

# SHOOTING **TIMES**

JULY 1984 \$1.75

## Handgun Silhouette A Knockdown, Flat-Out Game Of Skill!

**IHMSA  
Official  
Guidelines**

▪ Single Shots ▪ Revolvers  
▪ Autoloaders

**Ruger's No.1 Rifles:  
65 Loads That Make  
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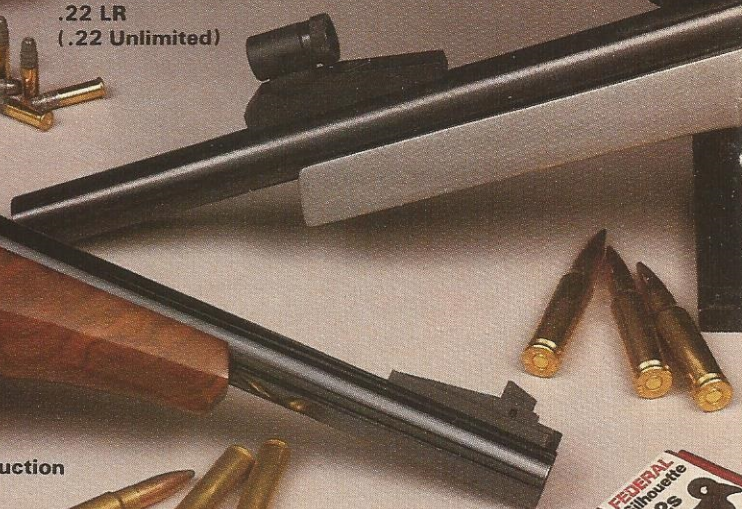
Interested in the handgun metallic silhouette game? You don't need a custommade handgun to join in on the fun. Actually, very little equipment is required to become a part of one of the fastest growing shooting sports. Here's what it takes to . . .

# Start Shooting STEEL

By Dick Metcalf



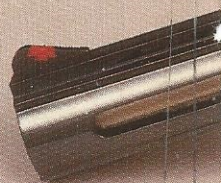
T/C 14-Inch  
.22 LR  
(.22 Unlimited)



T/C 10-Inch  
7mm T/CU  
(Big Bore Production  
Single Shot)



Ruger 7½-Inch  
Super Blackhawk  
.44 Magnum  
(Big Bore  
Production Revolver)






**F**OR ALL you shooters who have been reading and hearing about handgun metallic silhouette shooting but haven't gotten around to trying it just yet, I know how you feel. Five years ago, I heard all sorts of clamor about this new shooting game, and every time I attended a national firearms show or meeting, someone always asked if I "shot steel." My embarrassed "no" answer prompted me to find out more about this rapidly growing sport.

You may have the mistaken notion, as I did, that getting started in silhouette takes a lot of expensive equipment, a full-scale shooting

range, and plenty of steel for those big, heavy targets. It's true silhouette shooting can involve a lot of time and investment, but you don't have to get into it full scale to enjoy it. You don't have to become an International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association (IHMSA) member to shoot silhouettes. You don't have to be an NRA member. You don't have to participate in the formal matches sanctioned by either of these two sponsoring organizations. You don't have to buy special handguns—any of the ones you already have will do fine.

Of course, once you start shooting the silhouette game, it's likely you will wind up doing all of these things and probably become a card-carrying IHMSA member. That's what



Wichita 13-Inch  
MK-40 .308 Win.  
(Big Bore Unlimited)

S&W 8½-Inch  
Model 17 .22 LR  
(.22 Production  
Revolver)

Dan Wesson  
Eight-Inch Model 40-VS  
.357 Maximum  
(Big Bore  
Production Revolver)

Photo By  
Chroma



more than 35,000 shooters have done already.

