

Single Action Cartridge Revolver Shooting – 140 years on and growing!

The match defined below is a celebration of 19th century technology, when steel was forged, machined and fitted by skilled tradesman into accurate revolvers. The concept of the “six shooter” is, to say the least, quite quirky in requiring a precisely centred cylinder to rotate exactly 60 degrees per single action cocking, and to align across an air gap of about 4 thousands of an inch into the forcing cone at the rear of the fixed barrel. The efficiency of the revolver was threatened by the black powder propellant that left fouling which needed to be swabbed or brushed out to maintain accuracy. Finally, the bullet had to perform gymnastics of the highest order, as it skipped, swaged or shaved along the cylinder throat, before leaping across the cylinder gap, hopefully centred itself in the forcing cone, engaged the rifling assisted by lubrication carried in the lateral bullet grooves, and emerged into the air without being upset by any gas cutting past the bullet. Obviously, an impossible task!

Illustration 1 – Uberti 1872 Opentop replica firing 38 Special BPC.



Illustration 2 – S&W model 27 firing 357 Magnum BPC.



Campbelltown Liverpool District Pistol Club Inc.

Illustration 3 – Ruger Blackhawk firing 45 Colt BPC.



Historical highlights

1870 – S&W 44 Russian, Model 3 SA topbreak – became the leading target revolver.

1871 – S&W 45 Schofield added to the Model 3 range.

1873 – Colt 45 and Winchester 44-40 introduced – the cartridges that won the West.

1876 – Battle of the Little Big Horn. Custer's troopers carried a single shot Model 1873 Springfield carbine, calibre 45/55, and Colt 45 SAA revolvers with 40 grain loads. The Colts shot hard and high, with fixed sights set for 50 yards; future loads were reduced to 30 grains.

1888 – Dec. 22 (mid-winter), Ira Paine scores 904 in a 100 round match, at 50 yards, shooting a 44 Russian with full charge ammunition, cleaning after every 10 rounds.

1896 – First modern Olympiad – the Paine brothers, John and Sumner, win Gold and Silver in the 25m Military Pistol event, shooting a Colt SAA and a 44 Russian revolver.

1899 – S&W 38 Special, initially black powder then smokeless. Becomes a great target cartridge in the new swing-out cylinder Colt and S&W revolvers.

1912 – Stockholm Olympics, USA comes 4th in 30m Team Military Duelling Pistol, shooting Colt Officers Model .38 Special. Lt. George S. Patton, shooting a Colt SAA, comes 5th in the Pentathlon, when the judges deny him two doubles in the 25m shoot, ruling them as misses.

1920 – Antwerp Olympics, USA finally wins gold in the 30m Military Teams, shooting fixed sight Colt Officers Model 38 Special, or Smith and Wesson Military. The 30m Military Individual event is won by Guilherme Paraense (Brazil) shooting a Smith and Wesson with adjustable sights. This is the last appearance of military pistols in the Olympic Games.