

Walther's PPQ Q5 Match

by Geoff Smith

UK visitor and national rifle team shooter Gerald Betteridge Jr enjoys having a shot from a smaller firearm as handguns are prohibited in his homeland.

While the operating principles of self-loading handguns have not altered much over the 120 years since they first came into use, the design techniques and materials used most certainly have, particularly over the past decade or so.

In recent times, I have been loaned several variants of Walther's PPQ (Polizei Pistole Quick) handgun for review purposes and with each I have been impressed with the gradually evolving fine detail of the design and the extent of modern materials and processes employed. My original review of Walther's 9mm PPQ was published in *Australian & New Zealand Handgun 11*, while the 9mm M2 version

appeared in the February 2015 *Australian Shooter* and the PPQ M2 .22 rimfire version was reviewed in *Australian & New Zealand Handgun 13*. Walther's primary inventor of handguns, Fritz Walther, following on from founder Carl, would probably be astonished to see what has happened in the half-century since his death in 1966.

The present version under review here is the Q5 Match, a dedicated target model designed predominantly for action-type matches that is supplied with three magazines and a nicely arranged system for mounting sights of various kinds. In appearance, the current model is similar to the previous ones except for some minor sculptural alterations and apertures in the

slide that replace the front-end gripping grooves. The published literature does not, as far as I can see, distinguish whether this is functional or merely cosmetic, but either way it works.

The whole outfit is supplied in a foam-lined plastic case and includes the gun, three magazines and a set of mounting plates for the sighting system as well as a detailed multilingual instruction manual and a small set of tools. The supplied demo model from the distributor, Frontier Arms, has a Trijicon green dot sight that would normally be purchased separately from the gun. In general appearance, apart from the above superficial alterations, the external finish on the steel remains the black Tenifer scuff-resistant nitride coating, which complements the

textured surface of the hard polymer frame.

The magazine release is located on the left side behind the trigger and this can be swapped to the right side for left-handed shooters. The slide release lever is ambidextrous and pivots on the same pin as the trigger. At the lower front of the frame is a Picatinny rail on which laser sights and other accessories can be mounted. As with the other models, the grip may be altered by changing the insert at the rear to make it smaller or larger depending on the shooter's physique. This is done by carefully driving out the 4mm roll pin at the lower end of the grip insert. A lanyard can also be attached at this point if desired. Beneath the grip insert is a small receptacle for locating a radio frequency identity microchip, which would probably be useful in situations where multiple guns are kept in an armoury and need to be booked in and out quickly.

Physically, the gun is 206mm in length, 137mm high (not including the sight) and about 34mm wide at its widest point, and on my scales, with magazine and sight, the weight came out at 829g (unloaded). The specified weight without the sight is 775g.

The gun is supplied with open sights adjustable for elevation and windage and has a fibre optic red front-sight that is attached to



A left-side view of the PPQ Q5 Match including the Trijicon sight.

the slide by a screw from underneath. The instructions imply, but do not state, that the front-sight may be replaced with one of differing height. The supplied optical rear-sight bases suit Docter, Leupold DeltaPoint and, of course, the supplied Trijicon unit. These attach to the rear top of the slide using small cap screws. I was not inclined to alter the sights at all as the gun had been sighted-in already. The manual says the little screws must be tightened to specific torques for which I don't have the equipment and it seemed that thread locking compound had been applied. Call me nervous!

Field stripping of this gun is simplicity itself. The magazine is removed and after clearing the

breech, the gun is dry-fired and the takedown catches immediately forward of the trigger are lowered. As they are lowered, the slide assembly clicks forward ever so slightly and then it can be pushed straight off the frame. The recoil spring and guide are then pulled from beneath the barrel and it is withdrawn from the slide. The gun is now in its five main parts and can be cleaned.

Recommended cleaning involves pushing a bristle brush dipped in solvent through the barrel from the breech end, then scrubbing a bronze brush through the barrel to remove metal fouling. A small bristle brush dipped in solvent is used to clean the breech face and internal parts that are sooty. After this, a dry patch cleans out the residues then it needs a wipe over of the metal parts with light oil and a couple of drops of oil on the bearing surfaces of the slide.

Reassembly is even simpler. Once the barrel is reinserted into the slide, the recoil spring is replaced and the slide slips back onto the frame ready for action once more.

This time around, I decided to take the gun along to a match that I shoot and simply use it straight out of the box with a couple of different types of factory ammunition. As it is Frontier



The alternative sight bases and the tools supplied.



Arms' demo gun, there was no issue about carefully running it in, so I just fronted up for the match, which consisted of shooting 10 rounds in 10 minutes, two lots of five rounds in 20 seconds each, and then two lots of five rounds in 10 seconds each. I placed my trust in the zeroing without checking further and as I have my own scores for this match going way back, it seemed like a good way to introduce myself to the gun.

The scores I achieved turned out to be virtually identical to those using my own gun, although the 20-second series were slightly better than my normal scores. I attribute this to the fact that the Walther's Trijicon sight allows for much faster target acquisition than my own gun's open sights. The Trijicon sight is a sturdy, small, slide-mounted device that uses fibre optics to project a green dot that the literature suggests subtends 9 MOA. The internal light source is battery-free because it is powered by tritium, the radioactive isotope of hydrogen.

I used factory ammo for this match, namely Winchester 124-grain lead safe flat-point, Winchester 125-grain lead round-nose and



The supplied open rear-sight is ruggedly made and adjustable for windage and elevation.

Hornady 115-grain Steel Match. Careful rested zeroing with whatever ammo turned out to be its favourite would improve performance I'm sure. First impressions took me back to the previous PPQ models I have tested. It is very lively to shoot and a great deal of fun! The design of the grip frame is extremely good, and while the long pull of the two-stage trigger takes a bit of getting used to, it is perfectly acceptable for the types of matches to which this gun is suited. I checked the trigger pull with my Lyman gauge and the average measured pull force was

just less than 22 Newtons (4lb 14oz).

The basic design remains as with the earlier models and consists of a polymer grip frame and trigger into which strategically placed steel inserts carry and support the steel magazine, slide and barrel. The gun is striker fired, with the striker being cocked by just a short 8 to 10mm rearwards stroke of the slide. Pulling the slide back this short distance allows the lug at the base of the striker to slip over the sear so that when the slide is released the recoil spring pulls it back into place and the gun is now cocked.



Gerald Betteridge Senior, a SSAA member at Para Range in SA, attempts to show his son how it's done.

The striker consists of a neat little three-piece assembly having the sear engaging lug beneath, the firing pin at the front and the actuating spring located within the quite tiny body. The firing mechanism consists of a bright blue pressed steel trigger bar with two upwards projecting lugs running back from the polymer trigger around the right side of the magazine well to operate the sear. On pressing the trigger, the trigger bar moves backwards to disengage the sear, thus dropping the striker to fire the cartridge.

On firing, the barrel and slide remain locked together as they recoil back along the grip frame for about 8mm. At this point, the ramped lug under the breech engages with the sloping slot on the base of the barrel, pulling it downwards to unlock the slide. The slide then recoils back fully against the tension of the recoil spring until it reaches the end of its travel, simultaneously throwing the fired case out of the ejection port. It then moves forward again, scooping up a new round from the magazine, which it pushes into the breech as it shoves the barrel back up into its locked battery position. The actual lockup is achieved between the upper front face of the ejection port and the upper forward edge of the barrel's breech section. While locked together, the cartridge case is tightly enclosed and supported on all sides.

The two upwards projecting lugs on the trigger bar each serve important functions. The one at the front pushes the firing pin safety



Gerald reloads the Walther.



Showing how the trigger block ensures the trigger will only operate when the finger is fully across the trigger's face.

block upwards to allow the striker to travel forwards and fire the cartridge, while the one at the rear is pushed down when the slide moves out of battery during firing to ensure that the sear is disconnected from the trigger, thereby preventing more than one shot per pull of the trigger.

The whole mechanism is both deceptively simple and neat. The firing pin safety block makes certain that the firing pin cannot slam into the primer unless the trigger is being pulled. The trigger itself has a central safety lever insert that prevents it from moving when pulled unless the shooter's finger is fully engaged across the trigger face. These two safety features mean that a further safety catch is not required. What

this then means is that for operational use by law enforcement people the gun can safely be carried in a holster, ready to fire. Naturally, this is not something that we would normally require as recreational shooters, except perhaps in certain action matches.

The 10-round magazines are tapered at their upper end, meaning that they can be readily and rapidly slipped into the magazine well during those competitions where speedy reloading is important. The magazines themselves have an orange polymer follower, a substantial wire zig-zag spring and a polymer end cap with an internal steel reinforcement plate. The magazine dismantles for cleaning easily by depressing the central button at the base and carefully slipping the base plate off while controlling the spring. As with most modern self-loading handguns, the magazine has a slot on the left side at the top, which allows a lug on the magazine follower to lift the slide stop after the last shot so it stays open.

Unfortunately, my testing regimen was cut short before I had concluded what I wanted to do originally, but I was able to take it along to a further match at which some fellow shooters were given an opportunity to make comment. Among these was Gerald Betteridge Junior, from Swansea in Wales, who was out here visiting his



The aftermarket Trijicon sight supplied for testing the pistol has a green dot and needs no battery.

dad, a local SSAA member, also named Gerald. It turns out that Gerald Jr is a member of the UK Gallery Rifle team and has shot in international matches at Bisley in the UK, Germany and Spain, but because of the UK's ban on handguns, he is unable to gain much experience with them at home. Suffice to say, he enjoyed the shots he

had as did his dad and several other members at the SSAA Para Range.

I was able to include another four types of factory loads and found that the gun performed flawlessly with all of them. The general consensus was that it is great fun to shoot, accurate and nice to hold. One rifle shooter, accustomed to light

Field stripping the pistol into its five main parts.



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single-stage triggers, found the Q5 trigger difficult to manage, but generally the opinions were positive. Several regular handgunners from my club are already using PPQs in both 9mm and .22 rimfire and swear by them.

Although I wasn't able to gauge accuracy to my usual level of satisfaction, the factory-supplied test target shows that the gun produced a (presumably machine-rested) five-shot group of about 25mm at 25m range, so there is no real issue here. Few shooters would be capable of matching this level of accuracy on the range.

In short then, Walther's Q5 Match handgun



is a winner. It points very well, is lively and accurate to shoot, it cycles flawlessly with a wide variety of factory ammo ranging from bullet weights of 115 to 147 grains and it is easy to maintain.

Walther pistols are distributed in Australia by Frontier Arms, with the PPQ Q5 Match 9mm model retailing for around \$1900. For more information, ask at your local Walther dealer or visit frontierarms.com.au ■



Specifications

Manufacturer: Walther, of Germany

Model: PPQ Q5 Match

Calibre: 9mm

Barrel: 127mm, tenifer-coated, corrosion-resistant carbon steel slide

Magazine: Anti-friction coating, three 10-shot, cased

Sights: LPA click adjustable metal rear-sight, LPA red fibre optic front-sight, mil-std 1913 Picatinny rail, supplied with three interchangeable adaptor plates for red-dot sights

Trigger Pull: 2500g

Frame: High-strength polymer

Grips: Non-slip, interchangeable backstraps

Overall Length: 206mm

Weight: 775g

Distributor: Frontier Arms

RRP: \$1900