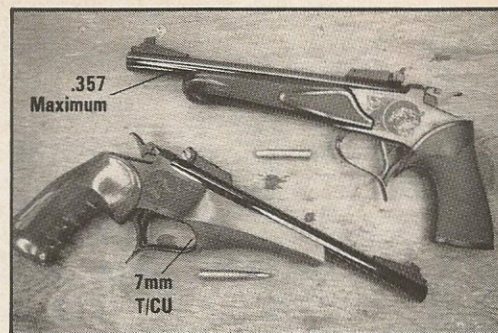
Five years ago, I'd never shot a steel target. Now I'm a member of a local silhouette gun club and the IHMSA. I have been an IHMSA member for two years, I shoot in both sanctioned big-bore and .22 matches, and last year I went to the IHMSA Internationals for the first time. Here's how my cohorts and I got started . . .

There were 10 or 12 of us who liked shooting and hunting and tended to get together on weekends. We would set up tin cans in rows of five and shoot at them, one shot each, left to right. Before long we were setting up 20-can matches in four banks of five at varying distances (all inside 25 yards). We were just shooting .22 LR handguns, but the competition was fierce.

You see, that's the essence of metallic silhouette. At its foundation, it's nothing more than plinking, which everyone knows is the finest form of firearms recreation ever devised and which has more adherents and participants than all other types of formal firearms competition

rupted 40-target match, according to IHMSA rules for match procedures. Then we started keeping track of scores to see how we fit into the IHMSA shooter classifications. We were anxious to see who would shoot the first AA and then AAA score. Then we progressed from the backyard to a nearby pasture where we scaled the range accurately for the target sizes we were using. The .22 rifle silhouettes were 1/8 full size; for correct scale, we put the little chickens at 10 meters, pigs at 20 meters, turkeys at 30 meters, and rams at 40 meters. This was a mind-boggling experience. The first time we started trying to hit those squirrel-sized rams at nearly 50 yards, we couldn't believe how difficult it was. At that time, breaking 20 was a real accomplishment. Average scores for the group were around 15 to 18 (out of a perfect 40).

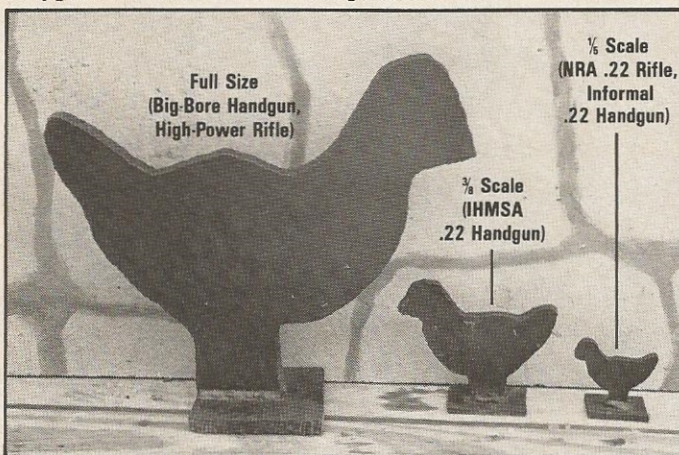
There was nothing regulation or official and certainly not sanctioned about any of our shooting. We were using .22 rifle targets for .22 handguns and setting them at unauthorized distances. Both IHMSA and the NRA have strict



T/C is top choice for big-bore silhouette.



Dan Wesson DAs are big winners in IHMSA big-bore revolver category.



Targets of various sizes are used for different types of matches.

put together. At the same time, silhouette raises plinking to the level of fine art and provides an arena where any shooter can quickly become skillful beyond his wildest dreams of marksmanship. You can start with cans at 25 feet, using a .22, and wind up shooting targets the size of pigeons at 200 meters with an iron-sighted handgun!

My friends and I played the silhouette game for several weeks with empty cans, and then we moved on to the little .22 LR rifle metallic silhouette targets. One chicken, pig, turkey, and ram came in a package for about \$10. We set up the rams at 25 yards, and the others were set up proportionately closer. It's hard to explain to a nonshooter how satisfying it was the first time I heard that "cling" and knocked over a little ram offhand at 25 yards with an open-sighted .22. I was using a four-inch S&W Model 18 K-22 . . . my first silhouette pistol.

All of a sudden, this silhouette game was starting to snowball. We collected enough targets to shoot an uninter-

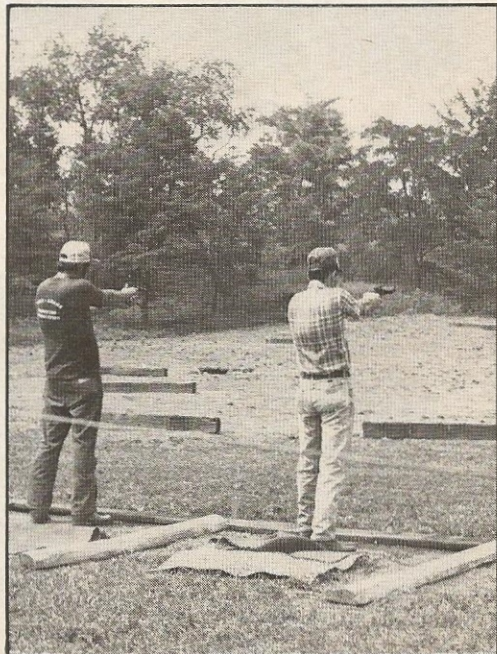
rules for matches forbidding shooting at metallic silhouettes closer than 25 yards. We were shooting at 10 meters, but we made a rule (our first club rule) that eye protection be mandatory, and we didn't have any trouble with "splash-back" from the steel targets. We weren't official, but we were enjoying ourselves, and the word started getting around about what we were doing. Before long, other shooting enthusiasts in the surrounding area started showing up for matches—some from 50 miles away.

From there we picked up even more momentum. We scrounged enough scrap steel to piece together a set of four full-sized centerfire targets. Eventually, enough material was scrounged to have a set of five each, and we started looking for a 200-meter range to put them on.

By the beginning of our third summer, we had access to unused farmland that was just right for a 200-meter silhouette range. At that point we actually organized, elected *pro-forma* officers, and wrote IHMSA for information on

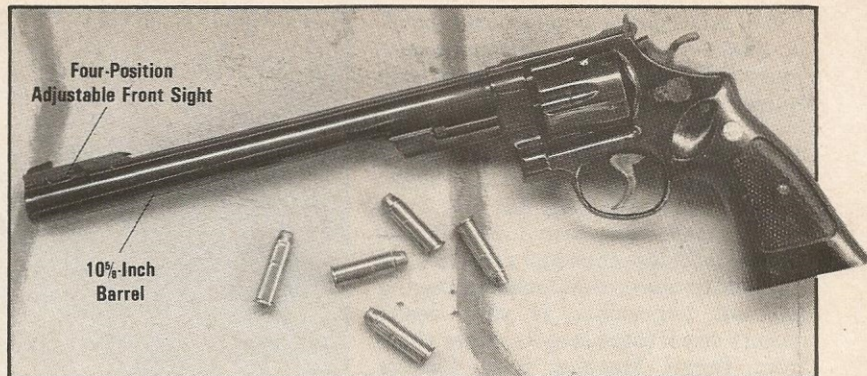


To get started in silhouette, try a general-purpose .22 handgun.



Author's club initially used .22 LR rifle silhouettes at scaled-down distances.





You can use Production guns in three categories.

S&W's Model 57 "Silhouette" in .41 Magnum is built for steel shooters.

how to hold sanctioned matches. By this time, some of our shooters were traveling 150 miles to shoot in real big-bore silhouette matches, had joined IHMSA, and wanted to shoot certified scores on their home range. IHMSA sent a packet detailing how easy it was to set up a real match, and we had our first one last year. We wound up going the whole route because we had the interest and enthusiasm to support it. Shooters are now driving 150 miles to shoot on our range—and we still hold .22 pistol matches for old time's sake.

If the truth be told, I think we were having just as much fun and getting as much benefit when we were shooting the nonregulation matches as we are now. Silhouette is formalized plinking, and it simulates hunting conditions. You can literally do it anywhere it's safe

to fire a gun. The basic benefits come from the shooting itself, no matter how closely you adhere to the regular competition rules.

One of the primary benefits is improved marksmanship. As I mentioned, when we started 15 to 18x40 was about par. But by the end of our first summer, only two months after the first shot was fired at a steel target, our better shooters were regularly breaking 30-plus scores, and at each match, at least one of us tumbled all 10 of the squirrel-sized rams at 40 meters freestyle. Everybody, even the nonpracticing shooters, had doubled their scores.

What had happened? Simple. Practice—practice that was fun. We learned to judge where a bullet would hit at 40 meters compared to 10 meters. And the target sizes were practical for real-life

uses of a .22 pistol. Our better shooters didn't hunt squirrels with .22 rifles that first autumn; they used their silhouette pistols.

What handguns were used? The most common guns on the line were Ruger Mark I .22 autos, Ruger Single-Six SA revolvers, S&W K-22s, and an occasional High Standard or S&W target auto-loader. T/C Contenders were not used the first season. They started coming along as some of our members became serious about competition. When we started shooting at the big-bore targets, common guns were Ruger Super Blackhawks, S&W Model 29s, and T/C Contenders. Most of the shooters had .44 Magnums, a few had .357s, but nobody bought anything "special" at the outset. We went in with what we had.

(Continued on Next Page)



## Handguns For IHMSA Categories

The following lists show the more popular and effective handguns and cartridges for the various categories of IHMSA competition, both big bore and .22 rimfire. The Standing categories, which refer to a shooting position instead of a particular type of handgun, have been omitted. Criteria for selection required that a gun be a regular-production item readily available to the general shooting public. In terms of the Unlimited categories, this criteria therefore omitted the fully customized guns (most based on Remington XP-100 actions) that dominate serious competition.

In general terms, the lists start with the more "general purpose" and less expensive guns that have utility for many types of shooting and then range up to the guns used solely for that purpose by top-level silhouette shooters and which place in the top ranks at the Internationals. □

### BIG BORE

#### Production Single Shot

T/C Contender 10-inch .357 Magnum  
T/C Contender 10-inch .41 Magnum  
T/C Contender 10-inch .44 Magnum  
T/C Contender 10-inch .30 Herrett  
T/C Contender 10-inch .357 Maximum  
T/C Contender 10-inch 7mm T/CU  
R.P.M. Merrill 10.75-inch .357 Merrill  
R.P.M. Merrill 10.75-inch 7mm Merrill  
Wichita International 10.5-inch .357 Maximum  
Wichita International 10.5-inch 7mm International Rimmed

#### Production Revolver

Ruger New Model Blackhawk 6.5-inch .357 Magnum  
S&W Model 686 8 1/2-inch .357 Magnum  
Dan Wesson Model 715-V10 10-inch .357 Magnum  
Ruger Super Blackhawk 10.5-inch bull-barrel .44 Magnum  
S&W Model 57 Silhouette 10 1/2-inch .41 Magnum  
S&W Model 29 Silhouette 10 1/2-inch .44 Magnum  
United Sporting Arms "Seville" 10.5-inch .375 Super Mag  
Dan Wesson Model 741-V8 8-inch .41 Magnum  
Dan Wesson Model 744-V8 8-inch .44 Magnum  
Dan Wesson 40-V8S 8-inch .357 Maximum

#### Unlimited

T/C Contender 14-inch .41 Magnum  
T/C Contender 14-inch .44 Magnum  
T/C Contender 14-inch .30 Herrett  
T/C Contender 14-inch .30-30 Winchester  
T/C Contender 14-inch .45 Winchester Magnum  
T/C Contender 14-inch .357 Maximum  
T/C Contender 14-inch 7mm T/CU  
Remington XP-100 14.75-inch 7mm BR Remington  
Wichita MK-40 Silhouette pistol 13-inch 7mm IHMSA  
Wichita Silhouette pistol 13-inch .308 Winchester



