

SLIMMER FORENDS

Dear Technoid,

I have yet to find an over/under whose forend shape is as comfortable to grip as is that of either an auto or side by side. If one subscribes to extending the index finger in a pointing gesture, this seems to work well with the long forend wood of an auto or as one lets the finger extend between the barrels on a SxS but with an O/U it is either a schanbel which puts a curve you must extend the finger around or a forend which sets the finger out from the barrels and nothing which lends to that natural graduation from forend to barrels for the finger to follow. Am I just in the minority in wanting to extend my finger from forend along the barrels? If not, is there a forend design on an O/U which permits this comfortably? How do the top shooters grip it?

Thanks.

Randy

Dear Randy,

Wow, you must carry your forearm way out there! Unless you have extremely long arms, it sounds as though your left (I am assuming that you are right handed) arm is far enough forward to slightly limit your lateral movement. Depending on your shotgun sport (you don't say which one) this can be quite acceptable (trap) or less so (skeet, sporting).

The reason that I surmise that you are holding "way out there" is that many of the top shooters use the extended finger hold successfully on standard O/Us and never mention that the forend is too short. I am 6'1", have a 35" sleeve and use the popular extended finger forend hold. I have never had problems running out of room on the standard forends of my FN Brownings. A SxS is very different. With those I get my forefinger well up on the barrels.

Even though I think that you are in the minority, that certainly doesn't mean that you are wrong. When Sporting Clays Champion Andy Duffy was shooting his 325, his index finger had worn the bluing right off of the side rib between his barrels just in front of the forend. He likes that hand way out there too. What it takes away in flexibility and swing, it gives back in barrel control. It works better for "come up in front" shooters than it does for "swing through" methods.

I don't know if you can find one to look at, but the forend you describe (thinning down in front to a natural jointure with the barrels) was the one used on some of the O/U models made by Merckels in Germany. Merkel O/U forends were often very narrow in width, really just shells along the barrel sides, and allowed the hand to literally hold the barrels, more like the SxS. Many people commented on how much they welcomed this feature.

If you can find a stock maker who has been around for a while, I am sure that he will know exactly what I am talking about. It really shouldn't be that hard to shave an existing forend down a good bit. There isn't too much that you can do with the depth due to the forend latch, but width and taper at the front is another matter. Any stocker who knows his business should be able to

thin down your existing forend, restain, refinish and rechecker for not a whole lot of money. If it doesn't work out, you can always order another forend from your gun company.

Of course, if you thin it out too much, it is going to break often. Then again, half the fun of shooting is experimenting and that means risking something. Have at it. It is only money.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid