

## BROWNING 425 AND LONG CONES ANY GOOD?

Dear Technoid,

Browning 425 Sporting Clays 30" ported. Is this a good gun? Can it have the cones lengthened? Would you? I know you favor gas guns. I reload my club has a "if it hit the ground it's our policy" plus I like the look of an O/U.

Please respond, I value your opinion.

Steve

Dear Steve,

Opinions are like noses. Everyone has one. Since you ask mine, here it is. Someone else may see things very differently.

The Japanese-made Browning Citori line of guns are of excellent mass produced quality. The 425 is my favorite configuration of all the Japanese Brownings made, but all the models are built to the same quality level and all use the same receiver. The models differ only in wood, rib and barrel configurations. "Higher Grade" Japanese Brownings only differ cosmetically on the outside with extra nice wood and computer/acid engraving. Inside, they are all the same.

You don't say what you want to use the gun for. If you are strictly a trap shooter, I would choose a different model than the 425. However, for a general purpose skeet/sporting clays/occasional trap gun the 30" 425 would be my choice. The barrels seem a good bit lighter than those of the Ultra (at least on the models I sampled) and I like the longer, higher stock of the 425. I don't like the cast off, but you might.

In the \$1500 price area, the Japanese Brownings really do not have any real competition in the new gun market. The Berettas have a very different feel and cost a bit more in the competition models. Beretta quality can be very good, but is much less uniform. Japanese Brownings are all the same quality- and that is really rather good.

Andy Duffy told me that he had over 300,000 through his 325 and I believe him. I shot his gun when he got it in 1990 and I know that he shoots a ton each year. His 325 has been rebuilt a couple of times, but still works fine. Last year Browning paid him to shoot the Gold semi-auto, but he will go back to an O/U this year- probably a 32" Belgian Browning. Still and all, he liked that 325 and won a ton of stuff with it. By the way, Andy's 32" 325 was after-market backbored to lighten the barrels, custom choked by Ken Eyster and had loong, shiny forcing cones. Andy and I both felt that his gun was too heavy to shoot in that 32" length without removing a few ounces by backboring. I feel the same way about the current crop of 32" Japanese Browning sporting clays models. Browning's "factory" backboring has actually increased the barrel weight because they maintained wall thickness while increasing diameter.

Porting: Personally, I would not pick the ported model as I find that - for me- porting can add obnoxious noise and does nothing to reduce barrel flip. I have never been able to tell the difference in recoil or muzzle jump between the same models of gun with and without porting when shot side by side. That said, I do shoot with a lot of left hand on my guns and hang on pretty tight. The very slight reduction in upward muzzle jump that some porting produces is not noticeable to me. The hotter the shell you use, the more the porting may work. Pigeon shooters, using those 3 3/4 dram, 1 1/4 oz whoppers just love porting and think that it helps a bit when firing two quick shots at a single target. If I were building a pigeon gun, I probably would port. If you are intending to shoot any ISU trap, be aware that ported guns are not permitted in Olympic-style trap competition.

Forcing cones? Here is the deal. If you do ANY after market interior barrel work on your gun, you will void your factory warranty. Just be aware of that before you perform any modifications. Browning hypes factory "backboring"(very different from after market backboring which actually removes metal), not long cones. Beretta doesn't believe in "backboring", but all their target guns have long cones. The first thing that Andy Duffy does on his guns is to lengthen the cones. That is also the first thing that I do on my O/Us- the smaller the gauge the more important I feel it is. Even the skeet tube manufacturers hype long cones on their sub-gauge premium sets. The smaller the bore, the more it should help reduce shot deformation- even though recoil may not be at issue.

In 12 gauge I have found that lengthened cones were the ONLY barrel modification that helped recoil in the slightest. Scientifically, long cones (and backboring) make absolutely no mathematical difference in recoil until they start to affect velocity or barrel weight. Subjectively, I find that usually (not always) long cones reduce perceived recoil by a very small amount. Small, but noticeable.

If you get cones cut, get them loong. Ballistically Roster feels that cones longer than 1 3/4" don't do any good, but I can tell you that longer cones are much easier to polish and that loong ones will look better and stay cleaner. Most gunsmiths don't have the vaguest idea how to do it correctly. It is better to leave it alone, rather than do a poor job. If I were you and I had a new 425, I would shoot it just the way that it comes for a while. If the recoil is bothering you, even after you get the stock properly fitted, lengthening the cones will NOT make a real difference. Long cones will not turn a kicker into a pussy cat. If the gun does not bother you after shooting for a month, and if you intend to keep it, then I would consider going to long cones for slightly increased comfort and better pattern over the long run.

Many people make the mistake of thinking that long cones will completely eliminate recoil. They could not be further from the truth. If it kicks you with short cones, it will kick you with long cones- just a tiny bit less.

Of course, with a gas gun, none of that matters.

Regards,  
Bruce Buck  
Shotgun Report's Technoid