

Royce Bright



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REVIEW

# VOLQUARTSEN

ONE SWEET RIMFIRE PISTOL

BY ARON BRIGHT, A51967

**E**arly on, it was decided that this gun test and review would be a little bit different. The goal was to really put this pistol to an endurance test. The Volquartsen pistol that arrived for review was accompanied by a card that said, “Your Volquartsen firearm was designed and engineered to the highest standards using only the best materials and technologies. It was assembled by hand, with great attention to detail, and is intended to last for generations.”

The card was signed by the gunsmith who built the pistol.

Lasting for generations? That seems like a difficult task for a rimfire pistol, particularly one that is going to get shot often. My gun safe contains a whole handful of used up, worn out rimfire pistols. The quest to find a reliable rimfire pistol has always been arduous. Finding a rimfire pistol that runs well and lasts seems akin to asking for peace in the Middle East, or asking the current congress to do something.

The Volquartsen is a fine-looking gun that feels really good in the hand; the features are excellent and well thought-out. The grip has some girth that looks and feels like a double stack pistol. It fills the hand nicely, and the finger grooves make a very positive grip easy to acquire. The back strap of the grip is textured metal and the other three surfaces are covered by a rubber grip. The magazine release is circular in shape and protrudes enough to make pressing the release simple and easy.

The location of the release was at the rear and bottom of the trigger guard. It was possible to press the magazine release without breaking the grip on the pistol, and yet with a two-hand grip on the gun the magazine release was not pressing against the hand.

The safety is ambidextrous, as it should be, and is located at the back of the grip where the thumb can ride on top of it, with a proper grip preventing accidental engagement of the safety during shooting. The rear sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation, which would make John Wayne and Mrs. Langdon both happy. The front sight is fiber optic. There is a rail for mounting optics running the length of the gun between the sights for mounting optics; there is a section of rail underneath the barrel as well. The pistol comes with a compensator that features one large port. The reciprocating slide is completely internal, which prevents any slide riding malfunctions that are common with rimfire pistols. The slide has a large knob at the rear for racking the slide.

The trigger has a unique look about it. The curve of the trigger is higher than traditional, and this puts the trigger itself well to the rear of the trigger guard – which is a good thing, because it can be reached by short fingers or small hands easily. The trigger is not flat, but the curve being so high gives this trigger a flat appearance and feel. The trigger does not have very much creep at all, and it breaks crisply, like the proverbial glass rod. This is a very sweet gun overall and the trigger is the best part. The trigger is in a class by itself.

The gun is easy to disassemble and clean; simply engage the thumb safety, press the takedown button on the rear of the pistol which is just below the slide racking knob, and the barrel pivots up and then comes off the frame. The slide and barrel can be easily cleaned from that point and reassembly is just as easy. A nice-looking pistol that proved to be accurate and reliable and is easy to



clean – what else can a shooter desire?

Jake, Royce and I managed to get to the range at the Riley Conservation Club and put this pistol through its paces. Royce and I arrived quite a bit earlier than Jake because we wanted to get warmed up, and we were eager to shoot this Volquartsen. My notes do not mention how many rounds we shot through the pistol, but we were out of ammo before Jake arrived. We shot at least a thousand rounds through the gun at various steel plates and paper targets and bottles of water, using an assortment of ammo. There were zero issues with the gun firing; not a single malfunction was encountered. We had the best time and made a hell of a mess in the bay. Bay Six looked a lot

like Georgia after General Sherman passed through, but with a lot less hard feelings. There were six cases' worth of Vitamin water lying around that had been shot. Jake arrived with a fresh supply of ammo, and he brought the good stuff, the new official ammo of Steel Challenge by CCI.

We shot some irregular steel challenge stages that tested the gun and the shooter's accuracy from 10 to 25 yards. The steel was ringing and the gun was running like a sewing machine. We burnt through quite a bit of ammo, and enjoyed every minute of it. We decided to do some first shots from the low ready. The target was a 10-inch plate at 10 yards. Royce pulled off five decent attempts with times of



# A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT VOLQUARTSEN

**IN THE EARLY 70'S**, Tom Volquartsen could be found in his home basement in Carroll, Iowa, restoring, bluing and customizing guns. He never set out to become one of the preeminent makers of precision rimfire rifles and pistols, just to be true to himself. Days spent as a tax collector would soon turn to becoming a full-time gunsmith, with the support of his wife and four kids. His vision for custom guns gave him an almost immediate following. Volquartsen guns at the time were totally unique in the market, both in terms of looks and performance; they were an incredibly precise breed of semi-auto rimfire guns. The Volquartsen mission: Build Firearms Worthy of Those Who Use Them; "Quality is Quintessential".

Volquartsen is now run by the family's second generation, brothers Scott and Nic working together to embody their father's relentless drive and quality standards.

"We craft every firearm and accessory we make using only the highest quality materials and production methods, ranging from time-honored hand tooling techniques to custom in-house CNC and EDM precision-built technology. For added quality, every gun we make is built from start to finish by a single craftsman, who not only hand-selects his raw materials, but also test-fires each gun before it's ready to ship. Each product is a promise – and we take that very seriously."

There are several different custom rimfire rifles and pistols in the current lineup, many of which can be found in the hands of the top rimfire shooters in the world. The website also boasts a very large selection of custom parts and accessories for several models of rimfire pistols and rifles. There are Remington 870/1100 shotgun extractors and a new trigger for the Ruger PC9 carbine, and a list of gunsmithing services available. For the Volquartsen family it's personal, "Every day we walk into our workshop, we work to make meaningful headway in the impossible pursuit of perfection. We always strive to challenge ourselves to make the best products we can. It's not just our ethos as makers – we're avid shooters, too. We understand and appreciate the experience as a whole, which is why we're devoted to building the best products we can."

During the Area 5 Steel Challenge Championship I picked up the Volquartsen Black Mamba that Brian Conley from Hunters HD Gold had recently purchased. Brian has a table full of custom guns that are on hand if a competitor has a gun go down or just wants to try it. Since I am known for being well-prepared for matches, it was an obvious choice for me to pick up something that I have never shot and hit an Area Championship Match. I ran the gun the entire match, shooting the CCI 22 Clean ammo with no issues. After the match Brian asked me how it went and then informed me that he had just received the gun, straight from the box and to his table. I didn't set any records that day, but to take a brand-new rimfire pistol with untried ammo and have no issue for several hundred rounds (I miss a lot) is pretty impressive.

Check out the entire lineup of Volquartsen custom rimfires and accessories on their website. If you see Hunters HD Gold at a match, ask to shoot the one he has at his table – you will not be disappointed. ■

0.64, 0.60, 0.56, 0.54 and 0.50 seconds. (If his draw was as fast as his mouth, we would have something.) Jake's times were 0.44, 0.38, 0.28, 0.39, 0.45 seconds. My times were 0.50, 0.46, 0.50, 0.30, 0.44 and 0.46 seconds and my eyes were open for all of them except one.

We decided to do Smoke and Hope for time as well. Royce led off with five runs that were solid and timed at 4.75, 4.03, 3.79, 4.08, 3.64 and 3.65 seconds. Jake's five runs came in at 2.13, 2.80, 2.02, 1.63, 2.45 seconds, and my notes do not show a miss on any of those runs. My times were 2.23, 3.28, 2.16, 2.14, and 2.11 seconds. If the shooter can go fast, this gun will keep up without a problem. Everyone was very impressed with the gun's performance that day.

My plan was to shoot several Steel Challenge club matches over the next couple of months, and then the Area 5 Steel Challenge. That did not happen due to a variety of reasons. However, the Volquartsen would see plenty more action that would test its durability and reliability. My notes show that in several informal plinking and blasting session between Jake, Royce and I, this pistol was fired roughly three thousand times. I have one recorded misfire in that time; there was a solid strike on the round but it did not go off. The ammo is absorbing the blame for this lone malfunction.

I decided to take the pistol to the Putnam County 4H practice session one evening and let the kids use the gun for the evening. This 4H group shoots steel targets and utilizes Steel Challenge rules. There are two flights of shooters each practice, so the pistol was being worked like a borrowed mule. The very first young lady had a malfunction with her very first magazine. I was sitting in a chair in the shade and observed it happen. There was no bang on the trigger press, the slide was racked and a round came out and was lost in the grass. It was never located. I am confident that ammo was to blame. Overall, somewhere between seven hundred and a thousand rounds went down the pipe that night with a lone hiccup. The pistol had not been cleaned since its arrival.

Every shooter was impressed with the pistol and a towel was kept handy to wipe the drool off that did not evaporate in the heat. One young lady was adamant that she wanted to buy this pistol on the spot. She hounded me for the rest of practice and stayed around for the second practice trying to make a deal. This pistol was turning heads and developed a following that evening.

The next outing for the Volquartsen was with a group of family in an informal setting in my cousin's barnyard. A group of Bright kids put several rimfire



guns to good use for a couple of hours. The Volquartsen pistol stole the show and was everyone's favorite pistol. The boys ran a couple of bricks of ammo through the guns for a couple of hours on a summer evening and had a great time. We had things set up so that two shooters could be shooting at the same time. The Volquartsen was always in someone's hand. The comfortable grip and the awesome trigger made it a favorite. It was the favorite that evening as well. This gun always ran and was fun to shoot. New shooters were able to perform some very impressive marksmanship with this Volquartsen. If the shooter lines up the sights and presses the trigger straight back, the gun hits the mark no matter the target. A great trigger also made this pistol popular in every setting.

Later at two other settings while training a couple of novice shooters during the early fall, I used the Volquartsen. Both

of these ladies had taken an introductory course but did not feel completely comfortable with a gun in their hand and needed some trigger time to build confidence, so each was scheduled for some range time and a couple hundred rounds of trigger time. The Volquartsen was a good fit for both shooters' hands, and no external slide was also a nice feature for this setting. The gun ran 100 percent of the time in each session. The novice shooters were working hard to develop strong fundamental skills and the pistol performed as it should for each of them. So in both cases, confidence was built up by strong range performances.

The first weekend of October was the next test for the Volquartsen. My favorite two kids were going to attend the Dan Ireland Memorial Steel Challenge Match at the Riley Conservation Club. They were going to both shoot the Volquartsen in Rim Fire Pistol Irons division. The pistol was cleaned and lubed for the first time

in preparation of this match. Alyssa and Royce shared the pistol and ran through the Federal ammunition that I sent along and finished running Remington Thunderbolt in the latter stages. The gun ran without flaw for the both of them. Alyssa is a full time nursing student who never has time to practice her shooting, but she managed to finish second in the division. A gun that runs reliably and is accurate is a serious advantage.

I have lost track of how many rounds were shot through this gun over the course of the summer and early fall but it was a large number. This gun runs and has been worked hard with great results. I have a feeling that if this gun could talk it would ask; "when are we going to the range?" There is no excuse to miss, and you can proceed with confidence with this pistol in your hands. If you are looking to compete at a serious level in Steel Challenge then Volquartsen is the investment that you should make. ■