



Pistol shooting is the most difficult of the shooting sports to master and many people new to competitive handgunning struggle to make much progress shooting live ammunition target pistols.

# Hammerli AP20 Air Pistol

## A Good Way to Get Started

There is a solution – start working with a match air pistol to hone your handgunning skills and leave the purchase of your high power IPSC autoloader until you can learn how to shoot it! The Air Pistol match was introduced to the Pistol Australia shooting program around 1970 and has long been part of both the international (ISSF) and Olympic shooting program.

Because of the restrictions on live ammunition handguns in many European countries, target shooting with air arms is a very popular pastime. Because of the international level of competition with air arms, a lot of development has gone into both air rifles and air pistols.

The match air arms now produced by the major European manufacturers are highly technical examples of precision shooting equipment and as a result, they come at a premium price to match their performance.

Since the 1970's, there has been an evolution in match air arm design that has been manifested in the power systems used with each generation of match guns.

Feinwerbau's Model 65 was the benchmark match pistol in the early days with a recoil compensating spring and pistol system powering the pistol. By the 1980's CO<sub>2</sub> powered match pistols supplanted the FWB's spring and piston operation and some manually operated compressed air powered arms made an appearance. These latter systems were effective but required a lot of cocking effort and the long cocking levers made for bulky and somewhat awkward target pistols.

The power of all match air arms today comes almost exclusively from pre-compressed air provided either by high pressure manual pumps, or

supplied from SCUBA compressed air tanks operating at around 200 BAR (2800psi). Some match air arms have air cylinders designed to operate at 300 BAR (4200psi) but this pressure level generally exceeds the legal limit to which the storage cylinders can be pumped.

The advantages of pre-compressed air over the earlier power systems are that it is relatively temperature independent, and unlike CO<sub>2</sub>, it has low mass per charge and thus reduces the recoil effect at discharge and has a much wider range of power options that can adjust the velocity of the pellets as required.

For handgunners, an air pistol should be one of the first acquisitions. They are cheap to run, can be shot 24/7 in appropriate places and lacking the recoil and noise of live ammunition pistols, quickly reveal where you are going wrong with your shooting technique.

You get to better understand the fundamentals of sight alignment, trigger control, grip, stance and area aiming than can then be learnt using live ammo handguns.

Hammerli has made life a little easier on the wallet for pistol shooters with the introduction

of its AP20 Match Air Pistol. Hammerli is part of the Umarex Group that also has Walther in its stable of target gun manufacturers. Walther produces several match air pistols; the top-of-the-line LP400 range and the less expensive LP300 series. The Hammerli AP20 is the entry level member of the family that is priced significantly below the level of the LP400 series pistols yet it has many of the desirable features common to the top guns.

The first thing that is obvious when taking the AP20 out of its hard plastic case is its light weight. It weighs a mere 870g – at least 200g

**TOP LEFT:** The Hammerli AP20 as received. The vertical air tank will suit shooters who prefer a very lightly balanced pistol.

**TOP RIGHT:** The air tank can be rotated to the under-barrel position which gives the AP20 much better handling characteristics, in the author's opinion.

**BELOW:** Colour-coordinated barrels are standard equipment on the AP20 with this set of barrel sleeves.



# SPECS

## HAMMERLI AP20

**Manufacturer:**  
Carl Walther GMBH

**Model:**  
Hammerli AP20

**Calibre:**  
4.5mm (.177")

**Action:**  
Single shot pre-compressed air

**Power:**  
200BAR pre-compressed air  
– 140 shots/charge

**Maximum energy:**  
7.5 joules

**Barrel length:**  
250mm

**Weight:**  
870g

**Length:**  
415mm

**Sights:**  
Front – 3 width adjustable  
Rear – Windage,  
elevation and width adjustable.

**Grips:**  
Polymer orthopaedic  
ambidextrous adjustable.

**RRP:**  
Approx. \$1250

**Distributor:**  
Frontier Arms Company  
(www.frontierarms.com.au)

lighter than most match air pistols. This is an appealing feature for those not acclimatised to the rigours of holding 1000g or more out at arm's length for a couple of hours during a 60-shot (plus sighters) Air Pistol match.

On the other hand, more experienced shooters may not find the lighter weight appealing as the more front-heavy match air pistols in the 1100g weight range.

The AP20 has been designed to fit as many configurations as possible. The polymer grip can be adjusted to fit all hand sizes and is also both ambidextrous and can be set up for specific right or left-handed use.

A detachable thumb rest that comes with the kit can be fitted to either side of the grip and a large range of adjustment is available on the palm rest. The trigger position is also fully adjustable for both length of pull and angle, by moving the trigger along a rod that connects it to the trigger mechanism.

The trigger has the usual range of adjustments for weight of pull and take-up that arte accessible externally. Other fine tuning on the trigger can be done but it is not recommended to fiddle with the factory setting for sear engagement.

The other novel feature of the AP20 is its air tank. As received, the air tank screws into a housing on the underside of the receiver and projects downward at about 20 degrees off vertical. The tank looks quite small but is fatter than a typical under-barrel air cylinder. It is rated as operating at 200 BAR and in testing the AP20, that was plenty of air for more than a full Air Pistol match.

