

One of the best things about getting older is that we can remember back further, hence be better than we ever were at whatever it is we're remembering. We do it with a clear conscience too. Most recently, when thoroughly immersed in my pontification pool in the midst of a cold, dreary northern Michigan winter, I decided it would be nice to shoot an American made gun again – just because.

A quick perusal of current American made target guns produces a starkly slim list. Kolar is beyond my price range and Parker target guns, scarce as hen's teeth and seen by few, even more so. The new A10 American by Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing Company is looming on the horizon and seems reasonably priced per relative value – but still isn't inexpensive. Cost aside, I'm at that happy stage

of decomposition where recoil from fixed breech guns becomes less than pleasant in fairly short order. Adding up the ideas of 'American made', 'fits my budget' and 'comfortable to shoot' and the list got really short, really fast – leaving just the Remington 1100.

### Early Marketing

In 1962, engineer Wayne Leek stood in front of a meeting with Remington's ad agency, no doubt bursting with anticipation. His

**DAVE HOLMES LOOKS AT THE REMINGTON 1100**

# WHO SAYS WE CAN'T GO BACK?



team's work was about to meet the world. He ushered in a new era of shotgunning when he told the assembled multitude that the new Model 1100 was going to revolutionize shotgun shooting. Forty-eight years later, with over four million produced and more major target shooting wins under its belt than any other semi-auto will likely ever see, it would be pretty tough to argue the accuracy of his statement. While many of the 1100s wins came on trap and skeet fields (before sporting clays was), our younger readers need to understand that the 1100 was the gun other manufacturers tried to emulate for many years. Duncan Lawton (England) won the World FITASC Championship with a 1100. Dan Carlisle shot one in international competition. Leo Harrison and Daro Handy shot trap for a loong time with 1100s. The Remington offering was top dog.



I remember when the 1100 ads hit. I looked longingly at the lines and devoured the 'propaganda'. But those were different times. The difference in price between the 870 and the 1100 was a mountain this farm boy couldn't climb. I didn't see Dad standing anywhere with his hand in his pocket either. (Truth be told, back then, there was nothing I couldn't do with my 870, anyway.)

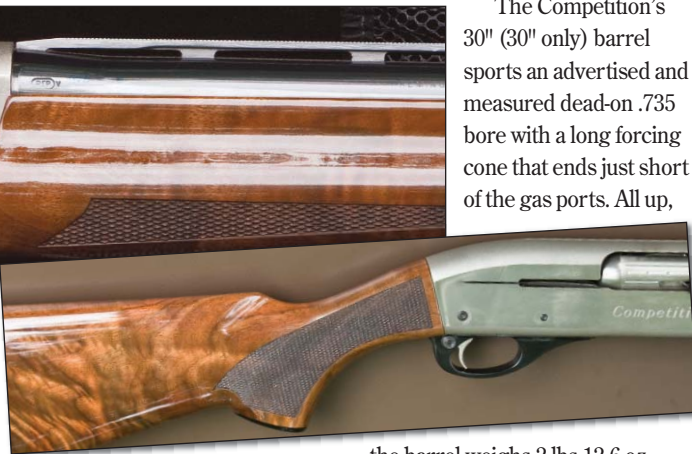
My first 1100, a .410, came along somewhere around 1970. I learned a valuable lesson with that gun, which worked just fine and was an absolute joy to shoot. The lesson was that I never wanted to reload

.410 shells again. I haven't either!

Fast forward twenty some years and I was reading about this new 'sporting clays' game – and I liked what I read. I had an 11-87 Remington field gun but thought the new Remington Sporting Clays gun would have to be better. It was, after all, a sporting clays gun. It was an interesting experience.

The gun shot 10-12 inches to the right. Some of you may remember that Remington had past problems with choke tube installation and point of impact was not to be taken for granted. The replacement 30" barrel was only 28" long, but the choke tubes were in straight and it shot straight – so I decided 28 was more than close enough to 30.

11-87s of that period were having problems with the pistons and piston seals breaking. I tried to keep three sets on hand, along with a small collection of 'O' rings.



My gun functioned fine for 340 (I counted) shells, but soon started hanging up. The Sporter receiver eventually went south when a shell detonated. There was nothing to indicate the gun was at fault, but I decided to move on to the then new Browning Gold. My auto odyssey continued to the Beretta 391s. I've shot them ever since they came out, quite literally, since I was at the writer conference

when the first box was opened. I like autos – I've lost too much hearing to be troubled by the cycling noise and love the felt recoil reduction.

