A User Review of the CZ / Huglu Model "Bobwhite" Shotguns in 20 and 28 Gauge

Sharptail and Straightshooter

Background

On May 11th, 1875, Messrs William Anson and John Deeley were granted a patent for the design of a side by side shotgun action. They assigned the patent to Westley Richards, the firm that employed them both. The Anson & Deeley design became known as the "boxlock" and it changed the world of shotgun manufacturing.

Westley Richards Boxlock

So successful was the design that it was copied by all gun producing nations. The inherent values of a boxlock are simplicity and ease of construction, reliability and (most importantly) an ability to distribute weight correctly. Equipped with an appropriate set of barrels, the boxlock SxS is a fine handling gun - fast and a natural pointer.

For many years the "meat and potatoes" gun of the common man was the boxlock non ejector (BLNE). Compared to his Lordship's Purdeys, the BLNE was a plain gun indeed, but it retained the virtue of being a good shooter and millions of examples were produced all over the world.

Today, the "meat and potatoes" role is played by repeaters - pumps and automatics made entirely by machines. As efficient as the boxlock is, it still requires hand fitting - labour - and cannot compete on a cost basis with the repeaters.

This turn of events has repositioned the boxlock SxS as a luxury item. Purchasers of these guns today are willing to pay more for superior handling, and perhaps for the nostalgia as well. Plain Birmingham BLNE's built in the early 1900's now sell for in excess of $1,500. New boxlocks built in Italy, Spain and other nations can start at

double that price and more. The English trade has focused on high end guns and Westley Richards no longer offers a boxlock in its catalogue.

The BLNE was a working gun, and the majority of them were built in 12 gauge. Today tastes are changing - if you are going to buy a luxury item, it does not have to do everything well, it can be specialized. In a SxS designed for the uplands, that means a light and fast handling gun and that is best suited to a gauge smaller than 12. Smaller gauge guns mean more expensive guns; smallbores have always carried a premium.

There are exceptions. The boxlock SxS's produced in Russia and Brazil remain inexpensive, even in smaller gauges. These guns, however, simply put small gauge barrels on full size frames and cannot compete in terms of weight and handling when compared to guns specifically made for a particular gauge. In order to realize all the benefits of shooting a sub gauge gun, the entire gun must be properly scaled so as to retain balance and handling.

Baikal .410 (bottom) with CZ / Huglu 28 gauge. Note the frame size on the Baikal.

The Holy Grail of many an upland hunter is to spend a day afield with a fine, well fitted sub gauge SxS. Manufacturers provide the means to fulfill that wish by offering luxury oriented boxlocks with exhibition wood, elaborate engraving, ejectors, automatic safeties and scaled frames at upper end prices. Scaled frame sub gauge SxS's are the sports cars of shotguns - small, fast and usually expensive. The new American made RBL shotgun by CSMC is a scaled frame 20 gauge which will cost in excess of $3,000 in Canada, and represents one of the better values in a sub gauge SXS. A plain unengraved Spanish Ugartechea Grade 1 BLNE in 28 gauge closely resembles a Birmingham style working gun and will still cost over $2,000 by the time you import it into Canada. Neither of these examples have any Canadian dealership or service available. Almost every other scaled frame sub gauge SxS available starts at $3,000 and goes up from there - way up. Not many sportsmen want to sink that much money into a specialized shotgun.

It is into this environment that the Czech firm of CZ has introduced the Turkish (Huglu) made Bobwhite line of shotguns - scaled frame BLNE SxS's which (in their sub gauge guise) sell for half or less the cost of their competitors. True to their Birmingham heritage, the Bobwhites are equipped with straight English stocks and splinter fore ends, double triggers and solid ribs. The action design varies only slightly from the traditional Anson & Deeley.

The Decision is Made

Half priced, scaled frame SxS's seem too good to be true. Examination was deemed necessary. To this end two Bobwhites were obtained, one in 28 gauge and one in 20, one from P&D Enterprises in Edmonton and the other from G&T Sports in Blackie (near Calgary). The 28 gauge is available with 26 inch barrels only (the barrels actually measure 25 13/16th inches, an odd figure even in metric). The 20 gauge offers a choice between 26 and 28 inch tubes, this example has a 26 inch set (which measure exactly 26 inches). The retail price of the 28 gauge is $1,099 and the 20 is $871. - more than an 870 Express, but not in dreamland territory. These guns (purchased new with a warranty) are within financial reach of many shooters. Having a Canadian distributor to deal with warranty issues is a plus.

"But, are they any good? Are they worth the money?". Those questions are the raison d'etre for this post. The shotguns are relatively new to Canada. To respond to the questions fully will take many months, as certain questions require extensive field use to answer. This post will attempt to describe the guns and their quality and handling characteristics, as well as some shooting experiences.

Initial Impressions

The guns are delivered in a blue cardboard box emblazoned "CZUSA". Opening the box reveals a styrofoam liner containing the barrel and fore end in one clear plastic bag, the rest of the gun in another. Also included is a small black cardboard box containing 3 of the 5 choke tubes and the choke tube wrench (the other 2 choke tubes come installed in the gun). You will need to provide your own choke tube case if you want to carry the tubes afield. A small user's manual is provided which actually covers all CZ branded shotguns and provides exploded diagrams for the U/O and auto guns as well as the SxS. There were no warranty papers of any kind included.

One other thing was included in the boxes - crumpled up pages from the Toronto Sun. These were apparently included by the distributor to limit movement of the parts within the box for shipping. A thoughtful touch, and it is nice to know that the distributor actually sees each example of the gun.

The guns come well drenched in oil, the first thing required are some paper towels. Once wiped down and assembled the initial impression is that these guns are lively and light in the hands, and quite handsome in proportion and line. The guns appear small, and describing them as svelte or petite is not inappropriate. All the visible

screws are engraved and properly timed. No initial, obvious or glaring flaws were observed on either gun.

Bobwhite with box

The slab sawn walnut on the 28 gauge is as plain as pablum. Lacking grain and figure, this 28 gauge has a small knot in the stock which looks like a beauty spot on the featureless expanse. On closer examination (removing the butt pad) it was discovered that the colour of the wood is the result of a stain, the natural colour being very light. The walnut on the 20 gauge is nicer with better colour, visible grain and some (slight) figure. One of the ways in which CZ is keeping costs down is by using inexpensive walnut. Since the guns come from Turkey, the source of much of the world's fine walnut, this is slightly ironic.

The 28 gauge is advertised as weighing 5.6 lbs., the 20 as 6 lbs. The 28 actually weighs 5.36 lbs., and the 20, 6.49 lbs. The difference between the advertised weight and the actual weight is significant, nearing a quarter pound shy on an already light gun in the case of the 28 gauge and the 20 being almost a half pound overweight. CGN member SuperCub has an identical 20 gauge Bobwhite and was consulted as to its weight - it is reported as 6.25 lbs.

Stocks

The stocks are nicely finished with filled pores and no drips or runs. The chequering is

cut before the stocks are finished. They are coated in a matt finish that is some sort of polymer. The butt pads are properly fitted and of workable design - soft rubber with a heel of smooth plastic to prevent the butt from catching on your clothing. These pads are better than those provided on the $2,200 Ruger Gold Label. The fitting of the top tang to the stock is very well done on both examples, more precise than the fitting on the Gold Label. Chequering is advertised as 20 lpi, but the actual count is 17. On the 28 gauge only a few flat topped diamonds were observed, but there were some over runs which were visible on the border of the pattern. The 20 gauge has many more flat topped diamonds, over runs, and bias cut lines. The wood to metal fit at the head of both stocks is acceptable. The wood stands proud of the metal, but evenly so. Where the wood interfaces with the metal the wood has been beveled inward and there are signs of hand work. Actual contact of wood to metal is constant. The fore end was equally well fitted. All in all the fit of the stocks is acceptable and should cause no problems.

CZ Stocks, 1/2 inch extension fitted to lower gun.

The fore ends, while "splinters", differ from the Birmingham design in several ways. The fastener is a Deeley & Edge latch instead of the traditional Anson pushrod. This must be for reasons of economy because the Anson system is self adjusting while the Deeley latch is not. In addition the fore end is 9 inches long, squarish in profile and has a Schnabel tip. This Hapsburg lip resides exactly where the longer armed shooter wants to place his hand. Some may like this feature, others will decidedly not.

Stock measurements are advertised as: LOP=14.5 ", DAC=1.5", DAH=2.5" for both guns. The 28 gauge actually measured at LOP=14.5", DAC=1 15/32nds", DAH=2 7/16ths". The 20 gauge actually measured at LOP=14.5", DAC=1 17/32nds", DAH=2 5/32nds". These numbers are close enough to the advertised figures to suffice, the largest deviation being the 20 gauge's drop at heel. Both the 20 and 28 gauge guns were cast off for a right handed shooter, the 28 appearing to exhibit a little more cast at the toe. It is not known at this time if CZ will make stocks for left handed shooters. One observation of note - despite the 14 1/2" LOP a pair of taller shooters who shouldered the 28 gauge gun found their noses positioned too closely to their thumbs. It is likely

that a taller shooter will have to add some length to the stock. The wrist of the 28 gauge measures just 4 1/4 inches in circumference, the 20 4 3/4 inches..

28 gauge CZ fore end above that of a 20 gauge Webley & Scott.

The stocks are held onto the actions with a through bolt which is accessed by removing the butt pad. Usually, the hole in the stock through which the bolt passes is bored out on a drill, the hole is round. On the CZs, the hole for the stock bolt is rectangular and large. The cavity has been chiseled out by hand. Removing the stock is not as simple as merely removing the bolt as there are screws in both upper and lower tangs.

Finish and Furniture

A welcome surprise was the long tang trigger guard. A traditional feature of Birmingham guns, the long tang is rare on production guns these days because of the labour required to fit it. Although the CZ tang has an oddly shaped end (squared and then pointed) it is well inlaid on both examples, flush and even. The guard bow itself is of rolled edge design. These classic trigger guards are a salient feature of the Bobwhite guns.

The next feature which attracts the eye is the colour case hardening. The Birmingham model uses a case hardened frame and blued furniture, but the Bobwhites have case hardened frame, fore end iron, top lever, safety slide, Deeley latch, trigger guard, and screws. The case hardening is of the cyanide type which is not as beautiful as the old bone charcoal method. The Turks have done a reasonable job with the cyanide, though. The results are far nicer than the cyanide finish on an NEF for example, but not in the same league as a Caesar Guerini Jaspe model. Coppers and vivid blues are in abundance when viewed from a variety of angles. Overall, the larger 20 gauge frame exhibits slightly darker, more saturated colours than the 28 gauge gun.

Long tang rolled edge guard bow.

The extensive colour hardening is a significant component of these guns. There are questions about the durability of the colours. The frame and parts seem to have been coated in a very thin layer of clear lacquer. The owner who wishes to protect the colours should consider an additional coat of baking lacquer or similar clear finish.

20 gauge with Greener crossbolt.

There are, in fact, no blued pieces on either gun. The triggers are case hardened but the trigger faces have a brushed gray finish, all other visible metal parts except the barrels are case coloured, and the exterior of the barrels are not blued, they are black chromed. Black chrome barrel finishes were used successfully by SKB and they resisted rust and fingerprints well. Black chrome is not as tough as hard chrome and is still subject to scratches and wear. If damaged, the surface can be replated.

28 gauge frame.

Barrels

The barrels must be discussed in some depth. They are not built on the Birmingham model. The Bobwhite bores are hard chromed and come with 5 choke tubes (cyl, imp. cyl, mod, imp. Mod, and full). The choke tubes appear to be of unique design, not shared with another manufacturer. They are of thick wall design with threading at the muzzle end. When screwed down, the ends of the tubes are recessed slightly in the muzzles. The internal diameter of the choke tubes (at their rear) is larger than bore diameter, leaving a visible ledge when viewed through the muzzle.

The manual advises that the Bobwhites are approved for use with steel shot using all but the full choke tube.

The barrels of both guns are fairly well struck, the 28 gauge being the better of the two as there are some slight visible ripples on the 20 gauge where the barrel tubes join the monoblock.

It is the effect the choke tubes have on the shape of the barrels which is most noticeable. The muzzles flare considerably to accommodate the choke tubes, giving a trombone appearance. The barrels are fat at one end, thin in the middle and then fat again at the other end. The illusion is heightened by the solid, concave and tapered rib, which acts as a straight edge to contrast the curvature of the barrels. This effect lessens as the gauge gets larger and is visibly more pronounced on the 28 gauge than the 20. In truth, the calipers measure the flare at only 0.055 inches on the 28 gauge, and exactly the same on the 20, but the visual effect is greater than the numbers would suggest.

