THE MOA MAXIMUM FALLING-BLOCK SINGLE-SHOT PISTOL

BY LAYNE SIMPSON

Since its introduction in 1983, the MOA Maximum pistol has established a reputation for uncommon strength, great durability, and superb accuracy. Its falling-block action is quite similar in operation to those of other single-shot actions such as the Winchester High Wall of yesteryear and today's Browning Model 1885 and Ruger's No. 1. This is a very strong pistol. Precision-machined from Type 17-4 stainless steel, its receiver has survived all sorts of laboratory-controlled torture tests during which it held together at chamber pressures as high as 180,000 psi.

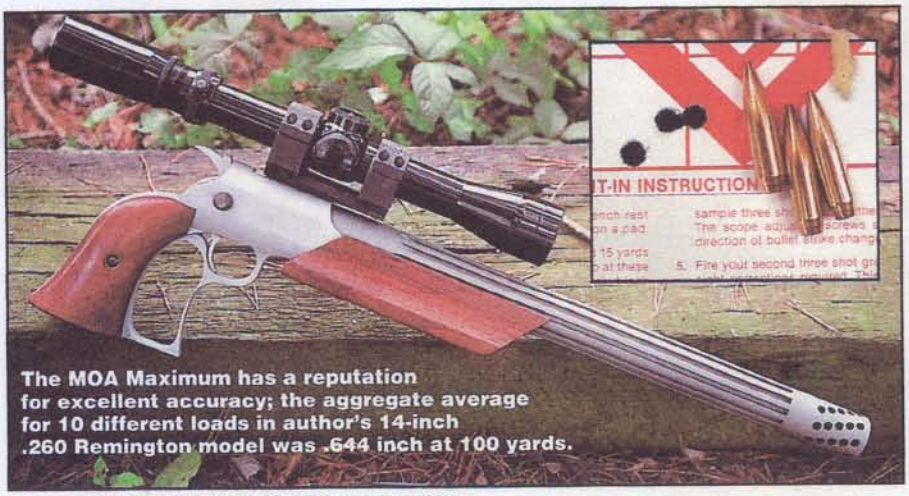
While barrels of the Maximum are interchangeable, each must initially be fitted at the factory. Each time a barrel in another caliber is added to the battery, the receiver has to be returned to Eaton, Ohio, but from that point on the fitted barrels are easily switched by simply screwing out one and screwing in another.

Four basic barrel lengths and weights are available. Standard-weight barrels are available in lengths of 8.75, 12.5, and 14 inches. The latest option is an extra-heavy nontapered 14-inch barrel measuring 1.125 inches in diameter. It comes with or without lightening flutes and is also available with an extremely efficient (but loud) muzzle brake. This barrel also requires the use of a wider forearm, which is ideal for resting atop a rabbit-ear-style sandbag.

In preparation for an upcoming pronghorn hunt, I had one of the new extra-heavy barrels in .260 Remington installed on my Maximum receiver. My barrel has the lightening flutes and muzzle brake, and it, along with the wider forearm, pushed the weight of the gun with a Burris 3-9X LER scope to six pounds.

As sights go, the Maximum comes with a fully adjustable leaf at the rear and a plain blade up front. Also available is a globe-style front sight, which is the first choice of most metallic silhouette competitors who shoot Maximum pistols in Production class. For those of us who prefer scopes on our hunting guns, MOA also offers a mount with integral one-inch rings; it utilizes holes drilled and tapped in the top of the receiver for the rear sight.

MOA offers two styles of grips for its pistol. Available in right- and left-hand versions, the original style is shaped somewhat like the grip on Ruger's Super Blackhawk revolver. The breech-block operating lever on this version is the finger-loop style that is more often seen on a lever-action rifle such as the Winchester Model 94. I have not tried the newer 17-degree finger-groove grip, but my guess is it would be more comfortable to shoot with more serious hard-kickers such as the .350 Remington Magnum, .375 H&H Magnum, and .444 Marlin.



The MOA Maximum has a reputation for excellent accuracy; the aggregate average for 10 different loads in author's 14-inch .260 Remington model was .644 inch at 100 yards.

Due to the great strength of its action, the MOA is quite suitable for most handgun and rifle cartridges, and that explains why it is available in about any chambering you can think of and probably a few you've never heard of. In addition to the .22 LR, there are various centerfire rifle chamberings ranging in caliber from the .17 Remington to the .444 Marlin. Then we have a variety of wildcats on the .250 Savage, .308 Winchester, .284 Winchester, and .350 Remington Magnum cases. The sky is also the limit on straight-wall handgun cartridges, with the .357 Maximum, .44 Magnum, and .454 Casull being quite popular.

The fire-control system of this pistol is quite unique. A pivoting transfer bar positioned inside the receiver is controlled by a sliding button located on the right-hand side of the receiver. With the button in its upper position, hammer travel is arrested by the rear of the receiver before it reaches the firing pin. Pushing the button down positions the transfer bar between the cocked hammer and the trigger. When the trigger is squeezed, the hammer strikes the bar and drives it against the firing pin, firing a chambered cartridge. Since the Maximum can be loaded only when its transfer bar is in its lower position, the pistol is always on "Safe" as a cartridge

SPECS
MOA Maximum .260 Rem. Single-Shot Pistol

Manufacturer.....M.O.A. Corp.
2451 Old Camden Pike
Eaton, OH 45320
Model.....Maximum
Type.....Single shot
Operation.....Lever-action falling block
Caliber.....260 Remington
(numerous others available)
Barrel length.....14 inches
(8.75- and 12.5-inch barrels also available)
Overall length.....18½ inches
Weight.....67 ounces
Sights.....Fully adjustable rear, blade front, drilled and tapped for scope mount
Stocks.....Walnut with thumbrest
Finish.....Blued steel; stainless steel
Price.....$740 (blued-steel barrel); $818 (stainless barrel)
Variations.....Extra heavy 14-inch barrel (with or without lightening flutes), scope mount, finger-groove-style grip, globe front sight

.260 Remington MOA Maximum Performance Results

Bullet	Powder (Type)	Powder (Grs.)	Velocity (fps)	Accuracy (Inches)
Nosler 100-gr. Ballistic Tip	RL 19	51.0	2751	0.682
Nosler 120-gr. Ballistic Tip	RL 19	46.0	2426	0.583
Nosler 120-gr. Ballistic Tip	RL 19	47.0	2464	0.522
Nosler 120-gr. Ballistic Tip	RL 19	48.0	2540	0.520
Nosler 120-gr. Ballistic Tip	RL 19	49.0	2601	0.501
Sierra 120-gr. MatchKing HP	RL 19	49.0	2612	0.462
Sierra 120-gr. PSN	RL 19	49.0	2574	0.614
Speer 120-gr. PSN	RL 19	49.0	2544	0.874
Nosler 125-gr. Partition	RL 19	49.0	2588	0.902
Remington 140-gr. PSN	Factory load		2221	0.781

NOTES: Accuracy shown for each load represents an average of three, three-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest at 100 yards with a Burris 3-9X LER scope mounted on the pistol. Velocity is the average of 10 rounds measured 12 feet from the gun's muzzle; barrel length was 14 inches. Remington cases and Remington 9½ primers were used in all loads.

is inserted into its chamber and the breechblock closed.

The Maximum has the best factory trigger available on any long-range pistol I have tried. Fully adjustable, it works reliably whether set at a few ounces or several pounds. I always adjust the trigger on my gun to a consistent 10 ounces for varmint shooting but increase its weight to a couple of pounds prior to taking it on a big-game hunt.

As far as accuracy goes, my .260 Remington Maximum is typical. In preparation for my pronghorn hunt I tried several 100- and 120-grain bullets pushed to maximum speed by Reloder 19, and every load averaged less than an inch for five shots at 100 yards. The Remington 140-grain factory load also proved to be quite accurate although a bit slow in the 14-inch barrel. While the Sierra 120-grain MatchKing is not classified as a big-game bullet—and I had no intention of using it for such—I was curious to see how accurate it would be in the 1:8-inch rifling twist of the MOA barrel. As it turned out, that bullet seated over 49.0 grains of RL 19 proved to be the most accurate; it averaged .462 inch for three, three-shot groups at 100 yards. As hunting bullets went, all those tried produced far better accuracy than is actually needed for bagging a pronghorn out to 300 yards or so.

While the Maximum enjoys quite a following among those who participate in metallic silhouette competition, this extremely accurate pistol is quite suitable for other applications. In fact, its dozens of available chamberings make it an excellent hunting gun. It is quite versatile too. Install a barrel in .22 LR and you've got just the ticket for precision target shooting and bagging small game for the pot. Switch to a barrel in, say, .444 Marlin and you can shoot everything from reduced-velocity handloads for punching paper to full-power loads for taking big game at woods ranges. Choose among cartridges such as the 6.5 BR, .260 Remington, 7mm BR, and 7mm-08 and you're all set for hunting deer-size game in open country where shots can be rather long. Screw a barrel in .375 H&H Magnum into the receiver and you've got a handgun capable of pushing a 270-grain bullet out the muzzle 400 fps faster than the .375 JDJ in a T/C Contender. The Maximum is truly an accurate and versatile handgun.