

Power-packed!

Mark Camoccio gets to grips with the brand new SMK XS26 Air Pistol

The SMK XS26 offers a high power pistol in a break-barrel format

As one of the largest suppliers of airguns to the UK market, Sportsmarketing certainly appear to have most bases covered. So when they launch a brand new product, it's often to fill a perceived gap in the market.

With a UK legal power limit set to a maximum of 6ft/lbs, air pistols are only ever going to be relatively low powered affairs. Yet consider that they are also invariably close range tools, normally associated with informal target practise, and the power issue suddenly becomes somewhat secondary. Dare I say it, we're talking about unashamed fun shooting, where a modicum of accuracy trumps kinetic output every time.

Sometimes though, some extra oomph does come in handy – especially when using reactive targets. What we have here is the all new SMK XS26 model, and it's a spring powered pistol, designed to pack a punch.

Sleek

It cuts a distinctive profile too, since the bulk of the surface area



The barrel sleeve is a push fit



This shows the adjustable rear sight with green fibre optics



Nicely contoured grips give a good hold



A chunky blade aids trigger control

is non-metallic material. Firstly, the fore stock and pistol grip are all one moulding, formed from high impact polymer, which also neatly wraps around the end of the cylinder. The steel barrel tube is also set into a polymer shroud and breech block, and whilst this may sound a bit cheap, in practise, the mouldings are precise enough to impart a quality feel to the pistol overall. Those grips are of course fully ambidextrous, and with some clever styling, the matching thumb and finger grooves, coupled with the main finger contours, results in an extremely comfortable and supportive grip.

Let's face it, with little change from £100, the XS26 is significantly more expensive than other basic spring powered pistols in the SMK line-up. Consider the features on offer here though, and it does begin to stack up nicely.

Sights

The XS26 comes with a neat 3inch strip of dovetails, so fitting a pistol scope, red dot or other sighting device, is firmly on the cards. Of course,

with an extremely impressive set of fibre optic open sights fitted as standard, it would be foolish to look elsewhere before exploring their uses.

These fibre optics offer a particularly good sight picture, with an attractive front orange element sitting within the two green dots at the rear. The rear sight is fully adjustable incidentally, although the fact that windage gets a finger adjustment wheel, and the elevation requires a small screwdriver, is ever so slightly irritating. Both or neither makes sense in my book, but hey - a mere nit-pick. Once the sights are set. I found they worked a treat out to about 20yds, further than this and my eyesight begins to be challenged!

Trigger

Triggers on this sort of gun can so often be the downfall, and spoil an otherwise good product, yet in the case of the XS26, I'm pleased to report that the unit is highly usable and more than acceptable. A chunky, wide, moulded trigger blade certainly helps to spread the load, and whilst the non adjustable pull has significant creep, careful technique can improve performance. I found it possible to slowly pull through the creep, and have the trigger waiting on the edge of the sear, with only minimal pressure left, before final release. The triggers action is best described as pseudo 2-stage (where the first stage doesn't actually alter sear engagement).

The manual safety catch features a rectangular push through button tab that passes right through each side of the pistol body indicating live or safe, and can be easily toggled on or off when required. Personally, I reckon it's a lot safer to ignore any safety catch, and leave the pistol unloaded until just before you make the shot, end of!

Leverage & Power

As a break open design, having a stubby barrel just 6.5 inches in length would ordinarily create problems, where a lack of

leverage is concerned. With this in mind, SMK supply a barrel shroud extension tube, which is simply a push fit onto the muzzle. In practise, this total simplicity of design can't fail to impress, and with precise locating grooves incorporated, it just puts a smile on the face.

Basically, I found it impossible to cock this pistol without the shroud, but once in place, leverage is transformed. The relatively easy cocking stroke should be within the capabilities of all but a few junior shots, and with a smooth determined stroke adopted, the task as usual, is made much easier.

The manufacturers make much about the power capabilities of this gun, with a full 6ft/lbs listed on the spec sheet. For the record, my tests revealed energy levels a bit down on their figures, with a variety of pellets. Yet with power in the region of 4.6ft/lbs achieved, and the fact that this style of gun is liable to run itself in, the manufacturers can still boast one of the highest energy outputs for a spring powered pistol. A pleasant firing cycle, with little spring resonance, was an added bonus too, and groups of around 3/4inch at 10yds, using SMK's curious black domed pellets supplied, certainly impressed. I managed 2inch clusters at 20yds for the record, again with the fibre optics, and fitting a scope will of course tighten those groups further.

Good All Rounder

In conclusion, I thoroughly enjoyed my time with this pistol. What we have here in effect, is a latter day version of the BSA Scorpion, albeit slightly less beefy, and somewhat less of a handful! Tipping the scales at a super manageable 2.2lbs, means this highly appealing pistol is unlikely to overly tire on an extended session. So whether despatching quarry at very close range, or just informal target shooting, the XS26 represents a sound choice.

Compact, relatively powerful and versatile sums it up nicely. **GM**



The barrel sleeve makes cocking easy



Note the orange fibre optic element to the fore-sight



The XS26 pistol with over barrel shroud removed

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Model:	SMK XS26
Type:	Spring powered break-barrel
Calibre:	.22 only
Weight:	2.2lbs
Overall Length:	18 inches with shroud in place
Barrel Length:	6.5inches actual (10.5 with shroud)
Stock:	High impact polymer
Trigger:	2-stage, non adjustable
Chrono tests:	Over a 10 shot string using SMK Black Domes / JSB's
Average velocity	365fps 350fps
Average spread	19fps 5fps
Energy on test:	4.6ft/lbs 4.4ft/lbs
RRP:	£ 99.95 approx.
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