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MARCH 1979



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**WILDCATting A
CONVERTIBLE RUGER!
THE BOBCAT
.357/.44 MAGNUM**

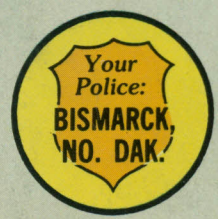
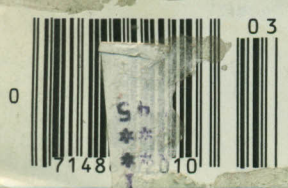
**PISTOL
SILHOUETTE
SHOOTING WITH
BILL JORDAN**

**PLINKER'S CHOICE
MOSSBERG'S
.22 AUTO**

**TEXAS STYLE
CONTENDER
A POTENT NEW
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**S&W's
LOOK-ALIKE
.357 MAGNUMS**

- TEST REPORTS:**
- VIRGINIA BUNTLINE DRAGOON
 - ITHACA ULTRA FEATHERLIGHT 20 GA.
 - MARLIN 780 .22 RIFLE

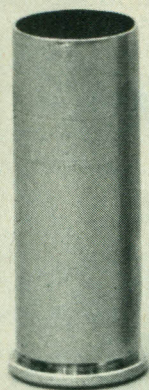


Special RCBS loading dies for the .44 Bobcat Magnum are easy to use. One pass through sizing die forms and sizes .44 Magnum brass to .44 Bobcat specs. Winchester 296, Hodgdon H110, and Hercules Blue Dot proved to be the best propellants. Plastic sleeves must be installed after bullet has been seated. Magnum primers are required with all Bobcat loads.

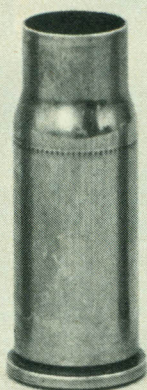


BOBCAT

.357/.44 MAGNUM



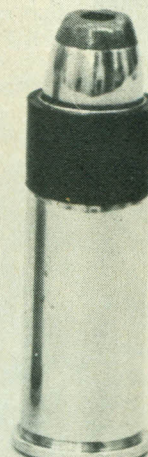
.44 MAGNUM CASE



.357 NECKED CASE



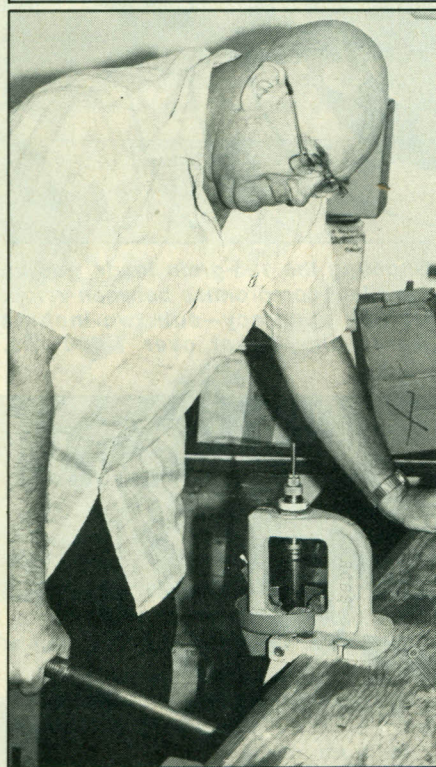
LOADED ROUND



LOADED ROUND WITH SLEEVE

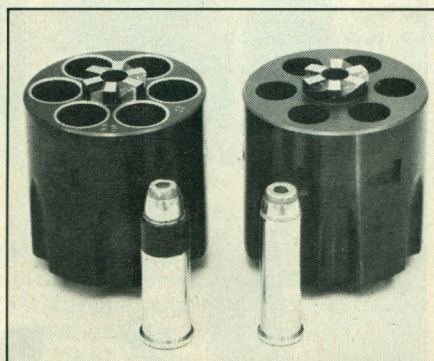
This new and improved version of the .357/.44 Super Magnum hypes up some impressive ballistics and overshadows the .357 S&W Magnum.

By Dr. Ralph C. Glaze

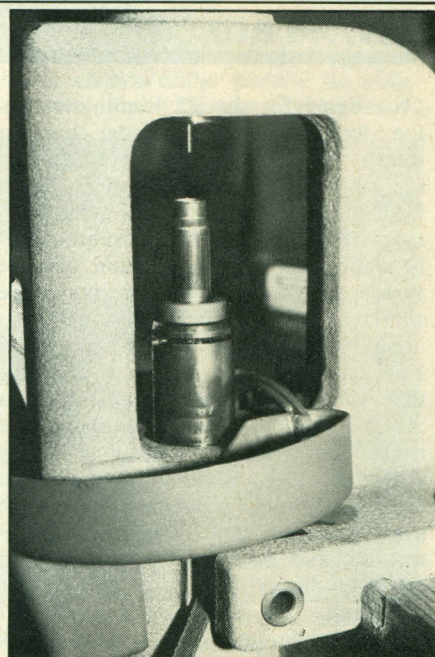


■ Since the earliest days of the revolver, shooters have sought new ways to increase the power of their handguns. The various methods used to achieve this result have included very large cases, and longer than normal cases. The trouble with very long or extra-large cartridges is that they must be used in over-sized revolvers that generally prove to be unwieldy and awkward in use. A bottle-neck case in a revolver presents an added problem: gas flow around the case neck, plus less effective obturation can allow the fired case to move rearward with enough force to jam it against the breech face and recoil shield, which prevents normal rotation of the cylinder.

The Smith & Wesson .22 Magnum Model 53 was one of the very few revolvers using a bottle-neck cartridge ever to reach the full production stage.

