Try Shooting

By Col. Mark L. Lisi

The number of new shooters in the ranks of the IDPA and USPSA is almost staggering – there are more and more shooters every week. The 10- or 12-man squad is now the norm here in Washington. Action pistol, like all other shooting sports, demands a considerable up-front investment; you must have the right gear to play the game.

While certainly not cheap, there are ways to get into action pistol without breaking out the children’s college fund. As the shooter, you must keep an open mind, make some concessions, and focus on a set up that allows for shooting both USPSA and IDPA.

Readers of my work here in The Blue Press know that I am in what is generally referred to as my “revolver period” and that’s the key to this discussion. I am a die-hard M1911 fan, but am currently focused on shooting revolvers. In an effort to stop jumping from one platform to another, I have set myself up to shoot K-Frame revolvers in both disciplines, at very little cost. I am not the slickest or the fastest, but the wheelguns are grand fun.

Let’s start with gunning up. We all know that there are lots of new revolvers for sale out there and that they are not cheap (inexpensive). However, there are tons of revolvers available on the used market for between $200 and $300. I just checked two websites: J&G Sales has police-trade-in 4” S&W M-64s for $259, and budsgunshop.com has police-trade-in 4” S&W M-10s for $269. I have a J&G M-64 and it runs like a sewing machine and shoots a knot. I like these old Smith wheelguns and even have an old five-screw with a 6” pipe that I shoot USPSA with: Retro, baby!

So now let’s assume we have a K-Frame revolver that needs to be outfitted. Our friends at Dillon Precision can take care of all your accessory issues right here in The Blue Press. Yes, there are other places to shop, but you can never beat one-stop shopping. The Dillon folks offer Safariland holsters for $45.95, speedloaders (you’ll need three for IDPA and seven for USPSA) for $11.95 (Comp speedloaders are $19.95) and speedloader holders starting at $9.95. So, assuming you own a suitable belt, you have outfitted yourself to shoot IDPA for about $400. That’s about half of what you would pay for a new entry-level pistol.

I own all of the items I’ve mentioned and I shoot the items that I have listed regularly. Heck, I have gotten to the point that I open the gun box and have to ask myself, “Where did all these revolvers come from?” That there are so many available on the used market makes it hard for me not to buy more and more! Of course, if you’re compelled to go first class, there is also the Smith and Wesson K38/M-14 family of revolvers. About a year ago I saw a Model 14 in nice condition in a local chain store for less than $400. I went home to “ask permission” and it was gone the next day. Vigilance is the key to good gun deals.

A shooter can never have enough holsters. I have two “speed” rigs, some leather and even some polymer holsters. I prefer leather, but I allow the task at hand to determine which holster I use. I still have the same Safariland leather rig I first bought for IDPA. Commit some care and thought to the purchase of your holster, lest you generate the same footlocker full of leather that I have. The “Ohhhh, Ohhhh!!” technique of buying what looks cool doesn’t work for holsters.

I’ve become a serious fan of the humble K-Frame revolver. It has long been the flagship frame and the M&P/M-10 the standard for Smith & Wesson. This revolver has served the nation in the hands of our warfighters, police officers and citizens for 100 years. All the bugs have been worked out of this gun. No, it is not a blazing-hot Uberstopper, but the .38 Special is accurate, mild to shoot and easy on a pound of powder. The last and possibly the best thing about the M-10 is that it’s blue. In the world of today’s futuristic finishes