

RECOIL and GUN FIT

Dear Technoid:

I'm using a Beretta 686 Sporting. After shooting a round of 50 my right cheek is very sore. A round of 100 is essentially impossible. I share the gun with my brother and he has no problem at all.

I have a long thin face and when I mount the gun the comb sits right under my cheekbone. It seems I cannot line up the sights without doing this. I've been told the gun obviously does not fit and I would need an adjustable comb to solve this problem. I've also been told that the Beretta has a reputation for slapping faces. I have 35" arms and am 74" tall.

Several dealers have recommended buying the Browning 425 with adjustable comb and the addition of a recoil pad to increase the length of the stock. Does this seem like the most reasonable solution to achieving proper fit and painless shooting? By the way I love your Web Page.

Best Regards: CH

Dear CH:

One of the hardest things to do over the Web is to analyze gunfit. I would really have to see you mount and shoot the gun. How you hold the gun and position your face when you shoot has as much to do with gun fit as your size and the length and shape of the stock.

Of course, the fact that you cannot properly analyze gunfit over the ether has never stopped me from trying! As long as you promise to take what I say with a grain of salt, I will try to touch on a few points. I would certainly try to work with the gun that you have before rushing out to buy a new one that may also have the same problem.

You and I are somewhat similar in size. I am 6'-1", 35" sleeve, heavy chest, but thin face with high cheek bones. Also, I am right handed and tend to "crawl" my stocks, rather than shoot with an erect head. The stocks that fit me best for target shooting are "more or less" 15" Length of pull, 1 3/8" drop at comb, 2" drop at heel, NO CAST OFF (the slightest amount of cast off causes face slap for me), and somewhat less than the normal 2" of pitch- but that also depends on the gun. Don't ever think that one set of measurements will work for every gun that you own. It just doesn't work that way. Each and every gun is different- and that's a fact.

I don't think that Beretta 686s are any more known for face slap than any other cast off gun. Personally, I find the Japanese 325, 425 and older GTI to be the most face punishing of the lot. They are all pretty heavily cast off "in the English tradition". Cast off works for some and just kills others. You and I are the ones that it kills.

If the Beretta pleases you (other than the facial abuse part), I would stick with it. It is a perfectly good gun and will shoot well if it ever fits you. The problem is gun fit, not brand of gun. A 425

may, or may not, be better. It were up to me, I would try a bunch of things with the Beretta before trading it in.

To get the Beretta to fit, the first thing that I would do is to get the length right. Set the gun up a little LONG. Make sure that you have at least TWO full inches between your glasses and the back of your right thumb (assuming you are right handed) when you mount. I keep a few cigar boxes of old recoil pads and spacers of different thicknesses and just tape them onto the stock with duct tape. At this stage, everything is temporary anyway. You may find that this will take you into a 15" or 15.25" length of pull. That's OK. Long stocks are a bit more awkward to mount until you get used to them, but they are almost always softer shooting because they insure that the stock is firmly in the shoulder.

Also, try setting the gun up with zero pitch. This will definitely be the kindest to your face. Add pitch only if the stock keeps slipping off your shoulder when you shoot. Most people use about 2" of pitch, but it varies with the gun. Some of my guns handle 2" just fine, others give me a sharp face slap when I use any pitch at all.

Next step is to take that roll of silver duct tape (you did buy the economy sized, didn't you?) and start laying it along the inside (left side as looking from the rear) of the comb so as to artificially "thicken" the comb and remove Beretta's cast off. Make the tape thicker at the rear than at the front so that the stock taper comes straight back. From the top, it should look like "!" rather than "\" this. Keep adding tape until you are looking right down the rib when you mount.

Finally, you want to adjust the height of the comb by adding tape there also. Your gun has a flat rib (the kind I prefer) and I set my guns up for the standard stacked bead (front bead just on top of middle bead) that many trap shooters look for. You may prefer a flatter picture. The nice thing about tape is that you can always take it off and start again. I am assuming that you will need more height because lengthening the stock usually requires also bending it up.

Once you have things hideously swaddled in gobs of silver tape, go off to the range and start shooting and adjusting, shooting and adjusting. Your first goal is to get your point of impact where you want it and then your second goal is the face slap.

When you get everything taped up the way that you like it, take it all to your gunsmith just the way it is and have it measured, bent and recoil padded to suit. The gunsmith will know what to do. He will probably charge around \$150-200 for the pad and bending.

If you don't like the tape and permanent bend approach, an adjustable comb is a possibility. The magazines have tons of people who offer this service. It will be more expensive than just having the stock bent and the pad will still have to be done. Many of the adjustable combs add considerable weight. A new pad and the spacers required to lengthen may also add a good bit of weight. Be careful that the combination of added parts does not shift your gun's balance to the rear more than you would like.

There it is. That is about the best that I can do for you at this distance. Good luck.

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid