

LOWERING RECOIL

Dear Technoid:

I have just started pheasant hunting and have been using my partners over and under 12 and 20 gauge. He is now talking about sporting clays. I have a bad neck and would like to buy a shotgun that has the least amount of recoil without sacrificing too much accuracy. I have been told that recoil pads, which neither of the other guns that I used had, would be helpful. Also, I have been told that the barrel should be ported. I have also been told not to buy a semi but to stick to an over under.

Any input you have would be greatly appreciated

Paul

Dear Paul,

Some of the advice that you have received has been good, some has been bad. A good recoil pad (such as the Kickeez or Pachmayr Decelerator) will help take a bit of the perceived kick out of the gun because it attenuates (draws out) the recoil pulse. It will also help keep the gun on your shoulder far better than a slipper plastic butt plate. Most definitely, use a decent recoil pad.

Porting has no effect on measurable rearward recoil. If you think about the vectoring of the gas escape and thickness of the barrel involved, you will see that it cannot. Porting may help slightly reduce muzzle jump (if you are using giganto shells), but muzzle jump has nothing to do with rearward recoil.

I don't have the faintest idea why someone told you to skip the semi-auto and buy an O/U when you want to avoid recoil in the neck and upper lumbar area. Even people who prefer the O/U to the semi-auto are quick to admit the vast superiority of the gas operated semi-auto (such as a Beretta 390 or Remington 11-87) as far as recoil is concerned. If I wanted to protect a neck injury the FIRST thing that I would do would be to go to a gas operated semi-auto. Recoil operated semi-automatics (such as the old Browning A-5 or the newer Benelli) can seem to have just as much kick as an O/U and I would not recommend them for your particular usage. There is a big difference between gas operated and recoil operated semi-autos.

Although mathematical free recoil from all guns of the same weight and using the same shell is identical, the gas gun spaces the recoil out over a far longer period of time than the O/U. This gives you the recoil as sort of a shove, instead of a sharp, concussive jab. It makes a BIG difference if you are recoil sensitive. Buy the gas gun, no question about it.

Another very good way to lower recoil is to use mild shells. One ounce loads will kick about 10% less than 1 1/8 oz IF (big IF) loaded to the same speed. Those 3 1/4 dram one ounce promotional dove and quail loads kick just as much, or more, than a standard 1 1/8 oz light target load. This is where reloading would really pay big dividends. You can make up a delightful 1200 fps 7/8 oz load that will function reliably in a Beretta 390 30" sporting clays model and you

would almost not know that the gun was going off. For matches, a 1200 fps 1 oz reload would be perfectly fine.

One point, watch out for those who advise you that a 20 gauge gun will kick less than a 12. 20 gauge guns are usually made about a pound lighter than the 12s, so they end up kicking just about the same. The heavier the gun is, the less it kicks. Get the twelve gauge- it gives you many more options.

Your best bet for soft recoil is a relative heavy 12 gauge semi-automatic shotgun shooting a light target load. You cannot get any softer than that. I prefer the Beretta 390 to the Remington 11-87 because I have found the Berettas to be more reliable. If you want a combination field/sporting clays gun I would recommend a Beretta 12 gauge AL-390 Silver Mallard with a 28" barrel. If you want a gun for mostly sporting clays I would recommend the Beretta AL-390 sporting clays model (the plain one, not the special one with porting and replaceable comb) with a 30" barrel. Read back through some of the Technoid archives in Shotgun Report where I discuss the various gas operated semi-autos.

If you have neck problems, skip the O/U and take the gas gun. Trust the Technoid on this one. There is a big difference.

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid