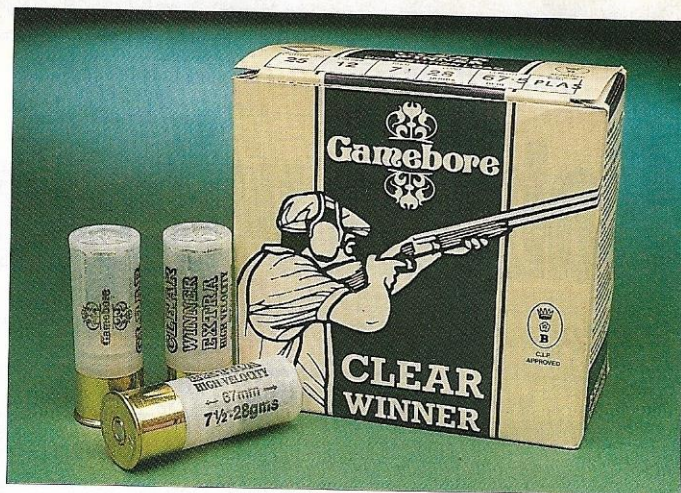


HEAD TO HEAD CARTRIDGE TEST

For the first time, Sporting Gun buys shells over the gun shop counter and puts the products of three leading makers under the microscope. Which cartridge would you choose?



A trio for t

NORMALLY, when Sporting Gun tests cartridges, we acquire them directly from either the manufacturer or the importer. This month sees the start of a series of special tests in which we have gone to a gun shop as a customer, asked which are his best-selling brands, and bought a box of each.

We asked our chosen shop for 1oz competition shells with size 7 1/2 shot, and were offered Lyalvale Express One Ounce High Velocity Competition and Gamebore Clean Winner High Velocity at the identical price of £2.95 a box, and Victory Sonic at £3.30. How did they stack up? Let's look, shell by shell.

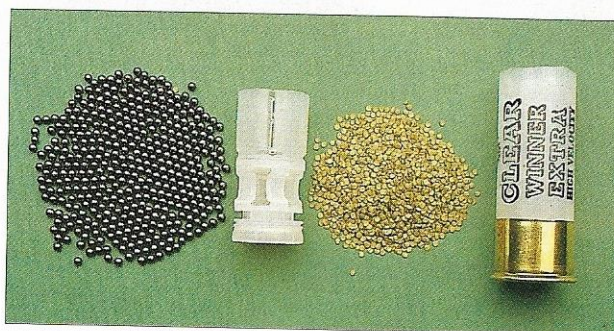
■ Gamebore Clear Winner

The shell is loaded in a white-ish transparent 67mm case with light ribbing and a 16mm brass head, made by Cheddite of France. Seal is with a well-applied six-star crimp. Propellant is 26 grains of sage-coloured flaked powder lit by a Cheddite primer. The shot, carried in a well-designed plastic cup averaged a tiny touch undersize on true 7 1/2, but nothing to worry about, and checked out at 34 per cent on our crush test - a bit on the soft side but still good trap shot.

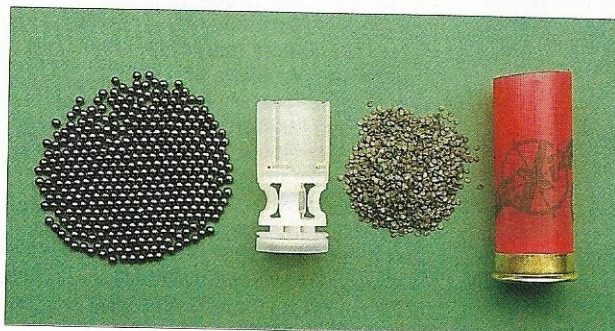
Average velocity at the muzzle was 1,479.9 ft/sec, with a down-range observed velocity of 1,148.4 ft/sec. Average pressure was 516.8 bars, and with both pressures and velocities there was very good consistency from shot to shot.

■ Lyalvale Express 1oz Competition

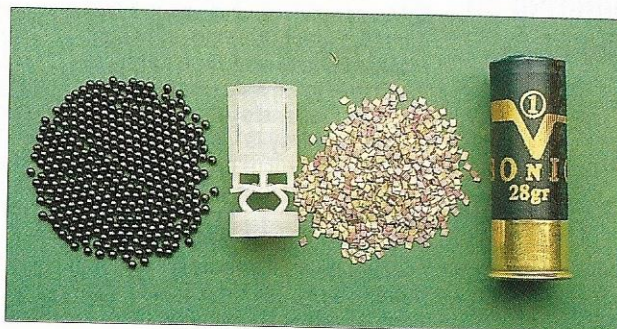
The Express offering was the only shell of the three suitable for use in 2 1/2 in. chambers, being loaded in a 65mm case. The case is lightly ribbed, translucent red in colour, and



