

# .45 Perfection

*IF ALL MEN WERE JUST, THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR VALOR.—AGESILAUS II, KING OF SPARTA*

By GREG RODRIGUEZ | Photography by SEAN UTLEY



A subtle blend of 1911 and 1911A1 features will please the most discerning Browning devotee.

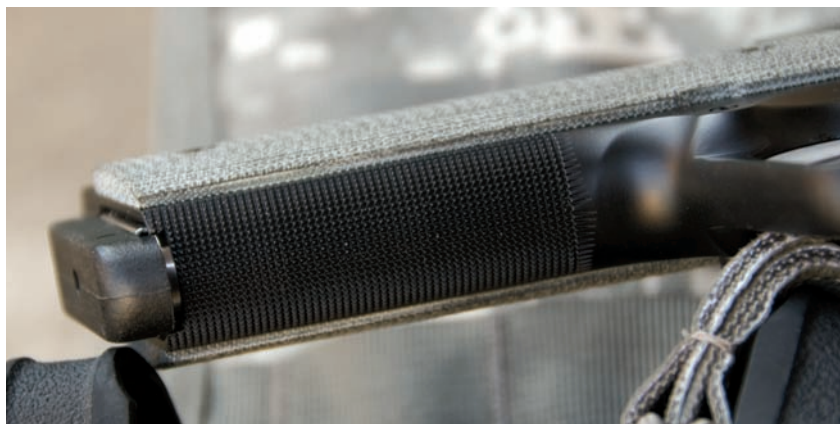




## DW VALOR 1911

I test a great many guns. Some are great, others are mediocre at best. But even the great ones rarely get me or the folks at my FFL excited. That's why I was so shocked to find the guys behind the counter at Houston's Fountain Firearms jabbering excitedly about my latest arrival, Dan Wesson's new Valor 1911.

I, too, fell in love with the Valor at first sight. It's available in either a stainless steel or matte black Duty treatment and completed with G10 double-diamond grips. The presentation is striking, and the Valor's slim grips make it feel great in the hand. The G10s have a fair amount of texture but are certainly not abrasive. The slim grips feel good, and the color is an attractive complement to this full-size pistol.



**One of the Valor's distinctive features is the 25-lines-per-inch (LPI) checkering on the frontstrap and backstrap. Caught in the middle of a checkering debate, 25 LPI is a happy medium.**

I am most impressed with the superb fit and finish of the largely hand-fitted Valor. It's as tight as many custom guns costing much more and uses only tool steel for the fire controls that measures 54RC on the Rockwell hardness scale.

The Valor starts life as a forged, 416 stainless steel slide and frame. The frame has a beveled magazine well for speedier reloads and nicely

executed 25-lines-per-inch checkering on the frontstrap and backstrap. The magazine release is slightly extended, as is the forged Greider slide stop. Neither is extended enough to be a tactical liability.

The triggerguard houses a solid, aluminum Greider trigger that is adjustable for overtravel. That combined with the carefully fitted match-grade, tool-steel hammer and sear

THE SLIM GRIPS FEEL GOOD, AND THE COLOR IS AN ATTRACTIVE COMPLEMENT TO THE MATTE-BLACK PISTOL.



The match trigger system is subtle and only appreciated when pulled.

gives the pistol a crisp, clean trigger pull. My sample measured four pounds, nine ounces.

The Ed Brown beavertail grip safety is expertly blended; there are no uneven gaps between it and the frame. It has a raised bump to ensure activation in a hasty draw, and its top is recessed for the combat hammer.

The Valor's Ed Brown thumb safety is my favorite. It is extended, but the shelf is fairly narrow. It's wide enough for those of us who ride the thumb safety to improve purchase, but not so wide that it digs into your side or is inadvertently deactivated. It was fitted perfectly, and it engaged positively.

The Valor's five-inch slide is also forged. It has no front cocking



Seen here is the 2009 model with Novak-style rear sight, but the 2010 model has the Heinie Straight Eight sights like the stainless version.



serrations, retaining that classic look and the feel that I've grown to like, and the ejection port is slightly flared for added reliability. The barrel and bushing are Dan Wesson's own stainless, match-grade parts.

The dovetailed front sight is part of Heinie's Straight Eight sight system for pistols. The Straight Eight night-sight configuration includes a tritium dot in the front and a slightly smaller tritium dot in the rear to prevent confusion in a critical situation. When trying to obtain proper sight picture, one dot sits on top of the other, presenting an elongated figure eight, hence the name.

Besides Dan Wesson's newest Valor model with a brushed stainless

steel finish, I evaluated one that carries an attractive matte-black finish that Dan Wesson calls a Duty treatment. Unlike coatings, this finish is bonded molecularly to steel, making it extremely corrosion resistant and tougher than coatings. The color complements the grips well.

After a more thorough inspection, overall fit and finish was as good as my first impression. There was

no hint of a rattle, the barrel locked up nice and tight, and the controls worked positively.

Truth be told, I was surprised at just how tight the pistol was. It obviously had a great deal of hand fitting, which is something that I would expect to find on a custom 1911 costing a lot more.

Generally, the downside of such tight fitting is that a 1911 will often

## SPECIFICATIONS

**MODEL:** Valor

**PURPOSE:** Target shooting, self-defense

**IMPORTER:** CZ-USA

**ACTION TYPE:** Recoil-operated, single-action autoloader

**MAGAZINE TYPE/CAPACITY:** Single-column/7 rounds

**FRAME/SLIDE MATERIAL:** Stainless steel

**CALIBER:** .45 ACP

**BARREL LENGTH:** 5 in.

**RIFLING:** Six grooves; 1:16 RH twist

**SIGHTS:** Heinie Straight Eight night sights

**METAL FINISH:** Stainless steel or Duty treatment

**SAFETIES:** Grip safety, manual thumb safety

**TRIGGER TYPE:** Single-action

**PULL WEIGHT:** 4 lb., 9 oz.

**GRIPS:** G10 double diamond

**OVERALL LENGTH:** 8.8 in.

**HEIGHT:** 5.5 in.

**WIDTH:** 1.5 in.

**WEIGHT, EMPTY:** 2.4 lb.

**ACCESSORIES:** Owner's manual, two magazines, lockable hardcase

**MSRP:** \$1,594 to \$1,913



As primates, when we're scared, we always want to hold on to the tree. All the controls that make a 1911 work are manipulated by clutching muscles.



The match barrel has a 1:16-inch twist. The ejection port is lowered and uniquely flared.

IT OBVIOUSLY HAD A GREAT DEAL OF HAND-FITTING, WHICH IS SOMETHING I WOULD EXPECT TO FIND ON A 1911 COSTING A LOT MORE.



The Valor punched this .93-inch, 25-yard five-shot group with Hornady 185-grain factory ammo. It demonstrates the Valor's tackdriving potential.



The Heinie Straight Eight sight is preferred over three dots by many contemporary pistol shooters.

#### ACCURACY RESULTS

Load	Velocity (fps)	25-Yard Accuracy (in.)
Hornady 185-gr. XTP	937	1.18
Black Hills 230-gr. JHP	832	2.22
Federal 230-gr. Hydra-Shok	876	1.57
Winchester USA 230-gr. JHP	844	2.97

Accuracy is the average of five five-shot groups fired at 25 yards from a sandbag bench rest. Velocity is the average of 20 rounds measured 10 feet from the gun's muzzle.

require a break-in period of 200 to 300 rounds before functioning properly. I had just 400 rounds of ammunition to run through the Valor, so I was hoping this wouldn't be the case.

Testing started by firing a few magazines at seven yards to make sure everything worked as it should. The Valor fed, fired and ejected perfectly. The shots were tightly clustered and dead center, but a bit low on the three-inch Shoot-N-C target. Fortunately, I was able to dial in the Valor quickly.

When I moved back to 25 yards to check out the Valor's accuracy, I got

some quick gratification. I started with Hornady's 185-grain XTP load, which promptly drilled a five-shot group that measured .95 inch. I thought it was luck, so I fired four more groups with the same load. The second group measured .93 inch, and the third measured .97 inch. The next two groups measured a little over an inch, but that load averaged an incredible 1.18 inches at 25 yards. That rivals the accuracy of the best pistols I've ever tested.

Clearly, I got a bit lucky stumbling on such a great load first, but Federal's 230-grain Hydra-Shok averaged a hair over 1½ inches. The other

two loads, from Black Hills and Winchester, averaged more than two inches, but that's still pretty impressive in any handgun.

A few days later, I conducted some reliability tests with Mike Ambrose, a Vietnam-era U.S. Navy SEAL. He was particularly impressed with the

Valor's trigger and even more so with its downrange accuracy.

Firing the last 160 rounds through the Valor, I really learned to appreciate the crisp trigger, and I loved the feel of the slim grips combined with the frontstrap and backstrap checkering. They made the gun easy to hold securely, especially in rapid-fire drills, yet they weren't too abrasive.

Dan Wesson's entry into the market of high-end 1911s is an incredible effort. For that matter, it's an incredible pistol, period. A great buy at any price, the MSRP of \$1,594 just might make the Valor the best buy. 