

BROWNING 625 SPORTING

A REPORT BY **TOM CERETTO**



I will readily admit that I have a soft spot for Browning shotguns, so when I heard Browning was to release a new sporting clays target gun, the 625 Sporting, based on the original John Browning Superposed boxlock design I couldn't wait to get my hands on one.

When I looked at the first photos of the new 625 I figured the engraving pattern looked pretty nice – but up close and personal it looks even better. The combination of finely done scroll engraving on each side of the silver nitride receiver and the diminutive Browning logo in gold set the right tone for John Browning's 80 year old boxlock design. The bottom of the receiver continues the same scroll pattern with a stylized 625 and a gold ribbon with Browning Sporting on it. Well executed, understated, and just the right touch necessary for a classic.



FINE SCROLL ENGRAVING AND DIMINUTIVE GOLD LOGO SETS THE RIGHT TONE FOR THE 625.

SOLID LOCK-UP

What is there you can say about the Browning boxlock except that it locks up like a bank vault and is built like one. The large, almost full width, chopper lump hooks onto a large diameter pin that forms the pivot that the barrel rotates on. The chopper lump, pivot pin and bolt are all a bit heftier than they need to be, yet are light enough to make the gun lively. I have always attributed Browning's slightly overbuilt design to the fact that he was not an MIT graduate, but from a long line of self taught American tinkerer inventors.

When the Browning is discharged, the hook and pivot pin keep the barrels from moving off

face and the cross bolt prevents the action from springing open. As if that is not enough, the chopper lump snuggles into two slots machined through the receiver and

mitigates any twisting motion the gun may have at discharge. The cross bolt is self adjustable to compensate for any wear that may occur over years of use.

THE IMPROVEMENTS

Most of the improvements to the original design have been in the trigger group, advances in barrel technology, metallurgy and machining technology. The trigger group on the 625 is probably the best I have ever encountered on an unmodified production Browning. There is no slack and the triggers go off crisply. Trigger pull is a little heftier than I would like it to be, but at 5.2 pounds for the under barrel and 5.3 pounds for the upper barrel it is not at all onerous. My demo is only serial number 206 and as more new models come off the assembly line, I am sure slight improvements will be made to the 625 as production continues and feedback is analyzed. The top tang safety also acts as a barrel selector.

The barrels are topped with a flat-vented rib that tapers from 10mm at the breech to 8mm at the muzzle. The rib is crosscut to reduce glare and has a 4mm groove that runs down the center of the rib. The barrel sports a HiViz Pro-Comp sight and a white center bead. Barrel finish is a deep black and as smooth as a baby's backside – without a ripple evident.

Five new Diamond Grade extended Invector Plus chokes in skeet, improved cylinder, modified, improved modified and full come with the 625. Others are available at extra cost. The new conical parallel chokes are 3 1/8 inches long, quite snazzy looking and are sure to draw a lot of attention. The new 625 is equipped with what Browning calls Vector

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURER: FN HERSTAL, BELGIUM
IMPORTER: BROWNING ARMS CO. MORGAN, UTAH
PRICE: \$3,499 WITH ADJUSTABLE COMB
WEIGHT: 8 LBS. 10 OZ. (WEIGHED)
TYPE: 12 GAUGE O/U BOXLOCK
RECEIVER: CNC MACHINED STEEL ALLOY
TRIGGER: RECOIL OPERATED ADJUSTABLE FOR LOP
TRIGGER PULL: UNDER: 5.2 LBS. OVER: 5.3 LBS.
SAFETY: TOP TANG SELECTABLE TRIGGER
BARRELS: 32" AS TESTED 30" AND 28" AVAILABLE
CHAMBERS: 2 3/4" CHROME LINED
TOP RIB: VENTED 10 x 8mm TAPERED
CENTER RIB: VENTED
CHOKES: DIAMOND GRADE INVECTOR PLUS CONICAL PARALLEL
SKEET: 0.007
IMPROVED CYLINDER: 0.012
MODIFIED: 0.022
IMPROVED MODIFIED: 0.029
FULL: 0.040
STOCK: GRADE II WALNUT
STOCK FINISH: SEMI GLOSS OIL
DROP AT COMB: 1 3/4" ADJUSTABLE
DROP AT HEEL: 2 1/2" ADJUSTABLE
LENGTH OF PULL: 14 3/4" ADJUSTABLE
OVERALL LENGTH: 50 3/8" W/32" BARRELS

Pro extended 2 1/2 inch long forcing cones. Browning states that the Invector Pro geometry completely eliminates any step or double taper between the chamber and bore. The chambers on the 625 are standard 2 3/4 inch and chrome lined.

WOOD WORK

Wood to metal fit on Browning shotguns has always been good, but the fit on the grade II wood on my demo 625 is the best I have seen on a Browning that didn't come out of the custom shop. The wood has nice grain and is topped off with a well filled semi gloss oil finish. While the Browning Superposed design is a classic, the checkering on the new 625 is not. It is totally different to the checkering on any Browning I have ever seen.

It is modern in style, but it does

come off very well – a modern touch for a classic shotgun. As attractive as the checking on the fore-end is, it is still a ubiquitous and not very attractive Schnabel. What a shame – but the fore-end iron is nicely engraved.

The stock on my demo is adjustable with very little effort. All the owner needs to do is loosen a single hex bolt through the recoil pad, adjust the height and/or cast and retighten the hex bolt. It is quick and easy and is one of the best systems I have ever used, but it does add seven ounces to the overall weight. Browning states length of pull is 14 ³/₄ inches, but with the adjustable trigger in the center position my demo measured 14 ⁷/₈ inches. I'll not quibble about that.

ON TEST

Because the length of pull is ³/₈ inch longer than my personal target gun and weight is over a pound heavier, it took me a while to get used to the heft and stock length of the demo. The added weight did make for a smoother mount and swing after I adjusted to it. I used the skeet, improved cylinder and modified chokes for most of my shooting on a course with average difficulty. All three chokes hit targets with lethality when I executed the drill properly. Going to the second target on report and true pairs was a piece of cake. Recoil with my ⁷/₈ ounce International Federal target loads was almost non-existent. I liked that. With its 32 inch barrels, hefty 8 pound 10 ounce weight and

adjustable stock, the 625 proved to be an excellent trap gun too.

Over the years the original John Browning Superposed design has proven to be a most reliable and shootable firearm at any shooting sport you may wish to

use it for. Add to that an improved trigger, longer improved forcing cone, excellent chokes and the very pleasing aesthetics of the 625 and you have a target shotgun that is well worth the asking price. I enjoyed shooting it. ■



MOST OF THE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ORIGINAL DESIGN HAVE BEEN IN THE TRIGGER GROUP, ADVANCES IN BARREL TECHNOLOGY, METALLURGY AND MACHINING TECHNOLOGY.