



BOND ARMS' MULTI-TASK SNAKE SLAYER

By Colonel Ashland Guthrie, SASS #60066

The genre of so-called snake charmer guns has been around a long time. From what I have studied of American Old West history, the old cowboys and ranch hands really had no special firearm on their carry to dispatch snakes. They often just opted for the Colt or Schofield, or maybe a Winchester lever gun, or a Greener smoothbore to squelch the tail shake of a nasty rattler along the cattle trail or around the corral.

The New Derringer

Small double stack barreled "belly" guns were most often encountered in the gambling houses or paddlewheel river boats held next to a spare ace by sporting men. Such guns were likely used in self-offense when a card hand went bad or another cheat was discovered dealing from the bottom of the deck. They were probably not regularly seen around the stockyards or ranches as a nor-



The Snake Slyer IV gets the job done with either .410 shotshells or .45 Long Colt pills.

mal tool of the workingman.

Today, the derringer has been relegated more or less to a plinking role or some orchestrated shooting events held at cowboy gatherings. Some may have picked them for a self-protection role. The overall popularity of the two-shooters seems to have waned somewhat over the

years, at least until Cowboy Action Shooting™ came into vogue.

All that changed when Bond Arms of Granbury, Texas came on the scene with a line of modern manufactured single-action, high quality Derringer pistols. Greg Bond and his group have come up with some really innovative designs and materials to upgrade the derringer concept to a multi-task utility firearm.

Bond Arms derringer's claim to fame is the simple fact their guns have won the World Champion SASS Shooter Derringer category for eight years in a row! That alone is a pretty good reputation to build upon. Once you handle one, you will quickly see why.

The Bond Arms Derringers

Of all the many models and configurations of derringers offered by Bond Arms, I was fortunate enough to lay my hands on their newest version called the *Snake Slayer IV (SSIV)*.

With pistol model names like Texas Defender, Cowboy Defender, and Snake Slayer, one's interest has to be piqued. I will be the first to admit, in this particular case I succumbed to their print media advertising campaign.

The ad depicts a guy out in the wilds on a fishing trip taking defensive action against the meanest, vilest looking snake one could imagine. In Texas those are rattlers no doubt, but here in Mississippi, we have a nastier model called the cottonmouth water moccasin. The ad looks to be illustrating this particular bad boy.

As a springtime turkey hunter and early fall whitetail deer scout, I envisioned this pistol the ideal back-up side carry for slithering ankle biters. Besides, it looked like it would be fun to shoot, easy to tote, and convenient to place in a scouting fanny pack or ATV holster.

When I saw the first ad for the SSIV derringer, then perused their web site (www.bondarms.com), I was dead sold on the spot. I called my gun dealer the next day, and within a week I was palming this man-sized hunk of stainless. I have never looked back since.

Detailing the Snake Slayer IV

What immediately caught my attention on this model was the extended grip design allowing for big



Even at "stand-off" distances, the Snake Slayer puts enough pellets on the target to stop a "creepy-crawler" where it stands.

meaty mitts like mine to get a firm grip on the thing. I was also attracted to the interchangeable .410/45 Colt chambering of this version. Of course, like other Bond Arms derringer models, the SSIV has a barrel set that can easily be changed out to many other calibers and a couple of different barrel lengths. It is truly a versatile pistol in this regard.

Specifications include 4.25 inch barrels, 23.5 ounce empty weight, 6.25 inches long, fixed sights, full trigger guard, swing open barrel release, and a manual cartridge slide ejector. Everything is a matte stainless finish with oversized laser engraved, polished wood grips.

Many accessories are available from the factory, especially other barrels in popular chamberings, including the .44 Special, .357 Magnum/.38 Special, .32 H&R Magnum, and .22 Long Rifle. Three-inch barrels for rimless rounds include the .45 Glock Auto, .45 ACP, 10mm, .40 S&W, and the 9mm Luger. This certainly is enough choice options for any derringer shooter.

Other add-on items include a selection of optional holsters; grip panels in various materials such as buffalo horn, stag, rosewood, or Giraffe bone; and custom made wooden display boxes. Company logo caps and coffee mugs are also available.

When I ordered my own SSIV, I also ordered the BMT leather holster. This is one beautiful piece of tanned leather and is fully lined. Later I received the BAD model holster, which is made in South Africa
(Continued on next page)

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yard targets.

People forget, no doubt, these are marketed as snake killer guns or up close and personal for defense use. Up close and personal is the operative term here.

I did my initial shooting round at 10 feet on paper target copies of snakes and a well-known reptilian figure known as the Geico Gecko. For these, I first used .410 shells in both barrels with Remington shotshells in No. 6 shot. Even at this distance with the 4.25 inch barrel, the concentration of shot holes proved a steady shooter could easily dispatch a vermin in quick order.

Ditto the same reaction with using .45 Colt lead loads of 250 grains in a Winchester Cowboy load. I discovered, curiously to my amazement, the .45 Colt loads were easier to control than the .410 shotgun shells, at least on this first trial. Certainly in terms of a small gun for taking out a snake or other close in varmints, the shotshell is the way to go with adequate shot density for better target coverage. Shooting this gun with .45 Colt loads in a self-defense mode at close range would be one tough ticket to punch.

Greg Bond highly recommends reading the owner's manual to learn exactly how to shoot these guns. In particular, he points out to make sure the web of the shooting hand should not in any way come in contact with the cocked hammer, as this will impact the feel of the trigger pull. This is not really an issue unless the shooter is used to snuggling the shooting hand up tight into the grip. Shooters should heed this advice though.

Bond Arms suggests two shotshell types that have proven to shoot well in their guns. These include the Winchester .410 load of 3-inch, 000 buck shot, which is loaded with five buck shot pellets. The other load is the CCI .45 Colt Shotshells with the plastic capsules holding 1/3 ounce of No. 9 shot. If you find difficulty in getting a good saturation on target, then try these specific loads.

(Continued from previous page) for crossdraw, self-defense carry against carjackings. It, too, is a fine piece of work, especially if you like a crossdraw, which I do.

Indeed Bond Arms has the water-front well covered when it comes to derringers.

But Does it Shoot?

The simple answer is, heck yes! I took the SSIV to the field on its first weekend of ownership to appropriately blacken its bore. Now, keep in mind these guns are short-range affairs, even though one champion shooter out there is using one at 60-

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The Snake Slayer IV retails for around \$485, but always try to work a deal. That's why they call them gun dealers. Extra barrels sell from \$139 to \$159. Grips run from \$40 up to \$250 for exotics. Holsters are priced from \$21.95 to \$95 for a shoulder rig.

If you want a near perfect small,

lightweight, two-shot tool for carry in the wilds against snakes and such, or in urban environs for other types of creepy slime-ball things, this is the gun you want. As a Cowboy Action Shooter, too, the Bond Arms Derringers are bar none the best for western action shooting. I highly recommend them!

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