THE BLACK POWDER SHOOTING UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Formerly The Historical Firearms Shooting Union Founded in 1958

www.bpsu.co.za

Affiliated to:
MUZZLE LOADER ASSOCIATIONS' INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
SOUTH AFRICAN BISLEY UNION (SABU)

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BPSU Newsflash 3 of 2017
Obatex Update

Dear BPSU members

Follow up on BPSU Newsflash 7 of 2016, dated 2 May 2016.

Due to various observations and comments made regarding the new locally manufactured Black Powder Obatex, we need to make these further comments.

After all the initial legal and logistical problems experienced, Obatex is now available in most areas in SA. We have to thank various persons who worked non-stop to get the necessary permits issued and the powder delivered. We also thank the various branches of the local SAPS Explosive Units for the admin done and the Chief Inspector of Explosives of SAPS for issuing the necessary permits to ensure the revival and survival of our Black Powder shooting sport. We also thank the various gun shops who applied and are selling the product. Without your assistance this level of availability could never have materialised.

After all the delays for permits and then all the small scale tests in developing the powder, the 1st full scale batch were made and tested in Cape Town. Some people however obtained small quantities of the small scale handmade batches and tested that with different results. After those tests, the first full scale product became available in May 2016. Lots of people have indeed obtained and shot with it. Unfortunately, some negative comments were being made also, and mostly by people who only heard the stories and never even tested the powder themselves.

Keep in mind that neither the BPSU management, nor any of its members have any financial interest or business interest in Obatex. Our only interest is to test the powder and give feedback to the manufacturer to enable him to enhance the product. We are striving to have a powder available that compares to the best in the world. No new product or black powder has ever been perfect at the first attempt. The manufacturer is relying on the expertise of people with lots of experience in this field. They found that the full scale batches were indeed a little different from the small scale handmade batches. A major problem is still the availability of good charcoal, which leads to problems with ignition. Until a properly acceptable charcoal is found, the formula has to be tweaked in small amounts to find the perfect solution and constant powder.

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Everybody will appreciate that the manufacturer cannot, when he receives some negative feedback, change the formula in the hope to satisfy each person's demands. He can also not put a different batch on the market each time. He needs to physically stop manufacturing (his core business being manufacturing of blasting powder) and clean all the equipment and then make a batch of black powder, resulting in an interruption of his core business for at least 2 days at a time. Due to the complete non-availability of imported Black Powder, the BPSU requested him to make the 2nd batch available to the public. That is the same powder that is in all the gun shops in SA at the moment. Some members of the Protea LR team that will compete in Australia later this year, are busy as part of their preparation to test various further bathes of Obatex and are achieving good results. Only when a settled batch was achieved, will such a batch be manufactured and distributed. If we do not support the manufacturer by buying the current stock, no new bathes can be made.

We have extensively tested the powder currently in the shops. We found it to be of really good quality. Most of the complaints are not due to the powder, but shooter related. Keep in mind that Obatex is, due to certain safety and financial reasons, not compacted like other powders. Therefore, the density differs quite a lot form Swiss and Wano that shooters use as their benchmark. This mostly leads to the complaints of not grouping or flyers. When cleaning or loading above the powder in the barrel, every different amount of compacting of the powder leads to different velocity, which is affecting the elevation and group sizes. With very careful and consistent loading, we found that it indeed groups as good as or better than other powders in most rifles. We have achieved excellent results in 45 calibre Gibbs target rifles, various 40 calibre rifles, Hawken and most 577 calibres. Due to our preparation for long range and mostly shooting rifles, we did not do enough testing for handguns. It does seem to work very well in certain single shot pistols and also in cap and ball revolvers.

A further problem is the loads that people use. Most complaints could be eliminated by vastly reducing the loads. **Obatex compares to about 50% of the charges measured by weight compared to Swiss and Wano.** This equates to about the same volume if measured in volume. The juniors currently in our training program shoots great scores (better than with Swiss) weekly at 50m and 100m in Gibbs rifles with as little as 28 grains of Obatex. In the 577 rifles charges of between 30 and 35 grains works very well. Even with patch and ball in Hawken rifles no more than 32 grains is required. One needs to do lots of development to find the load that works in each rifle. We did find that there is no general charge as all rifles differ. It is therefore of no use in recording all the various data we achieved. We found that not much is gained by trying to achieve a group with velocities over a chronograph alone. We found it much better to simply take different loads with very small differences in weight / volume and shoot until you find the best group for that firearm. As this powder is really cheap compared to the last Swiss and Wano, and the fact that you use half the loads by weight, there is no reason not to test and shoot a lot. Once you find the load that works and are able to load consistently without differently disturbing the density of the powder, you should be very happy with the results. The golden rule seems to be load a lot less powder and work to achieve a very consistent loading technique.

We are indeed very privileged that the manufacturer is prepared to keep developing the powder to obtain a high quality product. He indeed accepts any positive feedback that can help to enhance the product. If people however keep on criticising the product, we cannot guarantee his continued support. Without him and this powder there will be NO Black Powder in SA in future.

Let us support Obatex and all the suppliers and gun shops selling the product. Only by doing that can he produce a better product for all of us Black Powder shooters and enthusiasts.

Kind regards

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