

# .500 Martin

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The full-length Magnum Research BFR provides a unique platform for wildcatting single-action revolvers. As offered by the factory, this beast can be had in four powerhouse cartridges to include .45-70, .450 & .444 Marlin, and the new .500 Smith & Wesson. The first three make use of the majority of frame window with C.O.Ls running around 2.50-2.60", whereas the .500 S&W is shorter at 2.0". Many of us however hoped for an intermediate sized frame when hearing that Magnum Research had picked-up on the new .500. Nonetheless, it's still a well-balanced gun, especially when mated to a 10" straight tapered barrel.

Upon handling a .500 BFR, I was surprised to see that MRI fit a full-length cylinder to the frame. I guess I anticipated that a shorter cylinder with greater barrel protrusion would have been used (many of the early BFRs did just this to eliminate as much free-bore as possible). In the end though, the .500 BFRs shoot well and it doesn't appear that the resulting free-bore hurts accuracy. In spite of this quality, I can't help but view the frame as being unnecessarily long for a SuperMag length case.

Magnum Research has done an excellent job of filling the BFR's large frame window with full length .44s and .458s. If other calibers are to be explored though, you have to turn to a custom conversion. Now, one could opt for lower caliber rifle cartridges such as the .375 Winchester or .416 Barnes in a converted Magnum Research. I have no doubt that these would be functionally sound in a BFR, though they do little to spark my interest (at least in a revolver). Bigger may in fact be better, and if a larger bore is to be considered, two standouts are the .475 JDJ and .50 Alaskan.

Converting a stretch-frame BFR to .50 Alaskan is no more difficult than building a .500 Linebaugh on a Ruger Blackhawk. Essentially, a new five-shot cylinder must be manufactured and a piece of 0.510" barrel is fit to the gun.

When finished, what you get is a handgun that actually weighs less than a .45-70 revolver, can produce energies in upwards of 3,000 foot-pounds, and is capable of digesting bullets in the 500 – 600 grain class. Many would question the need for this type of single-action, and for some purposes, I agree that it's excessive. On the other hand, there's definitely demand for such handcannons as witnessed through SSK converted Contenders and Encores. I would also submit that if you're used to carrying a scoped TC in the field, you could easily adjust to a 10" BFR. Like the Thompson Center, the BFR can be scoped. Unlike the Thompson Center however, the BFR gives you five round capacity. Secondly, many shooters are better acclimated to the feel of a revolver, whereas a single-shot pistol may take some getting used to. With this in mind, chambering BFRs in heavy rifle cartridges isn't that illogical.

.50 Alaskan conversions work well on the Magnum Research frame and have proven to be a safe practice. Consider for a moment that the .500 S&W operates in the 44,000 - 49,000 CUP range and hasn't caused BFRs to come unglued. Now .50 Alaskan chambers are slightly larger in diameter, and as such I recommend that reloads be kept to a max pressure of 40,000 CUP. In doing so, what sort of velocities should you expect when using a 10" barrel? Some performance figures are as follows:

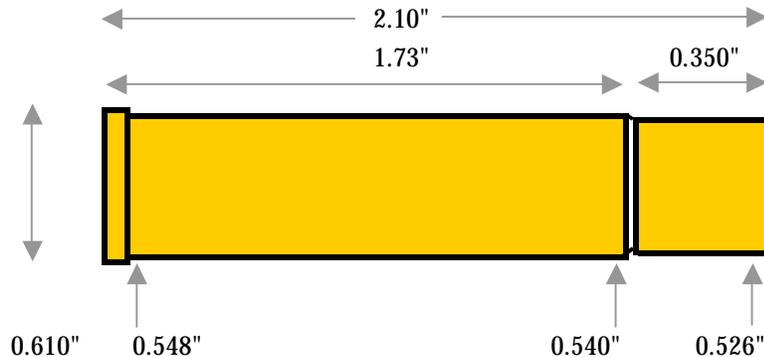
| BULLET  | POWDER   | CHARGE | VEL.  | FPE   | TKO |
|---------|----------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| 435 LFN | IMR 4198 | 60.0   | 1,790 | 3,096 | 57  |
| 485 LBT | IMR 4198 | 58.5   | 1,700 | 3,113 | 60  |
| 505 WFN | IMR 4198 | 54.0   | 1,670 | 3,128 | 61  |

Pretty impressive numbers to say the least (a 300 grain .454 Casull at 1,700 fps has a Taylor KO of 33). Ultimately, you will loose about 300 fps out of a 10" tube when compared to a 20 – 22" barrel. In spite of this, the resulting energy is still 300 – 400 foot-pounds greater than the new .500 S&W and resides in a similar weighted gun (an 8.75" barreled X-frame weights 72 ounces; a .50 Alaskan BFR comes it at around 69 ounces). As for recoil.....well, it's up there, but not to the extent that wrists are snapping or guns are flying out of hands. So is a .50 Alaskan BFR for the average shooter? Absolutely not. Then again, if you want a single-action that makes the .500 S&W look more like a .500 Special, this is a viable conversion.

As stated earlier, the only problem with converting BFRs to .50 Alaskan is that it does require a new barrel. Though this isn't really much of a problem, it does add to conversion expense and creates additional work. Once

Magnum Research unveiled their .500 S&W however, I decided to craft a new wildcat called the “.500 Martin”. Simply put, it’s a .50 Alaskan case that is slightly necked as to handle 0.500” bullets. The .500 Martin only has two advantages over the .50 Alaskan: 1) .500 S&W BFRs can be converted using the factory barrel, and 2) The new S&W round may spawn a greater selection of .50 caliber bullets. Other than these characteristics, it offers no improvement over its Alaskan counterpart. Cartridge specs are as follows (shoulder angle is set at 30 degrees and the round headspaces off the rim):

## .500 MARTIN



Cast Performance’s 370 and 440 grain WFNGC bullets are suitable for the .500 Martin, as would Hornady’s new 500 grain jacketed round nose.

Photos and chronograph data will be posted at a latter date. If you have any questions or comments, I can be reached at [sc429@yahoo.com](mailto:sc429@yahoo.com).

NOTE: All of the aforementioned loads work in my gun and do not show signs of excessive pressure. I am not responsible though for these reloadings in any other firearm.