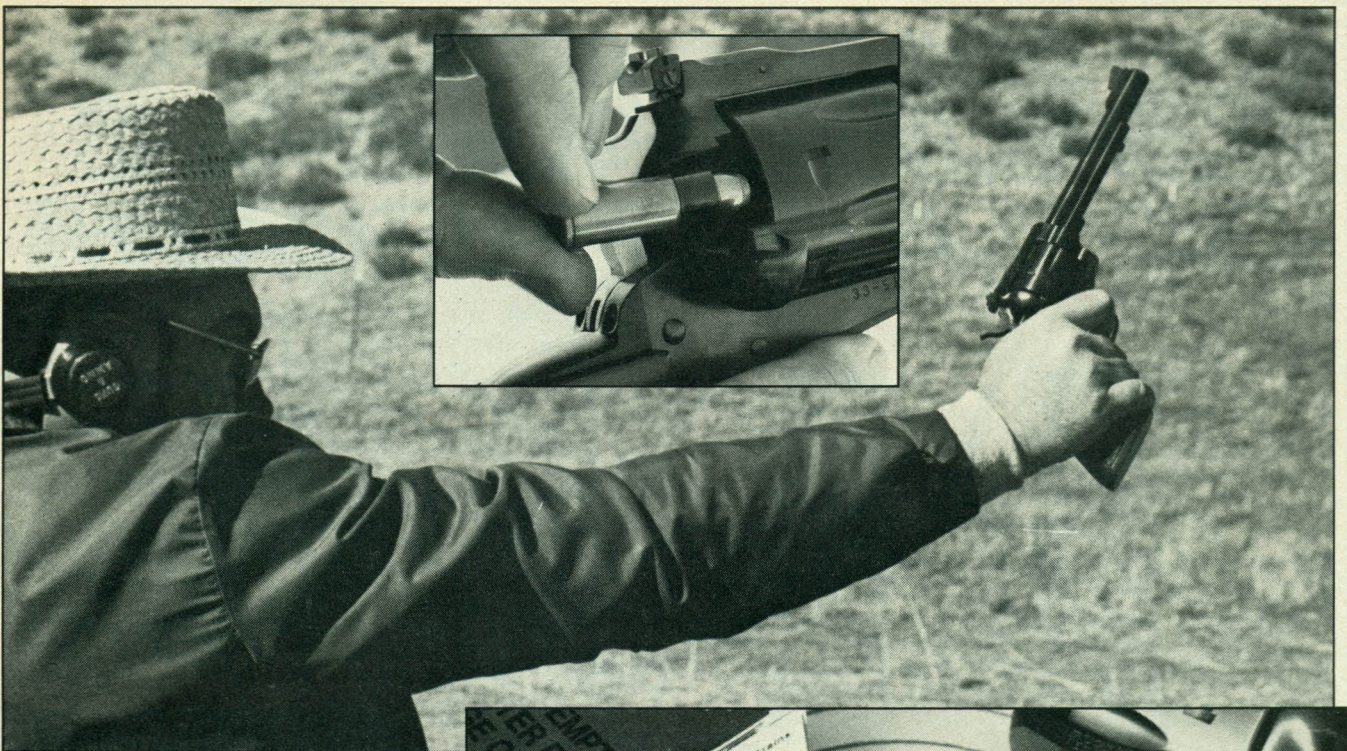


Reloading the Bobcat Magnum cartridge is the handloader's dream. Unlike many wildcat rounds, this potent performer is easy to produce and best of all—it works in the field and range. The high quality three-die set is readily available from RCBS and sells for \$36.50.



A standard .44 Magnum brass case can be necked down to .357 caliber in one pass through the RCBS die.

The ever-popular Ruger Blackhawk convertible in 9 mm and .357 Magnum is an odds-on choice. Boring out the 9 mm cylinder is an effective, easy-to-do conversion.



Feeding the sleeved .44 Mag. cases (inset) into the Ruger posed no problems. The Bobcat Magnum is heralded as the most powerful .357 Magnum—yet the recoil is comparable to the .41 Remington Magnum round.

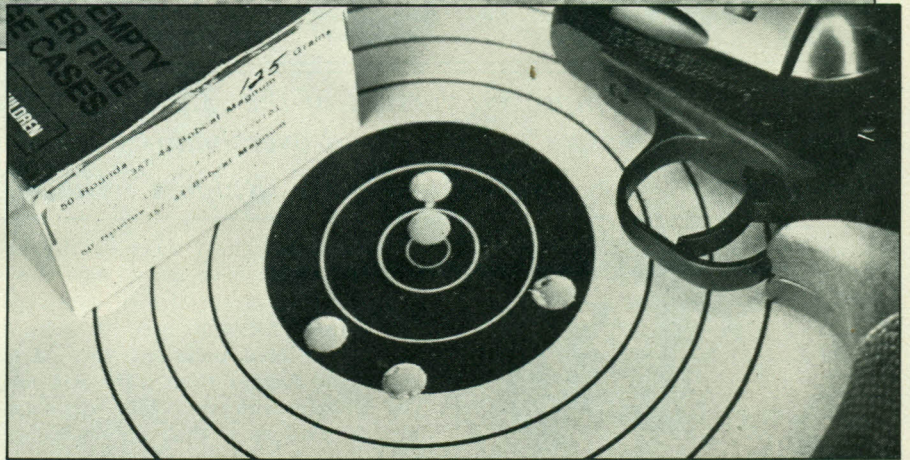
.357/.44 BOBCAT

Chambered for the .22 Remington Jet, the Model 53 featured cylinder chamber inserts that allowed the use of .22 rim-fire ammo as an alternative. The .22 Jet frequently jammed the cylinder, however, and the Model 53 was subsequently withdrawn from production because this problem could not be overcome sufficiently to provide reliability.

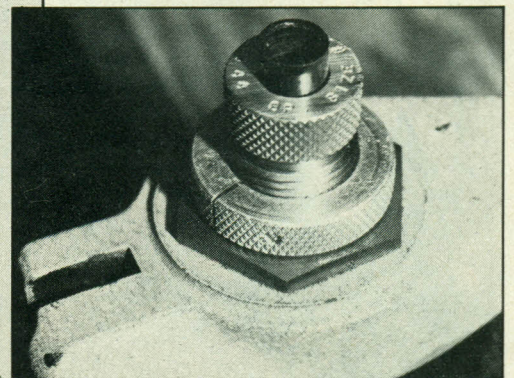
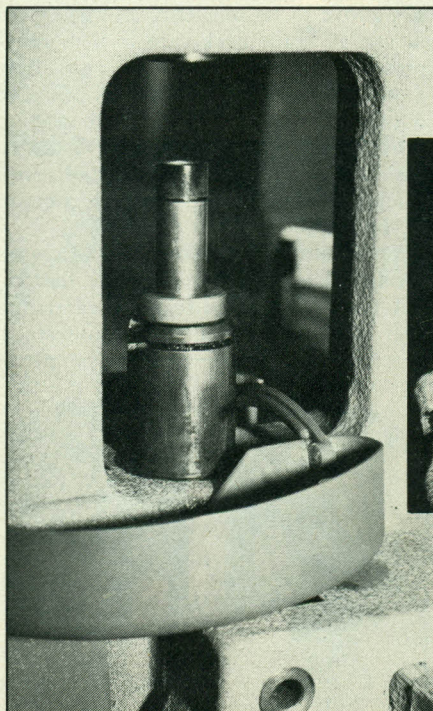
Some years ago, Keith Davis and Dan Cotterman developed a cartridge that was known as the Bain and Davis .44/.357. This was a .44 Magnum case necked down to .357 by way of a very sharp shoulder. Although it possessed excellent ballistic properties, there were some problems with case set-back, extraction, and even case separation with extremely heavy loads.

Recently, the Bain & Davis .44/.357 has been redesigned with a shorter neck and a more tapered shoulder. The new round is designated as the Bain & Davis .357/.44 Dreadnaught. This newest cartridge has been adapted to the Ruger Blackhawk, whereas the original sharp-shouldered .44/.357 was used in a Smith & Wesson Model 27. Although the latest version suffers less from case set-back than the original design, cylinder lock-up still exists with heavy loads.

Now, there enters onto the big-bore scene a new cartridge that delivers



Shooting the 125-grain loads was an excellent compromise between velocity and accuracy—sub two-inchers were achieved at over 1,800 fps.



Before reloading fired cases, the reusable sleeve must be removed. A RCBS .44 Special die is utilized which grips the plastic sleeve while the case is withdrawn from the die. Running the next shell through the die pops the first sleeve through the opening at top of the die.

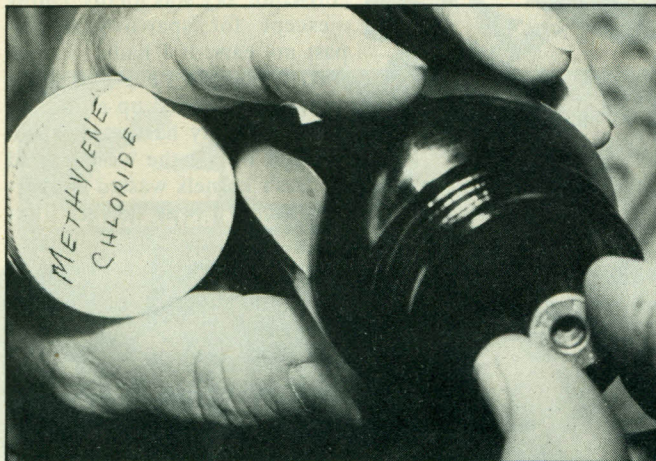
every bit as much punch as the Bain & Davis rounds with virtually none of the attendant problems. This new round is known as the Bobcat Magnum. It was developed by Bob Booth of 2560 San Carlos Ave., Castro Valley, CA 94546.

The unique feature of the Bobcat design is a plastic sleeve that fits over the case neck, taking up the difference between .357 and .44 calibers. With the sleeve in place, the case, including the sleeve, has the same dimensions as a .44 Magnum case—even though it fires a .357 caliber bullet. Confusing? Not really, when you think about it and take a look at the photographs. The rear portion of the Bobcat cylinder is bored out to .44 Magnum specs, while the front

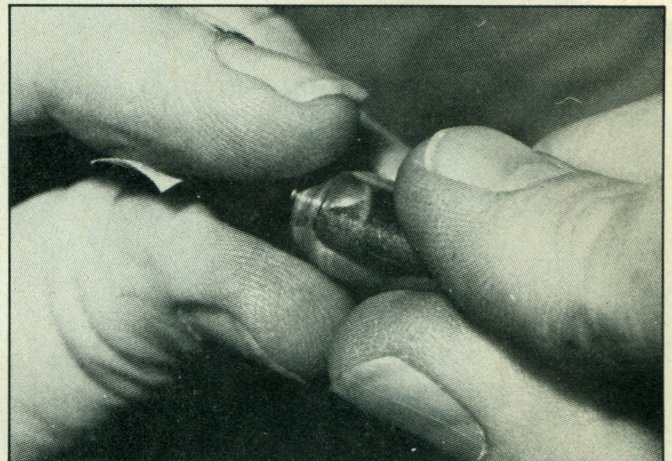
RELOADING DATA FOR .357 BOBCAT MAGNUM

POWDER	GRAINS	BULLET	MUZZLE ENERGY	MUZZLE VELOCITY
H110	27.0	Sierra 90-gr.	840 foot pounds	2,050 feet per sec.
H110	26.3	Speer 110-gr.	885 foot pounds	1,900 feet per sec.
W296	26.4	Speer 110-gr.	835 foot pounds	1,850 feet per sec.
H110	25.0	Speer 125-gr.	965 foot pounds	1,865 feet per sec.
W296	25.2	Speer 125-gr.	955 foot pounds	1,850 feet per sec.
2400	20.6	Speer 125-gr.	815 foot pounds	1,715 feet per sec.
W296	23.5	Speer 140-gr.	995 foot pounds	1,790 feet per sec.
H110	23.0	Speer 140-gr.	905 foot pounds	1,710 feet per sec.
Blue Dot	18.0	Speer 140-gr.	1,005 foot pounds	1,800 feet per sec.
W296	22.5	Speer 158-gr.	995 foot pounds	1,685 feet per sec.
H110	22.0	Speer 158-gr.	960 foot pounds	1,655 feet per sec.
2400	19.0	Speer 158-gr.	815 foot pounds	1,525 feet per sec.
Blue Dot	17.3	Speer 158-gr.	895 foot pounds	1,600 feet per sec.

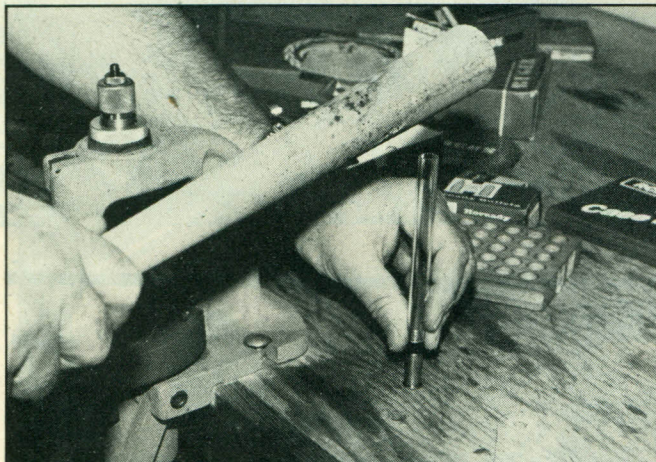
Above loads are at or near maximum and should be approached with caution. Loads were tested in a Ruger New Model Blackhawk with a 6½-inch barrel. All bullets used were jacketed hollow points. Hard-cast lead bullets may be used with the Bobcat cartridge but gas-checks should be applied and velocities kept below 1,600 fps.



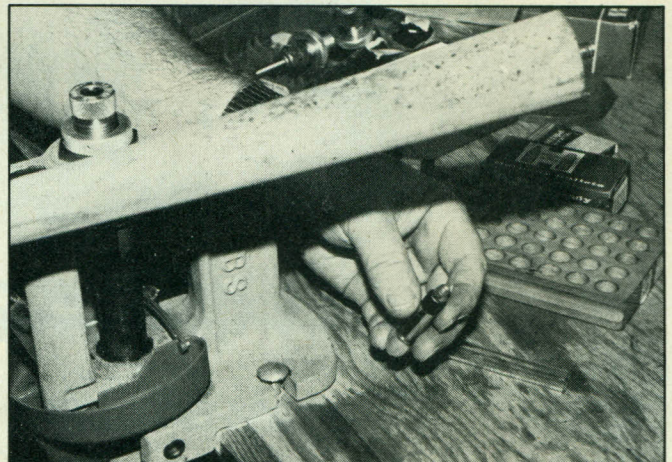
Applying methylene chloride to the neck of the case softens the polycarbonate sleeve for better adhesion.



Without delay, the plastic sleeve/collar should be affixed to the case neck by hand—these sleeves are reusable.



A plastic tube is part of the die set and a light tap on the tube will firmly set the sleeve against the shoulder.



The entire operation takes more time to explain than to do—and it's an easy, fun way to make a new, hot wildcat.

cylinder section remains sized for a .357 caliber bullet.

Because a .357 Magnum must be bored out to .44 Magnum size to convert it to Bobcat dimensions, only a few revolvers have sufficient "meat" around the chambers to leave enough strength for the hot-loaded Bobcat. Of the generally available guns, Bob Booth has chosen only the Smith & Wesson Models 27 and 28, and the Ruger Black-

hawk as being suitable for conversion. Bob says the Colt Single Action Army in .357 Magnum caliber could also be converted, although he has not yet made one.

Our test gun is a Ruger Blackhawk convertible that came from the factory with two cylinders; one chambered for .357 Magnum, and the other for 9 mm Parabellum. The 9 mm cylinder has been bored out to accept the Bobcat

round. This makes it possible to shoot either regular .357 Magnum cartridge or Bobcats as one wishes. The .357 Magnum cylinder will also handle .38 Specials, of course, which makes this set-up very versatile indeed.

Not only are the Bobcat ballistics highly impressive, but everything functioned just the way the maker claimed. There was no more tendency to "lock-

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.357/.44 BOBCAT

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up" the cylinder than might be expected from any .44 Magnum—there is almost always a slight "drag" from case set-back when using super hot loads in the big .44. There were absolutely no extraction problems. While the empty cases didn't exactly fall out on their own, it took only a slight push on the ejector rod to poke them out of the chamber. There was, of course, no sign of case separation. In short, the Bobcat functions pretty much the same as any straight-case cartridge such as the .44 or .357 Magnum would, using loads developing similar pressures.

The Bobcat is a high-pressure round, for sure. It will average 300 to 400 feet per second higher velocity than any other comparable load fired in a revolver. It develops practically the same muzzle energy as the .44 Magnum, but with about twice the penetration. Recoil of the Bobcat is comparable to the .41 Magnum—a bit more push than the .357, but not quite as harsh as the larger .44 Magnum.

We tested several loads with a variety of bullet weights that included the Sierra 90-grain Hollow-Point, and Speer Hollow-Points in 110, 125, 140 and 158 grain sizes. The Sierra 90-grain bullets are intended for use in pistols chambered for 9 mm Parabellum or .380 ACP and, consequently, are sized .355 instead of .357. The slight difference in diameter makes no practical difference at close range, but accuracy falls to nothing short of terrible at distances over 20 yards or so. Part of the problem here is with the bullet weight, since the 110-grain round was also quite inaccurate—although slightly better than the 90-grain.

The most accurate bullet we tested was the 140-grain Speer HP. Average group size at 25 yards from sandbag rest was 1½ inches. When pushed by 23 grains of Winchester 296 Powder, this potent pill left the 6½-inch barrel at 1,750 fps.

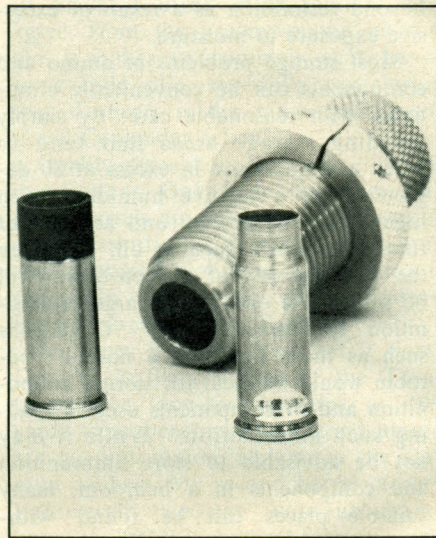
The 158-grain Speer HP was almost as accurate as the 140-grain. Average group size with the heavier slug was 1¼ inches. Muzzle velocity of the 158-grain loaded ahead of 22 grains of Winchester 296 is 1,650 fps.

Group sizes opened up a bit with the 125-grain loads, averaging almost two inches. Our test load for the 125-grain Speer HP was 24 grains of Hodgdon H110 for 1,805 fps.