## 1100 Competition

The 1100 Competition has been around for about five years. It addresses concerns with cycling issues by coating the receiver and action bar with a nickel-Teflon finish to increase lubricity. A new, one-piece piston/piston seal is under the 'hood'. The stock sports a new checkering pattern. Other than that, it looks pretty much like the gun Wayne Leek brought out in that 1962 sales meeting – and that ain't a bad thing. While lighter field guns from other makers have been justifiably well-received, and there are more versatile gas systems in newer guns, the 8 plus pound 1100 is still competent (the extra weight even desirable for target purposes).

The Competition's 30" (30" only) barrel sports an advertised and measured dead-on .735 bore with a long forcing cone that ends just short of the gas ports. All up,

the barrel weighs 2 lbs 12.6 oz. That's sufficient to give the gun a weight forward bias – some might term it a bit muzzle heavy. (By way of comparison, a 30" fixed-choke field barrel weighs 2 lbs 8 oz.) Less obvious are the gas ports. According to information I read, field and trap barrels have .079 ports, fixed choke skeet guns .086. The Competition barrel sports .094 ports and the shooter is limited to 3 1/4 dram equivalent loads.

Ribs on the Competition barrels are .360 wide on both ends. Earlier ones have a surface that is quite similar to, if not technically, knurling. They sport a mid-bead and a delightfully small (as in could pass for a mid-bead) white front sight. Later ribs have a radiused cut on the surface, mid-bead and a 1/8" white front bead. The front bead does not have the blocky Bradley type base. Overall gun weight out of the box was a recoil dampening 8 lbs 10 oz.

The 1100's five choke tubes are 2 3/4" overall with an 11/16" extended portion. The tubes measured dead nuts on for what one would expect given the designation: Skeet/.005, IC/.010, Lt Mod/.015, Mod/.020 and Full/.030. The tubes are notched for use with a wrench – though I haven't found the wrench necessary.

The Competition model comes with B grade wood. It might not be stunning, but I would have been happy to get it on any gun I've ever pulled out of a box. Stock dimensions are a measured 1 5/8" x 2 1/4", with a 14" LOP and no cast or offset. A Limbsaver recoil pad brings up the rear. The finish is a high gloss poly, quite slick and comfortable on the face. It shows the grain of the stock in fine fashion. Listed retail price is \$1692, but they can certainly be found for less – in the \$1200 range from some vendors on the internet.

## My Gun

I got the 1100 at the end of December, an absolutely ridiculous time to get a new shotgun in Michigan, especially a semi-auto, if you are a reloader like me. Snow and cold create lots of problems for equipment and shooters. On the other hand, if it works in Mother Nature's deep freeze, it should work all year!

I did have a bit of difficulty getting the gun together out of the box. For those who haven't dealt with an 1100, the usual process is to line up the bolt and bolt carrier with the receiver, reach under the gun, raise the lifter slightly, depress the shell latch located on the right side of the receiver and slide the bolt in – a piece of cake. What I eventually discovered, after strenuously doubting both my memory and IQ, is that I had to get my finger up and in on the tip of the shell latch to get it depressed sufficiently to slide the bolt carrier past it. Once that was accomplished, the gun went together with typical 1100 ease.

Next up I shot every box of odds and ends shells I had sitting around. One Winchester Universal didn't eject as the bolt locked open. Most everything else worked – but when shells don't work in an auto, one is wise to accept it and move on rather than proverbially beating one's head against the wall.

I was most curious to see how the 1100 Competition's nickel-Teflon coating would handle crud. My minimum standard was that the 1100 had to at least run reliably through a long weekend's shooting without cleaning. Shooting the 1100 wet and cleaning after a day's shooting only takes a couple of Kleenex, a little CLP and a few minutes to wipe off the 1100's gas system. No spanners, scrapers or disassembly of gas system components is required. I haven't found another gas gun easier to disassemble and clean than the Competition.

## Competition Outing

The first shoot with the Competition came shortly after battling the gun to get it together. Knowing the gun was clean, I left

all my tools at home. I never do that. Duh! Fourteen degrees, fifteen mile an hour breeze, first station, first target – click. I headed to the clubhouse to have a look inside with absolutely no clue what the problem was. I had to scour the clubhouse to come up with something borderline adequate to drive the pins out of the receiver to check the trigger group.

The pins wouldn't budge. After driving two hours to shoot and not having brought another gun, I did what anyone would do. I hit the pins harder and harder until they finally popped out. The trigger group was functioning perfectly and everything else was as it should have been. Reassembly was equally perplexing, but finally accomplished. I shot the course and the gun functioned perfectly. I'm still scratching my head over what happened, but 6,000 rounds later, I've had zero subsequent problems and have total faith in the gun.

In the course of prepping for this article, I emailed Remington a list of questions I had and have heard others bring up on various occasions. One was about the possibility of adding stock adjustment shims to the package, ala just about every other manufacturer on the face of the planet. I received what I considered to be a corporate response about the exhaustive study done to determine the perfect dimensions found on Remington stocks. No doubt the study was completed way back since the stock dimensions haven't changed for decades. Junior high kids are taller now than my senior class was back when, so are those dimensions still perfect? The drop figures are fine for a fixed comb, but even if we skip over the utility of a shim system, the 14" LOP simply needs to be stretched a bit to be a simple fit for

many shooters today.

Remington's 'perfect' stock dimensions weren't perfect for me, but neither are any other out-of-the-box gun's. I've got to have some offset. It ain't optional. The factory stock, with its slim comb, will work for shooters who need marginal offset, but for those of the prominent jaw clan, there is no wood to work with. The adjustable comb model has been dropped from the line up this year. Options? Fortunately, I was working with FITASKI stocks when the 1100 found its way in the door. A little tinkering with FITASKI's adjustable comb, add a couple washers to adjust the pitch and life was much better.

A second FITASKI benefit, in my estimation, was that the added weight of the stock took the muzzle heavy feel out of the gun. Total gun weight was a balanced 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> pounds. Recoil is ridiculously mild compared to an 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> pound over under. I have RA in my shoulders and neck and yet I can shoot the 1100 with my <sup>7</sup>/<sub>s</sub> ounce, 1300 fps reloads until the cows come home – with no ill effects.

## Reliability

Sporting shooters have long looked with slight contempt at the 1100. Few (no?) Remingtons are seen at major sporting shoots where the 391 is the king, queen

and usually the prince and princess too. Why? Possibly quality control. Reliability has also taken a few hits over the years. The 'O' rings used in the gas assembly have gotten bad press. I made sure I had spares early on, based on my earlier experience. Of course, that means the original is still in great shape and will probably last until I misplace the replacements. The new one piece piston/seal has worked just fine. There are those on the internet who claim the old two piece system works better, but I haven't seen how that would be possible with this gun, since it has functioned flawlessly since the 'mystery' incident at its first shoot.

I have to wonder what the reliability reputation of 1100 target guns would be today if shooters in earlier decades had been savvy enough to do what we do now – consider preventative maintenance (a routine part of the game). Springs take a beating in an auto. How many 1100 receivers would still be up and running today if we had been smart enough in the '60s, '70s and '80s to replace the action springs and kept that recoil beating from being transferred to the receiver? How many reports of functioning problems would never have been uttered? Leo Harrison told me he had never replaced the spring while shooting a bazillion rounds at trap. Bruce Buck wrote of wearing out 1100s in his skeet shooting days, but also concedes



that he didn't replace the springs, either. Nobody did 'back in those days'.

I found a credible internet account of an 1100 that lasted for a quarter-million shells, albeit with a bit of nurturing. There is an excellent 'sticky' post on [www.shotgunworld.com](http://www.shotgunworld.com) under the "I Love My Remington" thread, that offers a myriad of tips on keeping the 1100 series up and running. One of the more interesting was the use of light grease to lube action parts rather than the liquids we commonly use. The grease gets credit for killing vibration in the gun. (By the way, grease works fine, even in cold weather – I used STOS and Shooters Choice.) The information on the thread comes from Remington employees, gunsmiths and long-time Remington shooters. It's well worth the read.

Get a group of experienced shooters together and ask them to describe their idea of the perfect clays auto. I'll bet 8 of 10 will list a steel receiver in their design plans. The 1100 is the only currently produced auto that offers one. The 1100 receiver starts out as an 8½ pound chunk of steel. It ends up 1.340 inches wide and 2.370 inches high. That's slimmer and trimmer than anything else at my house that says 12 gauge on it. In fact, it's slightly slimmer than the receiver on my 20 gauge 391 – that bit of research kinda' surprised me too!

I noticed the slimness of the receiver the first time I mounted the gun. I'm a one-eyed shooter and was immediately aware of how much less gun there was 'in the way'. Two-eyed shooters probably wouldn't notice the difference so graphically, but I sure did – and I liked the expanded 'field of view'.

The receiver color isn't quite silver and I don't know what to call

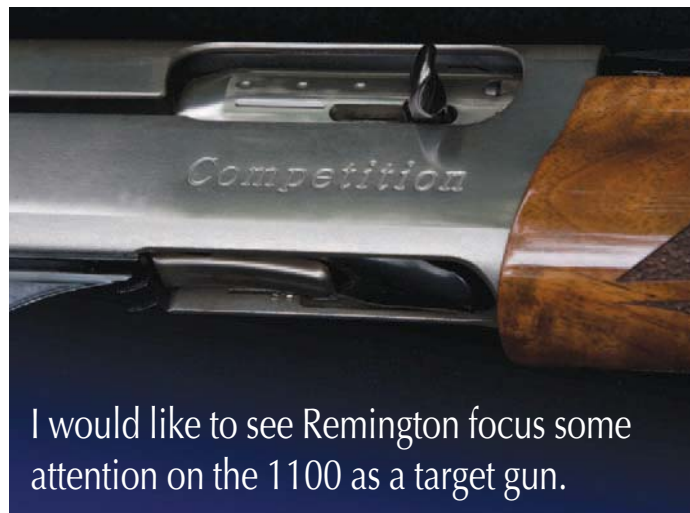
it, but it's a light color that doesn't stand out when the gun is mounted. That's another positive little touch.

This 1100 trigger assembly will swap out with any other 1100 trigger. It does have a nice touch added over earlier models. The bolt release, located on the shell lifter, is extended. This release has to be depressed to load the gun. The shorter ones could be a bit of a small target to find sometimes – but this new one makes the 1100 incredibly easy and quick to load –

One aspect of the 1100 worth mentioning is the ample parts supply, most quite reasonably priced, available throughout most of the country or on line.

There's also plenty of spare barrels to be found at prices to warm the heart. I walked into the local gun shop and walked out with a 30" field barrel that had been shot very little for \$150. Barrels can be found on the internet almost daily for similar prices. New barrels are listed at the Country

comments alluding to that favorable opinion stemming from trap shooters only having to shoot once. However, my 6000 rounds through the 1100 haven't shown an issue with second shot reliability. I've corresponded with another 1100 Competition shooter who has about 40,000 rounds through his. He has had zero problems with cycling or parts and is still using the original O-ring. He chose the 1100 because he liked the feel better than any other gun – and has found no reason to change.



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## My Wish List

It's no secret Remington has struggled to introduce a new model with market appeal. I would like to see them focus some attention on the 1100 as a sporting target gun. Seems everyone in Hollywood that has been around as long as the 1100 is getting a face lift, so why not? Ratchet up the quality control and give it the new trigger I mentioned. A true target stock rather than a take off on the field stock would be welcomed, as would a shim system, redesigned grip, added LOP and palm swell – a real target stock. With that, I can't find a reason why the 1100 Competition couldn't be a contender on the sporting field for years to come. With the current trend towards light, lighter, lightest, the weight of the 1100 is going to keep it a soft shooter, always a welcome feature. The simplicity that made the 1100 an instant hit in 1963 is the same simplicity that can keep it quietly competitive for years to come.

Simply put, the 1100 Competition is a better gun than we thought and the 1100 design worthy of more respect than it gets. This gun is capable and competent – and red, white and blue through and through. ■

drop one in the chamber and shove the other in the tube with the can't miss extended release. There isn't a simpler system.

The trigger pull was like any auto – less than stellar. I spent about 15 minutes polishing parts and moved this trigger from the basement to the first floor. There is still room for improvement, but it's now OK. The trigger is the same narrow design that has been used since before Moses had to shave. It's one area I feel would be quite easy to generate some design improvement, something wider to it. At the very least, Remington should explore Browning's over under approach of offering factory trigger shoes. (Tyler still makes trigger shoes for the 1100.)

Store at [www.remington.com](http://www.remington.com) and are quite reasonably priced compared to some other models.

The 1100's gas system has been surpassed – some will say it is outdated, but show me another current shotgun that has been on the market for 47 years? There's a thin line between an outdated design and a classic functional design, as is witnessed by the Model 70 Winchester or a 1911 Colt pistol. Both are designs that have been superseded, but nobody doubts their functionality. The simplicity that made the 1100 an instant hit in 1963 is the same simplicity that keeps it quietly competitive today.

The maligned-in-sporting-circles 1100 is still spoken of fondly in trap shooting circles. I've seen