

## FACE SLAP

Dear Technoid,

What is your valued opinion of the stock making philosophy where the comb is in-line with the plane of the barrels. This trap like stock would seem to make sense because the shooters cheek would be mounted at the correct comb height no matter what thickness of clothing is worn or variations in stock creep. This stock with a much higher heel would also seem to help with recoil as the stock would travel along the cheek bone and not into it. Why is this stock shape so rare on today's guns? I have not tried this design but would like to try to get away from my current cure to cheek pain, a sorbathane pad. Any ideas?

Your writing is a gold mine of information. It would have saved me a great deal of trial and error effort in the past.

Thanks- F.B.

Dear F.B. ,

Of course my column is a veritable gold mine. That is- after your dig through the first layer or two of barnyard effluent and work your way past the iron pyrites.

The idea of a parallel comb (in line with the plane of the rib) is a pretty standard trap configuration. The "Monte Carlo" trap stock has just such a feature. The comb is parallel to the rib and then there is a slight notch at the rear where the stock drops down to the recoil pad.

The parallel comb has pluses and minuses. In theory it has two advantages: 1) the sight picture remains the same no matter where the cheek is placed and ; 2) face slap is reduced because the comb slides straight back along, not into, the cheek.

In fact, the result is somewhat less than expected depending on the game you play. You do not mention what type of game(s) you use your gun for, nor what type of gun you use, so it is a bit hard to analyze. For trap, skeet and any premounted situation where the height of the bird does not vary much, the Monte Carlo works quite well. It also works very well on rifles where the reduction in face slap is paramount. In fact, Weatherby rifles often have a reverse Monte Carlo where the comb is actually higher at the rear.

Where the Monte Carlo is not at its best is in the field and in sporting clays. This is because those games often require one shot at an extremely high altitude (driven birds, for example) and then often one at very low altitude (rabbit or gully shot). Here the stock that is a bit higher in front and lower at back (the standard field stock) has an advantage. This is because you put your face on the stock very differently for high and low birds.

On a high bird the face is placed further forward on the stock (higher on a field stock), BUT the head is tilted forward also, thus reducing the vertical distance from comb to eye pupil. This is the all important measurement. The fact that the field stock is higher in the front compensates for

this lessening of the pupil to comb distance due to the forward tilted head. It evens out properly and all is well. A Monte Carlo would leave you too low on high shots.

The opposite is true of low shots. Assume you are on the edge of a gully shooting down at a rabbit (a fairly common sporting clays shot). Here the head is placed more to the rear of the stock where the stock is lower, but the head is very much more erect in relation to the stock so the eye is quite far from the comb. Once again this evens out. The Monte Carlo would be too high here.

The above reasoning is why you will never see a parallel comb on a good English field gun. They have been doing this for a long time and have it figured out.

This doesn't mean that Monte Carlos do not have their place (trap mostly) or that they do not reduce face slap a bit. They do. It is just that the price that you pay is eye alignment if shot presentation is varied.

Personally, the gun that I shoot best at trap, skeet and sporting (one gun for all- a 30" Beretta 303 Trap gun) has a Monte Carlo, but I have put a small amount of drop in the stock by shimming. I shoot my O/U FN B-25s just as well, but not as comfortably. They have standard "straight" trap stocks of about 1 3/8" down to 1 7/8" or so. Both seem to fit me about the same. Neither causes face slap.

While the parallel comb may, or may not cure your face slap, I might guess that your face slap could be caused by other things. I will have to guess since you don't mention which gun you shoot or which sport (readers: please be specific in this area).

For me the biggest contributor to face slap is cast off. Like many American competition shooters, I tend to crawl my stocks. Any amount of cast off at all will cause instant pain. As soon as the stock is straightened, the face slap disappears. Shooters who use the more erect head position will not be bothered as much by cast off and will probably require it to center their pattern. Most O/Us come with cast off, except that many trap guns do not. Most semi-autos and pumps do not have cast off (Beretta's 390 is shim adjustable for cast and height).

A very soft recoil pad will also accentuate face slap. The soft, thick pads compress a good deal on firing. This compression causes more stock movement along the face and thus more face slap.

Another, but much less likely, contributor to face slap is excess pitch. Most guns come with about 0"-2" of pitch. Trap guns tend to have less, field guns tend to have more. A great deal of pitch (4"-6") is sometimes used to keep the muzzle of the gun down on recoil. International Skeet shooters particularly have experimented in this area. Heavy pitch is far more effective than porting in this respect, but it may increase face slap for some.

Reduction of recoil by lengthening the cones or adding weight, may lessen face slap a bit, but that is just masking the gun fit problem. Same with "soft combs". 100% of the recoil from a properly fit gun should come into the shoulder. Any amount of face slap indicates that you still have some work to do in the gun fitting area.

Regards,  
Bruce Buck  
Shotgun Report's Technoid