The barrel walls are thicker than they need to be and thus the barrels are heavier than they need to be (to reduce construction costs). The addition of the choke tubes adds weight to the end of the barrel. This is perhaps why the 28 gauge is offered only with the 26 inch barrels - longer ones would place the balance too far forward. Both the 20 and the 28 gauge balance nicely with the 26 inch barrels with the fulcrum on the 28 gauge 3/4 inch in front of the hinge pin and the 20 just 1/2 inch forward. The majority of the weight of the guns rests between the shooters hands, and the guns are quick to shoulder and point. The Birmingham model calls for longer, lighter, thinner walled barrels with fixed chokes.

The barrel assembly is of monoblock design, where barrel tubes are inserted into a separately machined block which also provides the lumps and hook. This method of assembly is inexpensive but widely used and usually allows for accurate regulation of the barrels. Testing for regulation (follows in this review) will reveal how well the Turks have done their job. The seam where the barrel tubes join the monoblock is disguised with a ring of small circles, but they are really unnecessary as the joint is finely machined and the black chrome fills in whatever gap is left. The English model uses one piece barrel tubes with the lumps either forged integrally with the tube (chopper lump) or dovetailed into the barrel flats.

There were no defects visible in the bores, the hard chrome effectively covering any slight scuffs in the polishing. The concentricity of reflected light rings in the barrels indicate straight tubes on both guns. Close examination of the exterior of the barrels reveals inconsistencies in the finish. For example, on the 28 gauge, the bottom rib is glossy from the muzzle back to a distance of about 2 inches, then it turns to a semi gloss for about 4 inches and then turns shiny again. There is a slight difference in the colour of the barrel tubes and the monoblocks, the latter being a slightly flatter black. Looking in good light with a magnifying glass will reveal many minor defects in the polish of the barrels, they are all effectively hidden by the black chrome.

The sight is a brass bead shaped something like a miniature chess pawn. On the 28

gauge the bead was installed slightly off centre. It is 0.010 inches to the right, and it is noticeable. It will not affect wingshooting, but it is a flaw that will not be easy to fix. The warranty may have to be exercised. The bead on the 20 gauge is perfect.

Frame and Bolting

The barrels of the 28 gauge are held closed by the traditional Purdey double bolt activated by a Scott spindle, and the 20 gets that plus a rib extension and Greener crossbolt. Fitting of the barrels to the action was flawless in both cases, with no gaps or misalignment and no play at all. The top lever is held open by an extension off of the rear of the forward lump, which contacts the Purdey bolt. With the barrels removed, the hold open does not function, so the user must remember to operate the lever when assembling the gun. Failure to do so results in a sound "klunk" as the extension hits the bolt.

Comparison of frames.

While the 20 and 28 gauge guns are both Bobwhites, the frame of the 28 is not a scaled down version of the frame on the 20. The frames are of different design. As mentioned, the 20 has a Greener crossbolt, but it also has a curved shape to the rear of the frame whereas the 28 has a notched arrangement. The two frames differ in measurements as well (scaled frame, of course). The measurements are as follows: Height 20 (2.038"), 28 (1.875"), Width of fences 20 (2.023), 28 (1.870"), Width of box 20 (1.533,) 28 (1.340"), Distance between firing pins 20 (0.985), 28 (0.890"). These are significant differences and indicate a serious effort to provide frames suitable for the gauges.

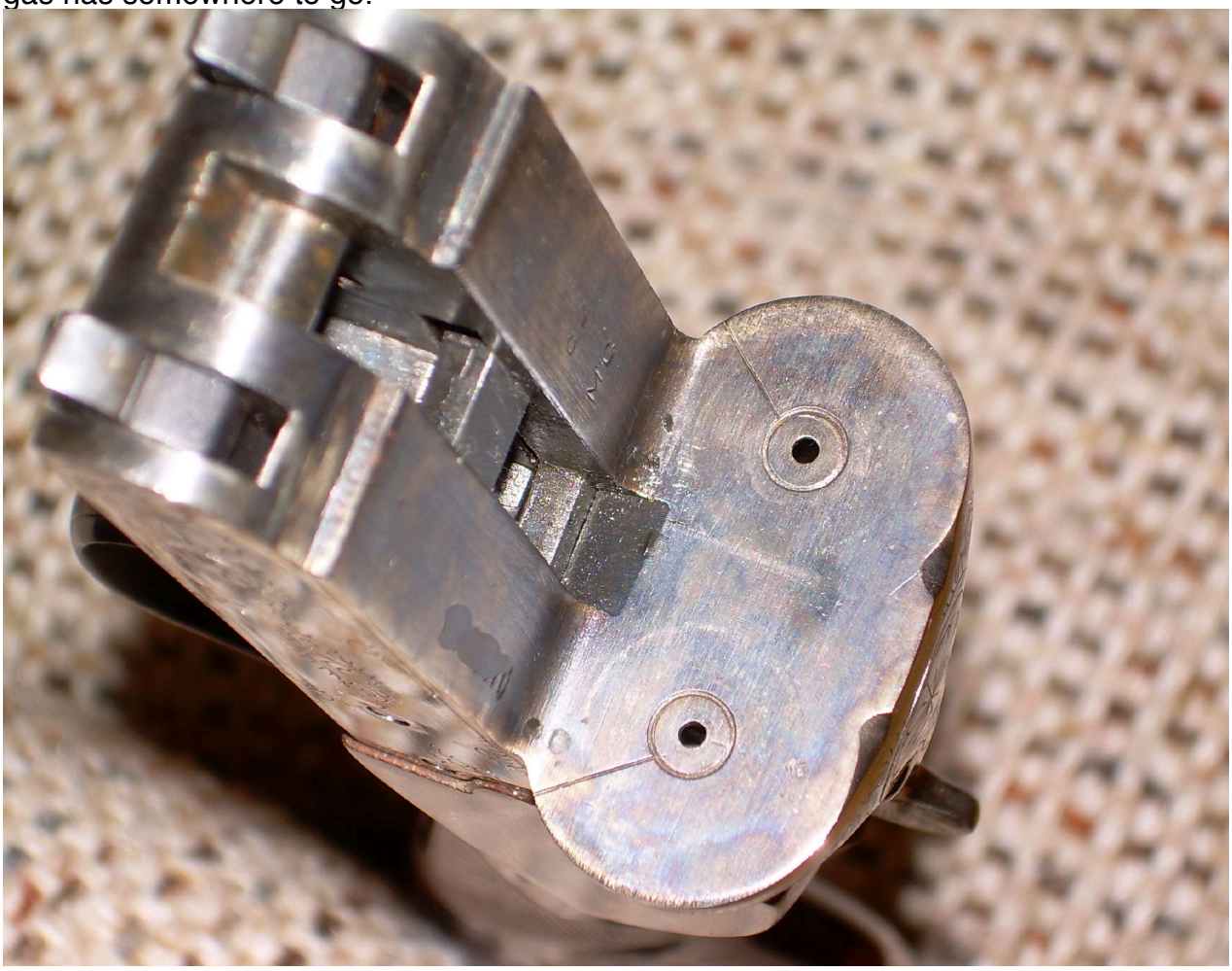
Both frames retain the same internal design deviating from the traditional Anson & Deeley pattern by using coil (mousetrap style) springs to power the sears. The tumblers, with integral firing pins, are powered by vee (leaf) springs. The trigger blocking tang mounted safety is of the non - automatic persuasion. The safety slide on the 28 gauge is slightly skewed, and has created a very small scratch on the upper tang, visible only when the safety is off. There are no intercepting safety sears

incorporated into the design. There have been (hearsay) reports of these guns breaking firing pins which is of concern because of their integral design. A breakage of this kind would indicate improper hardening. The pins were measured at .065 inches (28 ga.) and 0.080 (20 ga.) when new and will be monitored for any change.

If examined carefully the surface of the frame reveals many machining marks. These are very small but have not been completely polished out. Evidently manual labour costs good money even in Turkey. It is of little consequence, as the case colours and engraving hide the marks.

The frames of the Bobwhites are hand engraved with border lines and accents, and some paisley shaped scroll in the centre. The bottom has similar scrollwork surrounding the trigger plate screws, and the word "Bobwhite" in a hand written style. Barely visible under the case colours until you get close to the gun, the engraving is continued on the top lever, the fore end iron, Deeley latch and the trigger guard. The top lever also has chequering on the blade, but this looks more cast than cut.

Gas relief channels are cut into the breech face. In the event of a pierced primer, the gas has somewhere to go.



Gas relief channels cut in breech face.

Proof Marks and Stampings

There are no actual proof marks on the gun. The side of the left barrels are stamped HUGLU over 28 ga. 2 3/4" and HUGLU 20 ga. 3". The right barrels read CZ-USA over Kansas City, KS. There is also a makers mark, similar to a head on view of a rifle muzzle with some scripting in it. The barrel flats are stamped with the serial number and the gauge and chamber length (28-70, 20-75). There is also a stamp which reads CZ MC and a small, 5 pointed star. On the bottom of the rear lump is stamped M 363. Near the loop is stamped Made In Turkey. The action flats (water table) contain the (7 digit) serial number and the CZ MC stamping. There are no other visible marks.

Operation

One area of concern on both guns is the trigger pull. The pull weight is around 7 lbs., where the usual is 4 lbs. This is too much, and if the triggers do not lighten up during the break in period then trigger work may have to be contemplated. As a rule , the trigger pull should not exceed the weight of the gun. There is a slight gritty feeling to the triggers of the 28 gauge that may indicate that the sears and bents would benefit from a polishing.

Opening the guns after firing meets resistance, especially the last few degrees of arc. The extra weight of the 20 gauge barrels aids in this respect. The amount of leverage given the cocking arms seems slightly short. The guns are new, and will no doubt break in with use. The extractors lift the shells easily and have a good deal of contact area with the shell. The extractors are well fitted and look to be simple and trouble free in design.

Handling

Since no other SxS shotguns in 28 gauge were available, the Bobwhite was compared back to back against two other 28 gauge guns - a Caesar Guerini Tempio Light U/O and a Franchi AL-48 Deluxe automatic. Both are sub 6 lb. hunting guns with 26 inch barrels. Both achieve their light weight through the use of alloy frames, versus the steel frame on the Bobwhite. In addition, a comparison was made with a 20 gauge Army & Navy boxlock extractor. The gun, manufactured by Webley & Scott, is the archetypical Birmingham boxlock and representative of the genre.

The Franchi has a longer sighting plane than the Bobwhite due to its much longer receiver. This promotes accurate pointing and the longer overall length helps smoothen out the swing. Although the weight of the Franchi is similar to the Bobwhite, it feels much more spread out over the guns length. The Bobwhite seems to pivot around its centre of mass more willingly, more quickly. The English stock aids the rapid reactions of the gun and it will outspeed the Franchi to the shoulder. Once there, the Franchi's long sighting plane will benefit it in many situations, but the snap shot advantage goes to the Bobwhite.

28 gauge Bobwhite below 20 gauge Webley & Scott.

The Guerini makes a very good comparison with the Bobwhite. The guns weigh within an ounce of each other, and are virtually the same length. In the hands the Guerini feels lighter than the CZ and is faster to turn. The difference is not as great as that between the Bobwhite and the Franchi, but the Guerini is quicker in all respects. The balance of the Guerini is finely tuned but sensitive, it requires fingertip light handling. The Bobwhite is a little more forgiving. This is the result of the contour of the barrels of the Guerini. When the barrels were weighed it was surprising to find that the Guerini barrels were heavier than the Bobwhite's by 3 oz. (41 vs. 37.65 oz.). The balance point told the tale. While the Guerini barrels balance 9 1/8 inches from the breech the Bobwhite's balance at 10 1/4 inch. Much more of the Guerini's mass is centered around the beefy breech block and the barrels are thinner and lighter . The Bobwhite carries more of its weight forward.

When the 28 gauge Bobwhite is handled back to back with the Army & Navy 20 gauge, the weight of the Huglu's barrels are immediately apparent. Although the English 20 bore has barrels 2 inches longer than the CZ, weighs 6.4 ounces more and has an identical length of pull, the gun feels faster in the hands. The Bobwhite feels more like handling a solid bar, whereas the English gun has a lower resistance to being accelerated in any direction. One feels the extra mass of the 20 gauge in the heft of the gun, but so well distributed is that weight that the handling feels lighter, easier. The difference, while not large, is significant enough to be detected by all who handle the two guns.

It is not surprising that the Guerini is a more finely tuned gun, after all it is more than twice the price of the CZ. What is surprising is that the Bobwhite comes anywhere near the Guerini in terms of balance and handling - and it does come close! The

Franchi is a respected automatic and one of the lightest to be had, yet the Bobwhite is quicker. To approach the handling qualities of the Birmingham boxlock, the Bobwhite must drop from 20 to 28 gauge to achieve the weight and use shorter barrels to achieve the balance, and even then its moment of inertia feels slightly greater.

The heavier front end of the CZ may actually help a novice shooter of sub gauge guns by damping out some of the whippy feeling. The Bobwhite is definitely not a club or a 2X4. Its handling is that of a game gun. The Franchi, the Guerini and the Army & Navy are all much more finely fitted and finished than the Bobwhite, there is no comparison in that department.

The 20 gauge Bobwhite was put through the back to back comparison against a 20 gauge Stevens 311 SxS. If the Stevens were being made today it would likely sell in the same price range as the Bobwhite. It is an American version of a working, no frills boxlock non ejector. The Stevens 311 line was the most popular SxS ever produced.

20 gauge Stevens 311 and Bobwhites.

Against the Stevens the Bobwhite compared very favorably. The first impression is dramatic. Next to the Bobwhite, the 311 appears utilitarian and poorly finished. Despite the uninspired grain and figuring of the Bobwhite's Turkish walnut, along side it the Stevens still seems to be lacking. The clean lines of the nicely finished English buttstock and the tactile splinter fore-end serve to accentuate the CZ. In contrast, the painted finish, crudely checkered, semi-pistol grip buttstock and beaver-tail fore end give the 311 a clunky, mass-produced look. These being the aesthetics, what are the facts?

Both are BLNE models in 20 ga., the Bobwhite weighing in at 6.49 lbs. and the Stevens at 6.83 lbs. Both 20 ga. BNLE's are equipped with 26" barrels; both incorporate double triggers. Both are chambered for 2 ¾" to 3" shells. The similarities end there.

The English stock, the splinter fore end, and the cushioned butt pad with a smooth plastic heel are all nice features that squeeze even more performance from an already well balanced platform. The Bobwhite is a true scaled-frame, small gauge shotgun. The Stevens is an example of 20 gauge barrels fitted to a modified 12 gauge frame. You can easily see where the barrel flats are built up to achieve alignment of the center of the chamber with the firing pin. In the case of the 311, the manufacturer didn't

even bother to cut the fences down to mate the receiver to the barrel diameters.

The Bobwhite is the superior performer, both in getting the gun to the shoulder and following the target. The weight, balance and handling all point to the Bobwhite as the clear winner.

The 20 gauge Bobwhite was also compared to the same 20 gauge Army & Navy gun which was used in the 28 gauge comparison. The extra weight of the Bobwhite was obvious, but the comparison is not a valid one. The Army & Navy is an upland gun only, while the Bobwhite has 3 inch chambers and is steel shot compatible. The extra weight of the Turkish gun will come in handy for shooting ducks with magnum loads. Even so, the Bobwhite showed competent balance and a very smooth swing.

By the numbers.

Wouldn't it be great if there were some way to quantify what is otherwise a subjective evaluation of a shotgun's handling characteristics?

As luck would have it, the July / August 2006 issue of Shooting Sportsman magazine published a formula to calculate the theoretical minimum moment of inertia of a shotgun (page 18). The formula is:

0.34*(weight in lbs) + 0.07*(inches from front trigger to balance point) + 0.12*(length of pull) - 0.06*(bore diameter in inches) + 0.04*(barrel length in inches) - 0.03(if it is a sidelock, else 0) + 0.04(if it is a single barrel gun else 0) - 4.05

The article indicates that results in the 1.2 range indicate a lively game gun, a 3 indicates a heavy fowler and results less than 1 are "quite quick".

When the appropriate measurements from the 28 gauge Bobwhite are run through the formula the number 0.93015 is obtained. The measurements taken from the 28 gauge Caesar Guerini produce a result of 0.80025. The results mirror what was observed in back to back handling tests - the Guerini with its lower number is slightly quicker in handling than the Bobwhite in the same gauge, and that both are on the "quite quick" end of the scale. The Army & Navy 20 gauge produced a number of 1.03435. While the result indicates a very quick handling gun indeed, the Bobwhite's number is lower. This is slightly surprising in light of the perceived feel, and is a good indication of how weight distribution can affect perception.

It must be noted that by the time the formula was discovered, the 28 gauge Bobwhite had been fitted with a stock extension which added one ounce of weight and a half inch in length. Without the extension the Bobwhite would be fractionally closer to the Guerini than these numbers indicate.

The 20 gauge Bobwhite returned a number of 1.259725, a "lively game gun". This is an apt description of the gun. It is interesting to note that if the weight had been 6 lbs.

as advertised, and all other factors such as the balance point stayed the same, the number returned would be 1.09185. The numbers show what the hands feel - a half pound is a significant amount of weight.

As a reality check a 7.83 lb. long barreled 20 gauge sporting clays gun was measured and run through the formula. The result was 2.00155. This is exactly the result you would expect from a gun of this design. If nothing else this exercise should give the reader some idea of how fast the little Bobwhites actually are.

A note about weight.

The ideal weight of a game gun was determined long ago by the British, who employed a simple formula. A gun should weigh 96 times the mass of the shot charge it fires. A 12 gauge firing 1 1/4 oz. loads should weigh 7.5 lbs., a 12 gauge using 1 1/8th oz. loads should be 6 3/4 lbs., a 16 gauge with 1 oz. should be 6 lbs. even, a 20 with 7/8th oz. loads should be 5 1/4 lbs. and a 28 gauge with 3/4 oz. loads should weigh just 4 1/2 lbs. The reader may observe that 5 1/4 lb. 20 gauge guns and 4 1/2 lb. 28 gauge guns do not occupy a great deal of space on gun shop shelves.

Ideal weights notwithstanding, any shotgun weighing less than 6 lbs. requires a good deal of expertise to wield effectively. Sub 5 lb. guns require a truly expert touch.

By the British formula, neither the 20 or 28 gauge Bobwhites are real lightweights, the 28 gauge being almost a pound heavy and the 20 gauge being 1 1/4 lb. over the British ideal. The 20 gauge is in the same weight range as the 12 gauge Ruger Gold Label.

The Bobwhites are of practical shooting weight. Neither gun will tire the hunter, neither can be considered sluggish. The 28 gauge makes its living as a light gun, and it is gratifying to observe the lower than advertised weight while retaining a shootable and balanced gun. The 20 gauge is more of an all around shooter, its 3 inch chambers providing flexibility for waterfowl as well as upland game. In this respect the 0.49 of a lb. of additional (over advertised) weight is not altogether unwelcome. The 20 gauge Bobwhite retains a lively feel and is effortless to point.

