

## SKEET TO SPORTING CONVERSION

Dear Technoid - I am a long time reader of these pages and a fan of your sage advice. Glad to have you in the sunshine state.

I have a K-80 tube set with 30" barrels choked skeet/skeet. Being interested in an occasional round of sporting clays, and feeling under gunned with only skeet chokes, I have long toyed with the idea of having Briley or Kolar make thin walls for my barrels. From other posts on the subject, you have explained that certain manufacturers, notably Perazzi, make exquisite fixed chokes, particularly in the tighter ranges (modified through full)(e.g. your 28 gauge barrels). I assume that my Sk/Sk barrels have little to no choke taper leading to the .005 constriction (I do not have access to a bore gauge with which to measure the barrels). I further assume that thin wall screw chokes, being only a few inches in length, produce good patterns in the more open ranges (skeet through modified?), but possibly less than optimum patterns in the tighter ranges owing to the lack of a long parallel section before the final taper.

If my theory is correct, am I better off: (1) leaving the barrels alone and using variations of ammo to coax tighter patterns for sporting (cheapest option), (2) getting the thin walls or (3) getting a different set of barrels (with sporting type constrictions, i.e. LM/M or IC/IM) to use when shooting sporting (clearly the most expensive option)?

Your wisdom would be appreciated.

Rob

Dear Rob,

Thanks for your faith in my utter blinding brilliance. I wish my wife shared it. Heck, I wish my dog would come when I called. I've certainly made all the shooting mistakes someone could possibly make, so what's left has to be right, right?

As to arranging some chokes for sporting, I wouldn't hesitate to have Briley put in their Thinwalls if your gun will accept them. The reason I said that is that I had two Model 32 Krieghoffs for IntSk. One of them had conventional barrels with about .005" choke. The other had the jugged Tula-style chokes. I don't think that Krieghoffs do much of a business in those jugged chokes any more. They would be difficult to screw choke. But conventional skeet choke barrels should take screw choke quite nicely.

I really do believe that fixed chokes are superior to screw chokes, particularly in the tighter configurations, but I don't think it is enough to matter for sporting clays. A fixed choke gives the choke designer the option of a long choke forcing cone plus an appropriate parallel (usually equal to the length of the shot column). The parallel helps stabilize the shot column, something that is most helpful in tighter chokes. Open chokes, like skeet, are much less demanding and work well with much shorter dimensions.

That said, most sporting clays courses only have a station or two which demands full choke. Most sporting birds are in the 30 yard area, not 40+. Screw chokes can do a marvelous job through Modified if they are made correctly. I've also seen some screw chokes do a very good job with Full. It's just easier to get good Full performance from longer tapers/parallels. Is there enough difference between a screw choke Full and a fixed Full to matter? Probably not. If you were shooting flyers or 27 yard handicap for a living, then it might matter. But for even a demanding sporting clays shooter, the versatility of screw chokes far outweighs the slight possible performance edge of fixed chokes.

And remember too, a well made screw choke will beat a poorly configured fixed choke every time. The Briley Thinwall installation is first class. I've had their chokes fitted to numerous guns over the years and have never had a complaint. The jump from bore to skirt is certainly more than you'll find on a custom Teague screw choke installation, but it's also less than on most factory installations.

Another big advantage to screw chokes is that if you don't like one particular constriction, you can change it in a heartbeat. With a fixed choke, you have to find the shell that it likes. With screw chokes, you can adapt the chokes to your favorite shell.

So, to answer your questions:

- 1) Leaving the barrels alone and trying to produce tighter patterns with different loads may not get you as tight a pattern as you would want for certain sporting shots. I can see using a really good shell to tighten a Sk choke to IC, or perhaps occasionally to Lt. Mod, but not much more.
- 2) Install Briley thinwalls. This is what I would recommend in your situation. Your 30" barrels are just fine for sporting. You are used to them. The Thinwalls won't interfere with the skeet tubes in any way because Briley will see to it that their screw chokes don't mess up their tubes. The expense is modest and the quality is consistent.
- 3) Different barrels are always nice, but I'm not sure that they are necessary. George Digweed went quite a while using two different set of fixed choke barrels for his O/U. He carried the extra barrel with him when he shot a sporting course and changed as necessary. But I think that he did that more for the change in balance between the two barrels than for the difference in the chokes. The barrels were of different lengths and weights. One was more suitable for closer, faster shots. The other best for longer, more precise shots. I don't think that Digweed does this any more, but it's for sure that the vast majority of sporting shooters happily win trophies with screw chokes.

Best regards,

Bruce Buck  
Shotgun Report's Technoid