micro H-1



"Aimpoint originated in Sweden 30 years ago and, as 'Kleenex' is synonymous with 'tissue' and 'Xerox' stands for all copiers, so is 'Aimpoint' to red dots. The U.S. Army has been buying Aimpoints for 10 years now, and it's hard to watch the evening news without spotting an Aimpoint on top of an M16. If an Aimpoint can withstand the heat and grit of the Iraqi desert and the cold and snow of Afghan mountains, chances are, it will make it through a couple of weekends of riding through the spring woods slung over your shoulder," so stated Field Editor Phil Bourjaily in a feature about turkey-hunting optics (March 2008, p. 46).

Bourjaily then introduced the newest Aimpoint, the Micro H-1, which weighs half as much as the now classic 9000 model, yet, as he wrote, "has every bit the performance and battery endurance." The Micro, which comes with an integral mount for Weaver bases, offers versatility in its wide range of mounting options. The factory now offers dedicated mounts for guns as different as the Ruger 10/22 rimfire and Merkel double rifles. It can even be attached to a shotgun rib with an aftermarket clamp-on base.

And in its seemingly endless cleverness Aimpoint has given the Micro, now a series of three models, such features as: elevation and windage knob covers that are also tools for turning the knobs; a 4-m.o.a. dot; and 12 brightness settings. "So far, I haven't hunted on a day bright enough that I had to turn the H-1 up to "10" much less "12," wrote Bourjaily.

Oh, and, by the way, the editors have been using Micros, too, and have yet to replace batteries in them thanks to Aimpoint's ACET technology, which allows the sight to run for more than 50,000 hours.

Golden Bullseye Pioneer Award Winners

"The Golden Bullseye Pioneer Award specifically honors outstanding personal achievement," said Joe H. Graham, Executive Director of NRA Publications. "The award spotlights the exemplary achievement and cumulative body of work of an individual, members of a team or partnership, or family who were responsible for the development and introduction of shooting equipment that has made a profound, positive and enduring impact on the way Americans shoot and hunt," he said, adding, "This year's winners are legends in our industry."

The winners of the 2009 Golden Bullseye Pioneer Award are J.B. (I.) and Robert Hodgdon, officers of Hodgdon Powder Company, a firm well known to reloaders and firearm industry professionals. For nearly six decades the Hodgdon brothers have worked in the company founded by their father, Bruce E. Hodgdon. Today, Hodgdon meets the needs of shooters, reloaders and hunters around the world with an extensive array of smokeless, blackpowder and blackpowder-substitute propellants, and the company continues to bring innovative new products to market. 🦋



Photo courtesy of Hodgdon Powder Co.



Golden Bullseye Pioneer Award Selection Criteria

To qualify for consideration for a Golden Bullseye Pioneer Award, the individual must have been:

- Fundamentally responsible for the invention, development, marketing and/or promotion of product(s) that gained widespread use and which fundamentally changed some aspect of shooting sports equipment or related products for the better
- Influence of the nominee's work must demonstrably extend beyond the actual product(s) themselves; have spawned imitators or offshoots
- Through his work, nominee(s) must have contributed to the goals and mission of the National Rifle Association and be a member(s) in good standing
- Not intended as a posthumous award; individual nominee(s) or at least some member(s) of the winning team or partnership must be alive in the year during which the nomination is made (i.e., year prior to the award ceremony); however, deceased nominees meeting this criteria will be eligible

Golden Bullseye Award Selection Criteria

To qualify for consideration for a Golden Bullseye Award, the product must have been:

- Recently introduced and available to consumers prior to the selection of the Golden Bullseye Awards
- Used/tested by a staff member or regular contributor to the magazine
- Reliable in the field, meeting or exceeding the evaluator's expectations
- Innovative in design and function
- Readily perceived as a value to the purchaser
- Styled in a manner befitting the firearm industry and, perhaps more importantly, its enthusiasts