

# 'Wildcat' Cartridge Packs Kick

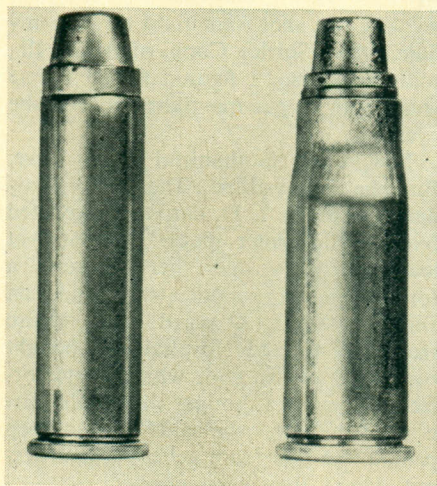
.357/.44 B&D handgun load has shocking power, long range

By BOB MILEK

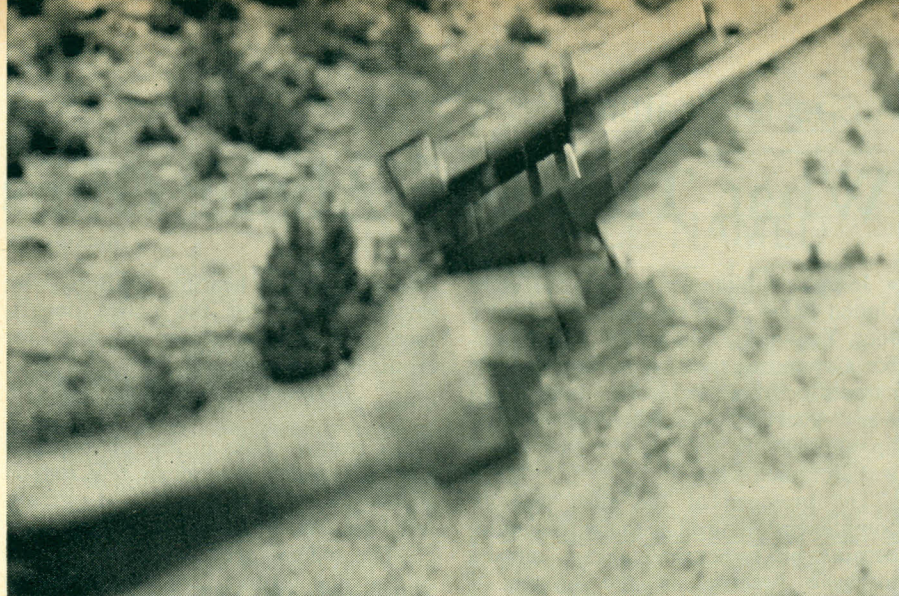
WOULD you like to work with a new magnum-class handgun cartridge with an energy potential like the kick of a Missouri mule? If so, consider the .357/.44 Bain & Davis. The designation of this non-standard 'wildcat' cartridge is as much a mouthful to say as the Thompson/Center Contender pistol chambered for it is a handful to shoot.

Made by necking down .44 Magnum brass to accept .357-inch diameter bullets, the .357/.44 B&D is a stubby, not-too-handsome case with a long, tapered shoulder, short neck, and with a capacity of about 2.28 cubic centimeters. Pertinent dimensions for this case are given in the drawing.

The Contender single-shot pistol, featuring interchangeable barrels chambered for a variety of cartridges, has been well received by handgun hunting enthusiasts. The fact that barrels for this pistol can now be had in .357/.44 B&D chambering is of special import



The old favorite .357 Magnum cartridge (l.) is compared with the .357/.44 Bain & Davis.



The recoil of the .357/.44 is heavy but not punishing.

as this high potential cartridge can be loaded to best even the mighty .44 Magnum in factory handgun loadings.

The .357/.44 B&D isn't new in the strictest sense of the word; an earlier version was reported on by Dan Cotterman in the January 1964 issue of *Gun World*. He called this cartridge the Davis .44/.357, and it was a little different from the Thompson/Center version, having a longer neck and sharper shoulder. Cotterman's tests were carried out with a converted S&W Model 27 revolver with 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " barrel.

The reasoning behind the development of this round was to produce a cal. .38 handgun cartridge that actually lived up to the ballistics claimed for the .357 Magnum factory round. Cotterman soon found that in his test revolver the Davis .44/.357 could be loaded to give greater bullet energy than that given by .44 Magnum factory handgun loads.

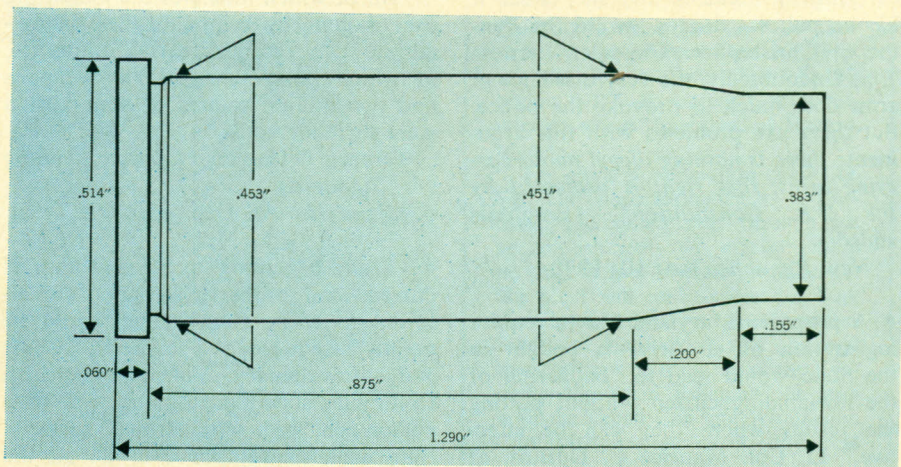
After ordering the .357/.44 B&D barrel for my Contender pistol, I had RCBS, Inc. make me up a set of reloading dies. The .357/.44 B&D cases are formed by merely running .44 Magnum

brass through the .357/.44 B&D full-length sizing die. Case forming requires very little physical effort, but cases must be well lubricated to keep them from sticking in the die. The finished case is 1.290" long and slips easily into the chamber of my Contender pistol, without the need of trimming. I established this as my maximum case length and keep my cases trimmed to that length.

## A wide selection

For my tests, I selected nine different bullets which I felt would give good performance under hunting conditions. Five of these were factory-produced jacketed pistol bullets, three were hand-swaged half-jacketed bullets, and one was a cast lead alloy bullet fitted with gas check.

I chose powders to work with which I felt would deliver the highest possible velocity and energy within safe pressure limits. As with all large capacity magnum handgun cartridges, propellant choice was somewhat limited. Hercules 2400, Hodgdon's H4227, and Unique seemed to offer the best potential. In



Dimension of the .357/.44 Bain & Davis cartridge.