

Rock River Arms LAR-6.8 ♦ Project XD ♦ Yamaha 2007 One Shot Challenge



# On Target

The Hunting & Shooting Buyers' Guide

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February / March 2008

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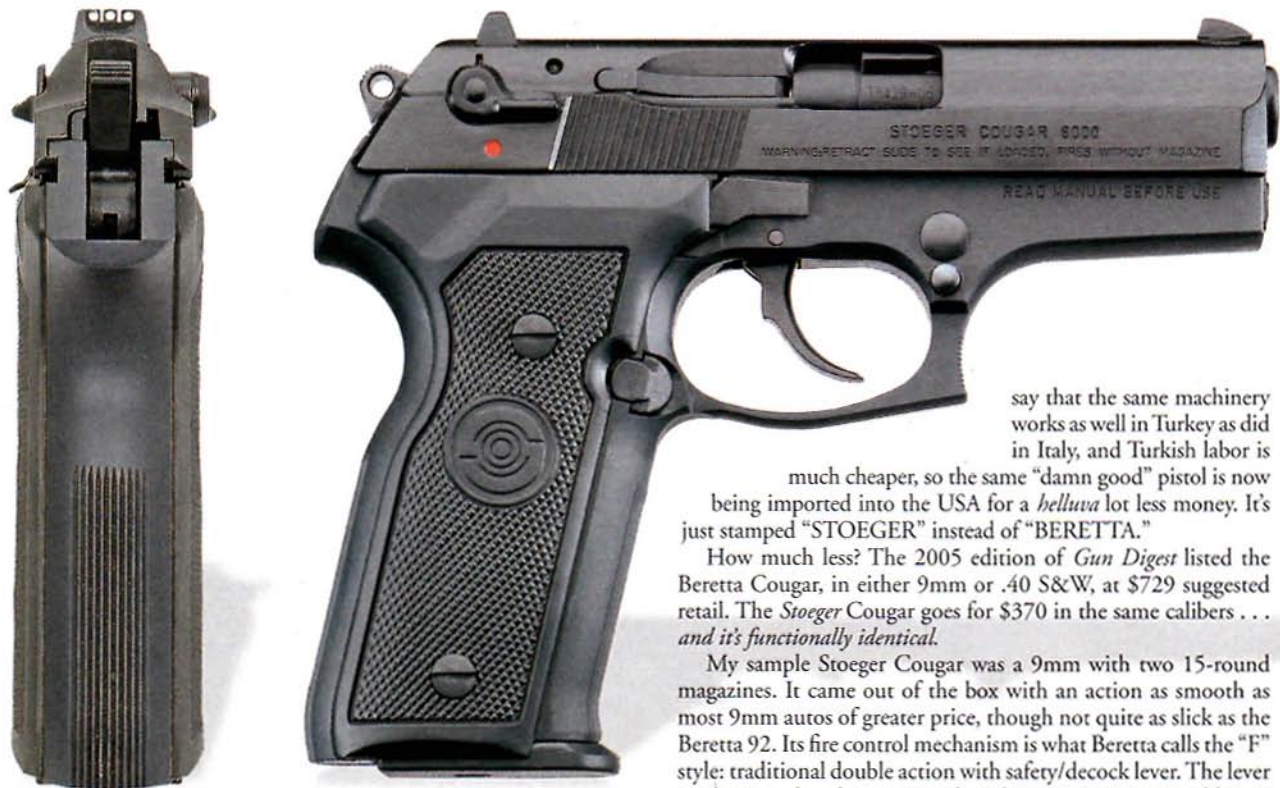


Caesar Guerini  
**Maxum**  
Trap Over/Under

This Magazine

COMPLIMENTS OF

Your Local Gun Shop



## STOEGER COUGAR 9MM

A few years ago, when I wrote the *Gun Digest Book of Beretta Pistols*, I devoted substantial space to the modern Beretta Cougar pistol, saying there what I'll say here. Its predecessor, the Beretta 92, is a great gun in my opinion, and by comparison the Cougar is . . . a damn *good* gun. I never found it quite as smooth of action and trigger, nor as accurate, as its older brother . . . but it was reliable, more than accurate enough, and distinctly smaller. Moreover, its rotary breech slowed and softened the recoil impulse, making the Cougar particularly suitable for recoil-sensitive shooters.

Time went on. The Cougar didn't sell as well around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the 92 did in the 1980s. Beretta saw the handwriting on the wall (it said "Polymer Frame") and began engineering the gun that would supersede it, the ultra-modern P×4. Then, the story goes, Beretta won a huge bid for Cougars from Turkey. A deal was made, and the Cougar manufacturing equipment was shipped to that country from Italy. What happened next would be of more interest to readers of *Forbes* magazine than to those of *On Target*, but that tale includes Beretta's acquisition of Stoeger. Suffice it to

say that the same machinery works as well in Turkey as did in Italy, and Turkish labor is much cheaper, so the same "damn good" pistol is now being imported into the USA for a *helluva* lot less money. It's just stamped "STOEGER" instead of "BERETTA."

How much less? The 2005 edition of *Gun Digest* listed the Beretta Cougar, in either 9mm or .40 S&W, at \$729 suggested retail. The *Stoeger* Cougar goes for \$370 in the same calibers . . . and it's functionally identical.

My sample Stoeger Cougar was a 9mm with two 15-round magazines. It came out of the box with an action as smooth as most 9mm autos of greater price, though not quite as slick as the Beretta 92. Its fire control mechanism is what Beretta calls the "F" style: traditional double action with safety/decock lever. The lever works smoother than most—though, again, not as smoothly as a 92F's—and trigger pull went 10.5 pounds average on the Lyman digital gauge for double action (first shot), and right at six pounds for single action (all shots after the first until decocked).

Accuracy was most impressive for a sub-\$400 pistol. Winchester's humble "white box" 115-grain economy FMJ put five shots in two inches even, with the best three in a startling 0.60 inch. Black Hills hot +P 124-grain hollow point delivered 2.20 inches for all five shots, and 1.20 inches for the best three.

The best overall group came from another economy round, Federal's American Eagle with 147-grain JTC (jacketed truncated cone). The five shot group measured 1.80 inches center to center, with the best three going into 1.25 inches. The 147-grain subsonic shot to point of aim, while the other two loads went consistently three or four inches high. No malfunctions occurred.

Thanks to some international juggling of machinery and business relationships, the Stoeger Cougar now has to be considered one of the best values out there in a defensive handgun.

See the Cougar at your dealer (\$370), or contact **Stoeger Industries**; Tel.: (301) 283-6981; Fax: (301) 283-6988; Web: [www.stoegerindustries.com](http://www.stoegerindustries.com)



Left: The Cougar shot consistently good groups at 25-yards, with its best group (under two-inches) being printed with inexpensive American Eagle 147-gr.

Right: The Cougar uses Beretta's "F" style trigger mechanism-DA/SA with a decocking/safety lever.

