

REBLUING AND REFINISHING

Dear Technoid:

In my first visit to your question center and at last check I've been reading for over two hours, I love it, I'm hooked. Okay, to my question. I'm very picky about the cleanliness of my guns, I have a Browning 425 and love it except for the fact that the finish on the stock leaves white marks with the lightest scratch or mar. Any suggestions on refinishing with a better finish. Also, can you recommend someone to re-blue my barrels with a matte finish?

Thanks

Phillip

Dear Phillip:

Yes, I have suggestions for refinishing and rebluing, but you probably are not going to want to hear them. The 425 is a perfectly nice mid range gun and, I think, the best value in the competition gun market today. That said, I think that you would be wasting your money trying to keep it "perfect". Target guns get used a lot and are bound to pick up nicks and dings from clay targets and general usage. It comes with the territory.

The stock finish on the Japanese Browning 425s is of average durability (more durable than that on the Belgian guns by the way), but it is known for its "muddiness". They use a lot of filler. I have seen some refinished 425 stocks and have sometimes been surprised at the amount of grain that had been hidden by the muddy filler that they use. Note that I said sometimes, not always.

As to Citori bluing- it is just awful and always was. It almost wears through as you watch it. Then again, the gun didn't cost \$5000 either. You get what you pay for and in the case of the 425, probably a lot more than you pay for. The metal on the Citoris is quite good and that and stock fit are all you really care about.

What to do about the stock finish: Your stock has a standard surface style finish on it. The finish is on the outside of the wood, not in it. This is cheap and fast to apply, but not very impervious to nicks and dings. Then a nick pierces the finish it leaves a white mark. You should be able to patch up a mild nick by just rubbing a bit of Birchwood Casey's "TruOil" on the ding. It won't remove the ding, but it won't look so ugly either.

The only real way to fix up your stock is to give it a traditional hand rubbed oil finish where successive coats of linseed oil (and often a bit of alkanet root for color) are rubbed into the wood, not on it. This is time consuming and expensive. All the best British guns are done this way. Target guns seldom are. The advantage of this finish is that when you get a ding you can just lay a damp piece of felt on the wound, apply a hot iron for a moment and (if the grain of the wood had not been broken) the ding will just pop right out. Every now and again you just wipe the stock down with a drop of linseed oil and it will look like now- for ever and ever.

The downside is that a REAL oil finish is time consuming and thus expensive. It can run you around \$500.

As to bluing: what you want is genuine rust bluing. That is the process that produces that beautiful hazy matte finish, rather than the bright shiny blue. This is also time consuming as the gun has to be dipped into the tanks many times. It is also expensive- over \$250 IF you can find someone who will actually do it.

Here in Connecticut we have a local gunsmith who has done absolutely first class work, but he costs a ton and I don't like to give his name out because there is a waiting line for him as it is. Any custom gunsmith or stock maker can do the work for you. It is up to you to decide if it is worth the money.

By the way, you NEVER get money spent on refinishing back when you sell the gun. It will sell faster if it is pretty, but not for more.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid