



HANDGUN HUNTING

J.D. Jones

TIPS, TECHNIQUE
AND POLITICAL-
INCORRECTNESS



.50 B&M AK



Dennis Lawrence (SSK machinist-gunsmith) gives permission to the .50 B&M AK!



Left to Right:
.50 Alaskan with 570 gr. Woodleigh
bullet, .50 B&M AK with the 375
Barnes and 500 Hornady bullets.

I was 13 years old when I fired my first .50 BMG at Camp McCoy Wisconsin, courtesy of a friendly Lieutenant. I shot most of a belt and destroyed a large hunk of concrete. I can still shut my eyes and visualize the concrete chunks and dust flying. Little did he know what those 80 or so rounds would lead to. I did not know what 21 different .50 caliber cartridges from the diminutive .50 American Eagle to the .50 BMG.

The .50 Alaskan has always been a favorite in lever guns and the Encore. It does suffer from a short list of bullets suitable for lever gun use, but handloaded with surplus 50 BMG bullets in single shots is the best fun of the lot.



This brake evolved with extended shooting sessions and is very effective in controlling recoil and muzzle jump.

EXPERIMENTS

Michael McCourry is a serious firearms enthusiast. He has a well equipped indoor firing range and the knowledge and interest to design and test a significant number of big game cartridges. As I write this Michael is visiting several African countries testing his cartridges on dangerous game. I've been fortunate enough to work with him in this endeavor and the .50 B&M AK. It's a vast improvement over the original .50 AK due to using the large number of .500" diameter bullets designed for the .500 S&W.

Simply necking the .50 AK case to use .500" diameter bullets instead of .510" bullets opens a whole new ballistic adventure. Most of these bullets are flat nosed and suitable for use in the tubular magazines of lever guns. Even the crimp groove is in the correct location on most of them. Converting a Browning or Winchester 71 or 86 is easily done by rebarreling. The Marlin .45-70s require a bit more work but are very satisfactory.

The Ruger No.1 requires some action work and a new barrel, but the Encore simply accepts another barrel. Most of my shooting has been in the Encore in pistol-length barrels, with some more in rifle length. Michael has done

a great deal of testing in lever guns with 18" barrels. Velocities with the 500 grain Hornady in rifle-length — without going crazy with pressure — will be about 2,000 fps, and the same load in a 13" Encore barrel does almost 1,800. A 400 in the rifle is 2,150 and 13" Encore about 1,925.

Some of the 300-350 grain bullets work well, and some are capable of being driven in excess of their design velocities in the .50 B&M and the .500 S&W. All of the 400 and 500 grain bullets work a lot better at the several hundred feet per second higher velocities than they do in the .500 S&W. The Pointed 385 Remington and 375 Barnes bullets at 1,950 in the 13" Encore do exceedingly well in accuracy and velocity retention, and are extremely effective on deer to elk-sized animals.

The 275 and 325 Barnes are real screamers for the velocity freaks. The brake on the Encore pistol is very effective and experienced big bore shooters generally consider the .50 B&M quite comfortable to shoot. I have reports on about 20 animals taken with it in SSK Encore pistols with exactly zero negative comments.

This particular design of Michael's is relatively simple, but was well thought out — as are his more complex cartridge designs.

