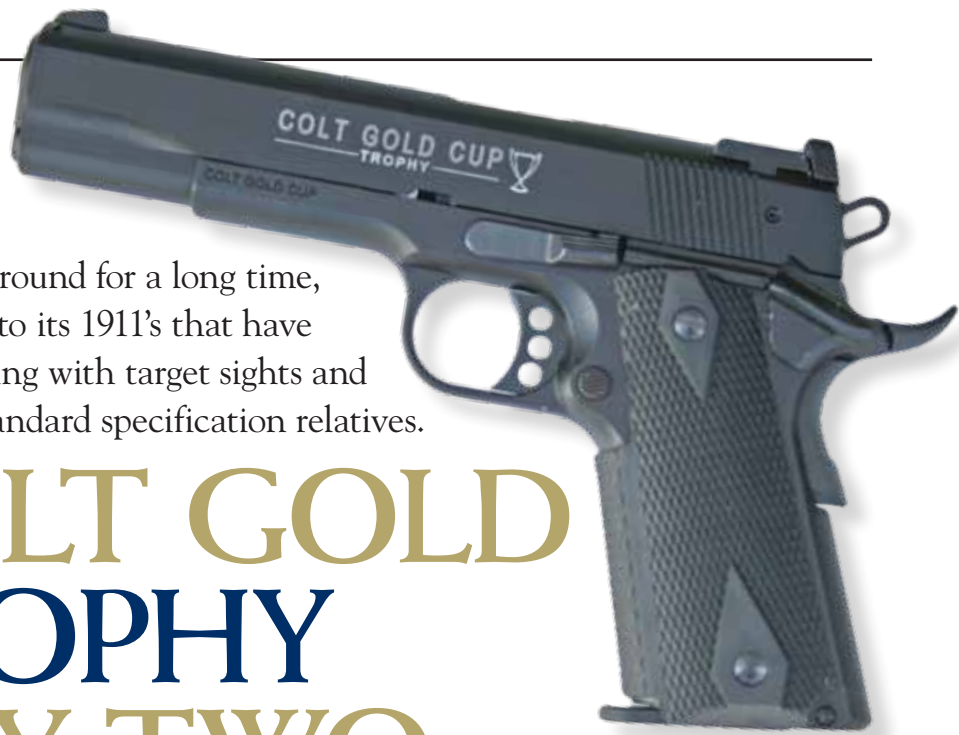


Colt's Gold Cup brand has been around for a long time, for many years has been attached to its 1911's that have been set up for competition shooting with target sights and enhanced performance over its standard specification relatives.

THE COLT GOLD CUP TROPHY TWENTY TWO



The ability to put a .22 Long Rifle conversion in a 1911 frame is not new, and Colt pioneered this concept with its Ace conversions and similar rimfire optioned 1911's as far back as the 1930's.

The challenge of converting a Colt 1911 .45 ACP to a .22 Rimfire was originally initiated only two years after the 1911 was adopted by the US Army as its official sidearm. Attempts to come up with a workable solution as a training aid for the US Military were unsuccessful until the mid-1930's when the first Colt Ace .22 pistols were delivered to the Army in small quantities, but were deemed to be not reliable enough. 11,000 of these early model Colt Ace pistols were produced until 1941.

Another variant was developed by Colt concurrently with the production of the first ACE .22's and was intended to emulate the recoil of the .45 1911 more closely than the first model Ace. This was done through the use of a floating chamber that acted as a piston to actuate the much heavier slide on this version. This came out as a full pistol in 1937 and is now one of the more valuable Colt collectibles.

In 1938, Colt offered .22 Ace Conversion Units that could be fitted to any 1911 .45 frame and these were available for many years and can still be found on the used gun parts market. The floating chamber compromised the accuracy potential of the conversion unit and also requires diligent cleaning.

With the remarkable longevity of the 1911 pistol design, and the increasing participation in IPSC – type competition, interest in .22 Rimfire versions of 1911 autoloaders has never been greater, with a number of manufacturers offering their own versions, including Chiappa, Kimber and other well known



ABOVE: The Gold Cup stripped. The barrel is held in place with a shroud and barrel nut and can be completely removed from its fixed position in the frame.

TOP: Target sights, extended beavertail and wrap-around rubber grips, along with reasonable weight (1000g loaded) make for a good handling outfit.

pistol makers, as well as some newcomers.

It was therefore not unexpected, that the initiator of all this 1911 development, Colt, should come out with its own .22 Rimfire 1911 in the form of the Colt Gold Cup Trophy.

The main point of interest is that this pistol is not made by Colt in the USA, but by Walther in Germany where it is manufactured under Walther's Umarex banner.

Colt has not had a happy time in the USA and its military contracts for the supply of M16 rifles to the US Army during the last quarter of the 20th Century (and M4's today) kept the company afloat during a particularly bitter dispute with its union members that lasted for 4 years.

Colt's focus on its military business left it behind its competitors in the commercial firearms market and today, Colt's sporting handgun production in the USA is confined to the 1911 and its variants and the legendary Single Action Army revolver. No double-action revolvers or rimfire pistols of any kind are now made by Colt in the USA, although significant upgrading of its manufacturing facilities there has allowed the company to improve the quality of its US – made products to a very competitive level.

Outsourcing the manufacture of specific firearms is not unusual and Colt has been down this track many times in the past,



LEFT: The Gold Cup digested all these types of rimfire ammo without a problem, delivering best accuracy with standard velocity loads.

BELOW: A very useful accessory is the magazine loader that depresses the follower and facilitates filling the 10 shot magazine.



With the slide removed, the method of barrel attachment can be seen. A special spanner is supplied to fit the barrel nut.

with its Colt branded bolt action rifles made by Sauer in Germany and its cap and ball handguns made in Italy by Uberti. Colt could not go wrong using Walther to source this .22 Gold Cup, and its performance in the tests backed that up.

The Gold Cup .22 is a very clever design and is truly a 1911 from the slide rails down. The trigger system, grip safety, hammer spring system and safety arrangement are as close to the original 1911 specifications as possible.

The main difference obviously lies in the rimfire barrel/recoil spring requirements. The action is direct blowback and not a locked breech arrangement as is the case on the centrefire 1911's. An integral breech block on the frame supports the rigid barrel and although the action is a direct blow back design, the barrel bushing on the slide operates identically to a centrefire 1911, with the bushing being removable.

The way the barrel is attached to the frame is similar to the Dan Wesson system. The rifled section of the barrel is a slender tube that fits neatly inside the barrel sleeve. The barrel's muzzle is threaded and a nut tensions the barrel against the sleeve and locks it into the breech block on the frame. This makes for a very rigid barrel setup without having to use a heavy barrel or more complicated frame attachment arrangements.

The slide on the Gold Cup is aluminium alloy as is the frame, but the pistol weighs close to 1000g with empty magazine insert-

ed, which is not all that much different to a centrefire 1911.

Sights are fully adjustable with a square blade front sight set in a dovetail in the slide. Accessories included with the Gold Cup include a barrel nut spanner so that the barrel can be removed from the frame and small hex spanners for locking the front and rear sight in place. A really neat item is the magazine loader – a polymer unit that fits over the magazine and facilitates pushing the follower down when loading the ten-shot magazine.

The Gold Cup was tested with a variety of .22 Long Rifle ammunition – both Standard and High velocity. Most of these .22 Rimfire clones of centrefire autoloaders are specifically set up to function with HV ammunition and will not work with Standard velocity rimfire ammo. The Gold Cup is an exception and worked perfectly with all types of ammo used in the tests. With respect to accuracy, it had a distinct preference for Standard velocity target ammunition, consistently grouping under 50 mm at 25 metres on spite of its extremely heavy trigger that made precision shooting difficult. It was not so happy with the HV loads which were almost twice the group size of the Standard velocity loads, mainly due to flyers, which may be more related to the consistency of the ammo rather than the pistol.

My RCBS trigger pull gauge almost went off the scale with the Gold Cup's trigger, in-

SPECS

COLT GOLD CUP TROPHY

Calibre:

.22 Long Rifle

Manufacturer:

Walther (Umarex)

Action:

Blow-back autoloading

Barrel Length:

127mm

Length:

225mm

Height:

140mm

Width:

35 mm

Weight:

940g without magazine

Grips:

Wrap-around rubber

Sights:

adjustable rear.

Windage adjustable front

Magazine:

10 shot – stainless steel
(1 supplied)

Trigger:

Single action non-adjustable

RRP:

Less than \$1000 – shop around

dicating a release weight of nearly 8lb. I am sure the pistol would deliver better groups given a ISSF compliant (1000g) trigger pull, and an owner would find a trigger job on this pistol a good investment. Fortunately, the 1911-type trigger is easy to work on and any experienced pistol smith should be able to sort out a lighter trigger release if required.

There are two other models listed in the Colt/Walther .22 range – a Government Model with standard original fixed military sights and a Rail Gun with an accessory rail under the front of the frame and a Novak-type combat rear sight. The adjustable sights on the Gold Cup would put it at the top of my list.

In any event, the accuracy with the Gold Cup was the best achieved so far with a rimfire autoloader of the 1911 kind and it offers an economical and practical practice option for those shooting the IPSC and Action matches.

Colt (and Walther) firearms are distributed throughout Australia by Frontier Arms Company. Web: www.frontierarms.com.au