



Concealed Carry in the Buckeye State

A newly minted CCW holder looks for the right sidearm in central Ohio

I recently completed a CCW course in Ohio and was issued a concealed-carry license by my local sheriff's office. That got me thinking: What handgun would area firearms retailers suggest I carry? It would be interesting finding out.

STORE A LOOKING SHARP

► This large outdoors store is located in a rural area along an interstate highway, making for easy access. I arrived mid-morning on a weekday to see several employees working the gun sales counter. All were dressed in matching black golf shirts and wore name tags. No doubt about it, they looked sharp. Another positive aspect of this store was that every employee I passed, both coming and going, greeted me and asked if they could help me find anything.

Approaching the gun counter, I was greeted by one of the younger men, Josh. I told him I was interested in seeing what handguns he recommended for concealed carry. He immedi-

ately reached for a Smith & Wesson M&P Shield.

Coincidentally, I had purchased that exact make and model handgun during the past year, so I was very familiar with it.

"It's the hottest concealed-carry gun on the market right now," he said, "mainly because it's so thin." He showed a deep knowledge of the gun as he explained its features. He noted that it came in two calibers—9mm and .40—and added that the gun also came with two magazines.

Next he showed me a SIG Arms P938, and again he was very knowledgeable about the gun's features and functions. Seeing a large selection of other handguns under the counter, I asked him if there

were other brands I should consider. "No, these are the only two I'd recommend for concealed-carry," he said.

STORE B ON THE PHONE

► With the record demand for firearms during the past few years, many small gun stores have popped up recently in Ohio. This shop, located in a strip mall in a small town, opened its doors within the last year.

I arrived about mid-afternoon on a Friday. As I entered the very small, one-room store, a woman greeted me from behind the gun counter. A man—presumably her husband—was also behind the counter, working on an MSR.

Two other guys were in the store, but they appeared to be just hanging out, talking guns, and not serious customers.

Upon telling the woman I was shopping for a concealed-carry handgun, she placed three options on the counter: a used Kahr and two new Smith & Wesson models. I asked to handle and dry-fire each gun; she told me I could, but didn't offer much additional information.

"Choosing a handgun pretty much comes down to personal preference," she said. I noticed that as I was dry-firing, she was checking messages on her cell phone.

Giving her one more chance to help me, I pointed to the M&P Shield. I told her that I'd heard this was a popular gun

and asked why. The man behind the counter got involved at that point. He walked over and pointed to the barrel of the gun. “See that M&P designation?” he said. “That stands for military and police. I believe that’s why the gun is so popular, because that’s stamped on it.”

STORE C FRESH AIR

► As with Store B, this gun store is a relative newcomer—in business only about a year—but was a breath of fresh air by comparison. Much larger in size (and professionalism), it is located in an urban setting within the city limits of Columbus. I arrived mid-morning on a weekday and was immediately greeted by John. I said that I

had just passed a CCW course and was shopping for a concealed-carry handgun.

“Congratulations,” he said. “You did it the right way. Most people buy a gun first and then take the course.” John also told me that he was a certified NRA instructor and taught CCW courses himself.

He then proceeded to take the next full hour to show me no fewer than 10 brands of handguns and various models of each. His knowledge of the various firearms was astounding, and he suggested that I dry-fire each of the guns to get a feel for their trigger pull. He also suggested that I pull the trigger at least three times on each gun; each time I did, he recycled the gun’s slide for me, so that I would not have to do

it myself and re-grip the gun.

I asked various questions from time to time, but there was no need to pump John for information—he was a veritable fount of features and details.

STORE D PROS AT WORK

► Just a few miles outside the Columbus outer belt to the northeast of the city is a small, upscale town, the location of this longtime gun store and indoor shooting range. Arriving around noon on a weekday, I was immediately greeted by Nick.

Upon stating my purpose for stopping by, Nick showed me about a half dozen brands of handguns—SIG Sauer, Kahr, Smith & Wesson, Ruger, and Springfield—suggesting that I

keep in mind two things when purchasing a concealed-carry firearm: quality and comfort.

“You don’t want to have to worry about your gun functioning flawlessly if you ever have to use it,” he said. “And as far as comfort is concerned, a concealed-carry gun should be comfortable in two ways: comfortable to shoot and also comfortable to carry.”

He also said that he didn’t want to overwhelm me on my first visit by showing me too many handguns, though he had plenty available. Nick then got a phone call he had to take, so turned me over to Ken, who was just as knowledgeable. I left the store feeling all my questions had been answered and that I had been waited on by two pros. ☺

How’d They Do?

Customer Service	Product Knowledge	Product Availability	Winner:  This was a wire finish between Store C and Store D. Salesman John Creal put Store C over the top. L.E.P.D. Firearms & Range 999 Bethel Road Columbus, OH 43214 lep.com 614-999-1009
★★★★★  Good, but I was surprised that despite such a large selection of handguns, the clerk only showed me two brands.	★★★★★ Of the two brands he recommended, at least, the clerk was very knowledgeable.	★★★★★ The store had a large selection of handguns, as well as other firearms.	
★★★  The semi-attentive service was mediocre at best.	★ If this couple knew anything about the features of their firearms, they were keeping it to themselves.	★ There wasn’t much on hand to choose from, but the proprietors did say that if I saw a gun online I wanted, they could order it and have it for me within 24 hours.	
★★★★★  Excellent. Could not have been better.	★★★★★ The salesman was unbelievably knowledgeable about many makes and models of handguns.	★★★★★ Excellent; a wide variety of handguns were available.	
★★★★★ 1/2  Very good. Both salesmen were experienced pros.	★★★★★ Excellent. These guys knew their stuff inside and out.	★★★★★ Excellent; a wide variety of handguns were available.	

SCORING SYSTEM: Outstanding: ★★★★★ Very Good: ★★★★ Average: ★★★ Fair: ★★ Poor: ★