

If there is one single model of gun which has been more popular than any other amongst top shooters during the last three or four years it is the Miroku 3800.

Built as a trap gun and succeeding the old Miroku 800, the 3800 has been a great favourite of not only DTL shooters, but also many big names of the sporting world. They have taken the 3800, made some slight adjustments to comb height, had Teague chokes fitted and found that they have a gun which behaves perfectly for sporting.

Carl Bloxham, Phil Smith, Arnie Palmer, Martin Elworthy, Mick Howells, Rob Beastall and new Embassy English Open Champion Kevin Mayor... these are just a selection of shooters who have achieved success with the 3800.

In trap too the list of achievement is endless from Peter Croft's success in winning the European OT Championship in the early 80's and John Grice's relentless pursuit of UT and OT titles, and in DTL it is a winner over and again.

Early last year with the launch of the new MK range, Miroku seized their opportunity to slot a new model into the market with MK-38 Sporter. Fully aware of the widespread use of the trap model by sporting shooters, they clearly felt that by making just such a model available to a wider market (ie those shooters who don't go to the trouble of converting new guns) they could crank up some extra sales.

I would suspect that this is a marketing ploy that has worked, though perhaps not in the way that they had anticipated. For the MK-38 trap gun is still being bought by top sporting shooters and having the comb dropped slightly, while club level sporting shooters are looking at the more obvious sporter. In trap meanwhile Ian Peel used an MK-38 trap gun to win the European OT Championship.

I decided to take a closer look at both guns, and I have to say that I was very impressed. I am not in the least surprised that they have proved so popular.

I had initially tried the sporter on a coaching day at Holland & Holland and shot

Sporting trap guns

Andrew Harvison casts his eye over the recent addition to the Miroku repertoire, the MK-38, where the sporter is a direct derivation of the trap gun.



The MK-38 Sporter (bottom) and Trap gun.

very badly with it. That particular gun had a very high comb but this one, a 30", was just right. The trap gun is low for its type and but for its pad it would not be difficult to shoot some very good scores at sporting with it, not having made any alterations to it whatsoever.

While the Pachmayr pad is ideal for a trap gun, for some reason Miroku have also retained it on the sporter. Such a pad is not conducive to the variable gun mounting techniques required in the sporting arena, and they would be far better to have either a standard butt plate or a more conventional sporting pad.

As regards drop, the 32" trap gun was 1 1/4" and 1 3/4" (comb to heel), while the sporter at 1 3/8" and 1 7/8" was approximately 1/8" higher than one would normally expect. Some may not like this, but I am of the belief that there are many benefits conferred in having a slightly high comb. I put it on the pattern plate and it shot 3/5 of the pattern on or above the point of aim. Ideal.

With regard to the position of the trigger in relation to the grip, on both of the guns on test I found that the measurement from the trigger to the bottom of

the grip (back of the hand) was slightly deeper than might be expected. Not a great amount but sufficient to affect the position of the trigger finger and hand. This could consequently lead to sloppy mounting, with a tendency for the gun to come into the shoulder first, rather than the comb to the cheek (an absolute priority on most sporting targets). The Sporter has an adjustable trigger, which overcomes this problem, something which should be an option on the trap gun.

Other than that I have to say that I was very impressed. They come with fixed chokes 1/4 & 3/4 for sporting and 3/4 & full for trap - Miroku obviously assume that sporting shooters will have Teague, Rhino or Briley chokes fitted.

I put a lot of Express Super Comps through both guns and they handled beautifully, throwing excellent patterns. Both have back bored barrels (the bore being increased beyond minimum specification with the aim of giving improved patterns and lower recoil).

I feel that 30" is the ideal barrel length for most shooters. Whilst many famous names in the sport use 32" they have the experience and skill to use them

to their advantage - for most club level sporting shooters I would suggest that 30" is a far better all-rounder. Both guns have 10mm ribs, the trap gun also with a mid-sight. The stocks of both guns are contoured well and this is no doubt a significant factor in their success.

The vertical face of the stock falls away nicely, and at just over 8lb they are lively positive guns. As could be expected the trap model has a beavertail fore-end, and there is schnabel for the sporter. Perhaps there should be an option of beavertail for the sporter (as offered by Perazzi and Kemen)?

At £1215* they represent very good value, though sporting shooters will also budget for the cost of having the chokes altered or investing in the fitting of multi-chokes of some sort. ■

● The MK-38 Sporter is available in Grade 1 only, with a choice of 28", 30" and 32" barrels, all priced £1215 - the MK-38 Trap offers 30" and 32" barrels in Grades 1, 3 & 5, prices £1275, £1945 and £2475.