The Speer 110-grain bullet, driven by 26.3 grains of Hodgdon H110 produced a muzzle velocity of 1,900 fps. Twenty seven grains of H110 pushes the 90-grain Sierra HP at an almost unbelievable rate of 2,050 fps. As mentioned before, accuracy falls off drastically with these lighter projectiles.

We did not perform any tests for penetration, however Bob Booth claims the 140-grain bullet will penetrate 18 layers of Kevlar, the material used in bullet-proof vests. This represents over ½ more penetration than any other magnum load tested.

With the very large number of bullets available in .38 caliber, the possibilities for Bobcat loads seem almost limitless. There are many propellant powders that are suitable for loading the Bobcat. Perhaps the best choices would be Winchester 296, Hodgdon H110, Dupont IMR4227, and the old reliable 2400. Highest velocities were achieved with 296 and H110, although it may well be



Even experts gouge up a shell once in a while. Careful and safe reloading techniques are always a must!

that accuracy could be improved using some of the other powders at lower velocities. This would be an interesting research project. Working up loads for new cartridges is certainly at least half the fun of developing something a bit out of the ordinary.

Cases for the Bobcat are easily formed in the special loading dies available from RCBS. All that is necessary is to run a .44 Magnum case into the Bobcat full-length sizing die, and the necking-down and sizing are accomplished in one operation. The Bobcat case is then primed, loaded with powder and the bullet seated in the usual manner.

After the bullet is seated (and crimped, if necessary,) the plastic sleeve is applied. A plastic tube is provided that slips over the bullet. A light tap on this tube will seat the sleeve firmly against the case shoulder. As an alternative method, the loaded cartridge may be placed bullet down in a .38 caliber loading block. A light tap with a plastic hammer applied to the base of the case (not the primer) will seat the sleeve. In order to be sure the sleeve stays where it should, the outside of the case neck

should be roughed up slightly with medium grade emery paper. When using sleeves that have been removed from fired cases, Bob Booth recommends dipping the loaded case, up to the shoulder, in Methylene Chloride, a solvent that will soften the inside of the plastic sleeve, causing it to adhere more firmly to the case neck.

Bobcat plastic sleeves are made from polycarbonate plastic material that has a very high impact resistance. Hammers, kinetic bullet-pullers, and bullet-proof windows are made of similar material. The sleeves may be used for many reloadings. In fact even if they are cracked, they will still work efficiently if properly secured to the brass case. Sleeves must be removed from fired cases in order to re-form the brass and seat the bullet correctly.

Sleeves may be removed from fired cases by running them into a .44 Special sizing die that is included in the special RCBS Bobcat die set. When the fired case is run up into this die, the sleeve is squeezed tightly enough so that, when the case is removed, the sleeve remains in the die. As each successive case is forced into the die, the used sleeves are pushed out of the top of the die body where they are recovered for further use.

With the exception of the very simple installation and removal of the plastic sleeves, reloading the Bobcat is carried out in the same manner as with any other cartridge. This is not one of those tricky operations that are so often necessary with many wildcat rounds. It's simple, it's easy, and it works.

Bob Booth claims that the Bobcat Magnum is the world's most powerful .357 caliber revolver, and the author knows of no reason to dispute this claim. The Ruger New Model Blackhawk test gun performed perfectly and, with a set of Sile oversize grips installed, was quite pleasant to shoot. Accuracy with 140 and 158-grain bullets is about as good as one could expect from any handgun. Muzzle energy developed by the heavier loads approaches 1,000 foot pounds, which certainly places it in the super Magnum class. The Bobcat offers all the advantages of two guns in one, and would be an excellent choice for anyone who wants a real powerhouse that will also handle plinking or target loads.

The cost of the Bobcat Magnum is quite modest by today's standards. Bob Booth will re-chamber your Ruger cylinder for \$59.95, or he will provide a modified cylinder complete for \$94.95 (\$7 more for stainless steel). Smith & Wesson Models 27 and 28 may be altered for \$59.95, or a new cylinder supplied for \$114.95. The Bobcat die set (three dies) runs \$36.50, and plastic sleeves are \$6 a hundred. Booth can also supply loaded ammo through dealer channels.