

POWER WITH CONTROL

Kevin Cudmore on the
Weihrauch HW45 - a true
modern classic



Kevin's smoking HW45.

I have recently become the owner of a Weihrauch HW45, over-lever, spring-powered air pistol, touted at the time of its release to be one of the most powerful air pistols available, in the UK anyway, at around 5.5 ft.lbs. or so in full power. Let me give a brief history, and a little insight into this iconic air pistol.

Weihrauch launched the HW45 in 1985. It was known in the USA as the 'Beeman P1' and contrary to popular belief, although made in Germany by a German company, it was Beeman in the US who provided the full specifications and design features of this pistol. They felt that it should follow the very popular lines of the Colt 1911 semi-automatic

pistol, which would be popular for the American market, so the Beeman company quickly made a plaster-of-paris, life-sized, 3D model that Weihrauch technicians used for the final design.

The huge commercial success of the HW 45/P1 design was aided by many of its features; high power, good accuracy, solid metal construction, its flexibility, the ability to fire at two power levels, integral 13mm scope rail, the availability of a Beeman-designed shoulder stock and three calibre choices – .177, .20 and .22. There are also five different choices of finish; Standard, which I have, Stainless, Black Star, Silver Star and the Trophy. The Black Star

version has target-style grips with a half-grip frame to accommodate them; the Silver Star, also has similar laminated target grips, but with a silver, or pale grey, frame, and the Trophy version has a short 20mm rail in addition to its usual 13mm rail.

At the time of writing, I have owned my standard HW45 for four days and I chose this version not just for its lower price point, but also because I can change its chequered walnut grips for any 1911-style grips that I want at a later date.

A warning any potential buyers; when the gun is new, you might notice that it makes an extremely loud noise, like a real gun going off, »

and plenty of smoke coming out of the end, but do not be alarmed. This is normal, apparently.

NEIGHBOUR FRIENDLY

This pistol does diesel a fair bit initially, and I recommend firing the first few shots in low power to let it settle. I didn't, and the local wildlife for miles around either ran or took wing and disappeared in an instant, but after the first shot I fired half a dozen or so shots in low power and after that, it was significantly more dignified and neighbour friendly.

The HW45, is a bit of a Marmite pistol in the looks department. Some have said it's a cross between a Colt 1911 and a girder, and I'm inclined to agree, but it feels lighter at a shade over 2lbs 8oz, than its large size would have you think, and it is surprisingly well balanced.

That said, it is not an easy gun to tame. On initial use, my accuracy was all over the place, and I had to try several different holds to get the gun to perform well for me. My advice is to ignore the advice of others, and just try to find what works for you.

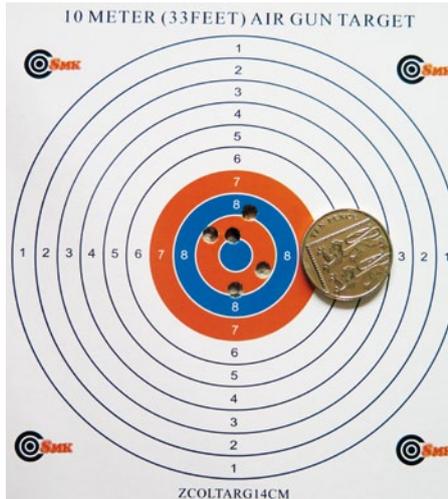
My grip is significantly different to what several people advised, but it seems to work for me as the target picture illustrates. This brings me to another piece of advice. Pick a hold/discipline, and stick to it. Shooting two-handed, is what achieved the left-hand group on the target, and that is a five-round group at six yards after a mere four days of using this pistol. Moving to a one-hand grip for the right side, though, as our UBC six-yard competition rules state, leaves you with pellet impacts significantly higher than point of aim, as shown.

This also goes for the low power setting, which is achieved by the piston having two sear points. Cock to 90 degrees for around 2ft. lbs., and crank the lever over all the way for

Eric's custom-made grips look and feel great.



Kevin's HW45 wears chequered wooden grips.



Eric's first five shots on target.



Left shows two-handed; right was one-handed.

around 5.5 ft.lbs.

Conversely, on low power, pellets hit higher than they do on full power. The full-power trajectory is very flat. My POA at 20 metres for can-bashing was barely different from six yards for target shooting.

Accuracy is helped by the long sight plane and one of the few revisions in over 30 years, fibre-optic inserts on both the fixed front, and fully adjustable rear sight.

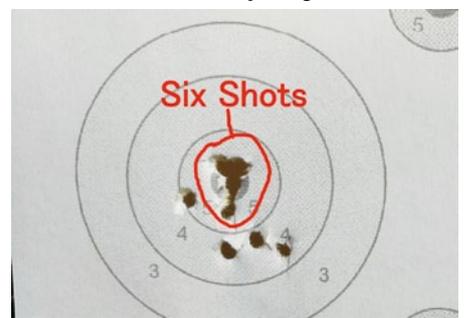
To get full power, cock to here.



