

Vic Harker looks at the guns that give clay shooters the edge

GUN TEST

ON TEST
THIS MONTH:
Benelli 828U
Sport

Unconventional beauty

Despite being a lover of classically styled shotguns, Vic Harker found himself increasingly taken with this Benelli's appearance as he successfully smoked more and more targets!

It is generally understood that the English double-barrelled shotgun, both the side-by-side and the over-and-under, attained a pinnacle of elegance and mechanical function as long ago as the last decade of the 19th century. With regards to the highest quality British artisanal guns, this may still be the case, but the most modern methods of shotgun manufacture are beginning to dictate rather different aesthetics.

The Benelli 828 Sport version of the company's first over-and-under, which I have

recently been evaluating, is an example of this. That said, the established Beretta line, though also produced with state-of-the-art technology, still retains a degree of design and decoration including beaded fences and raised side panels that reflect artisanal gunmaking values which, although not always entirely understood, are still valued.

The new Benelli 828U, however, has taken a new path that does not include traditional gunmaking decoration. The rounded action body, which melds into distinctive side panels,

is modern in conception, yet still genuinely attractive. This is further enhanced with the gun's Sporter designation engraved in bold lettering with a matt finish on each side panel. An attempt at modernity for its own sake doesn't usually work for shotguns, but in the case of this Benelli it creates an elegant and purposeful appearance.

DETACHABLE TRIGGER GROUP

The incorporation of a detachable trigger group comes as another surprise. Powered by coil



The Benelli's striking looks are in large part due to the innovative alloy action, evolved from the company's semi-auto shotguns.

SPECIFICATIONS

BENELLI 828U SPORT

■ Bore size:	12-bore
■ Action:	single trigger, hand detachable
■ Barrel length:	30"
■ Chamber length:	3"
■ Chokes:	5, hand-detachable
■ Rib:	low ramped
■ Stock:	pistol grip
■ Weight:	7lb 13oz
■ Price:	£3,545
■ UK distributor:	GMK
■ Website:	www.gmk.co.uk



springs, this is not a mechanism that should be detached unless it malfunctions – as one of the GMK gunsmiths was eager to point out. This would suggest to me a spare group would be the answer, if an expensive one.

Another feature is the equally original, if not more so, replaceable breech face. This is yet another easily installed component, in contrast to the cost of rejoining a shotgun barrel to its action, which incurs the price of skilled handwork.

There is a lot to be said for easily detached components, the emphasis being on the word 'easy'. In the case of the Benelli 828U, it's a matter of 'easy if you know how', and even then both removal and refitting of the breech face baffled me for some time.

THE STOCK

A subject close to my heart, and one I can grasp more easily than the benefits of a replaceable breech face, is gun fit. With a range of interchangeable shims that are easily fitted between the rear of the action body and head of the stock, a choice of 40 stock options for drop at comb and cast are available.

This is a simple but valid system for achieving an accurate gun fit that is visibly acceptable and will accommodate the needs of many shooters without recourse to expensive stock alterations. The 828U's basic stock configuration in terms of the grip and the comb is excellent, and with the choice of the options described makes an ingenious contribution to achieving accurate gun fit.

BARRELS

The barrel assembly, as with the rest of the gun, embraces modernity, dispensing with a middle rib and incorporating carbon fibre for the top rib to provide a barrel weight of 1.501kg with 3½" extended choke tubes in situ, of which there are five to choose from. The top rib also incorporates a low, ramped design 10mm high, 9cm from the breech face and dropping away to 2mm at the barrels' muzzle ends. It is suitably pointable without being obtrusive.

The fore-end wood incorporates a relatively slim shape that comfortably lies across the palm of the leading hand. The fore-end's fastening features Benelli's take on the Anson rod design and it requires strong fingers to detach it from the barrels. ■

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

Tipping the scales at 7lb 13oz, my test gun was fitted with barrels 30½" long, and with the hand-detachable chokes provided an all-up barrel weight of 3lb 5oz. So, not the fastest handling Sporter, but it provided reassuring heft between the hands. The ramped and tapered rib provided a pointable but unobtrusive sighting plain. The stock on my sample Benelli measured 14¾" length of pull, with 2½" drop at heel and 1½" at the comb. Nowhere close to my requirements, but a comb raiser from my collection solved the problem. I should add that with a point of balance 5" in front of the trigger, I

had a gun with a reassuring amount of weight up front, but I didn't expect the degree of help this gun provided on long targets... and just about every other kind. Inevitably, I suppose, this was on targets at distance, but I have always found if you can shoot well at long-range with a gun, close targets will take care of themselves. Mechanical function was particularly good, the trigger pulls were excellent and ejection of spent cases positive to the point that I just didn't notice it. Unconventional in appearance the Benelli 828U may be, but the more you shoot it the more beautiful it looks.

'The 828U's stock configuration, in terms of the grip and comb, is excellent'

Vic found the mechanical function of this gun excellent on targets



PICTURES: VIC HARKER