### .22 RIMFIRE

#### Production Single Shot

T/C Contender, 10 inches  
R.P.M. Merrill, 9 inches

#### Production Autoloader

Ruger Mark II Standard, 4 inches  
Ruger Mark II Target 5.5-inch bull barrel  
S&W Model 41, 7 inches  
High Standard Citation II, 7.25 inches  
High Standard Trophy, 7.25 inches  
High Standard Victor, 5.5 inches

#### Production Revolver

H&R Model 999 6-inch DA  
Ruger New Model Single-Six 9.5-inch SA  
Colt Diamondback 22 6-inch DA  
S&W Model 17 K-22 8 1/2-inch DA  
Dan Wesson Model 722-V10 10-inch DA

#### Unlimited

T/C Contender, 14 inches

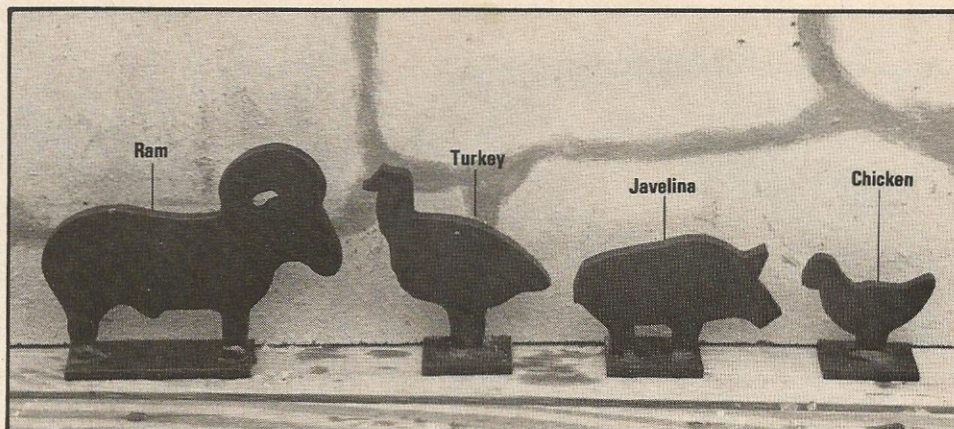


So if you'd like to get started in metallic silhouette, here are a few guidelines. Start with .22s on tin cans. Shoot with some buddies and approximate the actual silhouette procedures (IHMSA match procedures are excerpted in the attached sidebar), but don't worry about detailed rules. Shoot for fun. Get some of the small, inexpensive .22 LR rifle targets (still less than \$20 a set) and set them at distances that look challenging but not impossible. If your dealer doesn't stock these targets, order them from Target Masters, 8341 Canoga Ave., Canoga Park, CA 91304; phone (213) 998-3166. (Target Masters is also a source for regulation-size silhouettes for .22 handgun and big bore.) If you have to set the targets at close distances and are worried about splash-back, order some rubber .22 rifle silhouettes from SSK Industries, Rte. One, Della Dr., Bloomington, IN 43910; phone (614) 264-0176. These cost \$15 a set plus shipping when ordered direct, and they are an excellent alternative (although they don't "cling" when hit).

If you find you like the game, then I recommend you join IHMSA (Box 1609, Idaho Falls, ID 83401; phone [208] 524-0880), even if there isn't a sanctioned range in your area and even if you don't expect to immediately compete in IHMSA matches. Your \$15 a year will buy a classification card, which you can use on your own as a record, and a subscription to *The Silhouette*, IHMSA's publication. All sorts of information about shooting, silhouette in particular, scheduled matches around the country, and technical data is included. As an IHMSA member, you can also buy firearms and shooting equipment at a substantial discount through the association. You should ask IHMSA to send an information packet on how to hold matches. This packet contains a lot of practical tips on how to get materials, what to use for target stands (old railroad ties, concrete blocks), and how to turn useless property into a silhouette range.

Most shooters' first question when thinking about starting silhouette is, "What kind of gun should I have?" I hope the answer is already apparent: the gun you've already got. It makes no sense to rush out and buy an expensive silhouette pistol before you know whether you like the game. Try it first with what you have— .22 or big bore. If you find silhouette appealing, you'll be ready to trade soon enough.

Sanctioned silhouette shooting is divided into several different categories, both in .22 and big bore, that account for capabilities of different guns. Whatever gun you have right now will fit into some appropriate category for metallic silhouette, with one exception—center-fire autoloaders like the .45 ACP or 9mm. These are not silhouette guns. They just weren't made for 200-meter accuracy, and they don't have enough



These .22 rimfire silhouettes illustrate the relative size and proportions of match targets.

power at that range to knock over 50-plus pounds of steel ram.

Earlier, I touched on the kinds of guns most effective and most popular on the silhouette line; here's a more extensive look at what's most popular among grassroots silhouette shooters. I'm not necessarily talking about the guns used by the world-class shooters because they lean toward the exotic and expensive. But if you are looking for a good choice for each of the catego-

ries that silhouette shooting has to offer, here's what's most popular around the country.

In the .22 sector, competition is divided into five categories. There are three Production categories for standard-issue handguns—revolver, semiauto, and single shot. In .22 Revolver, the winningest guns are the Dan Wesson .22 and the S&W K-22, six-to eight-inch barrels. Ruger's Single-Six remains a very popular gun at the

## Official IHMSA Rules

"A sanctioned match consists of 40 rounds: 10 chicken targets at 50 meters, 10 javelina targets at 100 meters, 10 turkey targets at 150 meters, 10 ram targets at 200 meters.

"Firing is in five-round stages, two minutes per stage, in freestyle or standing position without artificial support.

"Each competitor has a bank of five metal silhouettes to fire against, one shot at each, left to right in order. Hits out of sequence are misses, i.e. second shot hitting a third silhouette a miss, and in this case a double miss as only the remaining two silhouettes may be fired on. Shooter cannot fire his third shot at the untouched second target. Only hits and misses are recorded, and a silhouette must be knocked from its rest to score a hit. Turning a silhouette on stand does not count. Ricochet hits count.

"When called to the firing line, competitors place their pistol and ammunition on the shooting pad and do not touch them until the command 'Load' is given. They may now handle their pistol, dry fire, and

load. Thirty seconds loading time will be allowed before the command to commence firing.

"Except when pistol failure occurs, the same pistol, barrel, grips, sights, etc. shall be used at all ranges in that particular match.

"At the discretion of the line referee, and prior to the command to load, time may be allowed for sight adjustments to be made.

"Each shooter may have one coach with him on the firing line who may have scope or binoculars and advise competitor where shots are going, keep time, or otherwise advise, but said coach may not handle shooter's pistol or assist in any physical way once the command to load has been given.

"When a shooter is called to the firing line to shoot at any distance stage of a match, at no time from the command to load until the last cease fire is called at that distance shall the shooter be interrupted by any match official (line judge, announcer, etc.) except for safety reasons or if that shooter, or his spotter, calls for an alibi or judgment call from a match official.

### ALIBIS:

"The only alibi shall be when a target is not available, in which case the targets which fell without being engaged will be reset and the shoot-





Creedmore position is popular in the big-bore revolver category.



T/C 14-inch rimfire Contender is for .22 Unlimited category.

grassroots level because it is so economical, but it is not as precise for the serious competitor. In .22 auto, High Standard's several target pistols and the S&W Model 41 are the pick of the crop for top scores. The economical Ruger MK I and MK II autos are frequently seen but lack the refinement in trigger pull for top place. In the .22 Single Shot category, there is only one gun: the T/C Contender. It beats everything else hands down on all counts.

The fourth .22 category is Standing, where all three production categories compete side by side. Here the Contender's superior accuracy and trajectory is balanced out because most shooters find it less comfortable to shoot off-hand than a revolver or semiauto. So the top-grade autos get the nod in the .22 Standing competition.

The fifth category is the .22 Unlimited — the custom-gun category. It was made official in 1983 and is new in IHMSA

silhouette this year. Currently, few guns are produced or are being made specifically for it. The one that is most visible is the 14-inch .22 LR Contender, and it is what I recommend.

In big-bore silhouette, there are four categories. In Production Single Shot (which includes any semiauto shooters who want to compete), the standout gun is the T/C Contender. For handloaders, the most popular silhouette chambering these days is the 7mm T/CU, and

er will be allowed 24 seconds each to complete his five-shot string, or by mutual agreement between the match director and the competitor, targets which are standing on another bank may be used to complete the five-shot string of targets.

"Pistol malfunctions and faulty ammunition shall not be cause for an alibi or allowance of extra firing time. Should a pistol fail to function during a match, another pistol of the correct category for the entry may be used to complete the match.

### SCORING:

"All shots are scored by marking either a O for a miss or an X for a hit in the correct spaces on a score card. It is the scorekeeper's responsibility to see that the competitor observes the rules and time limits, fires no more than five rounds per series, and when strong winds exist, watch silhouettes closely so that he can tell when a silhouette is blown over and not knocked down by a bullet. When a silhouette is blown down before a shot, the scorekeeper will instruct the shooter to fire on the remaining ones in order, then go back to the left end to fire unfired round or rounds at remaining silhouette or silhouettes. All scoring differences must be resolved immediately on completion of the series before either shooter or scorekeeper

er leaves the firing line or prepares for a second series at the same stand.

"If one foot or the other on any hit javelina or ram be completely off the stand, but resting on the ground or any other obstruction so as to prevent the target from falling, then the hit will be scored even if the target is still standing with the other foot still on the stand.

"Otherwise, in no case shall a hit target be awarded as a score point unless it is knocked down and/or off its stand.

### TIES:

"If a tie occurs, the shooter with the greatest number of rams will receive the higher position. If ties remain the greater number of turkeys shall be used and so on to the pigs and chickens until a clear winner appears.

"Should the shooters remain tied, then at their option, and the match sponsor's discretion, they may shoot at any target and distance combination that is mutually agreeable to all parties. Firing will be in five-shot strings at five targets for each shooter at the distance agreed upon.

"Regular loading, firing, and time procedures will be used. The high score shall determine the winner."

□

### Categories & Classes

**Production**  
(big bore and .22, all action types, single shot, revolver, autoloader)

36-40 International  
30-35 AAA  
24-29 AA  
18-23 A  
11-17 B  
0-10 C

**Unlimited**  
(big bore and .22)

39-40 International  
35-38 AAA  
30-34 AA  
25-29 A  
18-24 B  
0-17 C

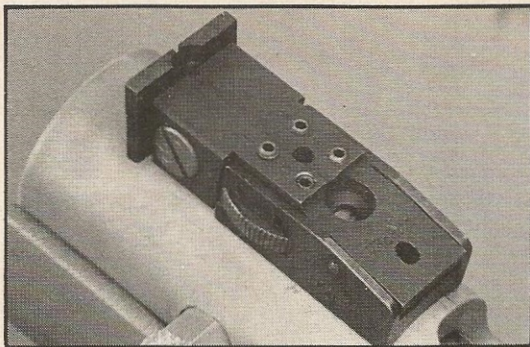
**Standing**  
(big bore and .22)

28-40 International  
22-27 AAA  
16-21 AA  
8-15 A  
0-7 B

"The first score fired in a sanctioned match by a new shooter in any category will establish his initial class in that category. Thereafter, any two scores, including said first score and any reentry scores that exceed the break point of any class in that category will move the shooter directly to that class, effective at the next match and thereafter. (Shooters compete directly only with other members of their class.)"

NOTE: Above material was excerpted from the 1983 International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association Official Rules book from IHMSA Inc.