Conclusions prior to shooting.

The purist or traditionalist is not likely to find these guns attractive. They are not exact copies of British game guns. They do not possess the quality of materials and workmanship of the originals, and they deviate from the standard design in many ways.

If the purist is disappointed, then the hunter will be delighted. Carrying either of these guns for a day in the field will not be a chore. The handling characteristics are ideal for chasing fast flushing game, the 28 being very fast to the shoulder while the 20 is more stable and smoother to swing. The guns do retain the instinctive handling advantages

of the genre. Purists may debate the finer points of the handling but the hunter will just smile broadly. The Bobwhites are miles ahead of a similar gauge Baikal or Stoeger. The hunter who lets the grouse get away is not paying attention, as the guns are so much faster than a standard 12 gauge Beretta or Browning under / over. It is difficult not to dwell on the light weight, balance and pointability of these guns. While not at the same level of refinement as British or European game guns, they beat almost everything else.

If it bothers you that a 20 gauge Webley and Scott will make a Bobwhite look less than perfect, then you are a purist and you will not be happy with the CZ. If you can approach the matter believing that you can enjoy the benefits of a light, fast handling, highly pointable and affordable SxS then you will be happy, for the Bobwhite is all of those things.

Both of these Bobwhites are hunting guns, pure and simple. They are true to the design philosophy, if not the actual execution of the Anson & Deeley boxlock non ejector game gun. A round or two at the club or a walk through the sporting clays course now and again would not be out of character. The guns are not designed as competition models and would probably not last long if subjected to a thousand round per week regime in the target sports. As hunting guns, they should live a long life.

CZ and Huglu have been astute in positioning the gun in the market. By sacrificing the quality of the walnut and forgoing fine metal polishing they have kept the price low. They have built in light weight, balance and handling as primary components, all of which cost money and raise the price (and the value) above the Russian and Brazilian offerings. Few other companies offer products in this particular market niche, and those that do don't have the distribution system of CZ. The question is whether there are enough customers who want the handling characteristics of a fine sub gauge SxS without the adjuncts of fine walnut and highly polished metal. CZ is betting there are.

Bobwhite below Ruger Gold Label.

To recap, the initial impressions of the guns are mixed. There is delight in the handling and pleasure in the weight and beauty in the form. There are disappointments in the details. While less than perfect polishing and plain wood were expected, the high effort triggers and off centre bead were not. First impressions are that you get what you pay for. Given the price of these shotguns, that means you get a better built gun than a Baikal or a Stoeger but not so well finished as a Fabarm or the Ruger Gold Label. The weight and the balance are more than acceptable.

All of the above is relevant only if the guns shoot well. They must produce useful patterns and shoot to point of aim with both barrels. They must not break. The triggers must be workable and the gun must be easy to load and unload. All the speed and handling in the world will not help if a gun shoots like Marty Feldman's eyes point, or is too irritating to use.

Part II

Shooting the 28 gauge Bobwhite.

The first opportunity to shoot the 28 gauge Bobwhite came from the 16 yard line of an ATA trap field. Chokes used were improved cylinder in the right barrel, modified in the left. Initial shots were to determine point of aim. The gun shoots relatively flat, and sight picture was quickly established. Both barrels shoot close enough to the same point of aim that no special considerations were required to break targets with either barrel. Targets hit with the improved cylinder barrel broke into several large chunks while the modified tube "smoked" the targets, crushing them into dust. While patterning and precise point of impact testing will provide a better picture of what the barrels are actually doing, the first test provided satisfactory evidence of regulated barrels and rib.

The barrels of the 28 gauge get hot quickly, a glove for the left hand or a proper leather hand guard will be required for repeated shooting. In order to test the heat dissipation characteristics of the barrels, and to determine if the solder joining the barrels and ribs are sufficiently strong, fifty shells were run through the gun as quickly as possible (25 shells through each barrel). At the end of the test, the gun was too hot to handle even with a glove. No signs of weeping from any of the joints were apparent. When the gun was cool, the barrels were removed and examined carefully. No flaws or failures were evident and when suspended from the hook, the tubes rang like bells with no fuzziness or distortion to the sound. A considerable amount of plastic was deposited forward of the forcing cones, the barrel heat apparently melting the shot cups. A hunter or even a skeet shooter would rarely have occasion to shoot so many shells so rapidly and the gun was deemed to have passed the test.

Perceived recoil was very light, less than either the Guerini or the Franchi, which is a surprise. There is barrel flip but recovery is very quick - in fact a shooter accustomed

to heavier guns will find over correction a problem after the first shot until the weight is adapted to.

Two more boxes of shells were shot with the Bobwhite as further function testing. Some of the stiffness on opening disappeared and at the end of the test and the break action felt noticeably smoother than when new. A little of the grittiness of the triggers was gone as well, but the high effort remains. The 7 lb. triggers are a detriment to shooting such a lightweight gun and while it was possible to get used to the feel with practice, most serious shooters of this gun will opt to lighten the triggers.

The handling of the gun on moving targets mirrored the static testing and theoretical numbers - the 28 gauge Bobwhite is a very fast handling gun with a properly thought out centre of mass. Shooting such a light gun is a challenge, great discipline must be exercised to swing the gun smoothly. For a right handed shooter the left hand must become the guiding force while maintaining a light and steady touch. If tracking a bird through a long arc requires discipline, snap shooting the gun is quite effortless. Control must still be exerted, but the splinter fore end and straight grip stock aid in the execution of a snap or instinctive shot. While the 28 gauge Caesar Guerini mentioned earlier may exhibit superior MOI numbers, the pistol grip and thick fore end do not provide the same quickness of feel, especially on odd angle shots. At the range the Guerini would be the better gun, but in the grouse or pheasant fields the Bobwhite should not prove to be at a disadvantage.

At the end of the first firing test, the Bobwhite was disassembled, cleaned and examined in detail. After 125 shells the gun appeared as new, with only the imprints of the shells visible on the breech face as evidence of use. No looseness or play had developed, the top lever maintained its position and the firing pins were measured at exactly 0.065" - no change. While 125 shells is not a lot of punishment, the absence of any dimensional changes is a positive start.

A second test of the 28 gauge gun was conducted on another ATA range. One hundred shells were fired, this time with 75 of them shot through the left barrel. Shooting low gun from the 16 yard line a high score of 19 was obtained which was considered acceptable and demonstrated reasonable gun fit.

Following the second round, a shooter at the club viewed the Bobwhite from a distance of about 10 feet and then asked if the stocks were made of plastic! Comparing the wood to the well figured walnut of the competition guns at the club, it is easy to see how such a mistake could be made.

During the third round of trap a pierced primer occurred. This was of great concern and the shell was retained for examination. After careful inspection it was determined that the incident was the fault of the shell, not the gun. The indent left in the primer was of normal depth and centered, but the primer had torn close to its outer edge, where the cup was abnormally thin. The other fired hulls were gathered and examined. The indentations in the primers were consistent in depth and well centered. It was not

possible to determine which barrel a shell was fired in by examining the primer as the imprints are virtually identical.

After the fourth round the gun was disassembled for inspection. At that point the gun had fired a total of 225 shells, 137 through the left barrel and 88 through the right. The gas channel for the left barrel was filled with residue from the pierced primer, the channel functioned as it was designed to do. A small nylon brush was all that was required to clean the channel.

During inspection it was noted that the screw on the left side of the receiver which acts as the pivot point for the cocking arm had loosened by an eighth of a turn. There is great advantage to having properly timed screws, one can see at a glance if anything has moved. The screw is of the traditional thin slot cheese head variety and a blade had to be ground to fit. The screw tightened up nicely, good torque having to be applied to return the slot to its timed position. It is not known why the screw came loose, but it will be monitored and if it does not stay tight then loctite will be applied.

The firing pins remain at 0.065 inches and show no signs of deforming. The barrel and frame remain perfectly joined. The fore end is still tight. The effort required to open the gun continues to lessen, but the final few degrees of arc still require extra pressure. Once the barrels are opened they stay in that position and do not require force to keep them fully opened.

The opportunity finally presented itself to shoot the 28 gauge Bobwhite at a sporting clays range. This test was considered important because of all the clay target games, sporting clays offers targets most closely related to the gun's true purpose - upland game hunting.

Presentations included towering, crossing and downhill shots, and simultaneous as well as report pairs. 125 shells were fired. The Bobwhite excelled in this environment, giving early shots on fast birds which gave the shooters of heavier 12 gauge guns some difficulty. The balance of the gun allowed for very quick and consistent shouldering, even when targets were called for while carrying the Bobwhite in the port arms position. The targets which gave the little SxS the greatest difficulty were longer, quartering shots where accurate tracking of the target is of primary importance. Here, the light weight of the gun played against its success, requiring a great deal of concentration to achieve a smooth swing. By contrast, close range fast crossers were simply "poked" out of the air, not correct technique but very effective with the Bobwhite.

Light perceived recoil means fast recovery and a quick second shot, and not many lightweight shotguns can match the recovery times of the CZ 28 gauge. The limiting factor on the Bobwhite was the skill of the shooter in switching triggers. Simultaneous pairs present no great challenge to the gun while with report pairs it is possible to completely dismount the gun and treat the second bird as a separate "pull".

The final test of the 28 gauge Bobwhite was conducted on a five - stand range. As with

sporting clays, the gun showed off its ability to react quickly. Many of the targets were not conducive to snap or instinctive shooting, however, and as on the sporting clays course the targets which require longer, deliberate tracking were the most difficult to hit. The bouncing rabbit made an excellent target for the little CZ Five rounds plus the shots fired in pattern testing brought the total number of shells expended to five hundred.

The triggers are still at nearly 7 lbs. of pull weight and will probably not change significantly through use or wear.

Shooting the 20 gauge Bobwhite

For an initial test of handling characteristics, both the Bobwhite and the 20 gauge Stevens 311 comparison gun were fired 50 times each using identical 7/8 oz. loads (approximately 25 times each through each barrel). The test employed standard ATA targets and traps. But, in order to better simulate field conditions, each shot was taken from a variety of field carry positions, calling for the bird before mounting. With its balance point more centered between the shooter's hands, the Bobwhite offered quicker, smoother target acquisition. The added weight of the Stevens, coupled with the forward center of balance, slowed the mount and dampened maneuverability. This increased inertial effect is detrimental to practiced wingshooters, but might help smooth the swing and assist the follow through of one new to the uplands.

Weight distribution is not the only factor influencing the disparity in the way these two guns from the same class feel, though. The English stock on the CZ presents a much different mount than the semi-pistol grip equipped 311. Additionally, the splinter fore-end stands in sharp contrast to the beavertail. Stock configuration and fore end style are more a matter of fit and of personal preference. In a side by side comparison (pun intended), the Bobwhite was definitely the more nimble of the two.

In the hands of the same shooter, similar scores were obtained with both guns. Targets were most often broken into many pieces, rather than completely dusted. It should be pointed out that this part of the testing was done with the factory installed choke tube selections in the Bobwhite – modified and improved-modified.

It was also noted that the lighter barrels of the CZ dissipated heat less efficiently than the Stevens, although this would be more of a concern to a clay shooter than to anyone using a Bobwhite in the field.

Only time will tell but, if the Bobwhite shares similar reliability to other makes of similar manufacture, it would be expected to fair better than those of Savage/Stevens pedigree.

Patterning the Bobwhites

Patterning a shotgun is the most effective test for evaluating barrel regulation, point of aim, and shot dispersion characteristics using different loads. Pattern testing of the Bobwhites is incomplete, as only one manufacturer's shells were used with each model. In order to do a comprehensive examination of shot dispersion in particular, it would be necessary to compare a variety of loads. In order to maintain a common base line for this testing, both guns were fired by the same shooter.

Conventional patterning calls for counting pellets within a 30 inch circle at 40 yards and expressing that number as a percentage of the total number of pellets in the load. Due to time restrictions pellet counting was not done. Subjective impressions of patterns are supplied. The target papers have been retained for possible further analysis.

The choke tubes supplied with both models are identified by small notches cut into the rim of the tubes; 1 for full, 2 for improved-modified, 3 for modified, 4 for improved-cylinder, and 5 for cylinder. For the sake of convenience in this section, they will be referred to by their number, rather than the description.

The first observation that could be made was that the barrels are well regulated and shoot to the same point of aim at any practical distance. For the evaluation shooter, the 28 ga. was consistently low by approximately 25% of the pattern. Since a stock extension had been installed before patterning and since the low POA was consistent, it is likely that it was caused by the fit for the individual rather than any issue with how flat the gun is pointing. By comparson, the 20 ga. shot slightly high for the same shooter. Both guns patterned cleanly in the center of the target once the sight picture was established. Stock adjustments specific to the shooter are recommended for any shotgun to ensure that the gun shoots where pointed when taking snap shots.

