

Shooting in the fast lane!

Sporting Gun tests the Victory Sonic - the fastest competition shell we have ever tried.

WHAT is it like to shoot the fastest cartridge you have ever encountered? Does it, for instance, significantly cut the amount of lead you have to give a target? And, if it does, is there a penalty to be paid in terms of horrendous recoil?

The answers in the case of the Victory Sonic are yes, and no, in that order. Yes, you do genuinely notice that leads are cut, and no, the recoil is quite reasonable considering the shell's performance. In fact, it is milder than that of some shells producing over 100 ft/sec less in muzzle velocity.

Here at Sporting Gun we have always maintained that speed is not everything. If pure performance is to be of any use it has to be allied with good patterning, reasonable recoil, excellent ballistics and pressure that doesn't cause your gun to strain at the seams. It's a bit like a fast car, really: Ferrari performance is no good without braking and road holding to match.

First of all, just how does this cartridge perform? We chose two shot sizes for test: 7.5 and 9. The muzzle velocity of the

trap shell, in our independent tests, was 1,537 ft/sec, while the skeet shell clocked 1,422. Down-range performance, at 20 metres, was 1,218 and 1,135 ft/sec respectively.

These figures are slightly slower than those claimed by the manufacturers, but we acknowledge that batches differ, as do test conditions, and these remain the fastest cartridges of their type we have ever tested.

With these figures came a surprise on the pressures: 596 and 544 bars, against the recommended safety limit of 650 bars for 70mm chambers. Nothing to worry about there - you can relax and enjoy the performance without worrying about what it might be doing to your gun.

Shot measured out at exactly 28gr, with a claimed antimony content of 6.5. Hardness of the 7.5 on our crush test was a touch better than 30 per cent, indicating good-quality trap shot. It was dimensionally accurate, round and well-polished, too.

Both the trap and skeet cartridges are presented in lightly-ribbed plastic cases (blue for trap and green for skeet)



with 16mm brass heads. Wad is the plastic Victory No.4 which has been specially designed for the load and probably does much to hold the pattern together at such high speed.

So much for figures and specification. What are these shells really like through the gun?

We tried the 7.5 against some surprisingly deceiving Sporting targets and got

quite a surprise.

On the slower birds it seemed to be just a matter of point and shoot, although we probably subconsciously gave them a little lead. But it was on the trickier shots that the shells really came into their own.

One pair of teal was so widely spaced and emerged from such a high bush that it proved impossible to shoot them both on the way up. Nailing the first close to the top of its trajectory was easy enough, but in normal circumstances we would have had great difficulty in getting far enough under the fast-dropping second target of the pair.

With the Sonics it was powdered by shooting what seemed to be no more than about two feet under it.

High tower birds which need an enormous lead with conventional shells proved much easier to shoot with the Sonics, too. About three feet of lead and squeeze the trigger...

An overall verdict?

These are super shells, and the manufacturers, G & L Calibres of Cyprus, have totally tamed the high performance with excellent secondary characteristics of recoil, pattern and pressure. We expect to see some super scores put up with them at all disciplines as the months go by.

Victory Sonic cartridges are distributed to the trade by A.P. Calibres (Tel: 0565-654117).

Below left: The Sonics are nicely presented and contain some super components.