**Wichita sight allows for separate zeroing at four silhouette target distances.**

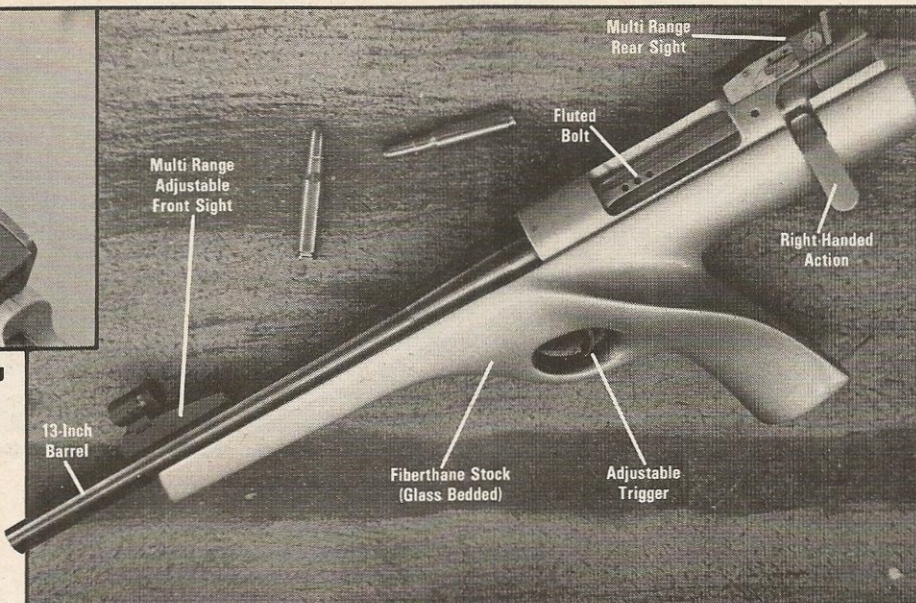
for nonhandloaders, the .44 Magnum remains the most popular choice. A Contender chambered for the .357 Maximum (Super Mag) would be a good choice for anyone not totally comfortable with several rounds of .44 Magnum recoil.

Dan Wesson's big DA revolvers, mostly the .44 Magnum, dominate the Production Revolver category. I cannot as yet in good conscience recommend the Dan Wesson .357 Maximum (even though it won top three places in this category at the 1983 Internationals) until I see convincing evidence that the barrel-erosion problem plaguing this cartridge in revolvers has been truly solved. The big Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum remains a primary match winner at the local level and is an excellent choice, as are S&W's new 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch .44 and .41 Magnum "Silhouette" guns.

In the Big Bore Standing category, both single shots and revolvers compete, and because single shots tend to outclass revolvers substantially in long-range accuracy and trajectory, they are the best choice here, in spite of questionable graspability. I'd go for something like the 7mm T/CU or .357 Maximum and let the accuracy edge make up for a little less absolute power.

In the Unlimited category, there are three choices: buy an expensive custom silhouette pistol—either handbuilt or factory made like the superb Wichita bolt-action silhouette guns; buy a less expensive Remington XP-100 in 7mm BR chambering; buy a less expensive T/C Contender in any one of the 14-inch barrels that seems appropriate. I'd recommend getting the XP-100 if you can afford it. The 7mm BR is a fine cartridge (it won first in the Internationals), and the XP action is the basis for nearly all of the customized and special-caliber Unlimited guns on the firing line. Then if you want to go the full route in Unlimited later on, your XP will be the foundation for further customizing.

If you don't already have at least one handgun that would let you compete in at least one of these silhouette categories, you probably aren't that interested in handgunning. And if you do, what are you waiting for? Get out there and start shooting steel.



**Wichita Arms bolt-action silhouette pistol is top competitor in the Unlimited category.**



**Many guns used in the Unlimited category are built on customized Remington XP-100 actions.**



**From a Creedmore position, this shooter topples the first turkey in the Unlimited category lineup from 150 meters with a Wichita bolt-action silhouette pistol.**



**Author recommends Remington XP-100 in 7mm Remington BR as a starting point for competition in the Unlimited category.**