



ON GUARD WITH GUARDIAN .380

*With personalized custom details
from North American Arms*

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The NAA Guardian
.380 is no larger than the palm of your hand!

I haven't given much thought to the .380 Auto cartridge for any defensive or law enforcement purpose these days. During the height of their popularity, .380 pistols like the Walther PPK, Mauser HSC, Colt and H&K had some utility due to their small size. Whether they were better than a .38SPL snubbie was a popular topic of debate.

Over the past several years, small handguns like the mini-GLOCKs (9mm G26 and .40 G27), the Kahrs and the Kel-Tecs had me wondering whether we even needed semi-autos in .380 caliber anymore. The Walther size .380s are certainly obsolete due to the fact the above mentioned guns are just as small but fire a more powerful cartridge. Why would I choose to carry a .380 when I could carry a .40 in the same size package? To the tactically inclined, it just doesn't make sense.

CHANGE OF MIND

Recently, I was made aware of a new compact .380 that was being introduced to the market. The same folks who first introduced rimfire mini revolvers, North American Arms, were making it. Whether or not you like these little guns, you can't question the quality that goes into each and every one. Plus, the new gun was reported to be a collaboration with Kahr Arms, who makes one of the most popular and reliable compact pistols currently available. I contacted Ken Friel, General Manager at NAA and made arrangements to take delivery of a test gun. For the first time I became aware of the custom shop that NAA operates to add unique characteristics to their pistols. Essentially, they offer custom carry packages. Since I am a fan of individually equipped guns (guns that meet individual needs), Friel and I discussed several options and he agreed to supply a custom Guardian .380 for testing.

When the gun arrived, I took it out of the box and was quite surprised at how small it was. It was no larger than a Browning .25 I had owned a number of years ago. The gun is a hammer fired, double-action-only palm-size pistol made from stainless steel. The trigger was rounded and radiused with a very smooth eight-pound pull. The slide was melted so that no sharp edges were evident. The three tritium dot guttersnipe sights allows rapid sighting without a conventional sight picture and the gun is finished in a nice matte finish to reduce glare. With nylon Hogue grips standard, it's an understatement to say the custom NAA Guardian .380 caught my attention.

FEATURES

The Guardian .380 is a blow back, semi-automatic pistol. A higher profile sight to replace the guttersnipe on my test gun is available, and NAA can install Hi-Viz, Novak, AO Sights or standard Tritium sights on your gun. I found the gutter snipe system to work quite well, once you get the hang of it. The sights are seated in the frame and instead of looking for a traditional sight picture, the eyes look for a three-dot profile that's in alignment. Once your eyes understand what the proper "look" is, the gutter snipe system works well, fast and adds no bulk to the Guardian.

The Guardian .380 has no external safety devices and is fired by a deliberate press of the DAO trigger. The magazine release is located at the rear of the trigger guard on



The NAA Guardian .380 is a hammer-fired weapon with a bobbed, snag-free hammer.

the left side. There's no slide stop, either internal or externally, to keep the gun as compact as possible. To tell the truth, on this type of gun, it's not really necessary.

The Guardian .380 also has no ejector. The gun has a traditional extractor hook which removes the spent round from the chamber, but the empty case is ejected from the chamber by the next round out of the magazine. I was surprised how well this system worked. No extraction malfunctions were encountered, except on the last round. About every third time, the last round out of the gun would snag, holding the slide open. I found this to be disconcerting at first, but soon recognized it didn't interfere with the loading of the next magazine. Once a new mag was inserted and the off hand works the slide to chamber a new round, the stuck casing simply falls harmlessly out of the way. When asked about this Friel advised that NAA were aware of this phenomenon, but didn't consider it a problem. On the contrary, Friel explained, "It's too bad we couldn't get the last round to do it every time. It would make a great empty gun indicator." In any event, as long as the shooter knows the last case can get stuck, it's really a "non-problem."



RANGE TIME

I test-fired the Guardian .380 during a concealed carry class I was teaching at the Tactical Defense Institute in West Union, Ohio. The gun was fired by both students and staff alike and was well received by and large. Staff instructor Dave Bowie stated that the new Guardian .380 would be in his personal collection as soon as he could find one. Over 500 rounds of Federal Hydra-Shok, Winchester SXT and Silvertip, Black Hills JHP, Corbon +P JHP, and Remington Golden Sabre rounds were fired through the Guardian .380. In the first 30 rounds every other round jammed. Somewhere between 30 and 50 rounds, the break-in period occurred as no malfunctions were experienced between rounds 50 and 500. As a matter of fact, the Guardian .380 then became completely reliable. In reality, a break-in period is not uncommon for new auto pistols, especially those of stainless steel. It's a good idea to undertake a 200-round break-in period for any defensive pistol. At least 50 of those rounds should be the hollow-points that are intended for daily carry.

The Guardian .380 proved to be quite accurate, keeping fist size groups on the target, regardless of ammo style at twenty feet. This high level of accuracy is likely due to the fixed barrel-to-frame construction. This

same design makes the NAA Guardians easy to field strip.

The Guardian .380 is a well-made pistol. When NAA decided to make this larger caliber pocket rocket, they decided to contact the company that many feel is the company for powerful compact pistols, Kahr Arms. The Guardian is a true collaboration between Kahr and NAA with Kahr manufacturing the frame, NAA the rest of the metallic parts and Hogue making the grips. This all steel, nylon gripped pistol is quality all the way, as well as being quite easy to shoot.

WHY THE SUB-COMPACT .380?

The Guardian .380 is an excellent choice for special purpose or back-up carry. It's not a primary carry gun and NAA realizes this. But at the same time, the Guardian .380 is perfect for special situations when a larger gun just won't do. I'll give you an example. I was recently asked to chaperone my daughter's high school after-prom festivities. Since an after-prom is intended to keep kids off the street and from getting hurt after their high school prom, I was more than happy to help out. In this format, I wanted to be armed, but in a discreet manner.

While helping these kids have a safe and enjoyable time, I didn't want some student, teacher or parent seeing my "hardware". The Guardian .380 was on the job that night. Another example? My oldest daughter will be getting married soon. The Guardian .380 will be ideal for the obligatory tuxedo. The Guardian .380 will also make an exceptional uniform back-up. It's easy to carry in the wide range of quality



holsters that are already available.



One holster I took a liking to with the Guardian was the Pager Pal IWB rig. You may be wondering if I've gone a little "Hollywood" here. Truth be told, I ignored the Pager Pal as being a little "out there" in the past, but I was wrong. For those special purpose carry situations described above, the Pager Pal is a practical solution to the problem. It takes some getting use to, and a little practice, but the rig proved both comfortable and functional with the little Guardian, as well as reasonably fast.

For me, I found it to work best in an offside position, like a cross draw, while using the Hackathorn Rip draw technique. My off-hand reaches down and grabs the Pager unit and pulls up, similar to removing a closed front garment. Once the gun is clear of the waistband, the gun is drawn with the shooting hand, in a cross draw fashion, and is driven to the target. This could be accomplished in about two seconds with a little practice. The Guardian .380 is a well-made mini gun that will prove to be popular. The custom versions should be especially so. If you see one in the near future, pick it up, I suspect they may be hard to come by.

<i>SPECIFICATIONS</i>		
N.A.A. GUARDIAN		
Caliber:	.32	.380
Barrel:	2.25"	2.49"
OA Length:	4.36"	4.75"
Width:	.85"	.93"
Height:	3.32"	3.53"
Weight:	13.57 oz.	18.72 oz.
Rifling:	1 in 15	1 in 15
Trigger:	DAO, 10 lbs.	DAO, 10 lbs.
Mag Capacity:	6	6

We welcome comments: webmaster@naaminis.com

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