Suggested Loads—.357/.44 Bain & Davis

Load Number	Bullet Weight (grains)	Bullet Type	Bullet Diameter (inches)	Over-all Cartridge Length (inches)	Charge (grains)	Powder Type	Test Barrel Vel. (f.p.s.) Average of 10 rounds	Test Barrel Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Test Barrel Pressure (p.s.i.) Aver. of 10 rounds	Pistol Vel. (f.p.s.) Aver. of 10 rounds	Pistol Energy (ft.-lbs.)
1	108	Super Vel Jacketed Soft-Point	.355	1.60	26.0	H110	1896	862	26,910	2289	1257
2	110	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.59	13.0	Unique	1678	688	25,822	1864	849
3	110	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.60	21.5	2400	1674	685	25,670	1965	943
4	110	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.59	14.0	Unique	1826	815	37,670	1972	950
5	125	Super Vel Jacketed Soft-Point	.3565	1.60	21.0	2400	1605	715	28,405	1935	1039
6	125	Speer Jacketed Soft-Point	.357	1.60	22.0	2400	1723	824	33,910	2002	1113
7	125	Super Vel Jacketed Hollow-Point	.3565	1.60	25.0	H110	1854	954	35,315	2182	1322
8	137	Super Vel Jacketed Soft-Point	.3565	1.66	20.0	2400	1524	707	25,810	1843	1034
9	146	Speer Jacketed Hollow-Point	.357	1.57	20.0	2400	1656	889	38,515	1791	1040

Remarks: Instrumental velocities with pressure barrel were taken at 20 feet from the muzzle with screens spaced five feet apart. Range temperature varied from 67° to 71° F; relative humidity varied from 52% to 56%. Effective length of the pressure barrel is six inches. It has six-groove right twist rifling, one turn in 10 inches. Load recommendations for loads Nos. 1 and 7 as well as test barrel pressure and velocity data for all loads courtesy of Lee Jurras of Super Vel Cartridge Corp.

Velocity and energy data derived in firing the Contender pistol with 10-inch barrel were supplied by author. Instrumental velocities were taken at 7½ ft. from the muzzle of the pistol.

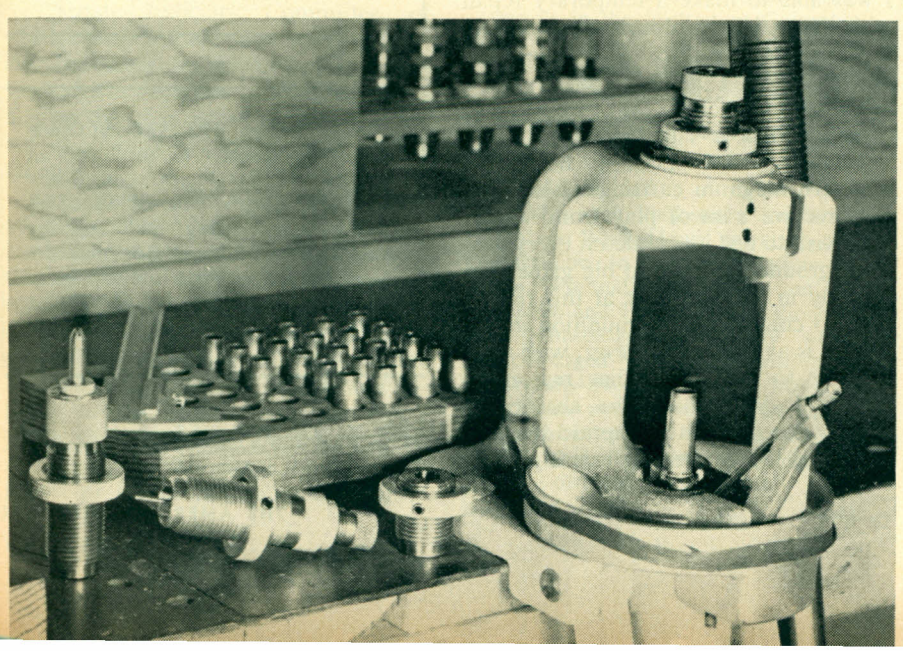
test, Unique proved to give inferior accuracy with all except 110-gr. bullets. Hodgdon's H4227 produced good groups, but only mediocre velocities. Hercules 2400 eventually emerged as the best powder of those I tried, but Lee Jurras of the Super Vel Cartridge Corp. later developed some good loads using Hodgdon's H110 powder. These are given in the table.

I made no attempt to develop any light or mid-range loads feeling that few, if any shooters would desire to use this powerful cartridge for target work. However, I am certain that satisfactory light target loads could be worked up.

Hand swaged half-jacket bullets proved wholly incompatible in my .357/.44 B&D barrel. Colloidal graphite wads employed under seated bullets will greatly reduce barrel leading produced by half-jacket bullets, but such wads cannot be used satisfactorily in the .357/.44 B&D case. When a bullet is seated on top of the graphite wad, it forces the wad below the short case neck, and it then drops down on the powder charge. Powder granules then adhere to both sides of the wad, causing the powder to burn unevenly, resulting in fliers that ruin groups or miss the target completely. This doesn't happen every time, but does occur often enough to be more than just annoying. I was able to alleviate this problem by placing a wad of cotton between the powder charge and graphite wad, but this required considerable time and care to insure that powder wouldn't leak by the cotton and adhere to the graphite wad. I finally decided it was best to abandon use of graphite wads in this cartridge. Without the lubrication afforded by the graphite wad, excessive barrel leading occurred after firing only a few rounds of the half-jacket bullet loads.

I was also unable to work up an acceptably accurate high velocity cast bullet load. I used the same bullet and alloy that produces excellent results in high powered .357 Magnum loads, so I'm certain the poor results couldn't be charged to the bullet alone. Again, some of the inaccuracy may have been due to erratic powder burning. As with graphite wads, powder sticks to the lubricant on that portion of the bullet base that extends below the case neck into the powder chamber. I don't believe this was the entire source of my troubles, but the poor groups obtained prompted me to scratch cast bullets from my list of hunting loads.

Forming .357/.44 B&D cases from .44 Magnum brass is simple. The RCBS die set shown here includes a trim die.



My experimentation so far left me with only jacketed bullets to work with. At first none of these shot well—groups were too large and erratic. All initial jacketed bullet rounds were assembled with a heavy crimp, either on the cannelure or just above the metal jacket, depending on the bullet used. But, when faced with poor accuracy, I started gradually to reduce the amount of crimp. Accuracy improved steadily until my groups were about 50% tighter when only a very light roll crimp was used on cannelured bullets and when uncannelured designs such as the Speer 146-gr. hollow-point were seated friction tight.

While crimp reduction was an easy solution to my accuracy problem, it is important to note that it worked only in this single-shot pistol. Similar rounds loaded for use in a revolver would require a heavy bullet crimp to prevent recoil from starting the bullets from their cases and possibly locking the gun up tight.

My best groups were obtained with 125-gr. jacketed bullets. The Speer soft-point and Super Vel hollow-point bullets produced comparable results on targets. The 125-gr. Super Vel jacketed hollow-point backed by 21 grs. of Hercules 2400 grouped five shots in just a little over one inch at 25 yds., and shot within 2½" at 50 yds. Groups with the Speer 125-gr. jacketed soft-point and 22 grs. of Hercules 2400 were similar in size.

Considerably higher velocities were