

# SPRINGING *into action*

**CHAMPION  
V  
SYNSG**

*Above: The Kral offers a satisfactory design, the SMK a super-sleek stock*

Spring rifles are the lifeblood of airgunning – so **Mark Camoccio** takes a brace of low-price models and pits them together in a head-to-head shoot-out...

*Each rifle's stock has a unique profile*

**F**ull-power airguns are the tool of choice for despatching quarry cleanly and humanely – and these days, with a plethora of precharged pneumatics available, the hunting fraternity is spoiled for choice. But not everyone wants the hassle of charging gear like a diver's scuba tank or pump. Many airgunners still swear by the standalone format of the traditional spring-piston rifle.

On test here are two springers offering legal-limit output at the lower end of the price spectrum. Both come fitted with black synthetic stocks, which are practical and help keep down costs. On the face of it, both offer good value for money, so let's see how they compare...

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Synthetic stocks, while not to everyone's taste, are undeniably trendy – not to mention immensely practical – and both test models here feature the 'black stuff', configured for adult shooters.

The Kral Champion from Range-Right is a relatively new model, and its radical styling is certainly eye-catching. It faces off against Sportsmarketing's SYN SG, which has super-sleek stock dimensions – though it's surprisingly heavy.

Placed alongside each other, these look like two serious airguns designed to do a job. Though the SMK's butt is slightly the plainer, first impressions reveal plenty of features on both rifles.

<b>Kral Champion</b>	★★★★★★★☆☆
<b>SMK SYN SG</b>	★★★★★★★☆☆

## TAKING STOCK

The Kral's stock includes stylish moulding and a thumbhole cut-out that affords a comfortable grip, even if it has a 'plasticky' feel. While it looked a little low, the cheekpiece actually set my head in exactly the right position – and a comfortable forend grip completes a highly satisfactory design.







The Kral Champion's green fibre-optic rear sight element



The SMK SYN SG – like its Kral rival – also has a fibre-optic rear sight, and thumbwheels for windage and elevation adjustment



The SYN SG's cocking stroke is the smoother of the two guns

The SMK's moulding is equally well presented, with exceptionally sharp chequering on show. Near parallel edges form a subtle taper to the forend to give a sleek and purposeful profile. A solid rubber recoil pad makes this a functional butt, though given this is clearly a purposeful sporter, I'm curious why it lacks a raised cheekpiece.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★☆☆☆  
**SMK SYN SG** ★★★★★☆☆☆

### OPEN SIGHTS

Open sights give younger shooters and novices the chance to master the art of basic marksmanship – and both airguns come fitted with fibre-optics opens that are very good in this respect. The Champion's fluorescent foresight element is incorporated into what appears to be a large silencer at the barrel end. The fully-adjustable rear sight, complete with finger wheels for windage and elevation, is particularly neat and functional. The SMK comes equally well appointed, too – with both rifles effectively

offering a sight picture formed from a red bead that sits within a notch flanked by green dots. Top marks!

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★★★★★★  
**SMK SYN SG** ★★★★★★★★★★

### SCOPING UP

Fitting a scope to a break-barrel airgun can throw up problems, as any glassware fitted must be compact enough to avoid fouling the break-open breech area – but as each model sports a long compression cylinder, no such issues will arise. As for the thorny subject of scope creep, the SYN SG has an arrestor plate fitted at the rear of the 11mm dovetail rails, against which you can butt the rear scope mount to stop it sliding backwards under the influence of recoil. The Kral lacked such a detail, meaning you really need to invest in a more expensive one-piece mount when fitting a telly.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★★★☆☆☆  
**SMK SYN SG** ★★★★★★★★★★





The Champion's breech lock-up system...



The Kral incorporates a manual safety catch forward of the curved blade

...and the SYN SG's



The SYN SG's plastic trigger blade is almost straight, and its pull-weight is lighter

**Top left:** The thumbhole stock and thin grip make the Kral a sleek handler

**Top right:** A plam-filling forend gives the SYN SG a very 'pointable' feel

## COCKING CYCLE

The required cocking effort is an important factor with any spring gun – especially where full power output is concerned. With both my test rifles capable of generating energy levels nudging the 12ft/lb limit almost too closely, it's no surprise that it takes some effort to prime their actions!

What the Kral concedes in respect of barrel length it should make up for with its muzzle fitment – and while that pseudo silencer improves leverage, the cocking stroke needs to be made in one concerted movement because spring resistance certainly increases toward the end of the stroke. Indeed, it felt more like cocking a gas-ram than a coiled mainspring – and I found gripping the top bar of the thumbhole during the cocking process gave the best grip for mastering the Kral's cocking technique. As far as smoothness goes, breaking open the barrel was fairly easy, and the lock-up was wonderfully positive – though the stroke revealed some spring graunch.

