

Walther's LP400 Club Match Air Pistol for Everyone

For anyone interested in mastering the target handgun, the first pistol that should go in the gun safe is an air pistol.

There is no better tool to learn how to shoot a handgun successfully for reasons that are obvious but often overlooked by those who cannot wait to start blazing away with their high-powered centrefire autoloaders.

Understanding the importance of sight alignment, trigger control and area aiming techniques can best be learnt with a match air pistol for a number of very good reasons. Air pistols have negligible recoil so the shooter can easily see errors in sighting or trigger control. Any good quality air pistol is superbly accurate with good quality pellets so any doubts about accuracy, as might be the case with cartridge arm, can be discounted.

Even the best quality match pellets are relatively cheap at round \$20/500, so there are no limitations on how much ammo is expended for practice and there are few limitations on where you can practice with an air pistol, as they are virtually noiseless. In addition, match grade air pistols have a number of very advanced features with respect to sight and trigger adjustments that are non-existent on most cartridge firearms.

Pistol Australia formally introduced Air Pistol as an official international match around 1970, allowing pistol club members to add an air pistol to their target pistol armoury. Way back then, the Feinwerkbau M65 spring and piston powered air pistols were the predominant target air pistol with some Walther LP2 compressed air (self-pumped) match guns also being available, although the latter were not that popular because of the significant cocking/charging effort required.

Power supply graduated to CO2 and this was a step forward, but had technical issues, particularly in colder regions where the vaporisation of the CO2 was affected at lower temperatures.

All these issues were resolved with the development of target air arms using pre-compressed air at high pressure (typically 200 BAR - 2800psi - or higher).

The current generation of Walther target air arms are in this category, and the most recent addition to the range is the LP400 Club match air pistol.

This is a more economical version of the LP400 Match series pistols, although it



shares most of the mechanical and design aspects of the more expensive models.

Its 'Club' designation reflects its versatility and while the sample was sent to GUNS for testing, it offered an opportunity to evaluate it for my pistol club, as our existing stock of club air pistols were simply worn out, with some models no longer being in production with no spare parts being available.

The club pistols need to be robust and versatile and of all the club guns, the air pistols probably get 3 or 4 times the use of any of the club's cartridge firearms. In addition, the air pistols are always in demand by junior and lady club probationary members, so whatever is available needs to be able to accommodate shooters of all shapes and sizes, and right and left-handers.

The LP400 Club is relatively light at 900g and that suits beginners although it is too light for me as my preference is for my bullseye pistols to weigh around 1100g or a little more – a personal choice.

The LP400 pistols have a carbon fibre barrel jacket enclosing a stainless steel .177 match barrel liner.

The removable air cylinder is designed to operate at 200 BAR (2800psi) and is intended to be filled from a SCUBA tank with the appropriate DIN fitting on the valve.

TOP INSET: The LP400 air cylinder is designed to operate at 200 BAR and holds enough air for about 180 shots.

LEFT: JR shooting the LP400 left handed, for demo purposes only. The versatility of the grip is a very good feature.



SPECS

WALTHER LP400

- Manufacturer:** Walther Arms
- Model:** Walther LP400 Club
- Calibre:** 4.5mm
- Action:** Pre-compressed high pressure air operation. Single shot. Double compensated recoil management system.
- Barrel:** 227mm carbon fibre jacketed.
- Sights:** Fully adjustable rear and 3-width front.
- Trigger:** Fully adjustable for let off and position – dry fire function.
- Weight:** 900g
- Air supply:** Alloy cylinder with pressure gauge – 200 BAR operating pressure – 180 shot capacity.
- Length/height/width:** 410/135/50mm
- Grips:** Polymer – fully orthopaedic and ambidextrous.
- RRP:** Under \$2000

Sights are fully adjustable. The rear sight has notch width and depth adjustments in addition to the normal windage and elevation, and the triangular front sight can be rotated to provide three different front sight widths.

The trigger is fully adjustable for everything, including the reach and angle of the trigger that is adjustable along the trigger bar. A cross bolt above the trigger is the dry-fire mechanism that locks out the air valve system and just allows the trigger to operate.

The air cylinder has an air gauge built into its front end with the green zone indicating the pressure range in which to operate the pistol. On a full 200 BAR air charge, there is sufficient air for two full 60-shot matches (plus sighters). The gas regulating system metres a uniform air charge into the system for each shot, ensuring shot to shot uniformity.

The unique feature of the LP400 Club is its ambidextrous flexibility. The loading gate/cocking lever can be operated from either side, but the really clever innovation is the grip. It is manufactured from polymer and is in three elements.

The main grip body attaches to the pistol frame and a palm rest and palm shelf are attached to the main frame with two hex-head bolts that engage cylindrical nuts within the main frame. By simply undoing the bolt, the palm rest and palm shelf can be inverted and flipped over to the other

side of the grip, to change the grip from right to left-hand. The other feature of this grip, is its capacity to accommodate a wide range of hand sizes.

The accuracy of these match-grade air pistols is amazing. The 5-shot test target supplied with the LP400 Club was literally one hole – basically zero dispersion at 10 metres.

The first test outing for the LP400 was more or less accidental. I took it to my pistol club to shoot a conventional ISSF 60-shot air pistol match, but it turned out that it was a Club Championship annual Air Pistol Silhouette match.

Air pistol Metallic Silhouette match is shot standing over 25m with chicken silhouettes set at 10m, pigs at 15m, turkeys at 20m and rams at 25m.

As I had left my sighted-in FWB34 at home, I was talked in to shooting the match with the virgin Walther LP400 and to my astonishment, shot a personal best 28/40, broke grade and won the match on the day.

While it is hard to imagine recoil with a 7gn air pistol match pellet, the Walther LP400 has a recoil compensation system built into the mechanism. Releasing a shot from the Walther is thus virtually motionless so any handling or sighting errors are immediately obvious.

I did not do so well shooting a one-handed conventional 10m 60-shot match as my hand is not as steady as it used to be as the relatively light 900g weight of the LP400

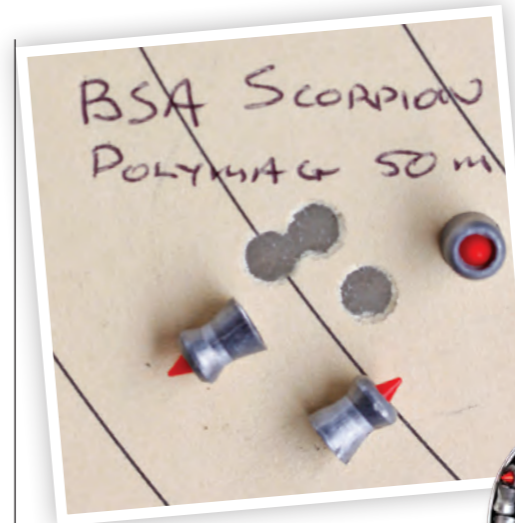
Club did not dampen the wobbles as well as my 1100g FWB M34.

The LP400 comes in a hard case with a full set of tools and DIN adapter for filling the cylinder. After giving my club's committee members a look at the Walther, it did not take long for a decision to be made to purchase four of these match pistols for club use.

Another factor that was important in making this relatively expensive purchase is that Walther has been around for a long time and Frontier Arms has been supporting the brand with service and spare parts for over half a century.

While the Walther LP400 Club is listed as the entry-level match air pistol in Walther's LP400 line-up, it gives nothing away in features and performance.

For more information on Walther arms, contact the Australian distributors: Frontier Arms Company: www.frontierarms.com.au



CLOCKWISE FEOM LEFT: Amazing accuracy at 50m with the .25 calibre Polymags in a BSA Scorpion – a 10mm group.

The Predator Polymag .25 cal. Pellets weigh 26gn and tins contain 150 pellets.

Precision composite construction is a feature of the Polymag pellets. The thick skirt is a feature that paid off in the BSA .25cal. Scorpion that would not group with thin skirted pellets.



Predator Polymag Pellets

In the July-September issue of GUNS, we tested a BSA Scorpion .25 calibre air rifle. We had a good variety of .25 calibre pellets, and the BSA showed a distinct preference for pellets of a certain configuration – namely, those with thicker skirts.

Nioa was interested in getting some of its .25 cal. Polymag pellets into the test, as .25 calibre air arms are not commonly put through their paces in any of the shooting publications. Unfortunately, the samples went astray in the post and did not arrive in time to include them in the original test of the Scorpion.

Fortunately, we still had not shipped the BSA back to Tasco Sales, the distributor, so we were able to do a one-off test of the .25 cal. Polymag pellets. I recruited John Rutkay, who does most of the GUNS air rifle tests to check out the performance of the Polymag pellets in the BSA Scorpion.

As with previous tests of high powered pre-compressed air arms, the test was done at 50m off a bench rest under cloudy but calm conditions.

The cylinder holds enough air for about

30 shots, so we limited the test to 15 shots to maintain the pressure at a reasonable level, although rifles of this type usually have pressure regulators to maintain a uniform pressure from shot to shot. The .25 cal. pellets weigh 26gn and their velocity was measured using an Oehler Model 35 chronograph. It averaged of 695fps with a standard deviation of 4fps over 5 shots.

Accuracy was remarkable. Two 5-shot groups measured under 20mm and one 3-shot group was just on 10mm – amazing 50m accuracy from any type of sporting rifle.

These pellets are very popular, particularly in the UK, for hunting small game and if you have a look on the internet at the Polymag images site, there are lots of small game images that are accredited to Polymag pellets.

They are not cheap, and a tin of 150 (the smaller calibres are in 200 tins) will not leave you much change from \$20, but if you want to get serious about using your air rifle for feral varmint control, Predator Polymag pellets would be a very good investment. Polymag pellets are distributed by Nioa – www.nioa.net.au

- 1 The LP400 Club comes in a hard case with multi-tool and DIN adapter.
- 2 The loading gate lever is ambidextrous. It exposes the chamber when open and cocks the trigger/valve mechanism.
- 3 The LP400 has a muzzle brake as well as a double compensated recoil damper. The front sight is triangular and can be rotated for three width options.
- 4 The orthopaedic grip on the Club model can be quickly altered to suit right or left handers via the two grip hex bolts. A tool is supplied to fit.
- 5 The rear sight is all-ways adjustable, including for width and depth of the notch.
- 6 The LP400 Club has all the features of the higher spec'd LP series match pistols with the clever grip arrangement shown here in both right and left-handed configurations.
- 7 The match trigger is also adjustable for length of pull and trigger angle.

