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BFR .50 Beowulf Revolver

by Jeff Quinn

photography by Jeff Quinn & Sebastian Giles

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For several years now, **Magnum Research Inc.** has been distributing the BFR heavy duty revolvers chambered for cartridges such as the .45/70, .30-30, and other cartridges that provide plenty of power for the hunting of the world's largest game. The most recent introduction to their catalog was the chambering of the .500 Smith & Wesson magnum in the BFR. The BFR just might be the best choice in a handgun chambered for the big .500 S&W. The BFR is not a small handgun by any means, but it is a bit more compact and lighter than the X-Frame Smith, and has exhibited no tendency to unlock the cylinder upon firing as has been a problem on the S&W with the heaviest factory loads. The design of the BFR is much like a beefed-up **Ruger Super Blackhawk**. It is made of stainless steel, employs a transfer bar safety, and comes equipped with synthetic rubber grips. For those who prefer wood grips, Magnum Research offers those also, and any grips for a Super Blackhawk will fit the BFR. One design improvement over the Ruger is that the BFR employs a free-spinning cylinder that allows rotation in either direction with the loading gate opened. This can be very important if a bullet jumps the crimp from recoil, which could make the gun inoperable on a non free-spinning design.

As some of you readers may know, I am a fan

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Magnum Research's BFR revolver chambered in .50 Beowulf is one potent combination!

of the .50 Beowulf cartridge which was designed by **Alexander Arms**, and is chambered in their excellent AR-15 style rifles (*Ed. Note: see Jeff's earlier articles on the Alexander Arms **"Entry Gun"** and **"Overwatch"** rifles*). The .50 Beowulf is a rebated rim design that has just slightly more case capacity than does the .500 S&W, but is loaded to lower pressures to facilitate reliability and efficiency. In the AR-15 style rifle, it is a superb cartridge for making big holes in tough targets.

Recently, I received by way of **Bill Alexander** a BFR revolver chambered for the .50 Beowulf cartridge. It is at this point a one-of-a-kind handgun, but it could become a standard chambering if the demand is great enough. The BFR .50 Beowulf weighed in at four pounds and three ounces. The cylinder length is just over three inches and the diameter measures 1.786 inches. The gap between the seven and one-quarter inch heavy barrel and the cylinder face measures a tight .003 of an inch. The trigger pull measured four and one-half pounds. Lifting one leg of the trigger spring from its post (*the **"Poor Boy's Trigger Job"***) resulted in a crisp trigger pull of two and one-third pounds. The BFR revolver shot exceptionally well with factory Alexander Arms ammunition. Accuracy with the BFR was excellent, grouping under one inch at twenty-five yards, when I did my part. Extraction with all factory loads was very easy, with the cases falling from the chambers without the use of the ejector rod. Velocity testing was done over a **PACT** chronograph at a distance of twelve feet. Velocities from the seven and one-quarter inch barrel were as follows:

Bullet	Velocity (fps)
334 grain JHP	1619
325 grain JHP	1741
334 grain JFP	1671
400 grain JFP	1355

In addition to these, I tried some of the excellent **Cast Performance** 440 grain Wide Flat Nose Gas Check bullets. These are the same bullets that are factory loaded into the .500 S&W Magnum, and are a superb choice for use in the BFR .50 Beowulf. These bullets combine a wide flat point with tough bullet construction, resulting in excellent



penetration and stopping power. In the BFR, they can be loaded up to around 1650 feet per second, just as they can in the .500 S&W case. However, I like this bullet loaded to about 1100 fps. At this velocity, recoil is greatly reduced, while still delivering plenty of shock and penetration on game. Accuracy was also excellent with this bullet.

Shooting the .50 Beowulf BFR was pleasurable, with one exception. While the recoil was stout with this gun, the rubber grips did a great job of cushioning the blow to the palm. However, I would like for the trigger guard to be a bit larger. Upon firing, the inside front of the guard would slam into my trigger finger, and it just plain hurt, even while wearing thin leather gloves. If the front of the guard were moved forward about another quarter of an inch, this should alleviate the problem. This might not be a problem for all shooters, but for me, it was. If this were my gun, I would simply remove the front of the trigger guard, making this a very comfortable big bore revolver to shoot.

The BFR revolvers, in any of their several chamberings, are very good quality handguns that are excellent for hunting. Chambered for the .50 Beowulf, the BFR has the power to take just about anything that walks the Earth, while carrying five shots in a reasonably portable package. In a good across-the-chest holster, the BFR carries easily, and is readily available should the need arise. It would make a great backup to a Beowulf rifle, with both using the same cartridge. For someone working or camping outdoors in areas where large bears reside, the BFR would be good insurance to have along, without being so cumbersome as to get in the way. It is a sturdy, well-built revolver, that combines stopping power and accuracy in a portable package.

For a look at the complete line of BFR revolvers and accessories, go to:

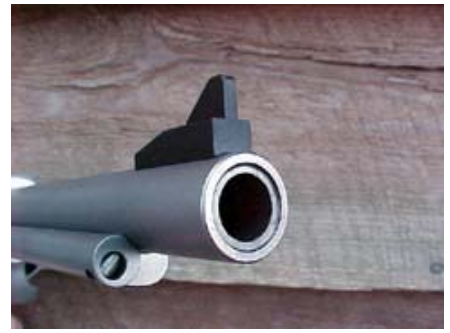
www.magnumresearch.com

For factory ammunition and AR-15 type rifles in .50 Beowulf, visit

www.alexanderarms.com

For some of the best cast bullets available, check out www.castperformance.com

Jeff Quinn



Basically a beefed-up version of



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the great Ruger Super Blackhawk, the BFR revolver is a quality revolver in every respect. The BFR features (top-bottom) wide grooved hammer spur & adjustable rear sight; quality ramp front sight; locking cylinder base pin; smooth trigger face; recessed target-type muzzle crown; five-shot cylinder; and transfer bar safety system.



The "base" BFR revolver comes with a set of Neoprene grips, but nice wood grips are optionally available from Magnum Research. Also, since the BFR has the same grip frame profile as Ruger's Super Blackhawk, aftermarket grips for the Super Blackhawk will fit nicely. Grips shown are Jeff's favorites for the Super Blackhawk: a set of custom-thinned Herrett's "Shooting Star" grips.





Author and his son-in-law, Specialist Sebastian Giles, both found the BFR .50 Beowulf accurate and fun to shoot. Recoil, while not for the faint-hearted, was very manageable.



Alexander Arms factory ammunition tested included (L-R): 334-grain JHP; 400-grain JFP; 325-grain JHP; and 334-grain JFP. There were no failures of any kind during testing, and Jeff was impressed with the accuracy exhibited.



The excellent Cast Performance .50 caliber bullets easily duplicated the performance of the .500 S&W Magnum.



Penetration capability of the big .50 Beowulf is demonstrated by this crater punched halfway through a 1" steel plate. This shows why the BFR in .50 Beowulf is capable of taking any game that walks or crawls on the face of this Earth.



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