

**SELF DEFENSE SIXGUN: COLT'S SNUB NOSE .38**

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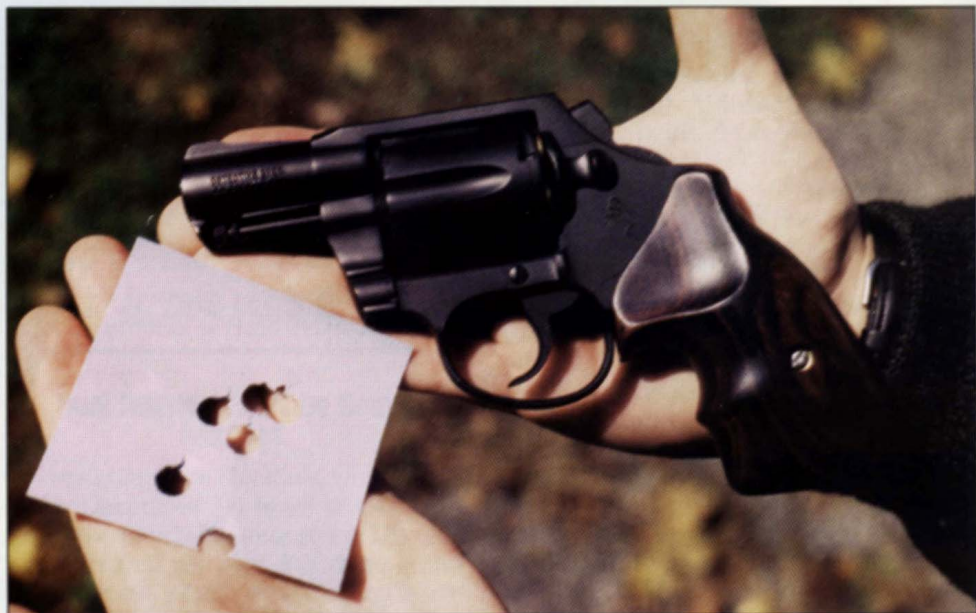
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# AYOOB FOR THE DEFENSE

BY MASSAD AYOOB

## THE ULTIMATE SELF-DEFENSE SIXGUN: A CUSTOM COLT DETECTIVE .38 SNUB



*Laughridge-customized Detective Special keeps all six rounds of Federal Match wadcutter on this Post-ITTM from 25 yard bench. Finish by Birdsong, grips by Craig Spegel.*

**T**he Colt Detective Special is a gun that's been around more than long enough to collect Social Security. It's still with us in its latest incarnation, the improved SF-VI stainless. New "concealed carry" states are coming on line all the time, and gun dealers in those places tell us that snubnose .38 Special revolvers are at or near the top of the list in sales to first-time pistol packers.

Many readers own Detective Specials (or Agents or Cobras, the light alloy versions). They'll appreciate the lighter, smoother, straighter-pull action of the new SF-VI, but they won't necessarily have to trade in. When the new Colt came on the market, I already had a late model '72 series Detective Special out to Bill Laughridge at the Cylinder & Slide Shop.

The gun I got back was a thing of beauty. It had the six-shot cylinder that is a Colt hallmark against their competitors, but it also had a straight-through trigger pull like a Smith & Wesson instead of the two-stage, "stacking" pull of typical older-style Colts. That makes it easier to shoot well, especially at speed.

Gunsmiths are leery of bobbing the

hammers on Colt revolvers because it may reduce inertia enough to cause misfires. The gunsmith has to know the breed to make this modification work, and Laughridge knows Colts. He bobbed mine completely snag-free and it gives 100 percent ignition on all brands of primers even though he's used his magic to bring the trigger pull down to 8 lbs. double action.

Most '72 series Colt D-frames seem to shoot either left or high left out of the box, and this one had been no exception. Laughridge tweaked it to shoot center. The flat, ramped front sight usually glares in overhead light; Laughridge notched it and changed the angle enough to give a good sight picture, but not so sharply that it would snag when drawn from even a pocket or an ankle holster.

The weight of a Colt snubby hangs more forward than on most of its small-frame counterparts from other makers. This and the heavy-configuration shrouded barrel help it handle the recoil of +P 158 gr. lead SWC HPs. These are the load of choice in a 2" .38 Special; with no tough copper jacket to peel back, the soft lead projectiles

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deform well even at the reduced velocity at which a snubby launches them.

From Chicago to Metro Dade to FBI — departments that have shot a lot of bad guys with this round — stopping power has never been a complaint. You can't say that for the trendy 125 gr. semi-jacketed .38 loads being touted these days.

The superbly balanced Colt handles the sharp recoil of this load very well, and the Colt factory warrants the gun even if you shoot +P in it. Every test has shown it to be a strong little revolver.

With a .38 you need all the power you can get. I see a lot of autopsies and shooting after-action reports, and with the +P 158 gr. lead SWC-HP, I don't worry about the stopping power. Evan Marshall is right when he says it about equals that of GI .45 hardball ammo.

The "double hand" mechanism locks the cylinder motionless as the hammer begins to fall, and this ingenious cylinder lockup plus Colt's trademark 1:14 rifling twist makes this brand the most accurate of snubby .38s.

Laughridge's action work and sight improvements let you translate that intrinsic accuracy potential into practical accuracy. That and the forward balance make it shoot like a medium frame 4" service revolver, while still concealing almost as easily as a little five-shot J-frame Smith.

Walter Birdsong's Black-T finish was applied for corrosion resistance due to body sweat, etc. in the deep concealment places a .38 snub gets carried. This is my third gun with the Birdsong finish and I'm very pleased with the way it stands up.

A cherished old pair of Craig Spegel exotic hardwood Boot Grips completed the package. Their dark brown finish sets off the dark gray of the Black-T, giving me a revolver that won't flash what's under my black sock if my trouser cuff rides up enough to reveal my ankle holster. The total cost of this custom job was about \$450.

This is my fourth Cylinder & Slide Shop custom gun, and I'm as happy with it as I was with the lightweight Commander .45, the 6" Python and the 9mm Hi-Power. Which is to say, very happy indeed. Bill Laughridge takes care of his customers, and his prices and delivery times are both surprisingly reasonable.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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