



## SPRINGFIELD ARMORY RANGE OFFICER .45

This one may set a new benchmark for  
the serious entry-level 1911 .45



**SPRINGFIELD ARMORY** .45 autos have shot their way to national championships in disciplines ranging from traditional bulls-eye to IPSC, IDPA and the Steel Challenge, and have utterly dominated the annual Single Stack 1911 Championship in the hands of Rob Leatham. However, the Leatham Signature Models are pricey guns, and the company knew that a substantial market of budding competition shooters lay untapped somewhere under the \$1,000 MSRP mark. As a result, this year they introduced their Range Officer model.

This .45 ACP is spec'd for the "build quality" of Springfield's primo TRP and National Match models, but with costs cut in places that don't affect performance. The adjustable sights are clones of the late, great BoMars that were used in so many national record-setting performances. The finish is cost-saving Parkerizing. The flat mainspring housing is checkered, but not the front-strap of the frame. The mag well is lightly beveled, but cost is reduced by not incorporating a true magazine fun-

nel. It has neither full-length guide rod nor forward slide serrations (which this reviewer, like many others, doesn't want or need anyway). The occasional sharp edge remains, notably on the rear sight, but the sub-\$1,000 retail ticket makes it worth some time with a Dremel and cold blue to handle that. It comes with two flat-bottom, 7-round magazines, but its makers have been selling to 1911 people long enough to know that the serious buyers either have, or will purchase, a slew of their own magazines. The thumb safety is not ambidextrous, saving more money, but a great many right-handed shooters prefer their 1911s in that format, anyway. Suffice it to say, the cost saving measures all can be lived with, unless you're a southpaw... and even then, the cost savings will make the addition of an ambi safety relatively painless.

### LIVING WITH THE RANGE OFFICER

INSERT IT IN A holster that shields you from the sharp edges, and it carries like any other full-size, all steel 1911 pistol. You want the

gun to be reliable, of course, and this being the second Springfield Range Officer I've shot, my experience is this. The first one, tested for another gun magazine, went something over 500 rounds with only two malfunctions. One was my fault: it choked on a light, mid-range target load I probably shouldn't have been shooting in a service .45 that didn't have the special 14-pound spring for mild loads. The other was a failure to go to slide-lock, combined with a hammer follow, an anomaly that was not repeated. The second example tested here hasn't gone that many rounds, but it has been 100% reliable thus far with full-power hardball and hollow point loads.

While perfectly suitable for home defense or uniform duty carry, the Range Officer by its very name seems geared to recreational shooting in general, and competition shooting in particular. Is it good enough to win a match with? I found out. I shot my first test sample at one of Lance Biddle's excellent IDPA matches in Leesburg, Florida in late January and won the Custom Defense Pistol (single-action

.45 auto) division with it. So, the answer is most definitely yes, you can win a match with this gun right out of the box!

### ACCURACY

THE FIRST Range Officer I tested showed solidly good accuracy. The one tested here for *On Target* was even better. Working off Battenfeld Technology's Matrix rest on a concrete bench at 25 yards, five rounds of inexpensive MagTech 230-grain .45 hardball put four shots in one hole that measured 0.45", ironically enough, center to center. One more hit was just far enough out to make the whole 5-shot group measure 1.05" center to center. For a sub-\$1,000 1911 .45 auto, that's beyond "damn good" and closer to "awesome."

Red-box Black Hills 230-grain jacketed hollow point printed five shots into 1.40", the best three in three-quarters of an inch even, all measurements being to the nearest 0.05" between the farthest-apart bullet holes, center to center. That gives us an average of less than an inch and a quarter for 5-shot groups, hand-held

from a rest. Given the proven fact that the best three hits from a solid hand-held rest will roughly equal what the same gun and ammo will do from a machine rest for all five shots at the same distance, the "best three" measurements from this short test predict mechanical accuracy of about six-tenths of one inch. I, for one, am impressed by that... but hell, I've only been shooting 1911 .45s for fifty years!

It helped that the test gun was set up with a good "street trigger." Pull weight averaged exactly 5.5 pounds on the Lyman digital gauge I acquired from Brownell's a few years ago, and have used with great satisfaction ever since. The trigger stroke had a light take-up from rest. It's adjustable for backlash, and the *On Target* test sample apparently had already been so adjusted before it left Springfield Armory.

The first Range Officer I tested shot very well. This second example, tested for *On Target* exclusively, grouped even better. One place they didn't scrimp on to keep price down, clearly, was accuracy. Another place they didn't scrimp was in the grip

safety: the Range Officer has a perfectly functional beavertail and "speed bump" which allowed very fast recovery shot to shot, smooth draw and, unlike some poorly executed beavertails, proper activation of the grip safety every time even if the thumb was high enough to pull the web of the hand back from it slightly.

### BOTTOM LINE

I REALLY LIKED this pistol. It's well-made, with no frills, and it comes in distinctly under the thousand-dollar price point that has proven to be a real barrier in today's economy. Yeah, the sight edges could have been more rounded and I've shot enough competition that I like a true funnel on the magazine well for speed reloads on the clock, but I have to say that the Springfield Armory Range Officer .45 is an excellent value for the person who's looking for an accurate, reliable 1911 with this gun's particular set of features. See it at your local firearms retailer (\$939), or contact **Springfield Armory**; Tel.: (800) 680-6866; Web: [www.springfield-armory.com](http://www.springfield-armory.com)



Left: Designed as an affordable option for competition shooting, the Range Officer is ready to compete straight out of the box.

Right: Hinting at its competitive nature, a fully adjustable rear sight is inset into the slide. The finish is standard Parkerizing.



Left: Precision was on par with 1911s costing two or three times as much. A quick rear sight adjustment would later correct for windage.

Right: All controls operated smoothly, and grip-safety engagement was spot-on. Front strap remains un-checkered as a cost saving measure.