The SYN SG's cocking experience was totally different. The breech is quite stiff to open – always a good sign on a break-barrel! – and required a small

jolt over the knee. The cocking stroke was then a little easier than its rival's – and much smoother. Both guns' breeches locked-up nicely on closure; neither gun falls short here.

<b>Kral Champion</b>	★★★★★★☆☆
<b>SMK SYN SG</b>	★★★★★★☆☆

## TRIGGER & SAFETY

In this price bracket, triggers are frequently 'acceptable', but rarely any better – and the Kral's is par for the course. The blade itself is slightly too curved, with plenty of creep in the heavyish pull (although the ultimate release pressure reduces as the creep is taken up). The safety catch, just forward of the trigger, is manual – and there's an anti-beartrap to protect your fingers during the loading process, the downside of which is that the action can't be de-cocked.

By comparison, the SYN SG comes with a near-straight plastic blade, and though it's a fairly unsophisticated unit, there's very little creep and its pull



is notably lighter than its rival. Its resettable safety is automatic and takes the form of a pop-out tab at the end of the cylinder.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆  
**SMK SYNSG** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆

## HANDLING

Both of these rifles handle well and hold a different appeal. The Kral feels good on aim and the added benefit of the thumbhole stock is noticeable. The ultra-thin, raked-back grip gives great control, and the thin bar at the top of the cut-out not only feels good, but doubles as a 'handle' by which to pick up the rifle!

My first impression of the SMK, with its ultra-sleek forend, was that it may be left wanting in the handling stakes – but, in use, the SYNSG has an ultra-pointable feel that's really appealing. The palm-filling forend is very nice, and if the comb was just a little higher for use with a scope, I'd have scored it an extra point.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆  
**SMK SYNSG** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆

## OVERALL BUILD

Given the price sector here, it would be unrealistic to expect faultless engineering and finish – but I was impressed with both rifles. The Turkish-made Kral looks well made and certainly has a quality feel, save for the final finish applied to the metalwork, where a slightly rough surface and rather dull blueing just about give away the price tag. The most disappointing detail on my test gun was the sloppy engineering around the inside of the breech face, although this, of course, is unlikely to be a feature of every Champion – and it didn't affect the performance.



*Both these springers demonstrate that affordability and quality aren't always mutually exclusive.*

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL	Kral Champion	SMK SYNSG
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Turkey	China
CALIBRE	.22 only	.177 and .22 (tested)
TYPE	Spring-and-piston	Spring-and-piston
COCKING	Break-barrel	Break-barrel
OVERALL LENGTH	1,168mm	1,143mm
BARREL LENGTH	400mm	483mm
WEIGHT (UNSCOPED)	2.8kg	3.3kg
STOCK	Synthetic sporter	Synthetic sporter
TRIGGER	Two-stage, adjustable	Two-stage, adjustable
SAFETY	Manual, with anti-beartrap	Automatic, resettable
POWER (WITH AADF)	11.8ft/lb	11.9ft/lb

As for the SYNSG, this has to be one of very best-finished rifles of Chinese origin that I've had from Sportsmarketing. Even the blueing, so often the downfall of Far Eastern-made fare, was smooth, deep and even. Indeed my only real criticism, quality-wise, is that the trigger blade is plastic.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆  
**SMK SYNSG** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆

## ACCURACY & PERFORMANCE

On test, the Kral was settled from the off – albeit that the cocking stroke is more akin to a gas-ram in the progressive nature of the effort required. Get a routine going, though, and it's perfectly manageable. My test rifle did exhibit quite a bit of spring twang and resonance on firing, yet accuracy over 25 yards was excellent, once I'd mastered its trigger creep. Actually, with high-quality ammo – Air Arms Diabolo Field – sub-12mm groups were the norm, when I fought that trigger.

After an initial running-in period to get rid of the excessive dieselling, the SMK was hot on the Kral's heels in the accuracy stakes with decent ammo, too. Once things had settled down, it was capable of 19mm groups at 25 yards with AADFs which, for a rifle in this price category, is extremely impressive.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆  
**SMK SYNSG** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆

## VALUE FOR MONEY

These are two very appealing guns, with their own character. Rarely have I been so surprised over the course of a gun test as I was with both rifles here. Retailing for similar asking prices and well under £190, they represent excellent value for money for the high standard of performance on offer, and their presentation overall. I have no hesitation in awarding each top marks – again.

**Kral Champion** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆  
**SMK SYNSG** ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆



<b>Kral Champion</b>	<b>78/100</b>
<b>SMK SYNSG</b>	<b>80/100</b>

Okay, synthetic stocks are not to everyone's taste, but these two springers really have made a case for themselves and demonstrated the increasing quality to be found at the lower end of the price spectrum.

Both displayed a level of accuracy that could only impress, and both handled well enough to make the final choice tricky to say the least. The points system I use decides on a technical winner – and for me, victory goes to SMK's SYNSG by a whisker. Suffice to say, though, either of this pair represents a great buy – whether you're considering it as a starter pack or as a budget-priced hunting rifle.