

BERETTA 686 ONYX

“IN THE LAST ISSUE OF CLAYSHOOTINGUSA I REVIEWED THE BERETTA SO5, ONE OF THEIR MOST EXPENSIVE SPORTING CLAYS OVER AND UNDER TARGET SHOTGUNS. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE IN THIS ISSUE TO REVIEW ONE OF THEIR LEAST EXPENSIVE – THE 686 ONYX,” SAYS TOM CERETTO.

Not only does that bring me back to reality, but also it's a gun most of us can afford to own without breaking the bank.

Mike Vrooman, Marketing Manager of the Victory Shooter Division of Beretta, was kind enough to send me the gun for review. Upon opening the sturdy looking supplied case, I was impressed with how good looking it was. It is not elaborately

reviewing as many target and field shotguns as I have done, I would be a bit blasé about getting another 'out of the box' gun to review – but I'm not. I'm a gun nut and I still get excited about almost any gun I am sent. As with many guns I receive, my first reaction on opening the case was, "Oh crap – another shotgun that's too damn long for me to shoot well." Had I given more attention to the contents of



embellished, but is still attractive. The area in front of the scallops and on the bottom of the receiver is machine-turned and the Beretta logo and Beretta in gold block letters is on the smooth silver finished scallop on both sides. The bottom of the receiver has the Beretta logo and Beretta 686 Onyx engraved on it. There is also some well executed engraving – acid etched I would guess – on the external trunnion buttons. The top of the receiver, at the fences, is also engraved with small scallops. Simply done, but done well. The monobloc is also machine turned with some semi-circumferential engraving on the breach end of the monobloc and where the monobloc and barrels join. The wood is also more attractive than I expected on an entry-level target gun.

You would think that after

the case I would have noticed that there was a second recoil pad shipped with the Onyx. After installing the optional pad, which shortened the length of pull to 14 1/2 inches, much closer to my preferred 14 3/8 inches, I was much happier. I was impressed by that small attention to detail.

CNC MACHINED

Like all the 600 series shotguns, the boxlock receiver is CNC machined out of a solid forging of alloy steel. It is common knowledge that the entire series (target and field) are more than durable enough for many thousands of rounds as long as you do not abuse them. The receiver locks up with truncated cones on a modified boss design. The barrels pivot on stubs on the inner receiver walls and are replaceable.



Two cocking rods, one on either side of the bottom of the receiver, engage cocking levers in the fore-end and set the hammers. On closure, the truncated cones nestle into cone shaped recesses machined into either side of the monobloc just north of the axis of the barrels and secure the gun in battery. It is simple and effective.

The combination manual safety and barrel selector hangs from the top strap. Left on the barrel selector selects top barrel first and right selects the bottom barrel first. The selector snaps right to left with authority. The safety also requires a bit of effort to select the desired position – and that’s good. I do not like barrel selectors or safeties that are moved easily out of position.

The bottom barrel went off at

is 49 ³/₈ inches with the optional thinner butt pad installed (⁵/₁₆ longer with the thicker pad). Both the stock and fore-end had better than average wood and the grain showed some nice contrast. The stained oil finish on my demo was better than average for an entry-level target shotgun and the pores were well filled. Drop at comb measured 1.5 inches and drop at heel measured 2.36 inches – exactly what the factory specifications are supposed to be.

The Deeley and Edge fore-end latch is embellished with a bit of a machined turned surface and is slightly recessed from the fore-end wood. Wood to metal fit is one of the best I have seen on an entry-level shotgun on both the receiver and the fore-end. There was

5.2 pounds and the top barrel at 5.1 pounds, a bit heavy but they both snapped off with not a smidgeon of creep and are very crisp. A slight amount of sear polishing would probably render them almost perfect.

When I was chatting with Ed Anderson, gunsmith at the Beretta New York Gallery, he emphasized the pride that Beretta takes in their barrels – and I must admit that I’ve never seen a Beretta shotgun barrel that was not as smooth as glass from breach to muzzle. Barrels on my demo 686 Onyx were typically well-manufactured. Both Optima Bore barrels measured out at 0.732 inches. Four bright stainless steel Optima Bore flush chokes came with the gun.

The ventilated top rib is tapered ³/₈ by ³/₁₆ and is checkered from breach to muzzle. The mid rib is solid. The barrels measured 31 ¹⁵/₁₆ this long and overall length

absolutely no fore-end movement either fore-and-aft or side-to-side on my demo. The fore-end is reasonably attractive for Schnabel. Checkering on the stock and fore-end is sharp and well done. It offered a good grip with and without gloves. There was not a single run-off or miscue I could see on stock or fore-end.

ON TEST

It is getting a bit chilly in Wisconsin to pattern every shotgun I test, but the three chokes I used while shooting sporting clays broke targets with solid hits when I did my job properly. I used a combination of skeet and improved cylinder or improved cylinder and modified on two separate sporting clays courses – with targets of average difficulty. Cylinder and skeet crushed skeet birds using Federal International 24 gram

shells I had left over from the Wisconsin State shoot.

The Onyx balanced ¹/₂ inch in front of the trunnions and that facilitated movement in any direction. Movement from target to target on report pairs or doubles was a piece of cake. Without question, the Onyx would make a fine skeet gun with either short sub-gauge tubes or a set of full-length Briley or Kolar lightweight sub-gauge tubes. I have been thinking lately of purchasing an

entry level over and under and a set of sub-gauge tubes for small bore sporting clays events. When I make up my mind whether to do so or not, the 686 Onyx will definitely be on the list of might buy guns. At a retail price of only \$2,025 for a well-made target gun, it should be on everyone’s list for consideration. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURER:

FABBRICA DI ARMI PIETRO BERETTA
VIA PIETRO BERETTA, 18
25063 GARDONE VAL TROMPIA
(BRESCIA)
ITALIA

U.S. DISTRIBUTER:

BERETTA U.S.A.
17601 BERETTA DRIVE
ACCOKEEK, MD 20604
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www.berettausa.com

SUGGESTED RETAIL:	\$2,025.00
ACTION:	CNC MACHINED MODIFIED BOSS BOXLOCK
RECEIVER DEPTH:	2.5"
SAFETY:	MANUAL
GUN WEIGHT:	7.8 LBS
OVERALL LENGTH:	49 ³ / ₈ " W/SHORT PAD
LENGTH OF PULL:	14 ¹ / ₂ " AS TESTED
DROP AT COMB:	1 ¹ / ₂ "
DROP AT HEEL:	2.36"
STOCK & FORE-END:	WALNUT SCHNABEL FORE-END
STOCK FINISH:	HAND RUBBED OIL
BARRELS:	32"
FRONT BEAD:	IVORY
CENTER BEAD:	STEEL
CHAMBERS:	3"
BORE:	0.732"/0.732"
CHOKES:	5 FLUSH OPTIMA BORE
CHOKE LENGTH:	2.75"
FORCING CONE:	LONG EXTENDED
TOP RIB:	FLAT VENTILATED, TAPERED ³ / ₈ X ³ / ₁₆ CHECKERED
CENTER RIB:	SOLID
TRIGGER:	GOLD NON-ADJUSTABLE SINGLE SELECTIVE
TRIGGER PULL:	TOP: 5.1 LBS. BOTTOM: 5.2 LBS.