



## **Christmas in August: Springfield XD-M**

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Back in June, I was browsing through law enforcement equipment websites and came across one that mentioned the soon-to-be released Springfield Armory XD-M. I thought the pistol looked pretty interesting, so I went to the Springfield website. After viewing the posted videos, my curiosity was piqued. I was contemplating replacing my Glock 22, which I have carried for 14 years, and this pistol seemed to possess the features to make that happen. I mentioned this to a friend in the training world, who put me in contact with an employee at Springfield Armory who works in their Testing and Evaluation department. After speaking with her, I figured that my chances of seeing a T&E pistol were between small and non-existent. Imagine my surprise when I received a call from the front desk of the police department telling me that I had a package. I went to the lobby and picked up a non-descript, plain brown rectangular package. I had no idea who it was from and could not remember having ordered anything to be delivered to the police department. When I returned to my office, I opened the box and saw the black plastic box with XD M written on it. Several folks from neighboring offices came to see what the problem was because I was so excited, I let out a very loud “Wooooooooooooo Hoooooooooooo”. For me it was Christmas in August, and I was going to get to play with a new toy.

My initial perception was that there was quite a bit being offered to a person purchasing one of these pistols. Besides the high quality molded plastic case it all came in, there was the pistol, a paddle holster, double magazine pouch, two spare magazines, magazine loader, replacement backstraps, cleaning brush, and gun lock. Also included was a hex wrench for making adjustments to the holster and magazine pouch. The one thing missing, somewhat surprisingly, was a punch tool to change out the backstrap on the pistol. The pistol itself looked very inviting, just waiting to be picked up. It fit nicely into my hand but I was to find out later that the grip was a little too small for both of my hands when obtaining a shooting grip, even after fitting it with the large backstrap.

It was a couple of days before I was able to get out to the range for a test run. Keep in mind when I talk about being at the range that August temperatures in Texas reach 100+ degrees regularly and the days I was at the range were no different. I thought it would be a good opportunity to try out the new checkering that was being touted to help with grip shift during firing. When I arrived at the range, I immediately found out there was one thing I did not have to help me shoot this pistol. That one thing was the “big boy pants” it was going to take to put the 16<sup>th</sup> round in the magazine. Fifteen rounds went in snugly, but it was doable. However, even after several attempts, I was unable to load the last round using just my hands, so I turned to the magazine loader that was included with the kit. The loader worked remarkably well, and I loaded all 16 rounds into the three magazines with no



problem. When loaded with a full magazine, the pistol had a nice heft to it that I found comfortable and reassuring.

The paddle holster is a molded plastic minimalist design that I found to work quite well. The tension screw could be adjusted to provide some security for the weapon while in the holster. The holster should work quite well for concealed carry purposes. The magazine pouch was a little different matter. I have carried my spare magazines in vertical pouches for over 18 years, so I found the angle built into the pouch somewhat awkward, but I'm sure that with more practice, I would have no problems with it. The tension on the pouch adjusted the same as the holster and held onto the magazines when needed but did not hinder drawing them when doing a reload.

I got onto the firing line and charged the weapon in preparation to fire. The serrations on the slide lent themselves well to giving a good grip for racking the slide. The forward serrations also worked well for doing a "press check" to ensure that a round had been loaded. Not that a press check was absolutely necessary, as Springfield has a loaded chamber indicator that pops up on the top of the slide at the center rear of the ejector port when a round is chambered, but I think it is a nice option as it makes it easy to ensure that the pistol is loaded in low/no light situations.

I decided to start with rough accuracy firing to see how the pistol shot. I started at 10 yards and did five-round slow fire strings from a standing position with a two-handed grip. The pistol was quite accurate, but shot just a little high in relation to point of aim. The sights were white, three-dot style and were very easy to pick up. I liked the sight picture that they presented. The change from the original XD to having the sight come completely to the rear of the slide is a nice touch. By the end of my testing, I concluded that the XD-M was probably more accurate than my Glock by a small margin. Keep in mind, though, that the testing was by no means a scientific experiment, and this is just my opinion.

It was during these first strings of fire that I became aware of the aforementioned grip issue. The middle size backstrap was installed on the pistol when it arrived and I found that the grip did not provide enough girth for me to get a good 360° contact grip while shooting a modern isosceles stance. The fingers on my dominant hand wrapped so far around to inhibit my support hand from making as much contact as I am used to having. This is also where it became a problem that a punch had not been supplied with the pistol to change out the backstrap as I did not have one with me at the time. Even after changing to the bigger backstrap, the grip was still small for my hands. As I fired the five rounds, I found myself having to adjust my grip after every 2-3 rounds. That fact that I was sweating profusely may have been a factor. Despite the checkering having been changed, the pistol still moved in my hand. I do not know if there is any amount of checkering that could help with this since the grip itself is a hard smooth plastic that does not provide any traction when wet. The addition of a rubber slip on the grip might solve both my issues with it.

After completing the slow fire, I moved over to the plate rack. The rack has 6-8 inch plates and I would be shooting them from between 12-15 yards. The pistol was pretty controllable during quick strings of fire. Because the bore axis is a little higher in the hand, however, I noticed more muzzle flip than I experience when performing the same exercise with my regular duty weapon. The



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shifting of the weapon in my hand caused some small issues when I was trying to “clean” the rack with no extra rounds. I have to admit, though, that the weapon was FUN to shoot.

From the plate rack, I moved back to paper silhouette targets to work on multiple shots. I fired double taps and controlled pairs to see how the pistol would perform on fast follow up shots. Due to the muzzle flip noted earlier, I found myself a little slower than usual getting back on the sights for the second shot. I was able, though, on most occasions, to keep both shots within a hand’s breadth of each other. I think that with more practice I would have gotten even better.

During the couple of days I spent at the range, I put a little more than 400 rounds of ammunition through the pistol, with no malfunctions. I used both 180 grain FMJ factory-loaded rounds as well as 165 FMJ factory reloaded rounds for the testing. I felt the pistol is a good attempt by Springfield to up the ante for high capacity 40 S&W pistols. It was not enough to get me to give up my current duty weapon, but it might be for other folks. Hopefully they will keep the price around the same as the rest of the XD line, which would keep it competitive. I do think it would be a viable consideration for someone on bicycle patrol due to magazine capacity, metal finish, and the polymer frame. Thanks to Springfield Armory for allowing me to test the pistol for IPMBA.

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