

64 IDPA SSR Class: THE Most Affor

By Duane Thomas

Back in April 2005, IDPA released a new rulebook that made significant changes to the revolver rules. What this has given us is something really exciting: The opportunity for new shooters to get involved in combat pistol competition more affordably than ever before.

Prior to the new rulebook, there was one IDPA wheelgun division: Stock Service Revolver (SSR). Rules on what type of revolver could be used were almost non-existent. There was the usual list of IDPA-excluded modifications (no comps, optical sights, weighted grips, etc.), but as far as the type of revolver went, if it had a barrel no more than four inches long, you could shoot it in SSR. Power floor to compete in the division was 125,000. (In IDPA, when deriving a power factor, after multiplying the bullet weight in grains by the velocity in feet per second, you don't divide by 1,000 to get a smaller number. Dividing by 1,000 apparently takes too much time and could get you killed in a gunfight.)

The reason for the low power floor was that IDPA HQ figured – with charming naiveté – that most revolver shooters would be firing .38s. They seriously underestimated how much *some* people want to win. In short order, ironically, SSR – which you'd think would be really low-tech – became the only IDPA division with a real equipment race; where you absolutely needed one specific type of gun loaded with one specific type of ammo to be competitive. The gun was a Smith & Wesson N-frame .45 ACP, because when used with full moon clips, it offers the fastest revolver reloads around. Then shooters figured they could drive a heavy .45 slug at about 600 fps (what we in the sport call “foofer” or “mousefart” loads) so that the heavy revolver barely moves when you fire it.

From his perch high atop Mount IDPA, Bill Wilson looked out over his domain and said, “This is not what I had in mind at *all*.” The new rulebook closed those loopholes. There are now two IDPA revolver divisions. The new one is called Enhanced Service Revolver (ESR) in which moon-clip guns are allowed, but the power floor is 165,000 – the same as Custom Defensive Pistol, IDPA's .45 auto division. What IDPA HQ is saying here is, “You want to shoot your big, honkin’ .45 ACP revolver with full moon clip reloads? Fine. But you’re going to have to do it with real .45 ACP ammo.” Frankly, Bill Wilson wanted to outlaw moon-clip guns outright since he doesn't think revolvers that big and heavy are something very

many people would actually carry. However, other people convinced him not to do that.

Stock Service Revolver still exists, and still has the 125,000-power floor, but now it's a speed-loader-only division. Really, with that one change, SSR should be called the “Smith & Wesson K-frame division.” When I first heard SSR had been made speedloader-only, moon-clip guns need not apply, I instantly knew what that meant: Shooters now have an option that never before existed! If you want to become a combat pistol competitor, you can take that old Model 10 you bought for 200 bucks down at the local gun show, three speedloaders, whatever holster and speed-loader carriers tickle your fancy – none of which is going to cost very much – and you're in. You have everything you need to compete in combat pistol matches, with an absolute minimum outlay of cash, and a division in which you'll only be competing against people armed with the same level of technology.

For ammo there's a minor problem: Most inexpensive generic .38 Special won't make 125,000-pf out of a four-inch barrel. You have a few options: Reload (I know no one reading this magazine does that!), chronograph until you find ammo that does, or buy only specific factory loads known among serious shooters to make pf. There's a long thread on brianenos.com about that topic that will point you in the right direction.

When the new revolver rules were first introduced, you would not *believe* the whining on the Internet. “IDPA HQ has killed revolver,” we were told. That small but vocal minority was especially critical of exactly what I so admired: Creating two separate revolver divisions and making SSR speedloader-only. “It's not enough that there aren't that many revolver shooters, now they've diluted the pool even more.”

And yet, since the new rulebook went into effect, at my local IDPA club, for the first time ever we're getting a significant number of revolver shooters. The vast majority of them compete in SSR with Smith & Wesson K-frames. Even experienced auto pistol shooters are transitioning over to SSR. They enjoy the challenge of mastering a revolver. They like the easy affordability of equipment to shoot SSR. If I can believe what I'm reading on the 'net, many clubs are experiencing this phenomenon. So I was right. Man, sometimes it's scary to be psychic. However, I want you all to know I've sworn an oath to use these mental powers only for the good of mankind.

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