



LEARN THE GAME FROM CLAY

TIM REVAMPS A PERAZZI
MX8 AND SEES WHAT WE
CAN LEARN FROM CLAY
GUNS TO BENEFIT GAME

In last month's issue, I referred to this time of year as the crossover point between clay and game shooting; the major clay events are now behind us, while game shooting is in full swing.

A recent piece of work I was asked to carry out set me thinking about the crossover that has occurred between guns that we use for clay shooting and those which are used for game shooting. I believe that some shooters out there are beginning to think on the same lines as me.

Side by sides were always considered the correct choice for game shooting, a design which has hardly changed over the last 100 years. Even the stock design of most modern over and under's still exhibit their origins in 19th century gun makers, although today's guns, when produced for clay shooting, are considerably heavier, with deeper stocks for absorbing more recoil as more shots are generally fired in a shorter space of time and higher combs for a more consistent gun mount.

There are some notable exceptions to this. One I always mention is the Beretta 686/687 20-bore: very light and a positive joy to carry all day over your arm when rough shooting or on a walked up day. However, on a driven day with plenty of high birds in the offing, when you may be tempted to put 28-grams or even 32-grams of lead through them to ensure a good clean kill. The kick, for me at

least, is truly horrendous - just the same as a classic side by side, which brings me, somewhat long-windedly, to the nub of this month's article. Maybe what we have learnt about stock design from clay shooting can make driven days more comfortable for game shooting?

In picture one you can see an example of a very good second hand Perazzi MX8, standard black action gun with the superb drop out Perazzi trigger unit. Although not a light gun, there are several barrel lengths and weights, together with many stock configurations available to match your personal requirements and the company will even make a stock to your measurement.

These are not a cheap gun to buy new, but are very reasonable to buy second hand; older ones are sometimes half the cost - or less - of a new one. With their shallow actions, due to the excellent locking system, they look graceful and when balanced correctly, handle superbly. Even older guns can be easily repaired and renovated, with full spares available from the manufacturer as they have hardly altered over the years, always a good sign that someone got the original design just about perfect.

Stood next to a standard side by side game gun, as in picture two, you can clearly see both the similarities and differences in the stock configurations, especially the depth of the stock at the face and less drop from the front to the

PICTURE ONE: A GOOD EXAMPLE OF A SECOND HAND MX8 SPORTER

back of the comb. However, there has always been a small problem with using MX8's as a game gun. Most game shooters like



PICTURE TWO: THE MX8 NEXT TO A SIDE BY SIDE GAME GUN, NOTICE THE DEPTH OF THE MX8 STOCK AT THE FRONT AND BACK OF THE COMB



GETTING TECHNICAL

By Tim Greenwood



PICTURE THREE: THE MX8 TRIGGER UNIT DISASSEMBLED WITH THE STEEL GUIDE BRAZED IN PLACE

their guns to have an automatic safety catch, something which MX8's with their drop-out trigger-units very rarely have and even if requested on a new gun, cost several hundred pounds as an extra.

Now, I don't know what your opinion of the need for an automatic safety catch is, but I personally feel that the only safe gun is an open gun. There are those who like the additional security of pushing off their safety as they mount the gun to shoot. Indeed I have spoken to many clay shooters who feel the same and so because of this, MX8's have not generally been at the top of the shopping list when purchasing a gun which may at times be used for game shooting.

Designing an auto safe unit which can be retro fitted at a reasonable cost is not an easy undertaking and when asked to do it, I accepted the challenge with trepidation – if I got it wrong a replacement trigger unit is very expensive. However, with a little thought and a great deal of bad language, here is the result.

Picture three shows a Perazzi drop out trigger unit, with all its parts



PICTURE FOUR: THE FIRST GUIDE HOLE DRILLED IN THE CENTRE PLATE ALONG THE UNIT'S AXIS

removed. The U shaped part at the front of the unit I copied from a Perazzi auto safe system fitted to the MX12 non detachable coil spring unit, I then cut a small rebate into the centre plate to accept a small upright metal peg brazed into place. Next, I drilled a hole longitudinally through the centre plate, above the two holes used to retain the mainsprings, as shown in picture four.

