

Accuracy & Chronograph Data

	Taurus	Taurus	Smith & Wesson	Taurus
Hornady Custom 180-gr. JHP-XTP	445	445UL Ported	296	445TBC
Average Velocity, 10 ft	769 fps	735 fps	771 fps	721 fps
Standard Deviation	4 fps	3 fps	10 fps	7 fps
Power Factor	138	132	139	130 f
Smallest Group, 15 yds.	2.0 in.	2.1 in.	2.7 in.	2.1 in.
Largest Group Size	3.7 in.	2.4 in.	3.0 in.	2.4 in.
Average Group Size	2.9 in.	2.3 in.	2.9 in.	2.3 in.
PMC 180-gr. JHP				
Average Velocity, 10 ft.	808 fps	765 fps	830 fps	745 fps
Standard Deviation	5 fps	9 fps	12 fps	7 fps
Power Factor	145	138	149	134
Smallest Group, 15 yds.	2.8 in.	2.6 in.	1.8 in.	2.6 in.
Largest Group Size	3.0 in.	3.1 in.	2.6 in.	3.1 in.
Average Group Size	2.9 in.	2.9 in.	2.1 in.	2.9 in.
Winchester 200-gr. Silvertip HP				
Average Velocity, 10 ft.	700 fps	668 fps	717 fps	669 fps
Standard Deviation	5 fps	8 fps	7 fps	6 fps
Power Factor	140	134	143	134
Smallest Group, 15 yds.	1.5 in.	2.0 in.	2.4 in.	2.0 in.
Largest Group Size	2.1 in.	2.4 in.	2.7 in.	2.4 in.
Average Group Size	1.9 in.	2.2 in.	2.5 in.	2.2 in.
Winchester 246-gr. Lead RN				
Average Velocity, 10 ft.	609 fps	598 fps	NA	591 fps
Standard Deviation	7 fps	14 fps		12 fps
Power Factor	150	147		145
Smallest Group, 15 yds.	2.6 in.	2.9 in.		2.9 in.
Largest Group Size	3.0 in.	3.3 in.		3.3 in.
Average Group Size	2.7 in.	3.1 in.		3.1 in.
Black Hills 210-grain FP Lead				
Average Velocity, 10 ft.	648 fps	633 fps	NA	630 fps
Standard Deviation	11 fps	10 fps		8 fps
Power Factor	136	1334		132
Smallest Group, 15 yds.	1.1 in.	2.4 in.		2.4 in.
Largest Group Size	2.0 in.	2.8 in.		2.8 in.
Average Group Size	1.6 in.	2.7 in.		2.7 in.

The 296 is sculpted in two shades of gray plus a black front sight-blade (serrated and pinned), offset by a black rubber grip, and a charcoal-shaded cylinder and internal retaining pins. The front sight is easy to find despite the rear notch being nearly invisible from anywhere but from behind the grip. The crane is devoid of a detent lockup, but fits tightly into the frame. We found the trigger stacked a little bit before let-off, but accu-

racy was very good. The best groups were produced with the most powerful ammo, the 180-grain JHP from PMC. However, this is not a gun you'll want to spend a lot of time practicing with due to its recoil.

GUN TESTS Recommends

To sum up this exercise in steel, aluminum, titanium, and lead, below we say buy, or good-bye, to our little round friends:

✓ Taurus Stainless Steel 445,

\$351. Buy. The size and weight of this package match up well to the .44 Special cartridge, in our view. We feel the heat-driven lockup problem can be addressed inexpensively.

✓ Smith & Wesson 296, \$625. Buy. If you are love with the .44 Special cartridge, this clunky but light revolver is good for everyday concealment (especially off the body, like in a briefcase, purse, or pouch).

● Taurus Total Titanium 445TBC, \$599. Conditional buy. We feel the lockup problem can be addressed in a steel gun, but we just don't know enough about titanium yet to be confident about the cost or effectiveness of increasing the cylinder gap. If this modification could be made, we feel it is adequate as a fast-pull close-range weapon.

● Taurus 445 UL Ported, \$599.

Conditional buy. There is probably a bullet that matches up well enough to make this gun shoot closer to point of aim. It's loaded with features, but needs adjustment.

✗ Smith & Wesson Stainless Steel 696, \$525. Goodbye. Besides the fact that it broke, we don't see the need to weigh ourselves down for the sake of only five rounds of .44 Special. Smaller, more compact five-shooters chambered for .357 Magnum pack more punch. ●