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Light 'em up with this STI high-cap fighting .45 ACP from custom pistolsmith Mark Morris



# ENTRY GUN

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Photos By Ichiro Nagata

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Take what the SWAT cops and Special Forces operators have learned, combine it with the best components in the hands of a master pistolsmith and you get something close to the ultimate home defense handgun.

An "entry gun" is what a SWAT raid team deploys up front when it goes through a door into unknown territory after something that is likely to have guns of its own. The paradigm entry gun is the Heckler & Koch MP5 submachine gun. Benelli made a 14" barrel version of their Super-90 12 gauge semiautomatic shotgun that they call the "Entry Gun," and it lives up to its name.

Sometimes -- more often than you'd think -- the entry gun is a handgun. People who have to go into unplanned places and move rapidly sometimes choose mobility over firepower.

"Firepower" is something we associate with very powerful hardware, unleashed from a fixed location into an already known and aligned area of fire. Think "artillery."

As desirable as artillery is, once the foe is engaged, the final mop-up (and, often, the first hostile contact) tends to fall to the infantry. Infantry is mobile, fast reacting and capable of doing a whole lot more than just blowing something to pieces.

When you think of what the first man breaching the door on a police raid has to accomplish much if not most of the time, think infantry. This is a point man who will probably have to communicate more than he shoots. It is often a job best accomplished with a handgun.

The team member(s) wielding the battering ram are good candidates for entry pistols: the handgun won't get in the way of the ram as an MP5 on a GSG-9 sling might, yet it can be



drawn the instant the door goes down and the ram is dropped. NYPD Emergency Services Unit established that game plan decades ago, and it still works.



#### *Point Man*

The generic term for the first guy through the door is "point man." British SAS refer to those who go into those deadly uncharted waters as being "on the sharp end." The two terms really say the same things, but the Brits do have a way with their native tongue, and "sharp end" says it better.

In that position, you need light to identify the situation and for other things as well, you need fast reaction, and you need to deliver accurate, powerful blows to whatever threatens you.

Thus, there has evolved another type of entry gun for this sort of work, the "entry handgun" if you will. The design parameters are pretty much agreed upon by the professionally armed. The gun must be as powerful as it can be. The gun must contain many cartridges, because you might find yourself alone against foes in greater numbers who may have cover when you don't.

Any of those scenarios -- let alone, God forbid, a combination of them all -- can suck ammo out of your gun uselessly as you return fire until you have time to recognize the situation, react and go to Plan B or Plan C. Thus, the need for an entry handgun that holds lots of rounds.

We all know that the handgun is a poor manstopper compared to the shotgun or a high powered rifle at CQB distances. This means that multiple hits are very likely to be needed if all you have in your hand is that highly mobile pistol. This means high capacity magazines.

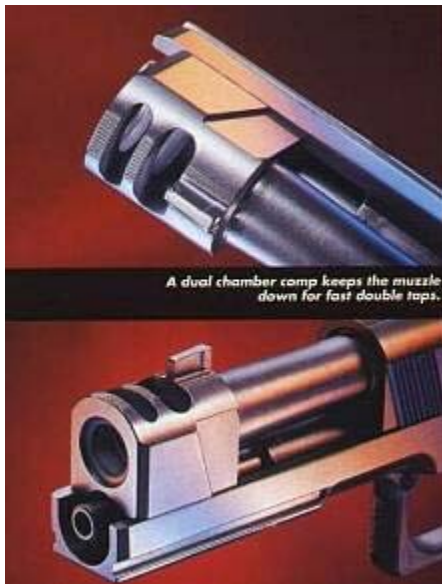
#### *Fast And Accurate*

When you come through that door, you have to react to what you see in front of you. The other guy is the actor, and you're the reactor. We all agree that "action heats reaction." Thus, any entry gun, and the entry handgun in particular, has to be capable of delivering accurate, rapid fire into the threat.

Accuracy is essential. In these situations, an opponent who knows cover and heard you coming may present only the tiniest slice behind his gun. There may be a very narrow corridor of safe fire to the threat, between the victims or hostages, so target accuracy is desirable.



Finally, because you're likely to be coming into a dimly lit area from a brighter one, you need to be able to project light to find your way to the situation and back. You'll need to be able to positively identify the opponent as a lethal threat. You'll need to be able to deliver accurate, rapid fire to whatever you've spotted in that bright beam of what cops call "white light" in time to neutralize any threat it might present to you.



#### *Morris Custom*

We go back a few years, to the late 1990s. Mark Morris was an ace pistolsmith and a good IPSC shooter. He was also licensed to carry concealed and he took the responsibility seriously. He knew how to make guns that shot fast, straight and reliably. He took them into competitive arenas. He adapted what he learned in the heat of competition to make his guns work better.

Before long, a disproportionate number of the people in his native Pacific Northwest who won major combat matches were shooting Morris guns: Marty and Gila Hayes, Bill Lloyd, Les Larsen and, on the East Coast, Buddy Riva, just to name a few.

I had noticed the dominance of Morris Custom shooters in that part of the country, and when Morris took training from me I watched him run 500 HydraShoks through his own Morris Tactical Colt 1991A1 without a hitch. I wound up owning the gun. It became one of my favorite carry .45s, a 1" gun at 25 yards. I later supplemented it with one of his Carry-Comp 10mm pistols on a Colt Delta Elite. In short, I knew Morris made fine pistols.

#### *Prototype Design*

At the last Second Chance shoot in 1998, Morris brought along his prototype Entry Gun. Travis Bunke, a superb marksman who had been working with Morris, had inspired it. "It needs tweaking," the gunsmith

said, "but I'd like to know what you think of the basic concept."

The pistol weighed roughly 3.5 lbs. with the short magazine and a dozen rounds of 200 gr. JHP. It was crafted from a wide-body STI full dust cover frame and STI slide. The barrel was one of the match grade models Storm Lake makes to Morris' specifications. The STI trigger was set light. Fixed Heinie night sights in the bar/dot configuration were set up to hit dead on at 25 yards. They did just that for Morris, but hit a tad low for me.



We only had the "back range" of the Second Chance facility to test the pistol and a limited variety of .45 ACP ammo, but the gun was hell for accurate. There was the occasional stoppage, however, either a 12 o'clock misfeed or a failure to go into battery.

"It's the damn magazine springs," said Mark. "I see that a lot with these magazines." Re swapped springs and the pistol ran great for him, earning him killer times in the 9-pin event.

#### *Compact Compensator*

The effectiveness of a recoil-compensated pistol makes a world of sense for a police or military assault team. Wilson and others have sold a bunch of gamey looking comp guns, both in the U.S. and abroad, for tac teams who use them for "positive entries."



It is essentially the same compact compensator of dual chamber, progressive expansion chamber design that Morris uses on his Carry-Comps, reducing the overall length of the pistol to that of an unmodified 5' Government Model. The fast recovery from recoil made sense on the densely packed 9-pin array, just as it would on multiple human aggressors, or a single golem who refused to fall to just two or three .45 slugs.

Morris machined the frame for an experimental mount made to his specs by John Matthews at SureFire, and then attached a light with pressure switches. We took it out at night and through some dry-run house clearings, and the sight picture was centered perfectly in the brilliant spot beam.

Except for the mag spring glitches, it had been a promising debut. I suggested a heavier trigger.

#### *Fast Forward*

After we left that shoot in the Great Lakes, I didn't see the gun for a couple of months until it surfaced at my home base in New Hampshire with photographer Ichiro Nagata and holstermaker Mitch Rosen. The master photographer had become so enamored of this gun, he had ordered one.

Rosen made the holsters: a high-ride scabbard that could actually be concealed under a medium jacket, and his horizontal Style Master shoulder rig. Both were comfortable.

Frankly, I expect the typical tactical officer will carry one of these in a thigh holster to clear the heavy armor, and the armed citizen will have it set out holster-less or in a lock box in the master bedroom. Rosen and Nagata, both excellent shots, did well with the gun.

Morris made Nagata's gun much like mine, but with some updated modifications. The Bear Coat finish could be shiny under certain light conditions, so Mark switched to a less reflective corrosion-resistant finish from Rhino Tough. Heavy-duty springs by Integrated Systems Management, Inc. went into all the magazines.

"As time wore on," said Morris, "the springs attaching the experimental flashlight assembly to the pistol got weak, and started falling off during firing. Rather than keep experimenting, I cut the mounting grooves to take the SureFire mount for the Millennium on the Glock. The first prototype had started falling off when we shot +P. This one stays on through anything, and the new Millennium light is unbelievably powerful."



Morris took my suggestion and brought the trigger up to a more tactically sound 4.5 lb. pull. As before, Wilson hammer and STI sear were parts of choice, along with Ed Brown beavertail and ambi thumb safety. All worked positively on both guns.



For safety's sake- since the STI does not incorporate the internal firing pin lock of the Colt and ParaOrdnance -- Morris installed in each of them the STI titanium firing pin. This is light enough that the gun should be immune to 'inertia discharge' due to firing pin travel if the pistol is dropped or otherwise struck.

Nagata fitted his pistol with the new compact red dot optic from Tasco for maximum speed of sight acquisition. This gun also had forward grasping serrations on the slide. Am I the only 1911 shooter left who doesn't care for this feature?

By now, Morris had also finalized the name of this unique handgun. It would henceforth be called the Dynamic Entry Pistol.

#### *Res Ipsa Loquitor*

Res ipsa loquitor is Latin for "the thing speaks for itself." The Dynamic Entry Pistol speaks for itself as soon as you take it to the range. When T did the accuracy testing for this article, my native state was in its frozen wasteland mode and I went to The Firing Line, an indoor range in Manchester, N.H.

An MTM pistol rest was set up at 25 yards and seven brands of .45 ACP combat and training loads were unboxed, encompassing five different bullet weights. Each five-shot group was measured center to center of the farthest holes, then measured again for the tightest three. The latter measurement factors out human error to a large degree, and comes close to predicting the mechanical accuracy deliverable from a machine rest.

One thing I was looking for was "4+1 syndrome," the well-known tendency of most semiautomatic pistols to send their first hand-chambered shot to one point on the target, and the subsequent mechanically-chambered rounds to a different point. Engineering this out of the gun is one of the reasons you pay big bucks for custom 1911s, and Morris had eliminated "4+1" patterning on both of my Colts. I was curious to see if he could do the same on the STI superstructure.

The "4+1" effect adversely impacted the accuracy of four of these proven cartridges, as comparison of the three-shot and five shot groups demonstrates. The powerful Pro-Load firing the 200 gr. Gold Dot at 1,050 fps was the clear winner for accuracy and a superb carry load as well. It would be my choice in this particular pistol.



Malfunctions had shown up with two rounds, the 170 gr. Winchester NT and the Blazer with the H&G #168 style training bullet. The former is a fairly light load and the latter notoriously tough to feed, but in a gun like this you expect 100 percent.

<b>BRAND</b>	<b>5 SHOT</b>	<b>3 SHOT</b>	<b>4 + 1 ?</b>
Federal Hydra-Shok 230 gr.	<b>1 7/8"</b>	<b>1 1/8"</b>	<b>No</b>
Black Hills 185 gr. JHP	<b>3 9/16"</b>	<b>1"</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Win NonToxic 170 gr. TMJ	<b>2 7/8"</b>	<b>1"</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Triton Lite 165 gr. JHP	<b>2"</b>	<b>1"</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Pro-Load +P 200 gr. JHP	<b>1 1/8"</b>	<b>7/16"</b>	<b>No</b>
CCI Blazer 200 gr. JTC	<b>1"</b>	<b>1 1/16"</b>	<b>No</b>
Rem. +P Golden Saber 185 gr.	<b>3 1/8"</b>	<b>1 5/8"</b>	<b>Yes</b>

I called Morris and talked it over. He thought some early magazines might have migrated back into the package he sent me, so he FedEx'd some new Integrated Systems springs and a new mag. Sure enough, these cured the problem, and at the next session the gun perked 100 percent.

#### *Matter Of Magazines*

You don't need me to tell you that the supply of hi-cap .45 ACP magazines is finite. This gun came with three pre-ban STI mags. The short one, barely more than flush with the butt of the gun, carries 12 big bore slugs. The medium-length mag holds 15, and protrudes about .875" from the gun's butt. The long one

extends a whopping 2 1/8" from the butt, but my hands still couldn't pack more than 15.45 ACP rounds into it.

For the entry gun function, protruding mags are no problem. SAS proved this years ago with extended 20-round mags in their 9mm Browning Hi-Powers and later in their SIG P-226 duty pistols. For a house gun, it's not a problem either. Interestingly enough, with its barrel horizontal/butt down carry, the Rosen holster conceals the Morris Entry Gun with the longest magazine as slickly as Bill Clinton hides the truth. That's the good news. The bad news is, these mags are in short supply and Morris has to ship the pistol with three 10-rounders.

*Price And Value*

The price of a Morris Custom Dynamic Entry Gun is high, but so is the value. This is a Ferrari of handguns, hand-built for high performance. The ticket is \$5,500. This is a sort of a prix fixe deal in which you get to select options like Reinie or Novak fixed or Wilson adjustable sights for the same money.

If it was me and I couldn't get hi-cap mags that I trusted, I'd save myself a couple of thousand dollars and order a regular Morris Carry Comp fitted with the SureFire light and stuff it with Wilson 10-round magazines-. My hands are more used to single stack 1911 frames anyway.

Delivery time runs about a year. Morris does excellent work. My own idea of a \$5,500 .45 auto is a used Volkswagon with a Glock 30 in the glove box, but you know what? For those who fancy such things, I think the Morris Entry Gun is probably worth the money.

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