



## BROWNING GOLDEN CLAYS SPORTING



*...Tom Ceretto puts it through its paces*

I have owned three Browning shotguns and tested several others and I have always shot them reasonably well right out of the box. But all of them were over and under shotguns – none were gas guns. So I didn't really know what to expect when Paul Thompson sent me a Browning Golden Clays Sporting Clays autoloader to review. I should not have been concerned at all. When I shouldered the gun for the first

time I was looking straight down the barrel and the front bead was sitting atop the center bead forming a perfect figure eight, just the way I like it.

I wanted to test a high-grade shotgun and the Golden Clays Sporting filled the bill nicely. The silver alloy receiver was embellished on the right side with a gold pheasant and sported some nice scroll engraving surrounded by a gold border and sporting

clays engraved in block letters. The right side also has two gold clay targets centered amongst the scroll engraving. The left side has three bobwhite quail in gold and a gold clay target in the center of the receiver. There is a lot of scroll engraving on the left side too and it is bordered in gold. All of this is very well done and the birds actually look like a pheasant and quail. I say that because I have seen pheasants that look like

vultures masquerading as pheasants and quail masquerading as some unknown species of avian. All in all, the embellishments are very well done.

The machining on the receiver is first class and there are few tool marks visible. The bolt rides on two rails machined into the alloy receiver. A drop of oil seems to keep the rails lubricated and the bolt sliding comfortably back and forth with ease. The machining on the bolt is very professionally done and the extractor seems to be heavy duty. It threw empty cartridges into the next county. The receiver is easy to

some automatics I have reviewed, the bolt release doesn't take a gorilla to push it down and release the bolt. Suffering from a bit of arthritis in my hands, I am grateful for that. I also use that as an excuse for my terrible typing – thank God for spell check on my Mac.

Trigger pull did not seem onerous when I shot the gun, but when I measured it I was surprised to see it was over six pounds. That is a bit excessive, even if the trigger is nicely gold plated.

The Browning Golden Clays has two barrel length options, 28 and 30 inch, but being a bit height

of 0.729 inches is more than adequate. If you get much larger, gas can escape from around the obturate skirt of the wad (with some brands of wads) and gas can bypass the wad causing pressure and velocity loss. The bluing is deep black, lustrous and very well done.

Contrary to common belief, overboring does not reduce recoil, but does offer a larger area for gases to expand and that does lower pressure slightly. Lower pressure tends to deform fewer shot on set back and improves patterns. Shot strings are slightly shorter with overbored barrels and that improves patterns too. Another plus with overboring is that forcing cones tend to be tapered shallower and are easier on lead shot transitioning through the forcing cone. I know I am going to get some heat from readers after saying recoil isn't reduced – but that's OK with me.

The barrel is equipped with three Browning Invector-Plus chokes – skeet, improved cylinder and modified. The flush chokes are 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches long and are conical parallel. The skeet measured 0.004, the improved cylinder 0.012 and the modified 0.018. Close enough for standard flush chokes. I think a competition shotgun of this quality should come equipped standard with extended chokes. The quality of the gun deserves them. Its too damn cold in November in Wisconsin to pattern shotguns, but the improved cylinder choke seemed to pattern the 24 gram Federal International 1,325 fps loads I was shooting very well. When 5-stand targets disappear in a puff of smoke something is going right.

The wood on my demo gun was good for a shotgun in this

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**MANUFACTURER:** FN, HERSTAL, BELGIUM  
**IMPORTER:** BROWNING ARMS CO. MORGAN, UTAH  
**ACTION:** ALLOY RECEIVER GAS OPERATED AUTOMATIC  
**SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:** \$1,848

**GUN WEIGHT:** 7 LBS 15 OZ. (WEIGHED)  
**LOP:** 14 1/4"  
**OAL:** 48 1/2 INCHES WITH 28 INCH BARREL  
**DROP AT COMB:** 1 1/2"  
**DROP AT HEEL:** 1 1/2"  
**BARREL:** 28" TESTED 30" AVAILABLE  
**CHAMBER:** 2 3/4"  
**RIB:** VENTED TAPERED 10X8MM  
**BORE:** 0.742"  
**CHOKES:** INVECTOR PLUS FLUSH CONICAL PARALLEL  
**CHOKE CONSTRICTION:** MEASURED SKEET 0.004 IMPROVED CYLINDER 0.012 MODIFIED 0.018  
**SIGHTS:** FRONT HI-VIZ, CENTER IVORY  
**TRIGGER PULL:** 6.3 LBS.  
**SAFETY:** MANUAL IN TRIGGER GUARD

price range. It showed some decent figure and the satin gloss finish was very well done with all pores fully sealed; the stock and fore-end were as smooth as a baby's backside – a job well done.

The checkering, laser engraved I suspect, was more than adequately done and grip was good with and without gloves. The fore-end is beaver tail and a bit large, due I suppose, to the large diameter of the Browning Active Valve System. It is not so large as to be burdensome, but larger than most gas guns. The stock has a soft butt pad with a hard insert at the stock heel for ease of mounting.

The Golden Clays balanced right at the breach end of the barrel, a point almost exactly between the shooters hands. Handling was more than adequate and the gun transitioned smartly to the second bird on true pairs. Recoil was next to nothing with the 24 gram loads I was shooting. At



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disassemble and a quick blast with something like Gunslick Gun-Flush and a spritz of oil gets the Browning ready for its next outing.

All Browning automatic target shotguns come with two gas valves, one for light target loads and one for loads 1 1/4 ounces and heavier. The valves, called an Active Valve System by Browning, look like a complicated affair, but do the job with 2 3/4 inch loads very nicely.

The Golden Clays is equipped with speed loading, but being an old guy and set in my ways I load in the conventional manner. Unlike

deprived and of small stature I chose the shorter of the two for my demo. A gun with an overall length of 48 1/2 inches is perfectly adequate for me.

The machining on the barrel is well executed and the chamber is chrome plated. The rib tapered from 10mm at the receiver to 8mm at the muzzle. The rib sports an ivory center bead and has a Hi-Viz front sight with several different color inserts supplied with the gun. The barrel is ported with 11 vents on each side and is overbored at 0.742 inches. I think an overbore of 0.013 from the American standard

almost eight pounds, it is a bit heavier than the auto I usually shoot, but due to its excellent balance it handled nicely.

I like this shotgun very much, but I do have a few issues with it. A gun of this quality should come equipped with extended competition chokes and a hard case instead of a cardboard box. The trigger pull, while not onerous was too stiff. I think a prospective buyer would be willing to pay a little more for a gun as nice as the Golden Clays with those upgrades and improvements.

We recently celebrated Thanksgiving and I have a lot to be thankful for this year. I spent two sessions in the hospital recently and wound up having a coronary stent placed in my right coronary artery due to an 80 percent



blockage. I almost missed the deadline for this article because of the time lost in hospital and the two weeks my doctors would not allow me to shoot for fear recoil might displace the stent. I recently went pheasant hunting and survived breaking brush with a bunch of young lads, so the

procedure must have turned out OK. Hopefully, my doctor was right when he said I was in pretty good shape for an old fart. Now that I have finished this article in the wee hours of the morning I am going to email it and pour myself a John Jameson on the rocks. Buonanotte. ■

**THE LEFT SIDE HAS THREE BOBWHITE QUAIL IN GOLD AND A GOLD CLAY TARGET IN THE CENTER OF THE RECEIVER. THERE IS A LOT OF SCROLL ENGRAVING ON THE LEFT SIDE TOO AND IT IS BORDERED IN GOLD.**