Putting the trigger back into the main action body, after inserting a piece of 1.5mm spring steel through the hole, I was able to line up with the drop bar of the safety catch, the position of the second hole in the support peg earlier fitted. Picture five shows the spring steel in place, with part of the trigger back together to check that all of the parts clear the new additions.

Taking the trigger apart again, a small amount of filing cleaned up any excess brazes and rounded a few corners. In picture six, you can see the unit with its additional holes and

peg all filed to fit. A light polish and the unit is ready to be placed into the blacking tank for re-finishing as in picture seven.

I have included this picture of my small blacking tank working, as most of you will probably never see what one looks like. This is a caustic tank, used only for blacking actions. It is at a working temperature of just under 150°C (300°F) and gives off awful fumes, is highly poisonous and very caustic, but if the metal to be finished has been prepared to a high polish it produces a deep black rich finish.

Although using larger tanks, barrels that have been brazed can be blacked by this method, I wouldn't recommend it. Any of the salts from the solution left behind in vented ribs or ejector apertures will bleed a white caustic powder which, if not quickly wiped off, will ruin the bluing job. The old slow rusting method is far better for barrel blacking.

One last job, requested by my client to make this his perfect driven game gun was to change the T bar or 'sear lifter' so that the gun would fire the top barrel with its tighter choke first as the first shot on a driven bird is at a longer range. Picture eight shows the original and new part: the one on the left is the old part firing the bottom barrel first, on the right is the new unit to fire the top barrel first. I also had to re-cut the sears so that the trigger pulls were re-configured for firing the top barrel first. Most first barrel pulls are 3 ½ to 4lbs, second 4 to 4 ½ lbs. If they are not reset correctly the gun may double discharge.



PICTURE FIVE: THE SECOND GUIDE HOLE HAS BEEN DRILLED TO CARRY THE ACTUATOR ROD FOR THE AUTO-SAFE



PICTURE SIX: ALL THE PARTS FILED TO SHAPE. A FINAL POLISH WILL HAVE IT READY FOR THE BLACKING TANK

The last part to complete the job is to re-assemble the trigger unit. As with many things, it is very simple if you know how and fiddly if you have never been shown. Hook the spring compression lever supplied with the gun around the back of the correctly located mainspring. Hold the whole unit and compress the spring whilst at the same time using the other hand to move the stirrup or tumbler connector over the hook in the end of the mainspring, ensure it is fully seated and gently release the pressure. All V spring Perazzi triggers come with a spares kit and tool, but these are sometimes mislaid over the years.



PICTURE SEVEN: THE BLACKING TANK, BOILING AT A WORKING TEMPERATURE OF NEARLY 300 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT

They are readily available from your local Perazzi dealer but remember: if you are replacing a broken mainspring, always replace both to avoid upsetting the trigger pulls.

Picture ten shows the trigger unit back in the action and functioning fully. It is quite a simple system but it works; finally MX8's can have a

retro fitted automatic safety unit, at a reasonable cost.

Next month I will be restoring a much neglected Perazzi SC3. Keep your Ask the Expert questions coming in, and enjoy your shooting. ●



PICTURE EIGHT: THE PERAZZI MX8 T BAR. LEFT IS SUITABLE FOR BOTH CLAY AND GAME SHOOTING



PICTURE NINE: COMPRESSING THE MAIN V SPRING AND PLACING THE STIRRUP OVER THE HOOK



PICTURE TEN: ALL BACK TOGETHER AND WORKING – SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE!

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- Full gun fitting service, free help and advice gained from working with some of the best shooters in the world.
- All stock work, including cast, bend, lengthening, shortening, repairs to broken and cracked stocks, re-finishing, re-chequering, re-heading.
- Specialises in wooden stock extensions matched to your existing stock.
- All barrel work, including choke alterations, re-black, re-brown, re-lay ribs, dent and bulge repairs, lapping to remove internal pits and marks.
- All action work, including servicing to O/U, box locks, side locks. Replacing of firing pins, mainsprings, top lever springs, tightening, full rejoining, and all ejector work.
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