

.375 Breeding

Sam Fadala

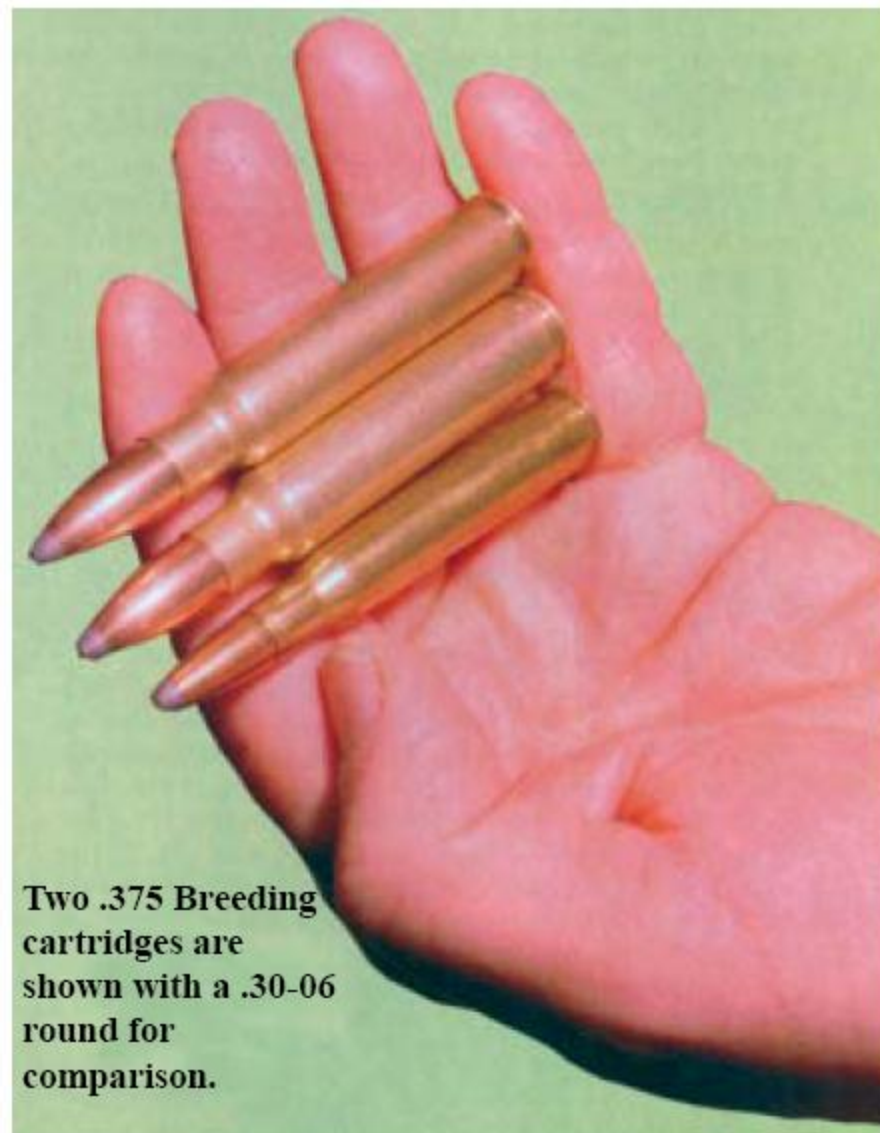
Early in this century layman cartridge designers –wildcatters being their colorful appellation – longed for superperformance, especially if they could get it from rounds that fit short-to medium-length actions. Often, the minds of these creative souls develop wonderful things.

Back in 1987 Ryan Breeding came up with one based on the principle of getting “magnum” power from a cartridge that fit a .30-06-length action. Ryan called his baby the .375 Breeding. His goal was Olympian: to ballistically match the .378 Weatherby Magnum – or close to it – with a case near .30-06 length (2.5 inches). The well-worn cliché about no free lunch applies to many wildcats. They get the poop, but only at the expense of high pressures. The .375 Breeding is loaded right up there, but there were no signs of trouble. Ryan’s cartridge turned the trick, certainly close enough to give the gentleman a cigar. With a 26-inch barrel, the .375 Breeding breathes right down on the neck of the powerful .378 Weatherby Magnum, one of my favorites. After the .375 Breeding rifle saw safari use, it was decided to lop 2 inches off the barrel, which cut muzzle velocity, but not enough to put the cartridge into a lesser class.

The .375 Breeding is built on a shortened .404 Jeffrey case. Case length is 2.60 inches compared with 2.4940 inches for the .30-06. This is quite a bit shorter than the .378 Weatherby at 2.913 inches. The body of the Breeding case has very little taper, and while the neck is not long, neither can it be called short at .360 inch. The .30-06 has a neck length around .3814 to .385 inch, while the .378 Weatherby’s neck runs .373 inch. Shoulder diameter of the Breeding case goes .524 to .531 inch. Head size of the Breeding is .541 inch, compared with .473 inch for the .30-06 and .580 inch for the .378 Weatherby Magnum. Shoulder angle for Ryan’s round is 25 degrees, compared with 17 degrees, 30 minutes for the .30-06 and .130 radius/.151 radius for the .378’s rounded shoulder.

Ryan Breeding is a protégé of one of the truly great rifle makers, Gil Van Horn, who is well known for his own special cartridges, as well as flawless custom arms. Ryan knows Gil’s building methods and preferences, but does not clone his work. “He’s created some original custom items I never would have thought of,” Van Horn commented, “including some very interesting sling swivel studs...” Which are held securely by a machine screw through the butt of the stock. That is innovative. The Breeding rifle was handcrafted, no mistake about it, including handmade trigger guard, floorplate, follower, tang and magazine box.

The magazine is slanted, as on the .350 Rigby, allowing the use of a longer cartridge than a straight box that has the same distance from front to back. The slanted box sets the trigger guard farther to the rear for more pleasing lines and places the trigger farther from the bolt handle, which helps prevent a bruised finger during recoil. The French walnut stock, with hand-rubbed oil finish, was not clubby but did handle recoil well. The test rifle was” in



Two .375 Breeding cartridges are shown with a .30-06 round for comparison.

the family,” having been made for John Breeding, Ryan’s father, who wanted a long-range elk rifle.

The .375 Breeding was also meant for safari work, and many experienced hunters, including Van Horn, believe a shorter bolt throw is important when the animal you’re pulling down on, such as a Cape buffalo, can “shoot back.” The barrel was lopped off from 26 to 24 inches to improve handling in the bush, making the 9.5-pound rifle 41.5 inches overall.

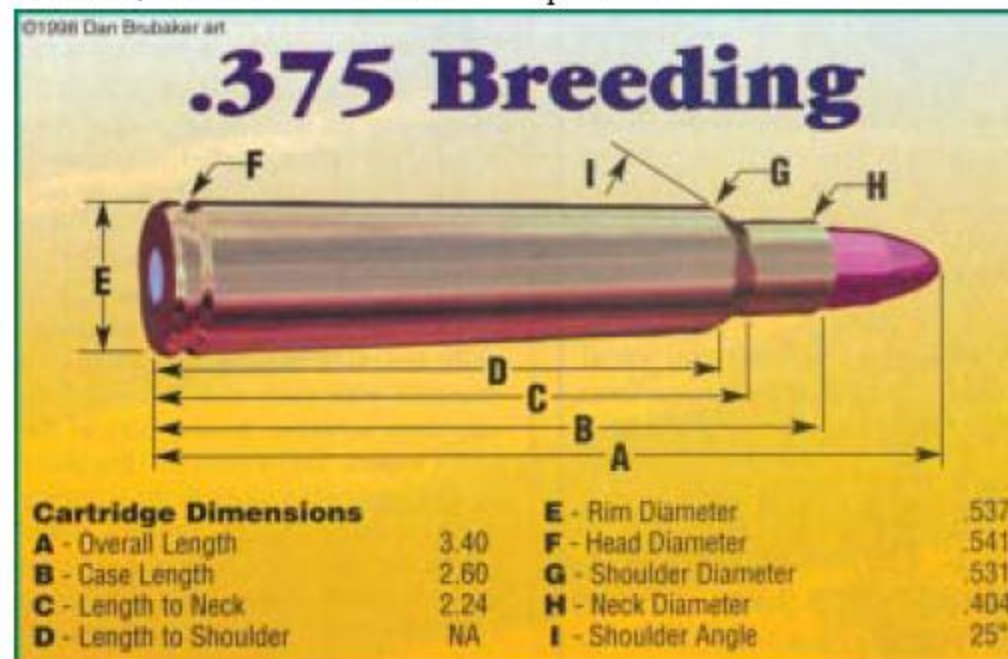
I was surprised when the first three shots with Ryan’s handloads created an eyebrow-raising .75-inch group at 100 yards. Then to prove it was no fluke, the next target showed three holes measuring only .60 inch center to center. On the third attempt, I was brought back to reality with a 1.25 inch, three-shot group, but on the fourth go, the .60-inch group repeated itself. I didn’t do further target work. Not that a

Loads/Ballistics			
bullet (grains)	powder	charge (grains)	velocity (fps)
270 Hornady roundnose	IMR-4350	89.0	2,951
300 Sierra boat-tail	H-4831	90.0	2,819
300 Sierra boat-tail	IMR-4831	90.0	2,919
300 Sierra boat-tail	H-4350	88.0	2,819

.375 from the bench delivers a blow to the shoulder or anything like that, but I figured I’d learned enough for one day. Besides, the muzzle brake did its job. I’m no longer surprised by that, having tamed my .378 with an Answer Systems brake that altered its character from downright mean to darn near friendly.

All brass was RWS .404 Jeffrey with Federal 215 Magnum primers only. The Oehler 35P chronograph was set up at an elevation of 6,000 feet with a range temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit and 60 percent humidity that day. Distance from muzzle to middle screen was 12 feet. Test results are listed in the table.

Anyone interested in his own .375 Breeding can write to Ryan at 3112 West Avenue N, Palmdale, CA 93551. RCBS has forming dies. Cases are made from .404 Jeffrey brass, shortened, necked and reamed. The



Above, the .375 Breeding is designed to fit a standard .30-06-length action. Left, the trigger guard is set back a bit from the bolt handle, so it won’t rap the trigger finger during recoil. Below, the Bryan Breeding rifle has the overall look of functional elegance.