The novelty comes with the ability of the air tank mount to be rotated so that the tank sits parallel to the barrel. This is done by removing the air tank and using a hex key to detach the housing from the receiver and reposition it with the tank spigot in the horizontal position.

For those who like a front-heavier balance, this is the best option as the mass of the air tank is further forward of the grip.

The sights are fully adjustable with clearly marked diagrams on the rear sight body. Windage and elevation are finger-adjustable, and the rear sight notch is also adjustable for width via a small hex screw.

The front sight sign is on the muzzle

brake and is also width adjustable. A small hex screw in the front of the muzzle brake locks the front sight in place, and when loosened, allows the front sight blade to be rotated to one of three positions. This quickly delivers three different front sight width from the asymmetrical, triangular front sight blade.

The AP20 is also designed as a fashion statement, with a set of coloured sleeves provided to allow the barrel to be colour-coded to the owner's requirements. The muzzle brake is released with a lock screw and can then be removed from the barrel, allowing one of the sleeves to be fitted over the barrel. The owner has the choice of black, silver, fluoro orange, fluoro green, bright pink or blue sleeves. These are simply slid over the barrel and replacement of the muzzle brake locks them in place. I could not go past black or silver as my personal choice. The thought of turning up at the pistol club with an air pistol with a pink barrel would have exposed me to a level of comedic humiliation for which I was not prepared to accept.

The first shooting tests with the AP20 were not very satisfactory. The pistol was simply too light for me to hold steady. With the air cylinder in the vertical position, almost all the balance of the pistol is to the rear. My preference has always been for front-heavy pistols that weight at least 1100g. Other shooters may have an opposite view.

I ended up shooting some groups from a rest to get an more realistic idea of the accuracy potential of the Hammerli and it proved capable of consistent 10-ring performance with good quality pellets. This bench-rest testing highlighted a factor that is part of an ongoing research project on air pellets that I have been conducting using match grade air rifles.

The pellets DO make a difference and good quality match air pellets will definitely enhance the accuracy potential of a good quality air pistol. Unfortunately, accuracy discrepancies due to pellets are very difficult to detect when shooting a match, as shooter error will override pellet performance for most Air Pistol Match shooters.

RWS and H&N Match pellets produced consistent 10-ring groups while some of the cheaper pellets branded as Match pellets suf-

fered from flyers that opened up the groups.

With the air cylinder fully charged, I chronographed the AP20 with three types of match pellets – RWS, H&N and Game and all averaged 482, 512 and 505fps respectively. The RWS and H&N pellets were very consistent with only 2 fps velocity variation, while the variation with the Gamo pellets was 10 fps.

I gave the AP20 a second chance by using the cylinder rotation feature and set the air cylinder up parallel to the barrel. This produced a much better handling option for my style of shooting with more up-front balance. I think this setup would suit the average adult male Air Pistol shooter.

The Hammerli AP 20, while intended as an entry-level competition air pistol, has the full range of high performance features with respect to sights and trigger arrangements. The very clever grip design makes it a truly versatile outfit with the grip being able to be set up for almost any hand size in right or left-handed orthopaedic configuration.

It comes supplied with all the necessary tools and air cylinder fittings for filling the air tank from SCUBA bottles and has its own separate air pressure gauge for testing cylinder and tank pressure.

More information on supply and availability of the Hammerli AP20 can be obtained from the Frontier Arms web site at [www.frontierarms.com.au](http://www.frontierarms.com.au)

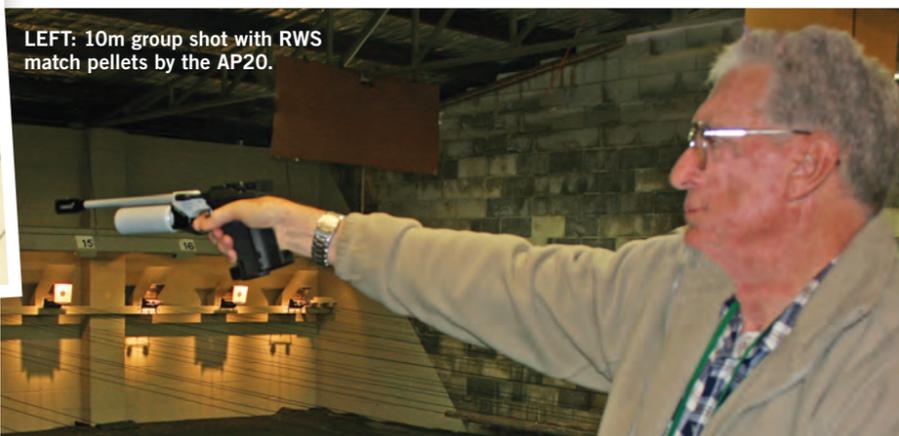


**ABOVE:** The AP20 comes with essential accessories including air bottle adapter and pressure gauge.

**INSERT:** Fully adjustable sights, including a width adjusted rear and three – width front sight allow the AP20 to be set up for all shooting conditions.



**LEFT:** 10m group shot with RWS match pellets by the AP20.



**RIGHT:** Author like the AP20 with its air tank in this position. Its very light weight – 880g – makes it very sensitive with the tank vertical.