

PISTOL GRIPS VS ENGLISH STOCKS

Dear Technoid,

Why are straight grip (English) stocks rarely if ever found in use on the sporting clays range? This stock design on a 12 gauge over and under would eliminate the rifle-like control of the dominant trigger hand with which most American shotgun target shooters have grown comfortable. With control placed in the pointing hand instead, would not there be better technique and less aiming as a result?

Thanks for your response.

F.B.

Dear F.B.

Your analysis is extremely reasonable, but like many reasonable things, that is not the way that it works. Such a world we live in!

If I understand it correctly, the theory is that by removing some control from the rear hand, control of the forehand will be emphasized. This really wasn't the reason for the original use of the English stock and most competition shooters of today would be very reluctant to give up any control whatsoever over either end of the shotgun.

The English stock was originally designed to allow a quick selection of the rear trigger on a double trigger gun. The fact that the English stock is lighter, looks sleeker and makes the gun easier to raise (less awkward wrist angle in the field carry position) were secondary considerations. The fact that the English stock offered less right hand control was considered the price to be paid for the above four advantages.

Even early on, the English stock was not universally popular with game shooters. In the late nineteenth century the Prince of Wales preferred a modified pistol grip on his game guns in order to retrieve some of the lost right hand control. This grip (often called a Prince of Wales grip) is still in use today and looks a good bit like the famous round knob grip of the older Belgian Brownings.

The virtually universal lack of straight English grips on clay target guns has nothing to do with esthetics, weight, mounting the gun or double triggers. It has everything to do with controlling the gun.

While it is very true that the fore hand is of supreme importance in moving the barrel with the bird, the rear hand is equally important in maintaining gun mount and trigger control. Neither hand is more important. They just have different jobs to do to complete a successful shot. One hand should not be weakened just to improve the performance of the other.

A strong right hand and reassuring pistol grip will not encourage rifle-like shooting any more than a crisp trigger will. Rifle shooting your shotgun is a habit or technique that can be altered by practice, not short term stock design solutions. Don't kid yourself, many of the very best sporting clays shooters will often AIM at a certain target if they are familiar with it. They certainly do not sight along the barrel, but they do often cheek very hard, grip both hands tightly and use a sustained lead of an exact known distance. In the shotgun world, this is aiming and requires full, complete and constant control of both ends of the gun. Many very successful skeet and trap shooters use exactly this technique in order to preclude lifting the head.

It is always good to question authority and everything else, but he who ignores history is doomed to repeat it. Don't forget the Technoid's Sixth Solecism: "It isn't wrong just because it is popular." Trust me, over the long run you will shoot better clay target scores with a pistol gripped target gun.

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid