Stoeger Condor Competition Combo O/U Shotgun

By Robert Geisler

I was looking for a 12 gauge over/under shotgun with which I could take up sporting clays and skeet. Being new to the clay sports (although somewhat experienced as a bird hunter), I started by doing a fair amount of internet research, reading gun reviews on Guns and Shooting Online, magazine articles and internet blogs and talking to those knowledgeable of the sport (including a couple NSCA professionals). I also started pricing various shotguns through my local gun shop, internet dealers and sporting goods retailers. After finishing with my version of “boiling the ocean” research, I came to this conclusion:

- Everyone seems to love their shotgun, regardless of brand.
- A large number of folks will tell you that whatever shotgun you are considering isn’t worth two hoots in their book, especially if it differs from their brand.
- An equally large number of folks will tell you that spending thousands is the best way to ensure your long-term clay shooting happiness.
- If they happen to understand that, as a beginner you cannot possibly justify spending thousands, they will tell you to buy a used Browning. (Pretty good advice. -Ed.)

After almost a year attending gun shows and viewing dealer stock looking for the right fit in a used shotgun, I ran across a brand new Stoeger Condor Competition Combo gathering dust at a local gun shop. For those of us that do not have several thousand dollars to plunk down for an expensive shotgun, or have grown tired of looking over well-used cast offs, take heart. The suggested retail price of $749 for the Combo (with both a 12 and 20 gauge barrel) was discounted by my local gun shop to $600 and I was one happy camper with, almost, two new shotguns.

A quick look at the Stoeger’s website (www.stoegerindustries.com/) will provide you with the following details:

"The Stoeger Condor Competition over & under target gun is nicely balanced, quick handling and has the stylish lines of guns that cost three times as much or more. Equally at home on a sporting clays course, skeet field or trap range, the Condor
Competition features an adjustable comb stock with palm swells in both left-and right-hand stocks in either 12- or 20-gauge, ported barrels, gold selective trigger, and automatic ejectors."

"The Condor Competition is also offered in a two-barrel combo set with 12-and 20-gauge barrels that fit the same receiver. Both barrels measure 30" for consistent balance and feel. Like the Condor Competition, the Combo stock comes with either a right-or left-hand palm swell to accommodate right-or left-hand shooters."

"The Condor's receiver, like other quality guns, locks up by using tapered cones that engage recesses machined into the monobloc. This provides a solid and safe lock-up every time and allows the gun to be opened and closed smoothly and easily. Elegant in understated style, the smooth, blued receiver sports a high-polish finish. The safety, positioned on the tang, also serves as a barrel selector."

"The Condor Competition's attractively figured stock is fashioned from American walnut. But the best part is the adjustable comb, which adjusts both vertically and laterally and comes on all Condor Competitions at no extra cost. Palm swells are featured on all pistol grips to accommodate either right- or left-hand shooters, so be sure to stipulate your shooting style when ordering. And finally, cut-checkering graces the pistol grip and fore-end to insure a positive gripping surface."

However, the Stoeger website does not mention a few things. I will address some of those here. The Condor Competition is an imported version of the Boito Miura from Brazil. That fact alone has caused many to bad-mouth this shotgun. However, the Brazilian imports of today are different from those of decades past.

In 1955, Elias Ruas Amantino joined the Boito family as a partner and began the manufacture of shotguns in serial numbers. If Boito was born almost accidentally, its vertiginous growth was not at all fortuitous. It is the result of the will and talent of a group of persons that followed modern industrial objectives aimed at manufacturing a sporting and hunting shotgun that could reach international renown. In 1962, the first double barrel left the factory's assembly line. Ten years later came out the first over/under shotgun, until now the only O/U manufactured in South America. Today this industry is equipped with modern machinery for production of parts and components.

While initial looks can be deceiving, I can tell you that this shotgun is well finished (both in its bluing and wood to metal fit), accurately machined (light action with a crisp trigger) and full of features that you simply cannot find in a gun under $2500. My Condor Competition came with all the features listed above and the nicely figured American Walnut stock looked like a grade 2 in my book. If you opt for the Combo version as I did, you will receive an additional set of 20 gauge barrels and choke tubes.

While price was the primary reason I opted for a Stoeger Condor, I probably would not have taken the plunge without all the features I just listed. The fact that I actually got a two-barrel set for less than the price of a well-used Citori is a big deal in my world.
All of the bells and whistles aren’t worth two hoots (to coin a phrase) if the gun does not function well. Even though I seriously doubt that I will be headed to the Olympics and don’t plan on shooting 10,000+ targets a year, I still want a solid performer I can hand down to my son at some point. I believe the Condor is just the ticket. He can start with the 20 gauge and grow into the 12 gauge. Better yet, I can practice with the 20 gauge and not blow my shoulder off.

My first step was to pattern the gun. I expected to be shooting the more open chokes and found this gun patterned very well on Improved Cylinder. I was using the factory chokes, but intend to upgrade soon into Comp-N-Choke extended chokes. I’m told that their ported design helps eliminate pellet flyers and I had a few with the factory chokes.

Next, I was off to the range. I mentioned before that I am a beginner at clays, but I pointed the gun at the birds, it went bang and they shattered, repeatedly. No, I didn’t go 25/25 every time, but I did every bit as well as I did with the $100,000 Krieghoff I used at Nemacolin. At this stage of my clay shooting career, I’m handicapped more by a lack of talent, not by my equipment.

Now, if I can just start breaking more targets than the guys with the gold inlaided and extensively scrolled Italian “investment” guns, I can get them to stop looking down their noses when I show up with my Condor. Then again, maybe I’ll just keep enjoying it and laugh all the way to the bank!