

designation was more of a name for the pistol than the cartridge, and much .38 Super ammunition just hasn't been that strong. This has changed, and today we have ammunition that matches the potential of the cartridge.

This ammunition will often surprise the user with modest recoil. The .38 Super uses relatively fast-burning powder that produces less recoil energy than the slow-burning powder used in the .357 Magnum, for example. The recoil spring captures much of the recoil energy as well. The 1911 platform was originally designed for the .45 ACP and easily handles the .38 Super, while the 10mm is often hard on the 1911.

If there is a drawback to the .38 Super, it is that ammunition for the caliber is not widely available. A well-stocked shop will have .38 ACP Super on hand but the selection may be limited. Within the past year, Buffalo Bore Ammunition and Wilson Combat have introduced .38 Super ammunition. In each case, the ammo is loaded to the potential of the cartridge. For many years, CorBon Ammunition has offered a wide assortment of effective ammo in this caliber. They've been the only show for the Super fan for some time.

Winchester offers the Silvertip loading and, while it isn't loaded to the full potential of the cartridge, it is very controllable and among the most pleasant of Super loads. For those who cannot comfortably fire the .45, .40 or a light-weight 9mm, the .38 Super/Silvertip combination is a good one.

The .38 Super offers first-class performance in a service loading such as the CorBon 125-grain DPX. If you wish a rapidly expanding or fragmenting load for use in an urban situation, the 115-grain JHP offers that option. If you wish to carry a spare magazine filled with a load that offers greater penetration potential, the Buffalo Bore 124-grain FMJ load is impressive.

FIRE AWAY

The accompanying table shows the performance of select loads in water jugs. Water is handy and inexpensive to use in testing ammo. It isn't gelatin but gelatin isn't tissue, bone and blood either. The results rendered by testing with one-gallon water jugs will be with-



Jason Winnie strong-side holster provides excellent balance of speed and retention.

in 10% of the results in gelatin as far as penetration and expansion.

During the course of this review, we fired the Government Model 1911 .38 Super against a similar .45 ACP pistol. While not timed, we fired as rapidly as we could regain the sights in recoil against an Innovative Targets steel target. You cannot ask for a better training aid—hit it and the target responds, but with a miss or off-center hit, you have no effect. That is reality.

The impression was that we were able to deliver ten hits with the Super in the time it took to deliver eight with the .45. Less trained shooters were handling the .38 Super more quickly in comparison to the .45.

The Colt 1911A1 may not have the bells and whistles some handguns do, but the pistol always works and gives excellent service-grade accuracy. The stainless steel version in .38 Super is the most accurate Colt .38 Super the author has used.

The only modification made to the 1911A1 was adding Katana grips from Lance Larson. I also added Wilson Combat magazines to the modest supply of Colt magazines, and I used a Triple K extended magazine with 15-round capacity with good function. While not suitable for holster carry, there may be situations where the Triple K magazine would be useful.

PACKING THE .38 SUPER

I have developed strong preferences in holsters over the years. They must be leather for most uses, and the fit must be good. A quality holster should demand a modest break-in period.

My Colt 1911A1 .38 Super is currently deployed in a Jason Winnie pancake holster. The J111 as ordered features a sweat guard that protects the body from the handgun and facilitates a sharp draw. The J111 is comfortable, keeps the pistol properly positioned to be drawn into the target, and has good retention. Jason Winnie is a skilled holster maker in his own right, but he gets it honestly from his grandfather, Don Hume.

The .38 Super/Colt combination fits my needs well. There are fancier guns, more accurate pistols, and more powerful handguns, but none more reliable and faster into action. Modern loads put the .38 Super just where it needs to be—a high-velocity loading with good performance, excellent penetration, and governable recoil. ☺

SOURCES

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