

Simples!



The SMKS3 pistol balances well

Mark Camoccio tries the spring powered SMKS3 – one of the most uncomplicated air pistols money can buy

We all remember how we got into airguns; and I for one, began my shooting career with none other than the good old Harrington Gat. This inexpensive classic pop-out pistol has put a smile on many a school boys face over the years, and for that reason alone, deserves recognition. I was over the moon with my second hand purchase for 50p many moons ago, and it serves as a reminder that beginners 'starter kit' has an important part to play in encouraging the next generation.

Under the spotlight here is the SMKS3 pistol from Sportsmarketing (SMK), and it's a spring /piston powered break barrel model, aimed fairly and squarely at the lower end of the market. SMK kindly sent over two versions of the pistol, one in .177 and the other in .22.

Take a break

Power is of little consequence with this type of beginners pistol, but for the record, it produces around 1.5ft/lbs of muzzle energy. These pistols come fitted with stippled, high impact ABS resin grips, which I have to say, are not only very precisely moulded, but extremely comfortably in the aim.



Cocking the action is fairly easy

A good start then, and despite a fairly short 7inch barrel, more good news comes with the fact that the SMKS3 is fairly easy to cock. As with any break barrel springer, just snap the barrel down, chamber a pellet, snap the barrel back up, and away you go.

The barrel lock-up is nice and solid incidentally, and there's even an adjustable breech nut, which is not a feature you would expect on such an inexpensive product.

Given the low power output, it does pay to select pellets that aren't a tight fit in the breech, and I used Marksman pellets in .22 calibre, and Edgar Brothers pellets in the .177, which seemed fine.

Fibre optic sights

Open sights come as standard here, and they're even of the fully adjustable fibre optic variety, whereby brightly coloured filaments create the rearsight notch, and fore-sight post. The image is a fluorescent pink dot sitting within two green dots, and in practise, it looks good, managing to stay bright in dim conditions. For the more adventurous, scope rails are cut into the receiver too.

Having had two identical models sent through, bar the calibre difference, gave me the opportunity for a comparison,



The rear sights are adjustable



Fibre optics add to a good sight picture

yet in my experience, this grade of equipment can vary quite a lot from one example to the next. A good example was the trigger, being slightly lighter on one than the other. The trigger is rather crude, which is a shame, since the blade is nicely shaped, sporting a pleasantly wide, flat surface. Yet the mechanism really does take some tugging before releasing, which is less than conducive to precise grouping. That said, and with a gloved trigger hand, I managed some surprisingly good groups with the .22 version (1inch groups at 10yds!),

whilst the .177 was nearer 2.5inches at the same distance.

Conclusions

Interestingly, the SMK catalogue lists the .22 as a smoothbore, and the .177 rifled, yet both my test candidates clearly had rifled barrels, with the .22, as I say, proving the point and shooting particularly well.

When all's said and done, to expect too much from these pistols is to miss the point, and at this price bracket, whilst a slightly lighter trigger would be nice, they represent a lot of fun for the money. **GM**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Model	SMKS3
Type	Spring powered break barrel pistol
Calibre	.22 and .177 tested
Weight	2.2lbs
Overall length	13.75inches
Barrel length	7inches
Grips	Synthetic composite
Trigger	Single stage non-adjustable
Velocity	293fps on test using .177 Edgar Brothers pellets (approx 1.4ft/lbs)
RRP	£39.95
Contact	Sportsmarketing Ltd Tel 01206 795333 www.sportsmk.co.uk