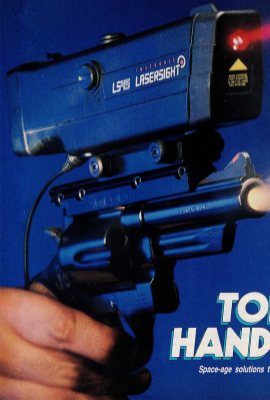


# TOMORROW'S SIGHTS...



## FOR TODAY'S HANDGUNS

Space-age solutions to handgun aiming problems.

By Bob Mlek

**F**or many years sights on handguns were open sights; your choice was between those of fixed design and those featuring adjustments for windage and elevation. Then came pistol scopes, the same basic design as rifle scopes, but using long eye relief so the entire field of view can be seen with the handgun held at arm's length. Man, how quickly things change!

Today we have open sights, pistol scopes and two relatively new products, projected dot sights and laser sights.

Laser sights are the newest as far as the market is concerned. To this point, their development has not been directed toward the sporting market. A laser sight actually projects a beam between it and the target and shows on the target as a red dot.

The shooter doesn't even look through the sight. Instead, he points the firearm at the target, locking only at it. When the red dot is where he wants it, he pulls the trigger. Under normal conditions, the laser beam between sight and target cannot be seen, but in a foggy or smoky atmosphere, you actually see the laser beam. I've had no experience with laser sights, but at the moment it's said that they are most effective in very subdued light, or when it's dark.

Laser sights from Laser Products, Dept. GA, 18285 Mt. Baldy Circle, Fountain Valley, CA 92706, are presently designed for use on rifles only, while sights from Imatronic, Inc., Dept. GA, 2727 Main Street, Suite E, Santa Monica, CA 90405, and Emerging Technologies, Inc., Dept.

# TOMORROW'S SIGHTS

GA, P.O. Box 581, Little Rock, AR 72203, make laser sights for both rifles and handguns. Laser sights presently have limited sporting use and are relatively expensive. In certain fields, as laser sight technology advances, we'll see units designed for sporting use on handguns and at that time we'll attempt to cover them in depth.

This brings us, then, to the projected dot sights. I'm not sure that the term projected dot best describes these optical sights. Tascos refers to their Pro-Point as an illuminated optical sight. Airpoint to them as an electronic sight. They are optical sights using a tube and lenses in



Laser sights, such as the ones seen above and to the right, project a beam of illuminated light to the target. It shows up in the form of a visible red dot on the target.



Mitek produced excellent results with a cobble-together mount system for the Mark V sight. The Mitek rings include useful open sights on top, as seen in photo.



Although the Ruger .22 was a little bulky with the sight in place, it shot quite well (left).



The Pro-Point (above) as installed on the .30-30 Contender, which can be a pretty hard-kicking handgun. After extended shooting, the sight still worked fine.



Mitek installed a Tascos Pro-Point on a Contender. The gun was a .30-30, which generate some hefty recoil. Pro-Point tube diameter is shown, but the unit comes with proper rings to fit standard Weaver-type bases and installs easily. The projected dot covered most of Mitek's bullseye at 100 yards, but he was able to shoot groups averaging 2.3".

Pro-Point. All four of the projected dot sights I worked with are 1X sights, affording no magnification of the target.

On every such sight I tested there's a rheostat integral with the battery case, which adjusts the intensity of the red dot. You aim through the scope, set the dot on your target and fire. There are also adjustments for windage and elevation built into illuminated dot sights just as in other scope sights. The adjustments are housed in bumps set on the top and side of the tube.

There are many advantages claimed for the electronically projected dot sights. First, they're parallax-free and the dot need not be centered in the field of view to shoot accurately. If you can see the dot and get it on target, your shot will hit the aiming point—at the sight-in distance, of course.

Second, these sights weigh very little. Most of the projected dot sights available for use on handguns weigh between five and eight ounces complete with batteries and polarizing filter. Third, they're relatively short. In all fairness to other sights, though, projected dot sights are bulky. The rheostat/power control is integral with the sight tube and sticks out to one side or the other. Fourth, all pro-



Author Mitek (above) mounted the Airpoint 2000 on a 56 W Model 57 .44 Magnum for 50 yard test shooting. From the rear (above right) the sight's electrical unit extends down to the left. Author used the mount system offered by the Airpoint company, which requires removal of the original iron sight.

The 2000 offers the smallest and brightest red dot of any of the units tested. It was also an accurate sight, with some 50 yard groups near the 2-inch mark. The 2000 is top of the line.



The Airpoint 2000, with 1-inch tube and integral mounting rail, is a compact and heavy unit. On the Contender in .22 long rifle, Mitek used the sight which proved capable of shooting 10-shot groups averaging 2 1/2 inches.

jected dot sight makers claim a large field of view and at least one claims a wider field of view than any other electronic sight or pistol scope.

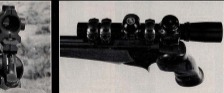
Finally, there's eye relief. Projected dot scopes are made to be used on both rifles and handguns, so the eye relief is unlimited. You can see through them with your eye close to the scope as it will be on a rifle, you can see the whole field of view with the scope on a pistol held at arm's length, and you see the entire field of view at any place in between those two extremes.

With these things in mind, let's get on with my tests of four popular projected dot pistol sights, considering each in alphabetical order. However, also be advised that there are two additional dot sights on the market that have not been evaluated by me but are comparable to the four featured here. These sights are the Amson O.E.G. (Amson, Inc., Dept.

GA, 37718 Hills Tech Drive, Farmington Hills, MI 48018) and the Ebot Falcon (Inframatics, Inc., Dept. GA, 12 Oak Park Drive, Bedford, MA 01730). These units warrant consideration, and I'd write to their makers for additional information.

## AIRPOINT SERIES 1000

This is the most compact of the projected dot sights I tested owing to the fact that the electronic unit—the battery compartment/microstat—is relatively small in diameter and is positioned horizontally alongside the sight tube rather than sticking out at an angle. It has a one-inch tube and weighs 7.86 ounces complete, making it a bit heavier than other sights in its class. However, this is because the means for attaching the sight to standard Weaver-style bases are integral with the sight tube. I mounted my Series 1000 on a 10-inch Contender barrel chambered for the .22 Long Rifle cartridge.



Looking down on this Contender, you can see the three-ring mounting system which may be necessary for some hard-kicking handguns.



The electrical unit on the Series 1000 is set on the right side of the sight tube with the rheostat facing toward the shooter so that it's easy to see and manipulate. When the white line on the

continued on page 108

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continued from page 37

rheostat knob is lined up with a white dot on the battery compartment, the power is off. Rotating the knob clockwise moves the unit on and increases the intensity, or brightness of the light. The rheostat is on continuous motion, the rheostat has ten positions, each of which is reached with a reasonable click. These positions are supplied by a single lithium battery or two mercury, silver oxide or alkaline batteries. Lithium and silver oxide batteries are recommended for low-temperature use.

Windage and elevation adjustments are located in a turret set on the front of the sight rather than in the middle or rear. The dials are covered with protective caps and are clearly marked as to which direction to turn them to achieve the desired direction of change in bullet impact point. Each adjustment click is supposed to move the point of impact of the bullet 1/4 inch at 110 yards. Because I did my testing of the 22 Long Rifle at 50 yards, each click moved the point of impact approximately 1/4 inch at this distance. The adjustments appeared to be pretty accurate, but there's no way that I can say for sure that each click moved the impact point exactly 1/4 inch.

The dot in the Series 1000 is relatively large, covering to the edge of the field of view in diameter at 50 yards and five inches in diameter at 100 yards. I used the sight with the polarizing filter attached to the objective end and, in bright sunlight,

"...laser sights...are most effective in very subdued light, or when it's dark."

the dot was best at nearly full intensity. The sight also has the smallest field of view of any projected dot sight I tested. While I was unable to measure the field of view exactly, it's very close to one foot at 100 yards.

Using Federal high-velocity hollow point 22 Long Rifle ammunition, I aimed at and shooting from a solid benchrest, I fired three 10-shot groups at 50 yards. The smallest measured 2.2 inches, the largest 2.8 inches and the average for the three groups was 2.5 inches.

The suggested retail price for the Series 1000 is \$199.95. The Series 2000 is \$249.95. The Series 2000 is the polarizing filter is \$159.95.

### AMPOINTE SERIES 2000

This is Ampoint's top of the line electronic sight. Two models, short and long, in both blue and a stainless finish, are available. Both have one-inch tubes and can be used on rifles and pistols. The short model is intended primarily for handgun use. My test sight is the blued short model which, with batteries and the polarizing filter in place, weighs 3.35 ounces and is just five inches long overall. The electrical unit on the sight is located on the rear of the sight and protrudes to the right 7 3/8 inches. It comes complete with two battery caps, long and short, to accommodate the various batteries which will power the unit. I mounted my test sight on a Remington-Wea-son Model 57 .41 Magnum revolver with an 8 1/2-inch barrel. A handgun I felt I'd test the durability of the sight. Again, I decided to do all of my shooting at 50

yards because the .41 Magnum is not a good long range cartridge. Standard sighting systems with one-inch rings can be used with the Series 2000, but special mounts are required for 20-caliber guns. To attach the sight to the Magnum, I used Almpoint's own base and rings for this revolver. This appears to be a well-designed, rugged mount. The base of being attached back to it that I can see is that the rear sight must be removed from the revolver before the base can be installed. However, no drilling and tapping is required and this is a big plus feature.

The Ampoint Series 2000 sight has the smallest steepest red dot found in any sight I tested. At 50 yards the dot covers a circle approximately 1 1/2 inches in diameter, so at 100 yards it will subtend three

"In their basic form, projected dot sights are optics, but they afford no magnification—unless..."

inches. Its intensity is regulated by rotating the rheostat, but there are no markings on the rheostat knob to tell the shooter when the power to the sight is turned on. Unlike the Series 1000, the 2000 has a continuous motion rheostat with no clicks. With the polarizing filter attached to the objective end and, in bright sunlight, results with the dot intensity at maximum.

The accuracy of this sight is good and it held up well to the recoil of the .41 Magnum. My five-shot groups at 50 yards, using Winchester 175-grain Silvertip .41 Mag. ammo, averaged 2.7 inches, the smallest group being 2.1 inches. The adjustments for windage and elevation have neither clicks nor any direction markings. Each mark on the adjustment scale indicates a movement of bullet impact of approximately one inch at 100 yards.

The factory specifications for Ampoint sights do not explicitly state any particular field of view. However, when I checked it at the range it appeared to be about 1 foot at 100 yards. This does not live up to the company's claim that "no other electronic sight, no rifle or pistol scope can offer you a wider field of view."

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Ampoint sights are available from most leading gun shops and sporting goods dealers. The Series 1000 is available from Series 2000 short model sight is \$209.95. You can't locate an Ampoint dealer in your area, write to Ampoint, Dept. GA, 365 E. 15th Street, Suite 202, Henderson, VA 22060, for details.

**INTERARMS MARK V**  
The Mark V projected dot sight comes in two versions: InterArms of Sweden. Like the Ampoint 1000, the battery compartment/rheostat unit lays alongside the one-inch tube, and the sight's core has a diameter of 1.2 inches, measures 6 1/2 inches long. It comes with a rubber cup which slips over the eye-piece and extends to the 30mm ring. This sight is different from others that I tested in that the rheostat is located on the front of the electrical unit, pointing away from the shooter. It's not a drawback, but I would prefer that the rheostat knob face me so that I can see when it's on and off. The operating ring is marked with a white line which, when aligned with the

white dot on the battery compartment, indicates when the sight is turned on.

The Mark V is supplied with two mercury batteries which are all you need for most shooting. The manufacturer recommends that these be soaked for the proper amount of time before the sight is to be used at temperatures below 5°F. I tested the sight with the one-inch tube, standard scope mounts can be mounted with the Mark V. I decided to mount mine on a stainless steel Mark I Ruger with a five-inch but barrel and I managed to come up with a rather unique system that could be very useful in the field. For a base I used the 3-Square unit which slips over the receiver and is locked solidly in place by three crossbolts. The factory rear sight does not have to be removed. The top of this 3-Square mount provides a standard 1 1/2-inch diameter ring, I chose the Miller Scope-Site set which fits Weaver-style bases. The unique design allows the sight to be mounted on a set of good adjustable open sights and the rings. I like the idea because should the batteries of the Mark V sight fail me in the field, or the sight become inoperable for any other reason, I still have a set of excellent open sights to fall back on.

Because this sight, too, was mounted on a shot chambered for the 22 Long Rifle, I did my shooting at 50 yards. The Mark V has a field of view of approximately 6 1/2 feet at 50 yards, 1 1/2 feet at 100 yards. Unlike the red dot is relatively large, covering a six-inch circle at 100 yards. Still, I was able to shoot some pretty decent shots. 50-yard groups with the one-inch tube, the largest 2.9 inches and the average of three 10-shot groups was 2.5 inches in diameter.

The InterArms Mark V sight is marketed in the United States by ADCO International, Dept. GA, 1 Wyman Street, Woburn, MA 01897. Its suggested retail is \$165.

**TASCO PRO-POINT**  
Probably the best-known of the projected dot sights is the Tasco Pro-Point. The newest—the Tasco Pro-Point. Developed with the action shooter in mind, the Pro-Point was designed for handguns by hand-

It differs from the other three projected dot sights I tested in that it has a 30mm ring. However, the sight's 30mm field of view can create mounting problems, it also results in wider field of view. As near as I could measure the field at the range, it's about 1 1/2 feet at 100 yards. But, as you know, that tube size speak you. The Pro-Point comes complete with 30mm rings which fit standard Weaver-style bases.

Tasco provides two 1.4-volt mercury batteries with the Pro-Point package. The instructions with this sight say nothing about using lithium batteries. But, as you know, I suspect the mercury batteries will give you trouble at low temperature. I assume that suitable 1.4-volt lithium batteries will work in the Pro-Point.

I decided to mount my Pro-Point on a pistol generating some recoil, yet one that provides an ample amount of recoil. I used a Contender 14-inch 30-30. The recoil of this pistol is a bit heavy for the dovetail mount, so I used a 30mm ring to anchor the sight to the Contender. This system functioned very well throughout my tests. While the Pro-Point is not a large field of view of the sights I tested, it also has the biggest red dot. It appeared to cover about seven inches at 100 yards. As with the others, the red portion of the dot is

dot appeared best at near maximum intensity when I was shooting in bright sunlight. The rheostat on the original Pro-Point sight was located on the front of the battery compartment, pointing away from the shooter. This was a change from the newer models—a welcome change indeed. Now it faces the shooter and is conspicuously marked with a white line. The rheostat is on continuous motion to increase the intensity.

I used a target sporting an eight-inch black ball for my accuracy tests of the Tasco Pro-Point 30-30. At 100 yards, I was able to come up with a 100-yard. Even though the dot covered most of the target, I was able to record some pretty low groupings. Using PMC 100-grain 30-30 factory ammunition, my smallest five-shot group at 100 yards was 1.8 inches, the largest 3.0 inches and the average 2.3 inches. I was able to shoot 83 rounds of ammo seemed to have no adverse effect on the Pro-Point.

The elevation adjustments on the Tasco are claimed to move the point of impact of the bullet one inch at 100 yards. It appeared that this is close to correct. However, there are no markings on the windage and elevation scales so I indicate which way to turn the adjustments for up, down, left or right. There is a reason for this, though. The Tasco has a turret set on the front of the cylinder on either the left or right side, an operation which reverses the position of the sight.

The Tasco Pro-Point has a suggested retail of \$215.95 and your dealer should have this sight in stock. However, if you need

"They're great in situations requiring speed in sighting..."

more information, write to Tasco, Dept. GA, P.O. Box 520080, Miami, FL 33152. Having completed my tests of four projected dot sights, I have a few comments to make. First of all, projected dot sights may not be the answer for all shooting at all distances, but they certainly have their uses. Second, the sight's 30mm field of view comparable to a good 1 1/2 long eye relief pistol scope, but the field of view is adequate for most situations. No, it might give you a few problems, but you'll get them using a projected dot sight. When the reticle covers an area three to seven degrees, you'll have a hard time sighting if not impossible to shoot groups measuring one inch or less. But one-inch groups aren't the goal of the action sport competitor or the woods hunter whose shots are going to come at 100 yards or less in poor light and often at a moving target. Despite their extremely light weight, projected dot scopes appear to be rugged enough to handle heavy recoil. However, I'd have to see a high sight a lot more on handguns getting a severe recoil before I could be sure.

Just a long eye relief pistol scopes were used. I used a 30mm ring to anchor the sight to the Contender. This system functioned very well throughout my tests. While the Pro-Point is not a large field of view of the sights I tested, it also has the biggest red dot. It appeared to cover about seven inches at 100 yards. As with the others, the red portion of the dot is

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