

NEILL ON

RELOADING

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Guy has been reloading for 29 years, including a stretch as a commercial reloader. He began practical pistol competition in 1977. He works as a Technical Service Coordinator for the Sporting Equipment Division of Blount, Inc., which includes CCI, Speer, RCBS, Outers, Weaver, and Ramline. As part of Technical Services, Guy handles questions and problems relating to SED products.

Cast bullets remain a viable option for handguns, as we've discussed before. We have seen a tremendous increase in the use of jacketed bullets over the years as their benefits have given advantages in competition. Still, they are expensive when compared to cast bullets, as well as being harder on the bore of the barrel. In the early years cast bullets were more commonly used in competition. In the early days I saw guns with more than 200,000 rounds through them that were still going strong.

In those earlier days, more individuals cast their own bullets. Today, the perils of handling lead and inhaling the fumes are more widely known, and sources of lead are not as common, so casting is not as popular as it once was. Add to this the increased premium on

our time, and casting for yourself becomes less and less attractive unless a specialized bullet is needed, or you only need small quantities.

With handguns, however, we want bullets in quantity. We also want good bullets that we can afford to buy. Commercial casters have always been around, but today's cast bullet suppliers are providing the best cast bullets ever.

A Look At "The Black Bullet"

Lately I have been using some of the cast bullets produced by Precision Bullets. They produce cast bullets with a lubricant coating that makes the bullets clean and dry to the touch, eliminating the potential for the lube to melt out in hot conditions. Since the coating leaves the bullets black in color, Precision likes to describe their product as the "Black Bullet." Similar products are available through other firms (notably Bear Creek Supply) but those brands are not as well-recognized as the Precision line.

I remember my friend and mentor, Gene, telling me of the several hundred rounds of .45 Colt ammunition he loaded many years back. In the hot desert sun of southern California, the

Photos by Guy Neill.

Black Beauties. Moly-coated lead bullets like these 155's (top) and 185's by Precision Bullets offer better performance than similar wax-lubed lead bullets in the same weights. Economy-minded shooters should test them against jacketed.



lube melted and contaminated the powder, deactivating the entire batch. Salvaging the cases and bullets is not a favorite activity on anybody's list. Jacketed bullets avoid this, as do the newer generation lubes used by many commercial casters.

The coating used by Precision has no problems in this regard. Precision claims the bullets are capable of being driven to 2000 fps without leading the bore. I didn't push any that fast, but did manage some 1100 fps with the 155gr RN bullets in the 40 S&W. I fired these in the recent Fall Classic match hosted by the Eastern Washington club. The bullets performed well. All steel was knocked down (when I did my part) and accuracy was as good as I could make use of. Considering one stage had some difficult shots at steel with no-shoots directly behind, there was a need for accuracy.

I used Hodgdon's Universal powder with these loads and the combination proved reliable and left the gun clean. No leading was present after shooting between two and three hundred rounds. Cleaning, while always a chore I dislike, was no more onerous than usual, and was much less a task than if leading was present. That's very good performance in my book when you consider how poor lead bullets can

begin to lead the bore at much lower velocity. I don't know what the coating is, but it seems to work well.

Of the ones I measured, the Precision bullets' weight consistency was also quite good. A sample of the 155gr RN bullets yielded an average weight of 154.89 grains with only a 0.5-grain standard deviation. Similarly, the 185gr TC bullets from Precision averaged 186.19 grains with a standard deviation of 0.3. Many jacketed bullets are not this consistent.

The 185gr truncated cone bullets were not of the normal cast configuration. This bullet had been designed expressly for the coating lube, omitting the conventional grease grooves. The smooth sides provide no detriment, and may actually increase the sectional density while simplifying the mold. This simple profile likely contributes to the good consistency as the lack of corners in the mold will mean more even heat distribution and consistent solidification of the alloy.

I have fired a couple of hundred of

the 185gr TC bullets as well and they have performed every bit as well as the 155gr bullets. I have some of Precision's 45 bullets as well, in 200gr SWC and 230gr RN configuration, but have not yet had an opportunity to shoot them. The sample of the 230gr RN bullets averaged 230.03 grains in weight with a standard deviation of 0.6.

I did not notice smoke during shooting. With conventional lubes and cast bullets, there are some circumstances where the smoke definitely gets in the way. Using conventional cast bullets at one match this summer, firing through a window, the angle of the sun was just right to make the smoke very apparent. Since I noticed it during shooting, it certainly slowed my shooting to some degree. Of course, with the sun in other positions, the smoke was not an issue. So while the sun's angle may not have been correct to show any smoke as an obstacle while shooting the Precision bullets, I think I would still have been aware of smoke had it been present in any significant quantity.

I mentioned last time that I elected to go with jacketed bullets for the Nationals because of the potential for smoke to interfere under some conditions. The bullets from Precision may change that in the future. I'll still want to work with them a bit to see how they do under a greater variety of conditions, but they look good so far.

If you are looking for a good cast bullet, Precision can help. Prices and details are available online at www.precisionbullets.com or contact them at 33112 CR2142, Kemp, TX 75143-6339, 903-498-8451.

Practice is crucial for increasing your shooting skill. Lead bullets can allow more practice for the money spent. As evidenced by the cast bullets I have seen currently available, they offer quality and consistency as good as many jacketed bullets. Conventional cast bullets, using lubes that smoke, may still be an aid to practice and in local matches where we do most of our shooting — saving the jacketed bullets for the larger events.



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