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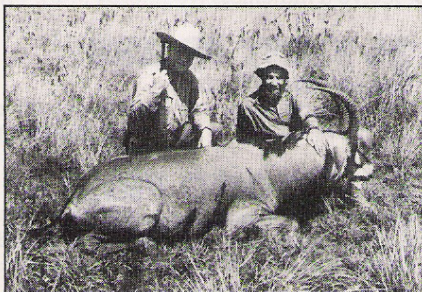
GUN NOTES



By Elmer Keith, Executive Editor

BIG-GAME BULLETS

First, let's talk about full jacket or solid bullets. As a boy in Montana, I used a 1903 Springfield with full-patch, 150-grain bullets for my coyote shooting and had very good success with the little spitzer full-patch bullet. They usually tumbled on impact and killed quite well. Sometimes however, on broadside rib shots, they sim-



ply drilled through and then I had to shoot again. Later, after service on the Montana National Guard .30 caliber team at Camp Perry, I tried the full-patch nine-degree boattail on coyotes and it did not kill half as well as the short, tumbling 150-grainer. I lost 15 coyotes one winter. They were shot with the 173-grain boattails that simply drilled through with no tumbling.

Back in 1917 I wounded a six-point elk at daylight on the West Gallatin by putting a 220-grain soft nose in his flank while he was quartering away. It was the only shot I could get between the trees. I trailed that bull all day into and then out of the park. I gave the bull my scent on a long circle and ran him out. I got another running shot in the deep snow and planted another 220-grain bullet in the elk's flank. Both bullets, I later learned, went into the paunch and stayed right there. The bull left



in a 150-grain service spitzer and worked my way down for a close shot. When I fired, he whirled, his hair all on end, threw his head up and charged and I shot him in

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the bulge of the neck which dropped him or good. Later when I skinned out the head I found a badly deformed 150-grain bullet lodged in the jawbone, showing how that bullet changed direction.

While the 150-grain service .30 caliber bullet is the most erratic after striking game, the flat point bullets are most apt to hold a true course with the round nose second. I once shot a big bull bison at 60 yards standing broadside to me. I held for a high lung shot as I did not want to damage the skull. That bull jumped eight feet into the air from the impact of the 520-grain cupro nickel-covered solid from my .476 Westley Richards double rifle, and he came down in full charge! My next barrel, I tried for a shoulder shot as he quartered toward me. The 520-grain solid went inside the shoulder, struck a rib, turned square across the chest and broke another rib and wound up under the skin. That put him down, but he was not dead. It later proved to be a mass of broken-up jacket and core with no resemblance to its former shape. The bull was still not dead and after five minutes Iver Henriksen ran in against my wishes and sat down on the bull's hindquarters, saying he would never get up. As Iver kinked his tail, the bull exploded off the ground throwing Iver to one side. As he whirled to get Iver, I shot him in the side of the neck, killing him instantly. That 520-grain round nose solid went through the neck vertebrae and into the side hill. Iver dug it out the next spring and it was only "rifling marked" and still in perfect shape! That shows you never can be certain just what any bullet, even a solid, will do on impact. An African Cape buffalo I also shot broadside through the heart with the same rifle and 520-grain solid simply jumped into high gear and ran in the direction he was originally headed. Swinging the big rifle sights ahead of his nose, I shot the other barrel which caught him high in the shoulder and broke the shoulder and the spine. His front legs folded up and he skidded on his chin with his hindquarters high in the air for 30 feet before he hit a rock pile and folded up without a kick. Those two solids worked perfectly. While the two 520-grain solids worked perfectly on the Cape buffalo, my first shot at the bison with the same ammunition, held for a lung shot, went through the skin and never entered either lung. Where it went, we never determined nor did we find it in the meat. I can only conclude it turned on a rib and went back into the huge paunch and lodged there as there was absolutely no trace of an exit. How two ribs can so badly deform a 520-grain, .476 solid and the same type bullet after the neck vertebrae of that bison and go into the snow and ground a foot, and still be in perfect shape is beyond my ken. I prefer solids for elephant, buffalo, rhino and hippo, but you should strive for either

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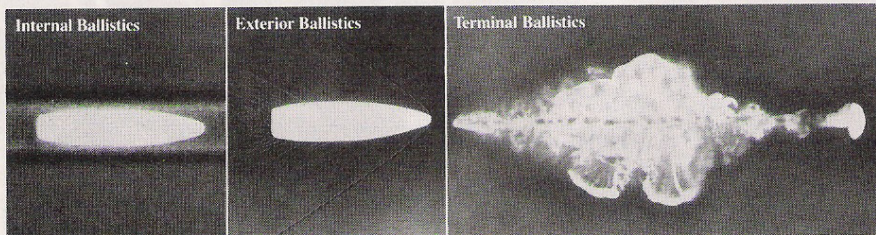
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a brain or spine shot and break bones with solids, otherwise they may have little immediate effect. My 1957 African White Hunter, John Lawrence, once told me if he could shoot like I did on that safari that he would use nothing but solids. However, I prefer soft nose for all lesser game.

