



GETTING TO GRIPS WITH YOUR SHOTGUN

GUNSMITH TIM GREENWOOD DEMONSTRATES HOW IMPORTANT A GOOD GRIP IS TO YOUR COMFORT, CONTROL AND BETTER SCORES

Whether you are new to the sport of shooting or an old hand who has been shooting for some time, you will probably have heard about having your gun fitted.

If you have had lessons from a competent coach, the cast, twist, drop and length of your stock will have been checked to ensure a reasonable fit. Around most shoots there is always a 'wise old shooter' who will impart sage advice about what makes a good gun fit.

You may even have read my article in last month's *Clay Shooting* magazine about head position in relation to your body, and eye position in relation to the rib and suggestions on how to correct any problems.

Unfortunately, a problem that plagues a lot of shooters, both new and experienced, is very rarely addressed – that problem, as you have probably guessed from the title, is your grip.

Those who play golf, tennis or cricket and have had some basic coaching are taught how to position

'Whatever gun you shoot have a look at how you have got to grips with it'

their hands to produce the best control and performance. Shooting is no different.

In this article, I will be dealing with the position of the master hand in relation to the pistol grip.

In picture 1, which features my daughter Flo and a Browning



PICTURE 1: THIS GRIP IS TOO LARGE FOR THE SHOOTER'S HAND

Ultra XS, you can see that her hand is 'riding' the top of the grip and halfway up to allow her to reach the trigger and be able to lock her index

finger and thumb together – the basis of a good, firm grip. This is because the grip is much too large for her hand. Also, if you look carefully, note the angle of her arm and wrist.

From the other side, shown in picture 2, you can see that her elbow is higher than the horizontal.



PICTURE 2: TRIGGER FREEZE AND OTHER PROBLEMS CAN RESULT FROM THE ELBOW BEING HIGHER THAN THE HORIZONTAL



GETTING TECHNICAL

By Tim Greenwood



PICTURE 3: INCORRECT GRIP CAN LEAD TO WRIST STRAIN AND FATIGUE AND HEAD LIFT

Having the arm at this angle can cause the gun to cant and a poor, inconsistent gun mount. Either the gun will mount low in the shoulder, or will be at an angle so that the pad is not in full contact with your shoulder. You can also see how far up the grip her hand is to be able to reach the trigger. Her finger will pull the trigger in an upwards movement towards the action, instead of along the axis of the gun. This can cause trigger freeze, or problems releasing the trigger to be able to pull it for the second barrel.

In picture 3 she has bent her elbow down to a more normal position, while retaining the incorrect grip. However, if you look closely at her wrist you can see the strain in her tendons caused by this poor position. Strain and fatigue in the wrist can soon become a problem, causing her grip to loosen, which at the very least will

make the left hand grip the forend too hard, hindering a good smooth swing of the barrels and, at worst, the gun to move in her shoulder causing 'head lift'.



So, what is the correct grip?

As you can see in picture 4 the grip should be of a size which allows the hand to be along the side of the gun, while attaining a good lock between the thumb and index finger. The ball of the thumb should rest in the hollow provided for it at the nose of the comb and the first finger should make contact with the trigger, no further round than the first joint.

Of course, not all standard grips suit non-standard hands, and this is

PICTURE 4: THE CORRECT GRIP





PICTURE 6: THIS NEEDED AN ELEGANT GRIP SUITED TO THE SMALLER STOCK SIZE OF A 20 BORE, FOR AN OWNER WITH BROAD HANDS AND SHORT FINGERS

where a competent gunsmith and gun fitter needs to be consulted for help.

In picture 5 is my friend Andre, who has extremely large hands. Notice how I have extended the grip down in Ebony and moved the nose of the comb back to allow his hand to attain a comfortable, firm grip.

Picture 6 shows a different grip modification to a Browning Ultra 20 bore. The owner of this gun has very broad hands but quite short fingers and wanted an elegant grip more

suited to the smaller stock size of a 20 bore. I, therefore, converted the grip to a Prince of Wales profile, with very deep insets for the ball of the thumb

As you can see, in picture 7, just by changing the grip, his hand is now alongside the gun, his elbow at a nearly perfect angle and there is little or no cant.

Picture 8 show what is, in my opinion, the ultimate grip for any competition shooter. Steve Roberts, the Greater London champion, had

PICTURE 7: A CHANGE OF GRIP LEADS TO A PERFECT ELBOW ANGLE



PICTURE 5: THE GRIP IS EXTENDED DOWN AND THE NOSE OF THE COMB MOVED BACK TO ALLOW A COMFORTABLE, FIRM GRIP FOR LARGER HANDS





GETTING TECHNICAL

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PICTURE 8: THE ULTIMATE GRIP FOR ANY COMPETITION SHOOTER

me alter the grip of his Krieghoff to a full anatomical grip. The right hand side shown has a deepened recess for the thumb.

The proof of the pudding – a perfect gun mount – picture 10. The right hand is at the side of the grip promoting a good elbow position,

‘A grip that fits will enhance your comfort and control and, with practice, lead to better scores’

The left hand side, which is shown in picture 9, has had finger recesses carved into the wood. This work, together with the pistol grip extended in ebony, produces a consistent, comfortable grip.

which helps to open the shoulder pocket for a consistent and stable gun mount. Part of Steve’s success has been down to him being able to mount this gun like this time after



PICTURE 10: PROOF OF THE PUDDING – A PERFECT GUN MOUNT FOR STEVE ROBERTS



PICTURE 11: EVEN THE GREAT JOHNNY WALKER HAS HAD HIS GRIP MODIFIED



PICTURE 9: FINGER RECESSES AND AN EXTENDED PISTOL GRIP PRODUCES A CONSISTENT AND COMFORTABLE GRIP

time – that and an awful lot of hard work and dedication.

Even the truly great Johnny Walker, seen in picture 11 with Steve, has had his grip modified and his gun custom graded by me. Once again, look at the position of his hand and elbow, both in a straight line along the axis of the gun, pointing the gun to the target.

So, whatever gun you shoot, do have a look at how you have got to grips with it. A grip that fits will enhance your comfort and control and, with practice, lead to better scores.

Tim Greenwood offers the following services:

- Full gun fitting service, free help and advice gained from working with some of the best shooters in the world.
- All stock work, including cast, bend, lengthening, shortening, repairs to broken and cracked stocks, re-finishing, re-chequering, re-heading.
- Specialises in wooden stock extensions matched to your existing stock.
- All barrel work, including choke alterations, re-black, re-brown, re-lay ribs, dent and bulge repairs, lapping to remove internal pits and marks.
- All action work, including servicing to O/U, box locks, side locks. Replacing of firing pins, mainsprings, top lever springs, tightening, full re-jointing, and all ejector work.
- Specialist part making available if required.

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