

BROWNING CONFUSION

Dear Technoid:

I am writing to ask what you think of the Japanese 32" Browning 425 compared to the 32" Belgian 325, is the difference in price worth it, about \$600. I have shot a couple of guns and I really like the Belgian 325, though I can only judge it by seeing that I break more stuff with it. Is the 425 a fair substitute for a Belgian 325; and am I just being cheap by wanting to save \$600?

Thank you, Joseph

Dear Joseph:

I am a bit confused (nothing new about that). Both the 425 and the 325 are Japanese made guns, manufactured by Miroku. The 325 is the "earlier" sporting clays model (low, flat rib- longer, higher stock) which was replaced by the 425 about two years ago. There is virtually no difference in the guns other than Miroku's production alteration of the monoblock/barrel mating process and some cosmetics.

Well, yes, there may be a difference in that all the 425s have enlarged bores, while many of the 325s did not. Also, some of the earlier 325s built to English specifications had lighter barrels and are much sought after here in the US. Now, Browning makes only the heavy barrels for everyone.

Since the 425 and the 325 are basically the same gun, pick the one you like and the one that balances best for you. Personally, I find the 32" Japanese Brownings to be far too heavy up front. The solid choke Miroku 32" model 3800 or newer model 38 trap guns are much better balanced. You can get those from Andrew Litt in England. Mirokus are not sold in then US right now due to a non-competition agreement with Browning (which is running out and may change). Any Mirokus you see here are grey market.

If you do select a 32" screw choked Japanese 425, I would consider having Ken Eyster or someone else back bore it a bit to pull some weight out of the barrels. Yes, I know that they come "backbored", but that is one of the problems that causes the heavier weight. Browning enlarged the barrel diameter, but kept the wall thickness the same- thus a heavier barrel. It made a bad problem worse. Aftermarket backboring a gun with screw chokes has to be done carefully and then all the chokes have to be recalibrated. I would consider 30" barrels.

Browning also markets a more expensive "Belgian Made" 125. It is a real slippery marketing ploy. Every single part in that gun, with the exception of the trademark forend opening lever, is pure standard grade Citori metal. The gun is "assembled" in Belgium from these Japanese Citori parts and is sold as a Belgian gun. They have nice wood and some hand engraving, but at the price they are charging it is a real rip off. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the real Belgian Browning.

The real McCoy is the Belgian Browning model B-25. This is the gun that everyone is trying to copy. They are quite available in the US on the used market for \$1000-\$1500 for the Grade I model. Some trap guns had 32", but almost all of those had the Broadway rib- which is an acquired taste. They are still made in Belgium, but are seldom imported new to the US because Browning charges \$7000 new for them and only a crazy person would pay that when they can get a used one so much cheaper.

In England, the B-25 (the low end is now sold with repulsive B2G engraving) sells quite well and is in the same price area as Perazzi and Krieghof. The B-25 is a more durable gun than either the Perazzi or Krieghof, but does not have the interior finish quality of the Perazzi. Personally, I feel that the B-25 is better balanced than the Perazzi and far, far better balanced than the clubby Krieghof. On the other hand, the Krieghof has remarkably low recoil, which the B-25 does not.

So, bottom line, if you are choosing between the 325 and 425, pick the one that you like the best. The differences are just cosmetic.

Best regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid