

# A BULLPUP OF A

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It appears to be yet another 9mm sub-compact pistol, and this one is very nicely made. There's a visible pivoting hammer at the rear, so it's obviously not striker-fired. But, wait a minute—the barrel and ejection port are way to the rear, over the magazine well. How can it feed? A quick answer to this is: rearward.

Another question is, why? Well, when you make a 9mm sub-compact of the usual design, you wind up with a very short barrel. The actual rifled portion is often 2 inches, or less. In

that distance, a 9mm bullet will never reach the speed necessary for top performance. Around 5 years ago, master designer Arne Boberg addressed the problem.

He extended the barrel to the rear, giving it nearly 3 inches of rifling. Then, he put a lever in the slide with a set of "tongs" at the front, to pull the cartridge rearward out of the magazine. As this got to full rear, a platform in the frame lifted the round to engage the extractor and breech-face, ready to feed into the chamber.

## BOND STEPS IN

It worked, beautifully. And, with some loads, the extra barrel length gave velocities up to 1,400 feet per second, and striking energy of 500 foot-pounds. For a few years, Arne made the pistol himself, as the Boberg XR9-S. Recently, Bond Arms bought the design. Because the action was extended to the rear, they called it the "Bullpup9."

Bond's Bullpup9 and a Spyderco folder make a great defensive team.



## Bond brings Boberg's magical "Bullpup" Pistol to shooters.

A brief historical note here: A rear-feeding magazine was tried only once before. Way back in 1895, in England, Hugh W. Gabbett-Fairfax designed a pistol called the Mars. Its locking system was a small turn-bolt breechblock in the massive slide. Parts were delicate, and during recoil several things were exposed at the rear. It didn't last long.

In the pistol that became the Bond Bullpup9, Arne Boberg made none of those mistakes. His feed system is made up of strong parts, and everything is internal.

The magazine sports a "followerless" top.

Also, he wisely used a turn-barrel locking system putting the barrel axis closer to the hand, and tends to adjust operating speed to the load used. With the barrel not "tilted" (as in the classic Browning design) and the round lifted and aligned, you have a flawless straight-line feed.

This is not to say bad things about the old "falling barrel" system. Actually, with a front-feed magazine, the "tilt" helps. Even so, the round has to wiggle a bit as it is chambered. At the present time, for pre-aligned, straight in chambering, nothing matches the Bond Bullpup9.

For the gun-scholars out there, I'll insert here another bit of history. The turn-barrel locking system also goes back many years,

J.B. used ammo only from the list of loads recommended, and they were Winchester "White Box" and Hornady "Critical Defense" 9mm. The gun ran flawlessly.



The Bond Bullpup9, is a remarkably compact 9mm and still sports a 3.18-inch barrel. The magazines are certainly different, and the empty one shows the follower-less top. They look like they're loaded backwards, but the cartridge feeds from the rear.



and can be traced to two men who were unaware of each other's work. Around 1905, in America, Elbert Searle used it in the Savage 1908 pistol. Meanwhile, over in Austria, Karel Krnka was using it in the pistol that became the Roth-Steyr of 1907.

**SILKY SMOOTH DAO**

Now, let's get back to the Bond Bullpup9. The trigger system is a true Double-Action-Only, smooth as silk, and on my test-gun it averaged 8 pounds. As the trigger is moved, the wide and flat hammer emerges at the back of the slide. If you want to "stage" the trigger for careful aim, you can judge by its degree of emergence when it's about to go. I will note here the experts advise against this.

With that long and easy trigger pull, there's no need for a manual safety, and there isn't one. Inside, there's a firing-pin-block, and it's always on, except for the last tiny bit of trigger pull. Other things, fortunately, are not there including a magazine-disconnect safety, serrations on the trigger, and a hook on the front of the triggerguard.

In addition to its back-feeding, the magazine is unusual in another way. There's no



The Bullpup9, fieldstripped. The part below the barrel is the rotation base. It's best to refer to the owner's manual during your first attempts at disassembly.



The Bond Bullpup9 (left) compares favorably with Arne Boberg's original XR9-S.

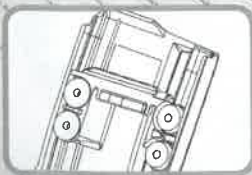
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follower at the top of the spring. Where the cartridge contacts it, the spring is formed into a slick surface. Once again, like the back-feeding, it works perfectly. (During the Boberg production, a follower was offered separately, just for those who wanted to see one there.)

**GOOD AMMO**

While we're on the magazine, an important note about ammunition: Never use cheap loads or reloads with un-crimped bullets. Aluminum-cased ammo should also be avoided. Here's why: During recoil, the sharp tug of the "tongs" can sometimes pull the case right off the bullet! You can imagine the result. In the manual, there's a long list of approved loads. With any of them, no problems.

Because of the unique magazine system, there's no slide hold-open after the last shot. Aside from the trigger and the push-button magazine release, the only other external control is the takedown latch. For a quick brush-out of the barrel, setting the lever at its half-way position, vertical, will

hold the slide open. Sights are not a big item on little hide-away guns, but these are excellent. Square-picture, three white dots, and both are laterally moveable in their dovetails. To do this, you have to first loosen their hex-head screws. A word of caution: Be sure the rear sight stays in its dovetail. Its underside retains the spring and plunger of the firing-pin-block.

On the test gun, the high-tech alloy frame has a matte-black finish. The other parts, stainless steel, are in natural matte finish. Other combinations may be offered later. The grip panels of laminated wood meet at the back of the frame. There is a deep in-curve at the upper rear sets the Bullpup9 solidly in the hand.

With a pistol of this size and weight in full 9mm, I expected considerable felt-recoil. So, heading out to the Big Tree range, I took along a pair of GripSwell gloves. Their fine goatskin and perfectly placed padding did a great job of protecting the bones of my hand. (Hey, at 80-plus I have to think of these things!)

I chose two loads from the list in the manual: Winchester "White Box" 115-grain FMJ, and the Hornady "Critical Defense" 115-grain FTX. Shooting was at 7 and 15 yards, standing, 2-hand hold. Groups were all near center in the 8-inch black of the Champion VisiShot targets, and they averaged 4 to 5 inches. Functioning was flawless.

You might now be wondering about the specs. The Bullpup9 weighs 18.7 ounces, with an overall length of 5 inches, is 4.06 inches high and 1-inch wide. The barrel is 3.18 inches long and the capacity is 7 rounds, and retail is \$1,099.

The after-shooting takedown for cleaning is not difficult, but the removal of the turning-base and barrel are a little tricky, so look carefully at the owner's manual. Up to now, Bond Arms has been known for their fine and drastically updated version of the old Remington double-derringer. Well, now they make a pistol. And it's a jewel.

www.GunsMagazine.com, Bond Arms, (817) 573-4445, GripSwell Gloves, (714) 379-9413