

VICTORY PARADE

SMK's latest top-value springer is designed for those looking for more than they bargained for - according to the editor

You've got £150 to spend and you want a practical, versatile, robust and user-friendly springer, perhaps as a top-class plinker, a capable medium range hunter, or maybe a lightweight, handy trainer to either teach a novice, or to keep yourself sharp. Perhaps you want all of those things and preferably a little bit more? I think you may have found it in the SMK Victory LB600.

I'm a springer fan, always was, always will be, and regular readers will have endured my banging on about how, in this age of the pre-charged pneumatic, regularly revisiting a spring-piston rifle is the best way to keep your technique exactly where it should be. PCPs allow you to take liberties that no recoiling rifle will permit and once you accept this fact of shooting life, you simply stop taking those liberties. If you carry on being aided and abetted in these minor infractions, all too soon they combine to form major faults that even your PCP won't allow. Far

better to go back to the best 'instructor' you ever had, and re-learn those handling lessons. Mini-lecture over; let's see where the SMK Victory LB600 fits into this scenario and plenty of others.

OVERVIEW

What we have here is a synthetic stocked, ambidextrous, break-barrel sporter, that measures a full 43 inches from its squishy rubber butt pad to the tip of its integrated sound moderator. The weight is a tad under 6.5 lbs, and that includes the supplied 4 x 32 scope and two-piece mounts. Those mounts have an unusual configuration, in that the front one is a single-screw design, and the rear has double screws, plus a wind-down recoil-arrestor stud. A back-up sighting system comes courtesy of a set of extremely functional fibre-optic open sights, with the rear sight adjustable for windage and elevation.

Moving down to the trigger, we



The hi-viz rear sight is a high quality unit.

discover a quaint and totally practical, manual, 'lift and lower' safety catch, which offers wrap-around blocking of the trigger blade in a way that is impossible to ignore when applied. In short, once that safety's on, you'll feel it instantly, so there's no chance of discovering the 'safe' condition of your rifle just as you prepare to release the shot. When the catch is

lowered to release the trigger blade, finger access is clear, so again you know you're OK to shoot.

The Victory's two-stage, trigger is factory set at around 4lbs and despite operating at the 'safe' end of the precision scale, each release is predictable, consistent and entirely manageable. That said, an hour in the workshop of a skilled trigger-fettler would definitely be an »

This is a Victory for a common sense springer with multiple uses.



"release is predictable, consistent and entirely manageable"

VICTORY LB600

hour well spent, and worth paying for. I managed a series of sub-inch groups out to 25 yards with this .22 on test, albeit in conjunction with a much higher magnification scope I'm testing at the moment, and it would be extremely interesting to see what a general 'smoothing out' of delivery could bring to this highly affordable package.

THE STOCK

Undoubtedly, one of the Victory 600's best features is its ambidextrous synthetic stock. There's nothing groundbreaking about it but it does a good job, it accommodates a wide range of body types and orientations, and it's totally unaffected by rain, sun, and the unfair wear and tear that's usually inflicted on air rifles at this price point. That stock looks the part, too, harmonising as it does with the 600's synthetic moderator, open sights and action end cap. Overall, the stock is pleasing to the eye and the hands, and we can't ask for much more than that.

"This rifle may not be expensive, but it's properly made"



Cocking effort is 'medium' but overall performance is quite a bit above that.

OVER THE CHRONO

It took around 20 shots to clear any excess lubricant and for the Victory 600 to settle down to its normal working output of 10.3 ft.lbs., using H & N Trophy pellets. The shot-to-shot consistency of most spring-piston rifles has always amazed me, especially when I consider the sheer amount of stuff going on inside them when these guns are fired. Compared to the striking of a pre-charged pneumatic's main valve, it's like a car crash in there, yet even budget priced rifles like the Victory return single-figure variation over the chrono. The test rifle's average of 9 f.p.s. over 30 shots is typical of this, and in my experience, that consistency will generally hold, unless something catastrophic happens, such as the mainspring breaking or a pistol seal failing in some way.

ON THE RANGE

The Victory is lively in the hands

and

punchy at the shoulder, which is expected of a lightweight springer with a healthy energy output. I found surprisingly little reverberation during shooting, and no trace of torque to undermine accuracy. Like all recoiling rifles, especially light ones, the 600 thrives under a lightness of touch and total consistency of grip. That's the training aspect, right there, and again, if we all shot our PCs in the same way these springers demand, we'd all be better shooters.

On a purely mechanical front, the cocking effort can be described as 'medium', but thanks to that synthetic moderator doing a job as a cocking aid, there was no real effort involved. Barrel lock-up comes courtesy of a heavily-sprung detent plunger locating a wedge-shaped end section located below the rifle's transfer port. It took a controlled smack with my palm to 'break' the barrel prior to cocking and lock-up is positive to say the least. Make no mistake, this rifle may not be expensive, but it's properly made and put together. It even has wear-compensating breech jaws, thanks to its barrel hinge bolt's locking system, and I'm certain that this budget priced rifle will provide years of service on little more than the standard



Safety on, and there's no ignoring it.



Safety off, and safely out of the way.

The SMK LB600 outfit includes a scope, mounts and tremendous value for money.

wipe-over with an oiled cloth, plus a little of the right lube in the proper places.

VERDICT

As with all springers, the more I shot the Victory, the more in tune with it I became. From establishing the best opening-cocking-closing procedure, to getting optimum accuracy out of it, familiarity will always breed success, and this is definitely a rifle worth getting to know. Finally, look at the price. If you're on the hunt for a tidy, lightweight springer that can be tweaked into something far beyond its £149.95, put the SMK Victory LB600 right at the top of your shortlist. ■

TECH SPEC

Model: Victory LB600

Importer: SMK

Country of origin: China

Type: Break-barrel, spring-piston sporter

Calibre: .22, .177

Cocking: Break-barrel

Loading: Direct to breech

Trigger: 2-stage, factory set

Stock type: Ambidextrous, synthetic

Weight: 2.9kg (6.9lbs), scoped as shown

Length: 1,092mm (43 ins)

Variation over 30 shots: 9 fps for .22 on test

Average energy: 10.3 ft.lbs.

Contact: Your nearest SMK dealer or www.sportsmk.co.uk

RRP £149.95



Fibre-optics meets moderator meets cocking aid.