



STI'S PERFECT 10

Hybrid long-slide 1911 loaded up with 15 shots of hard-hitting 10mm!

By Mike Boyle

Photos by Steve Woods

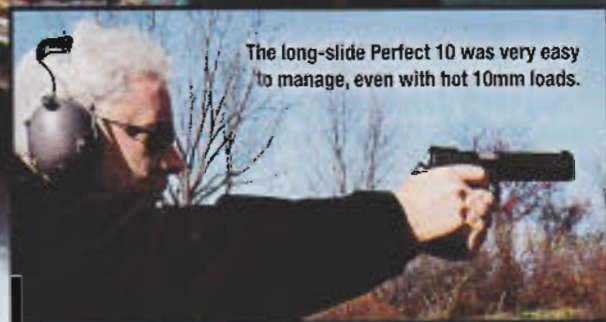
Just shy of its 100th birthday, John Browning's 1911 stands as the most popular self-loading pistol of all time. While its contemporaries have long been obsolete, the 1911 drives on and new variations of this timeless theme are constantly being introduced. Although there is much to be said for a traditional style 1911, new materials, configurations, and chamberings take this classic design to new heights.

Not too long ago, consumers were pretty much limited to a single source for a 1911 pistol. That's hardly the case today and one can purchase a 1911 from a variety of manufacturers. Quality,

however, can vary a great deal and the smart shopper will do his homework in determining which outfits are building the most reliable machines.

STI International may not be the biggest player on the scene, but their 1911 pistols are among the best available at any price. Founded by Virgil Tripp in the 1980's, STI was a pioneer in the precision world of "EDM" hammers, sears, and other components.

The firm was also the first to market a modular grip frame, which is lightweight and trim, and ac-



Mike Boyle photo

The STI Perfect 10 merges the power of a magnum revolver with the high-capacity of a contemporary self loading-pistol.

STI International



HIGHEST Level

commodates double-stack, high-capacity magazines. Complete pistols followed and quickly became the standard by which out-of-the-box competition and carry guns were measured.

I have had a number of STI pistols pass through my hands and have never been disappointed. My STI Trojan remains a favorite and allows me to be at the top of my game, despite an occasional mental lapse. There is simply no doubt in my mind that there is much more magic out there for the taking.

Gun Details

Last year at a show, a most unique specimen in the STI line caught my eye. The new STI Perfect 10 is a double-stack, long slide pistol chambered for the hard-hitting 10mm cartridge. I realize that the 10mm never captured the hearts and minds of American shooters and that's probably too bad. However, it remains the most powerful cartridge you can wrap a service size pistol around and I was intrigued. Besides, it's always more fun to take the path less traveled.

Well, I finally got around to getting a sample Perfect 10 to put through the paces and I can report that this bad boy rocks. If a high performance, easy to shoot pistol floats your boat, the Perfect 10 may be the gun for you.



STI is among the foremost in precision-machined manufacturing, making the "perfect" in Perfect 10 more than just a moniker.

The Perfect 10 is a large frame, service size pistol, based on STI's patented 2011 technology. With its longer slide, 6-inch barrel and accessory rail, external geometry is somewhat different than other STI offerings designed for competition and personal defense. This high performance

pistol is ideally suited for the tactical specialist in need of a hard-hitting pistol outfitted with a rail for the mounting of white lights or lasers.

In building the Perfect 10, STI went with their innovative modular frame. The upper sub-frame is crafted from steel while the



The Perfect 10 sports an accessory rail and a bull-profile barrel that mates directly to the slide and a full-length guide rod system.



Note the Perfect 10's 6-inch ramped bull barrel is fully supported—an asset when handling the formidable 10mm load.

triggerguard and grip frame are made of high impact, weight saving polymer. The hybrid frame allows STI to build a high capacity extended slide pistol, which only weighs about 3 ounces more than a standard production 1911.

An integral rail is milled right into the extended dust cover of the Perfect 10. The rail itself extends for 6 inches and allows for the mounting of the widest possible range of illuminators and laser aimers. My sample Perfect 10 accommodated white lights from SureFire and Insight Tech-Gear, as well as a Uni-Green laser aimer from LaserMax.

Both the frontstrap and flat mainspring housing are checkered 30-lpi (lines per inch) for a positive hold. An STI High Ride Beavertail Safety with a palm swell guarantees positive operation and prevents hammer bite. This southpaw was happy to see that the Perfect 10 sported an ambidextrous frame mounted safety for easy operation with either hand.

The Perfect 10 is equipped with an STI Long Curved Trigger. On the sample pistol, the trigger was crisp and clean and broke at about 4.5 pounds. Personally, I wouldn't care for anything much lighter on a self-defense handgun.

To facilitate the fastest possible reload, STI incorporated an aluminum magazine



Perfect 10's slide features cocking serrations fore and aft, while the rear sight is adjustable to help optimize the 10mm's performance potential.

well into the Perfect 10. This cavernous opening literally gobbles up the fresh magazine during the reloading process and proved faster than my single-stack 1911's. Non-slip black nylon grip panels complete the lower half of the gun.

Even the casual observer will note the longer slide and barrel of the Perfect 10.

The 6-inch ramped bull barrel is fully supported—a nice touch when firing full house 10mm loads. As expected, the longer barrel yields muzzle velocities that are more than a few strides faster than other 10mm pistols. A two-piece guide rod, along with the bushing-less barrel, represents a departure from traditional 1911 technology.

Sighting equipment includes a black competition front and adjustable rear. The front sight is dovetailed into the slide and should stay put through a lifetime of hard use. In view of the wide range of performance characteristics associated with the 10mm cartridge, adjustable sights make a lot of sense.

The slide has cocking serrations both fore and aft. Metal surfaces are blued with the sides of the slide polished. The Perfect 10 is not a small gun and measures 9.5 inches in length. Total weight is 41.5 ounces. This is beyond the limit for practical concealed carry, but not at all problematic for the SWAT cop with the proper holster.

Along with the Perfect 10, STI provided me with a pair of 10-shot magazines. Ordinarily, the Perfect 10 would be shipped

SPECIFICATIONS:

STI PERFECT 10	
CALIBER:	10mm
BARREL:	6 inches
OA LENGTH:	9.5 inches
WEIGHT:	41.5 ounces (empty)
GRIPS:	Glass filled nylon polymer
SIGHTS:	Competition front, adjustable rear
ACTION:	SA
FINISH:	Blued
CAPACITY:	14 + 1
PRICE:	Call for pricing

with a 14-shot magazine. For shooters who can't get enough of a good thing, extended length 170mm magazines with a 17-shot capacity are also available.

Cartridge Details

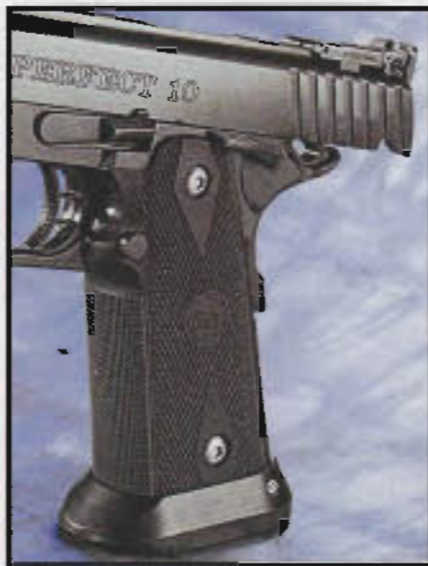
The 10mm was introduced in 1983 for the ill-fated Dornhaus & Dixon Bren Ten pistol. FFV Norma AB of Amotfors, Sweden, was the first company to manufacture the 10mm and those initial loads defined high performance in an autopistol. In fact, those original Norma loads were probably a bit too hot and proved to be a test of both shooter and gun. Current commercial offerings from the major manufacturers are loaded down a step, but are still very formidable. Energy levels of full house 10mm loads exceed the highly regarded .357 Mag.

Popularity of the 10mm got a huge jumpstart in the late 1980's with the FBI's endorsement and the selection of the Smith & Wesson 1076 pistol. The FBI determined that the original 10mm generated too much recoil for the average agent and requested a down-loaded version for their use. Federal obliged, and turned out a mid-velocity load that launched a 180-grain hollowpoint at 980 fps (feet per second).

A short time later, the .40 S&W cartridge was introduced that duplicated the performance of the FBI-spec 10mm. The fact that the .40 S&W could be chambered in a 9mm size platform essentially sealed the fate of the 10mm and it was quickly shuffled to the back burner.

But if one is willing to put up with a slightly larger platform, the 10mm still has it all over the .40 S&W. With full power loads, the 10mm outperforms the .40 S&W by 200 to 250 fps. If this level of performance is not required, one can still seek out any number of mid-velocity loads that are equivalent to the .40 S&W.

On the downside, the 10mm does generate more push and muzzle flip than other autopistol cartridges, but nothing that can't be managed by a seasoned shooter. I wouldn't categorize firing full power 10mms as unpleasant and find it less intimidating than the .357 Mag.



While the non-slip nylon grips aid in handling, the weight-saving polymer frame allows for an extended slide pistol that's only a mere 3 ounces heavier than a typical 1911.



The Perfect 10's cavernous magazine well makes reloading incredibly easy with the pistol's high-capacity, double-stack magazines.

Predictably, hot-rodding any weapon system platform beyond what it was originally designed for accelerates wear and shortens service life. This is true of a 10mm built on a standard 1911 frame designed for the mild mannered .45 ACP, as well as .40 S&W pistols on 9mm frames. I'm convinced, however, that the modular 2011 STI frame can stand up to a high volume of 10mm ammunition without a problem.

The 10mm has more assets than liabilities. With high velocity loads, it is flat shooting and more accurate than the .40 S&W. You might have to beat the bushes a little harder to find high performance loads, but they are still available from CorBon, Hornady, and Winchester, as well as a few

smaller manufacturers. If "magnumizing" your autopistol holds some appeal, the 10mm is the cartridge for you.

Range Time

The Perfect 10 had all the makings of a winner and I was very eager to put it through the paces. Although I had a modest supply of 10mm ammunition on hand, much of it was nearly 20 years old. Unfortunately, ammunition availability has been a real issue of late and several of my otherwise dependable sources were not able to come through. On the upside, the 10mm is an easy cartridge to reload for. I was able to cook up a fair quantity of factory equivalent loads using Remington 180-grain JHPs and Hodgdon HS-6 powder.

Once broken in, the Perfect 10mm ran like a top. I did experience a few failures to go completely into battery in the first 50 rounds, but that issue worked itself out. This may have just been some new pistol teething problems or the reduced impulse of some mid-range FBI loads. As with any pistol carried for self-defense, a break-in period of several hundred rounds is advised before carrying it in the field.

With full-house 10mm loads, you certainly know when the Perfect 10 goes off, but the polymer grip frame transmits very little felt recoil to the hand. Muzzle rise is a little more pronounced with the highest ammo, but certainly no more than a .45 ACP +P cartridge.

From an improvised rest of a table, 25-yard groups averaged under 3 inches with all loads tested. Sub-2 inch groups were recorded with CorBon 150-grain JHP, CC1-Blazer 200-grain TMJ, and Federal FBI-spec 180-grain JHPs. The 200-grain Blazer load took top honors with an average spread of 2.13 inches, followed closely by the CorBon 150-grain offering.

As expected, the long 6-inch barrel really lights the fuse on the 10mm. CorBon's 135-grain Pow'RBall load exceeded 1400 fps. Winchester's 175-grain Silvertip, a long time 10mm favorite, averaged 1279 fps. That compares favorably with the .41 Mag.

Much to my chagrin, I found that CorBon's 155-grain DPX load would not cycle from the STI magazines. At first, I thought that they might have exceeded the maximum overall length for the 10mm cartridge, but a quick measurement illustrated that was not the case and the DPX was the exact same length as the Silvertip. For whatever reason, the DPX load would hang up in the magazine. Better to find out in the sterile environment of the range.

Despite the fact that the Perfect 10 was larger and heavier than my everyday pistol, handling qualities were still very good. Manipulating the controls was second nature and the magazine well made reloads a piece of cake.

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PERFORMANCE:

STI PERFECT 10 10mm		
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
CCI-Blazer 200 TMJ	1,110	2.13
CorBon Pow'RBall 135	1,428	2.63
CorBon 150 JHP	1,381	2.25
Federal 180 JHP	1,050	3.13
Winchester Silvertip 175 JHP	1,279	2.63

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second (fps) by Oehler 35P chronograph, and accuracy in inches for an average of 5 shots from 25 yards.

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CorBon Pow'RBall averaged 1,428 fps and expanded to over 1.5 times original diameter.



Once broken in, the Perfect 10 handled a variety of 10mm loads without missing a beat.

The long slide and mounted light required a special holster and I was able to reconfigure my BlackHawk Omega tactical thigh holster for the Perfect 10. Considering its intended mission, this style of holster would be the top choice for this heavy-duty pistol.

Final Notes

As fond as I am of the Perfect 10, I recognize it is not for everyone and remains a somewhat specialized tool. For a general use, self-defense gun, most of us would probably be better served by one of the other 1911s from the extensive STI line. But, if the full house 10mm is your cartridge of choice, the "Turbo Diesel" Perfect 10 is the way to go.

I found very little to take issue with on this hard-hitting STI pistol. Considering its intended role, some sort of high visibility front sight with a tritium insert, would be the way to go. Black-on-black sights work great against buff colored targets on the range, but are too slow to pick up in fast breaking situations or poor light. Used in conjunction with a light or laser mounted to the rail of the Perfect 10, a contrasting front sight would give the user a means of obtaining a reliable index on a threat in any light condition.

The STI Perfect 10 packs all the fun you can possibly handle in a service size autopistol. It successfully merges the power of a magnum revolver with the high capacity of a contemporary self-loading pistol in an accurate, easy-to-shoot delivery system. Find out more from STI International at sti-guns.com or call 512-819-0656.