Story and Photo by Duane Thomas

In IDPA, if your goal is the ultimate in “shootability,” your best choice would be a full-sized, steel-framed Government Model-pattern 1911 chambered for 9mm Parabellum. The reasons for this are obvious. Of all the trigger actions you could choose for IDPA, the most conducive to fast, accurate shooting is the single-action 1911. Among auto pistol cartridges legal for use in IDPA, the lightest recoiling is the 9mm Parabellum. Combine the two; you’ve got the best of both worlds.

In IDPA the single-action 9mm competes in Enhanced Service Pistol division (ESP). The power floor in ESP (a number derived by multiplying the bullet weight in grains by the velocity in feet per second) is 125,000. Thus 9mm is right in there, offering you all the power you need but not so much more you pick up a lot of excess recoil.

Maximum allowable magazine capacity in ESP is 10 rounds. Full-length single stack 1911 mags in 9mm hold nine. In IDPA you have to start with the gun loaded to full magazine capacity or division maximum allowable, whichever is greater, plus one in the chamber. That means with a 9mm you’ll have a 10-shot gun when some of the opposition may have 11-shooters. This is not necessarily a bad thing. With (a) the prevalence of two-shots-per-target arrays in IDPA, and (b) the fact the fastest allowable reload in IDPA is to shoot the gun to sideload, (c) you can make a serious case for a gun carrying an even instead of odd number of rounds to start.

A 10-shot handgun will predictably go empty just as you finish engaging a target, allowing you to transition to the next target while reloading. An 11-shot gun will predictably go empty when you still need to put another round on-target, requiring you to reload and reengage before you can move on. The 10-shot gun can save you transition time (the interval required to move the gun between targets) versus the 11-shooter by ensuring you’ll probably go dry at the correct points in the stage. That little piece of gamesmanship may be anathema to those

**When you use a 9mm-chambered 1911 in IDPA, you’re armed with a gun so much easier to fire than anyone else around you it’s almost unfair - but it’s legal!**