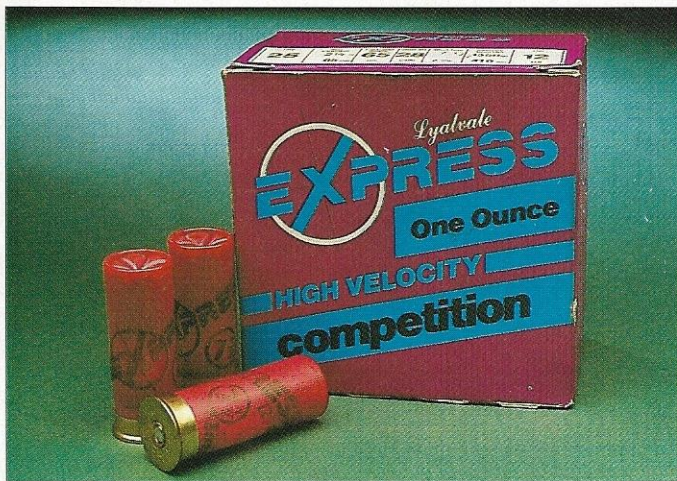
■ THE Gamebore Clean Winner featured 26 grains of a sage-coloured flaked powder.



■ THE Express, the only shell of the three suitable for 65mm chambers, was powered by 19 grains of powder.



■ THE Victory Sonic, the only foreign-assembled shell in the trio, also had very high quality components.



trap shots

capped with an 8mm brass head. Propellant is 19 grains of a grey powder in small circular flakes.

The shot, carried in a good plastic cup, was spot on size 7½, and averaged 32 per cent on our crush test - just a touch harder than the Gamebore shot.

Average velocity at the muzzle was 1,286.7 ft/sec, while the observed, down-range figure was 1,016.5 ft/sec. Average pressure was 445.8 bars and, again, consistency from shot to shot was good.

Victory Sonic

The Sonic, made by G & L Calibres in Cyprus, was the only shell of the three assembled outside the UK. The 70mm case is of lightly-ribbed dark blue plastic with a 16mm brass head, and closure is by an eight-star crimp. Propellant is 25.3 grains of a mixture of pink and sage green flakes.

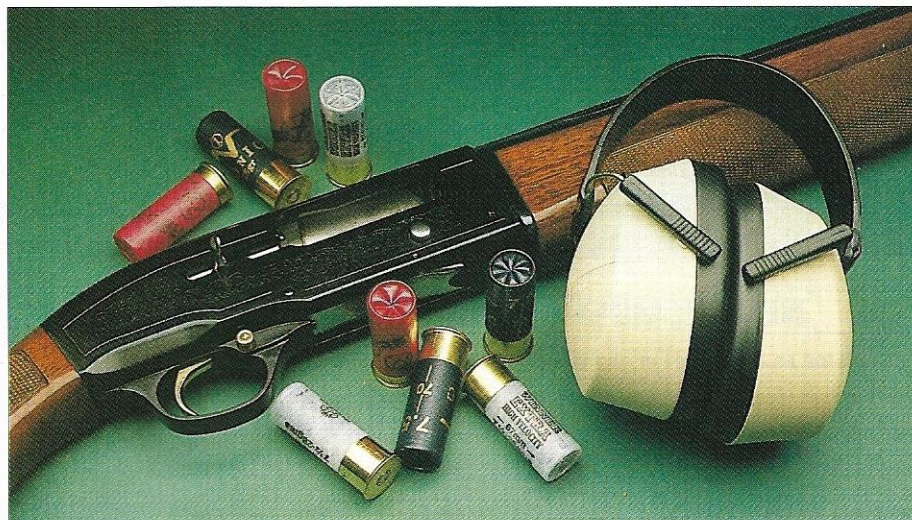
The shot, carried in a plastic cup, was spot-on accurate for size and so hard we ran our crush test on it twice just to be sure. It checked out at 17 per cent, which makes it some of the hardest trap shot we have ever tested.

Velocity at the muzzle was 1,507.3 ft/sec, and 1,192.7 observed down-range. Pressure average was 624.8 bars, while shot to shot consistency was equally as good as the other shells tested.

The Verdict

At the prices asked all the shells were good value for money and, as expected, the more expensive Victory was faster than the others - although it did not beat the Gamebore by much - and it had far superior shot. Hard shot usually gives denser patterns, but all of the shells broke clays well.

For a gun with 2½in. chambers the Express would be the only choice and, although the velocity of this particular batch was a bit down on what we expected, the shot was better than the Gamebore.



All set for a testing session: the cartridges in the chosen group, and our trusty Beretta 303 semi-auto.

SPECIFICATION	G/bore clear winner	Victory Sonic	Express competition
LOAD	28 gram No7½	28 gram No7½	28 gram No7½
SHOT	lead	lead	lead
POWDER	26 gr. sage flake	25.3gr. pink/sage	19 gr. grey
WAD	Plastic	Plastic	Plastic
PRIMER	Cheddite	?	?
CASE	Clear, ribbed	Blue, ribbed	Pink, ribbed
CRIMP	6 star	8 star	6 star
PRESURE	516.8 bars	624.8 bars	445.8 bars
VELOCITY Muzzle	1,479.9 ft/sec	1,507.3 ft/sec	1,286.7 ft/sec
Observed	1,148.4 ft/sec	1,192.9 ft/sec	1,016.5 ft/sec
CRUSH TEST	34%	17%	32%
PRICE	£2.95 per 25	£3.30 per 25	£2.95 per 25