For half power, stop here.



Newer models have fibre-optic sight inserts.



The heart of the group was dead centre.

QUALITY

The trigger is also fully adjustable, two-stage and the manual describes it as 'match grade'. There is also an ambidextrous safety. The standard version is pretty much fully ambidextrous, including the cut-outs in the top lever, which aid loading pellets directly into the precision-rifled barrel. In fact, everything about the pistol smacks of quality. From the high-quality alloy, hand-finished exterior, to the steel interior components. I'm told that Weihrauch airguns are all hand-constructed, finished and tested, and I'm inclined to believe it.

As I said earlier, I have only had the pistol a few days, but I am already getting used to it, by and large, and able to produce some respectable groups at target distances, but, if you don't do your bit, it can punish you, with pellets left right and centre. Don't worry, that's entirely your fault and not that of the pistol.

In the right hands, the HW45 is capable of pellet-on-pellet at close target-shooting ranges. It just needs the shooter to learn its foibles and come to terms with it. It's almost a symbiotic relationship; you do your part and the pistol will reward you. At one target, shooting 10-round groups, I managed to place six pellets in one ragged hole, which isn't too shabby for a recoiling springer, if I do say so myself. The first three of those went through the same hole – it's an odd feeling when that happens. You think 'where the heck did that pellet go? Did I miss the entire target?' Nope,

somehow everything just connects and they go right through the same hole, barely even tickling the sides of the first one. The remaining four shots go to pot after that, of course, and you try to work out what it was you did to get the first shots right. As they say, power is nothing without control, and that certainly seems to apply here.

That's just the way it goes with the HW45; I think it is going to be like having another child. You have to coddle it, treat it nicely, love it and ride out the inevitable tantrums, but overall, it will be a rewarding experience.

WHAT OTHER UBC MEMBERS THINK OF THEIR HW45S

Paddy Egan:

I got my HW45 about 20 years ago, and it is the favourite spring-pistol of my collection. As others have said, you have to learn about it and be consistent in your hold, or it will punish your scores. We used mine for one of our shoot-offs at our last meet and it went down well with the two shooters who had never shot with one before. This is one pistol that everyone should own, or even just have a go with it.

Jason Curtis:

The HW45 is a real hand-cannon in the world of pistol shooting, and I love it. She is one of only a few pistols that I still own from when I started pistol shooting; many have come and gone, but this one's a keeper. Mine has a two-tone silver body with a black top, and she looks good wrapped in Hogue rubber. She isn't small and in no way the prettiest, but you have to treat her like a lady – no tight squeezing, or she will kick back. A



Our club founder with his HW45.

firm yet gentle touch and she will unleash her full power to make that lead fly straight and true.

Eric Prichard:

When I first started shooting the HW45, she just felt right, comfortable to use, and more importantly, accurate. Today, after not shooting at all for three weeks, I was able immediately to put in a group at six yards that would fit under a ten-pence piece, and scored 46 on a commercial, 14cm target, free-standing, two-handed.

In conclusion, the HW45 is a gun that I would recommend to anyone. It is an accurate pistol, with enough recoil to make shooting a challenge, but just lively enough to encourage

the shooter to continue to try to master the gun at every opportunity.

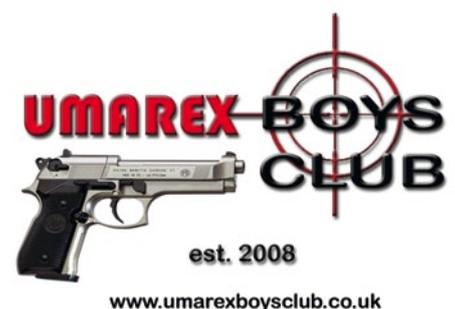
Randy, from USA:

I own a selection of Beeman P1s and P11s. These are the equivalent to the HW45 and Silver Star. Currently I have them all scoped up for longer-range shooting. ■

TECH SPEC

Calibre: .177, .20, .22
Max. Velocity: 600 fps (.177)
Barrel Length: 6.54 inches
Overall Length: 11 inches
Shot Capacity: 1
Barrel: Rifled
Front Sight: Fibre-optic
Rear Sight: Adjustable for windage and elevation
Trigger: 1.75lbs
Action: Over-lever
Safety: Manual
Powerplant: Spring-piston
Weight: 2.5lbs
Manufacturer: Weihrauch
UK importer: Hull Cartridge

RRP £269.95



Randy's scoped HW pistols.