Over the years I have tried or seen used about every possible type of expanding bullets at both low and high velocities. The umbrella point of Winchester, the Bronze Point of Remington, the U.S. Cartridge trick point were most all at high velocity and they proved to have very poor penetration in the main. They would also ruin a lot of meat and you never could predict exactly how they would perform. If they got into the lungs and heart area, they killed quicker than a long heavy soft nose but they also failed miserably through lack of penetration on raking shots and often on shoulder shots as well. Seven elk were shot in the shoulder one fall in the Selway. I once put five Remington Bronze Points of 150-grain into a bull elk's ribs at 300 yards from a Government Springfield sporter. The five all went through the rib cage and into the right lung where each blew out a small crater the size of a hen's egg. Then my partner put two .25-35 117-grain into his paunch, out of five he fired, and the bull turned around and faced us. I had one clip of 1923 National Match boat tail of 173-grains weight, so I shoved them in the magazine and centered my aim on his neck. He dropped dead at that shot and we later found that the bullet had drilled him full-length and it finally came out at the top of his tail.

That and many more experiences with short, lightweight, high-velocity bullets soured me on them for my own game shooting.

One party I had in the Lochsa, in the late thirties, were all armed with .30-06 and 180-grain U.S. Cartridge Company's trick point spitzer bullets. They should have had seven elk but wound up with three kills that hit the neck or spine and the other four got away wounded in spite of our best efforts to trail them up.

I sent a hunting party to Charlie Snook at Elk Summit in the sixties. Each had a .270 rifle and 150-grain bullet ammo. Two of them shot three elk each and the other two each shot two elk they wounded and lost them all. Charlie was as mad as a wet hen when they wanted to book again for the next year. He told them he would only book them if they came to me and took my recommendations for an elk rifle. They did so and I told them to get Model 70 Winchester rifles in .375 H&H and use 300-grain bullets. Then sight the rifles at 150 yards for that heavy-timbered elk country. They booked again and after the hunt they each came in with a fifth of scotch for me and claimed they got four elk

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with one shot each!

Leslie Simson, who hunted Africa for 23 years and filled many museum groups of African game, used a .577 double for lion and all the big stuff, and for plains game he recommended a rifle of .35 caliber throwing a 275-grain bullet at 2,500 feet per second (fps) and if any change is required, then add bullet weight rather than velocity. After a lifetime of hunting from the Arctic to Africa, I concur with his findings 100 percent.

I stopped booking anyone for elk unless they used a rifle throwing at least a 250-grain bullet and not less than .33 caliber in the rifle, as I was getting pretty tired of trailing wounded elk. Summing up our present big-game bullets, the 250-.338 and 300-grain Nosler Partition jacket always gave good results even though the point-half would blow off at close range and I have had no experience with the later one-piece jacketed Nosler. The Sierra Bottails in both 250 grains .338 and 300-grain .375 were by all odds the most accurate game bullets I have ever fired but at the time did not expand much on broadside shots at antelope. They also blew up on bones of heavier game and also often shed their jackets on heavy game. The 275 old heavy jacket Speer was, for many years, my standby in the various .338 caliber rifles after we quit the .333 O.K.H. The .338 Magnum is our old short-belted .333 O.K.H. with a .008-inch larger bullet just as the .340 Weatherby is our old .334 O.K.H. with the same larger bullet.

For years I used the 275-grain Western Tool & Copper Works bullets in the .35 Whelen. They would not expand enough on black bear but were wonderful on grizzly, brownies and elk. The .400 Whelen with 63 grains of 17 1/2 powder and the 350-grain W.T.C. Co. bullet was always a killer on everything.

Bill Stegers softpoints with the cores soldered to the jacket always worked well from all reports, though I never used them myself. Summing them all up, I have more faith in a plain soft nose with enough lead exposed for certain expansion and a heavy enough jacket to hold together. The Hot Core Speer has done well in this respect as has the Remington Core Lokt. This Remington has always proved a reliable bullet in their heaviest weights, but their 150-grain 7 mm Mag will blow up like about all other high-velocity bullets and I don't recommend that caliber for anything heavier than deer. After a lifetime of hunting, I prefer a long, heavy soft nose bullet with a heavy enough jacket so it will expand, but never blow up. I prefer it to go right through an animal's lungs broadside, and leave a blood trail, whereas the high-velocity stuff that blows up leaves no blood trail and seldom penetrates sufficiently except on broadside rib shots, which are so seldom obtained.

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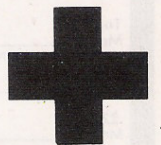
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