COMBAT TEST

CCF GLOCK 35 .40

Aluminum RaceFrame—extending the definition of perfection!

By Bob Pilgrim

When a new firearms holster line, product or accessory is debuted, invariably the first commercial offerings are designed to support the world's most popular sidearm, Gaston Glock's revolutionary and ubiquitous polymer and steel, self-loading GLOCK pistol. Today there are dozens of emulative polymer-framed handguns on the market that combine light weight with pound for pound strength superior to steel. So it follows that the world's first metal receiver for polymer, plastic and nylon-framed firearms is initially being offered for full-sized GLOCK 9mm, .40, .357SIG and .45GAP pistols only. Will CCF RaceFrames build aluminum, stainless steel, or titanium "RaceFrames" for Springfield Armory XDs, Smith & Wesson M&Ps and Walthers in the future? CCF's Larry Gaglio will only say, "Time and sales will tell."

Gun Details

One might also quip, "So what, who needs metal frames anyway? And aren't polymer guns the wave of the future?" Yes, you may be right, but there are still whole bunches of shooters out there that still prefer solid steel and, to a lesser degree, metal alloys over polymer firearms. And CCF intends to satisfy that demand. Creating quite a stir at the 2006 and 2007 SHOT Shows, CCF has been ironing out production holdups and will offer the aluminum alloy and stainless steel frames to the public and law enforcement for sale as you read this. However, 12-ounce titanium frames will remain a special order item and be subject to market demand and prices. Titanium has a strength-to-weight ratio about 50% higher than steel, which means that for the same degree of strength the part can be much lighter than steel.

The discernable advantages of the new frames over the OEM receivers are as follows: two interchangeable backstraps; 1911 grip angle available; higher cut beavertail and frontstrap permits grip closer to bore axis; longer, thicker and more robust slide rails for increased durability and reliability; stronger frame integrity; enhanced frontstrap and backstrap checkering, and finger

CCF RaceFrames are available for most GLOCKs and come in aluminum, stainless or titanium.

Aluminum-framed G35 with GLOCK GTL21 and Tac-Grips. Note 1911 grip.

Note limited muzzle rise during recoil.

Main photo by Stan Trzoniec

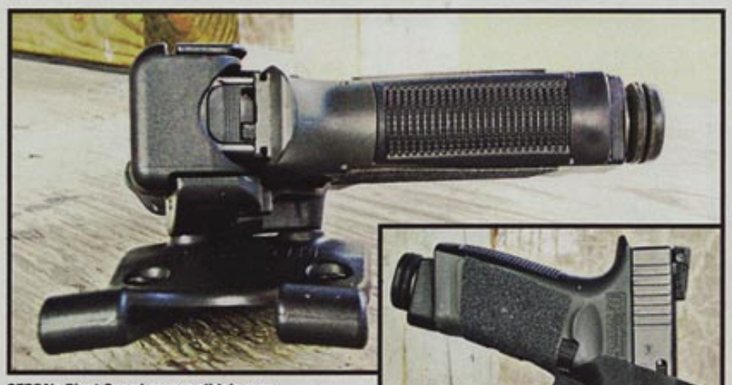
memory grooves have been eliminated; rounded and opened traditional trigger-guard for gloved hands and elimination of trigger pinch points; zero flex in frame results in a crisper trigger; increased frame weights ranging from 7.3 (aluminum) to 12 (titanium) and 21 (stainless steel) ounces result in enhanced recoil control; more robust 1913 Picatinny light and laser rail system, beveled magazine well with walls that are tapered and straight, not bottle shaped, which is characteristic of polymer when it cools after injection and removed from the mold; fully loaded, new GLOCK magazines drop free; for Special Operations personnel, frames enhance effectiveness of weapons strikes to stun and subdue adversaries; and optional thumb safety.

I had a chance to live with a CCF RaceFrames aluminum-framed GLOCK 35 for several weeks and have fired a couple of cases of Federal American Eagle .40, 180-grain FMJ ammo through it. The "proprietary, hard coating anodized and organic top coated aluminum" framed gun feels totally different from the stock GLOCK and recoil control is outstanding. Similar to the almost universal reaction, when shaking hands for the first time with a High-Power, to a person, when they pick up my G35 with the optional 1911 grip angle they respond, "This really feels good. It feels like a real gun." The frame with this grip strap not only reflects the familiar Government model feel for many shooters, but it also has a reduced (1911) diameter that is just the right balance between the GLOCK's generous grip circumference and a single stack pistol. With its standard GLOCK backstrap and 1911 option, all hands should feel comfortable with the CCF frame.

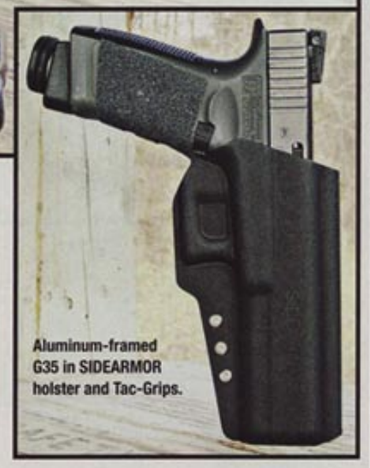
Ergonomically, stock GLOCKs are not for everyone and many Government model shooting colleagues of mine say that among other idiosyncrasies, the gun points high for them. In this respect, and like a number of other older designs, the GLOCK is a "what you see is what you get" firearm, take it or leave it, unless you want to spend hundreds on frame surgery by gun docs. For approximately the same dollars you can purchase a CCF RaceFrame along with all of its other unique attributes in addition to a more personalized grip. For me, the 1911 angled GLOCK now points naturally and I instinctively line up gun and target with my eyes closed.

The OEM GLOCK polymer frame weighs a feathery 3.6 ounces. With GLOCK innards in place, the 7.3-ounce aluminum frame weighs a little over 10 ounces. With 15 rounds of 180-grain JHP ammunition a polymer OEM G35 weighs 36.2 ounces. Slip on an aluminum frame and my G35 bulks up to 40.1 ounces. This compares favorably with my fully loaded Novak 1911 with eight 230-grain round's weight of 44 ounces. And, when I attached GLOCK's GTL 21 white light and laser, total weight duplicated the above cited 1911's exactly. The additional weight appreciably moderates muzzle flip and my six-shot Bill drills from the holster are approaching the holy, 2-second grail at 7 yards. However, if you opt for the stainless steel receiver, "Go to War Weight" shoots up to a hefty 53.9 ounces.

Marine captain puts aluminum RaceFrame G35 through paces.



SERPA's Pivot Guard covers slide's rear.



Aluminum-framed G35 in SIDEARMOR holster and Tac-Grips.

The CCF G35 .40 in BlackHawk Level III SERPA Auto lock Duty Holster.

A short tutorial by gifted engineer Ray Harms, the designer of the frames, revealed internal features not readily detectable. There is absolutely no barrel movement once lockup is achieved when the slide is in battery. The frame comes with a proprietary locking piece that exerts more upward pressure against the bottom barrel lug so that it is forced into a very snug berth within the ejection port. A more crisp trigger without a scintilla of overtravel is created by the metal frame's zero degree of flex, which in turn prevents the trigger bar from coming in contact and binding with the frame's starboard side wall and a unique built-in trigger stop.

All of the frames will resist corrosion and, according to CCF, will outlast polymer. If this is true, then these frames will be inherited by generations to come.

Continued on page 94

(Continued from page 41)

In addition, the CCF frame's internal rails are five times longer and thicker than GLOCK's and its forward mounted Picatinny rail is more substantial than the one currently on the polymer frame.

Recently, it has come to my attention that some polymer-framed guns will absorb moisture, particularly during hot and humid weather. Frames have swelled; and functioning, such as the removal of magazines has been rendered very difficult. This occurred in South Africa, but I must add that when I was seconded to DEA, my unit ran Operation Snowcap, the South American cocaine interdiction program and my boss, the legendary Frank White, specifically selected GLOCK pistols for the unit. The agents deployed to the jungles of that continent never complained about the ability of the GLOCK to perform in adverse conditions. An engineer advised that, "All polymers absorb moisture and expand as a result, to one degree or another. In fact, plastic pellets used in molding must go through a drying process to remove moisture before being melted, lest they explode like popcorn." The individual who conveyed the South African incident and provided the engineer's quote further speculated that, "I'll bet the rain-induced expansion, combined with suction, made those South African GLOCK magazines stick in the magazine well to a greater degree than expected."

Shooting Impressions

However, my most nagging and persistent problem resides with GLOCK pivoting triggers and my tendency to milk my shots to my support side, especially when engaging in rapid fire. Finger isolation is the key and I have never acquired that unique digital skill. I asked National Champion Dave Sevigny of GLOCK competitive fame how to correct this and his quick answer was, "Dry fire, dry fire and dry fire." Another solution for me is to grip the gun hard, so that the grip is almost completely contracted and there is no room for further movement.

When the stainless steel frame takes on the 9mm, I can attest that it spits out even the hot Parabellum like a .22 conversion kit. Muzzle lift was still there, but shot to shot recovery is almost scary fast. Trigger overtravel is non-existent and reset is much more abbreviated. Competitors will embrace the heavier stainless steel frame, but Gaglio further advised that the majority of police departments that have contacted CCF also favor the stainless receiver.

At the 2007 SHOT Show, CCF was visited by representatives for the IDPA and preliminary, but unofficial rulings were made regarding its place in competition. IDPA has preliminarily determined that the aluminum and titanium frames are legal for Enhanced Service Pistol, but the stainless or carbon steel frame, although they are within IDPA weight limits, cannot have a full-length dust cover. Ray Harms advised that RaceFrames will remedy that situation by shortening the SS dust cover, adding stippled side panels, oversized rails and an oversized locking block for match fitting.

Stainless steel frame with 1911 grip.

CCF RaceFrames: stainless steel, bottom left, titanium at top and aluminum on right.

John Amidon, a USPA/IPSC official was contacted and he advised that the metal frames would be good to go in Open, Limited and Limited 10 classifications, but not allowed in Production. CCF RaceFrames has already discussed providing limited support for a USPA Grand Master shooter in this competitive venue and you should witness RaceFrame-augmented GLOCKs winning these classifications in the near future.

One of the niggling problems that GLOCK exhibits on occasion is limp wristing or weak grip stoppages. This manifests itself most frequently with new shooters who do not provide the recoil-absorbing polymer frame with the sufficient resistance needed to function. In this regard, I intentionally fired a CCF RaceFrame GLOCK with my thumb and trigger finger holding the gun to the point of falling from my hand. I was able to exhaust the entire magazine without a hiccup.

Another criticism raised by GLOCK antagonists has been the lack of an external, active safety. Invariably, lawsuits against GLOCK frequently cite this omission as a safety deficit. As an option and a very welcome one, CCF will offer a thumb safety and they are in the process of improving those currently under consideration.

The RaceFrame will fit most GLOCK holsters, but I had to loosen up the Blade-Tech holster my friend loaned me. An extremely well made Sidearmor scabbard and the new ultra secure LIII BlackHawk SERPA holster fit the gun perfectly. At the 2007 SHOT Show, Safariland's Tom Campbell reported that 95% of their holsters accommodated the CCF's frames.

Final Notes

As you are reading this article, the frames are being delivered to customers via US distributors. A GLOCK 19 metal frame is being planned for late 2007 or early 2008.

CCF will not produce complete guns because of liability issues. Aftermarket manufacturers also produce a myriad of other GLOCK accessories so that the RaceFrame owner could further customize his/her own gun to their specifications and come even closer to one's personal perception of earthly perfection.

If you are a passionate GLOCK aficionado you will see the RaceFrame as an option and not as a competitor to the traditional polymer GLOCK. Only time and field use by end users will determine the true advantages of the metal frames over the OEM receivers. However, I guarantee that you will experience a new dimension of GLOCK shooting with these beautiful and practical alloy additions to the ever-expanding world of guns. ●

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