

TRAP STOCKS FOR ALL SHOOTING?

Dear Technoid:

I want to ask about your references to many successful shooters using a trap style stock for all shooting, i.e. skeet and sporting. I am somewhat confused as I thought trap stocks were designed to shoot intentionally high to accommodate the primarily rising targets shot in American trap. Do shooters just learn to compensate by intentionally holding or pointing under the birds or am I missing something as the advantages of using a trap style stock for sporting and other general use?

Regards,

Randy

Dear Randy:

I never should have opened my mouth. This may take a while. Yes, I do shoot trap guns for everything. Yes, one of the most popular sporting clays guns in England right now is the Miroku M-38 32" trap gun. Yes, many very successful skeet shooters shoot trap stocks. Yes, you are quite correct when you say that trap guns are set up to shoot high for most people (but not for all). No, I do not intentionally hold under the bird when I shoot sporting with a trap stock.

Here is why I, and I believe many others, shoot relatively high stocks. We want to be able to cheek moderately firmly without losing the rib and our facial structures require a higher stock in order to be able to do this. I set my guns up so that when I cheek very hard, right down to the bone, I look flat along the rib. All of my guns have low flat ribs, not the stepped or "Brooklyn Bridge" style. Naturally, no one actually shoots with the cheek pressed in to the bone (100% pressure). I probably shoot at about 70% pressure- enough pressure to reliably place the gun in the same cheek position each time, but nothing extreme. At this pressure, with my stock height and my facial structure, I see a slightly squashed figure "8" formed by the mid bead and the front bead. Another way of saying it is that I see about 3/32" of rib.

Clearly, when I am shooting I watch the target, not the rib. However, peripherally, I am aware of the rib. I know that when I see just that little bit of rib that the gun is properly mounted. If I perceive more rib, the stock is not into my face well enough. If I push my face into the stock too much, I will look right along the rib.

The reason that I don't like too low a stock is that when I cheek hard enough to get a reliable mount, I completely lose the rib on a low stocked gun. Once you are down below the rib, you cannot tell how far down below it you are. The reference is completely lost. That is why I don't ever like to look right down the rib, the way stepped or arched ribs make you do. It is too easy to completely lose the rib with just a touch more cheek pressure. I want that rib for a subconscious reference.

The low, flat rib feature of all my guns (Beretta 303 30" trap models and Fabrique Nacional Super Trap B-25s) permit me to see just that little bit of rib, but they seem to shoot dead on for me. I am not conscious of holding under at all.

I have loaned my guns to many shooters who commented that the stocks were too high. Some of them did indeed have trouble, but others shot my guns better than their own lower ones. It is really a matter of individual facial structure.

Shooters who prefer to cheek lightly and keep an upright head will probably prefer a lower stock. Those who want a bit more cheek pressure and tend to crawl the stock will feel happier with higher stocks. It is interesting to note that National Champion (FITASC and also NSCA Sporting Clays) Andy Duffy went from a virtual trap stock on his 32" Citori 325 to a much lower field stock on a Browning Gold auto. He wins everything in sight with either gun. Some guys can shoot anything.

Height is really relative. Everyone's facial structure is different. The distance between the notch in the cheek (where the stock fits) and the pupil of the eye determine's the proper stock height. Men with high cheek bones or small faces, women and young shooters tend to have a short vertical distance from cheek notch to pupil. This is also accentuated if the head is pushed ahead on the stock and tipped forward. This decreases the vertical distance from notch to pupil.

Those who shoot with an erect head, have low cheek bones or larger faces, will not need as high a stock to see the exact same sight picture. A lower stock for them might give them the same sight picture that I get with my trap stocks.

Confused yet? Well, if you are not, I sure am. The bottom line is that just because a gun has a trap stock does not mean that it will shoot high for everyone. Faces, stances and shooting techniques differ quite a bit.

It is easy to try a higher stock. Just layer on some duct tape and fool around. Make sure not to droop the tape over the side so as to induce an artificial cast on unless you want that. You may find that you shoot the gun better with a little height. Then again, you may not. Try it out. Tape is cheap. Buy the big roll!

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid