

CARTRIDGE TEST

THE Victory Challenger has been around for about a couple of years, so what's different about it now?

For a start, say importers A.P. Calibres, it is more readily available than ever before, thanks to increased production facilities being opened up by manufacturers G. and L. Calibres in Cyprus. A factory move which was scheduled to take six weeks took almost half a year, and the hiccup in supplies led many shooters to forsake their

favourite load for something else.

But delivery problems are now a thing of the past and, more remarkably, the Challenger has emerged in even better form than before in terms of performance.

What Victory set out to do was make a great cartridge even better. And they've done it. So what do you get for your money?

The 70mm case is of lightly ribbed translucent green plastic, capped with a substantial 16mm brass head

carrying the Victory headstamp, and closed with a conventional but neatly-applied six-star crimp. Propellant is 25 grains of a dark green flaked powder which looks almost as if it has been colour-coordinated with the case!

The load chosen for test was the 7½ trap cartridge, and the 28gr. of shot was impressive. No confusion with English and Continental sizes here: it was true English 7½, just one thousandth of an inch oversize, round, well-polished

and free of any "rogue" pellets.

On our crush test to determine hardness it averaged 32 per cent, which puts it on a level with most of the good trap shot you will find nowadays. Only very rarely do we record better than 30 per cent, and it is debatable whether super degrees of hardness have very much effect on either pattern or clay-breaking power.

The shot sits within a well-designed four-leaf plastic wad. What should be noted is

THE *VICTORY* CHALLENGER

What happens when a good cartridge becomes even better? Sporting Gun finds out...



that the new cartridge is faster than the old version by some degree. The load recorded an observed, down-range velocity of 1,123.7 ft/sec on average, with no remarkable highs or lows over quite a big sample. This equates to a muzzle velocity in the region of 1,400 ft/sec, which is what we have come to expect from a top-line competition cartridge these days.

This high degree of consistency has been achieved via improvements in manufacture and also the

manufacturer's decision to replace the Challenger's 'old' style primer with an ultra-reliable Olin product from Italy.

Pressure was stable over the same big sample, with an average of 2.48 tons per square inch — well within the safety limits for 2³/₄in chambers.

Through the gun the cartridges felt sharp and fast without delivering any uncomfortable level of recoil, while well-broken clays at all practical ranges were a testimony to some excellent

patterns.

The Challenger is available in sizes 7¹/₂, 8 and 9, which not only makes it suitable for all disciplines but gives the Sporting shooter the opportunity to use a compatible skeet shell on the closer targets if he wishes.

There's also a game shell with size 6 shot in the range, and felt-wadded cartridges for those who either prefer them for their slightly wider patterns or have to use them because of their shooting environment. We hope to have a look at

some of these variations later in the year.

Overall impression was of a much improved shell.

The new — and faster — Challenger has been in 'secret' use with top shooters like Mick Rouse and Phillip Thorrold. Mick used it to shoot his recent 100 ex 100 in Sporting competition, and both have used it to great effect on game and woodpigeons too. ■

Below: The Victory Challenger comes neatly packaged, and its components are better than ever.