The 28 ga. was fired twice through each barrel for each choke tube from a distance of 16 yards. Shells manufactured by Kent containing 3/4 oz of shot were used. As would be expected, #1 & 2 chokes produced tight groups of shot that would shred a bird in the case of a direct hit from that distance. The #3 and 4 chokes produced even patterns, large enough to take full advantage of the pellet count without gaps. The #5 tube was marginal – the pattern was beginning to develop gaps through which a lucky bird could escape unharmed. Interestingly, the #3 and 4 tubes are those that are installed when the 28 ga. ships from the factory.

A second set of targets were planned from a distance of 40 yards, but it quickly became evident that this distance was approaching the effective limit of the gun's range. Only the #1 choke offered good coverage at this distance. These results reinforce the intended purpose of the 28 ga. as a quick handling gun, best suited to early season or close flushing birds.

It is not unusual to discover that your choke choices are different after patterning a gun

than they might have been when deciding based on assumptions. In this case, for example, if most shots are expected to be 35 yards or less, a #2 in the left barrel and a #4 in the right would likely be good choices. If shots could come at a distance of up to 45 yards, a #1 in the left and a #3 in the right would yield better results. The factory set up is most effective in the 30 to 15 yard range.

The 20 ga. model was fired twice through each barrel with each of the choke tubes, at a distance of 16 yards. It was then fired twice through each barrel with each tube, at a distance of 40 yds. Lastly, it was fired once through each barrel with each tube, at a distance of 50 yds. Only Winchester 20 ga., 7 ½ shot, 7/8 oz loads were used for all patterning.

Generally, all patterns were uniform without clumps.

At 16 yards, the #1 & 2 chokes were serious overkill. Perfect lay somewhere around #3 & 4. The 5 tube begins to show gaps in the pattern. On 3 occasions, the shot cup hit the target with enough force to rip a hole through the paper (targets were stapled to masonite and shot only once each).

At 40 yards, a #1 or 2 produced good dispersion, while #3 started getting ragged towards the outer edges.

At 50 yards, a #1 would be best, while #2 would make for a serviceable shot, but with higher odds of wounding a bird.

Once again, depending on type and distance of shots that are likely to present themselves, choke selection will vary.

Despite using only 1 brand of shells, patterning these guns returned results that are a vindication of the marriage of the classic design points with the flexibility of recent innovation (recent in relative terms). The balance promotes quick handling; the English stock, good eye position and elbow up mount. Choke tubes and double triggers make for instant pattern selection in the moment.

Neither of the guns had any misfires or mechanical problems during pattern testing. Both guns were hot after repetitive firing.

Hunting with the Bobwhites

Both authors are ardent grouse hunters, and 2006 offered both a generous grouse population and more than the average number of days afield. Both authors have access to a number of proven grouse guns, and share the ambition of using different guns for different conditions. In spite of this, the Bobwhites were called upon for more than their fair share of hunting hours. In the beginning, this was due to the desire to test the guns. As the season progressed, it was due to the success gained with them.

Wingshot success on ruffed grouse with the Turkish made SxS's approached 65 percent.

Conditions of use ranged from 20 degrees C. to -15 C, and from green and leafy to frozen and snow covered. Considerable amounts of bush was pushed. The guns are relatively short in overall length, slim and shallow and slip through thick bush with ease. Carrying the light guns and ammo is a pleasure, the balance points providing a comfortable hold at port arms as well as while open with a one handed carry. This is an important feature in a game gun.

Both guns survived typical grouse hunting conditions without complaint. The colour case hardening has not begun to fade, nor has the clear coat over it deteriorated. No scratches have appeared in the black chrome barrels, despite frequent encounters with hard, dry branches. The stocks survived all normal encounters, although the 20 gauge suffered a small scratch in the butt stock from a barbed wire fence. The finish of the wood and metal of the Bobwhites has passed the test of the first year of hunting without showing signs of weakness. The guns are still tight and on face and the choke tubes remain snug in the barrels

At the end of the season the firing pins were still the same diameter as originally measured, there was still resistance in opening the last few degrees, and the trigger pulls were unchanged, i.e. too heavy. The screw on the 28 gauge still needs occasional tightening.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this article, two questions were asked: Are the guns any good, and are they worth the money. The first question may be answered with a cautious yes. CZ and Huglu have carefully positioned their guns in the marketplace. They have concentrated on handling and shooting properties (within budget limits) and forsaken polished metal and fine walnut to achieve their goal. All important functions of the guns were reliable, the frame and barrels are correctly joined and the barrels are well regulated. Stocks are of useful dimensions. Quality control on small items seems to be suspect and the weights of individual guns can vary considerably from the advertised figures. The drop at heel also seems to be variable. The interested party is advised to examine the gun in person, if at all possible, prior to purchase to avoid small flaws. The guns are simplicity itself in their method of construction and should prove to be reliable over the long term. Still to be determined is the quality of the steel and hardening of the sears and bents, which will take years of use to determine. Initial observations give no cause for concern in this area. The guns do indeed fill the niche of the Anson & Deeley boxlock non ejector as a lively and functional game gun.

The second question, that of value, is harder to answer. The consensus is that the Bobwhites are worth the money, but just barely so. The 20 gauge in particular provides the best cost to value ratio, with its three inch chambers, Greener crossbolt and slightly better wood and case hardening. The 20 gauge is the more versatile gun and may be

used in more situations than the 28, at a price point $214 less. It will appeal to a larger number of buyers than the 28 gauge, and rightly so.

The smaller Bobwhite delivers what the 20 gauge cannot, which is lighter weight and faster handling. The shooting characteristics of the 28 gauge gun place it in the same league (if not at the top of that league) as the quickest handling guns available. Still, $1,100 is a lot of money to pay for a gun with plain wood and a mediocre finish. That is, until it is compared to other guns in the same handling class. What you are paying for with the 28 gauge are things you can feel, rather than what you can see.

The Bobwhites seem to offer exactly what you pay for, but not a lot more. If the guns came with fine walnut, rust blued barrels and highly polished metal they would be a screaming deal. The reality of economics (even in Turkey) mean that if those features were included the price would rise to the level of the competition. CZ and Huglu have threaded the eye of a small needle by offering most of the handling characteristics of an expensive gun in an affordable, if not beautifully finished package.

If you have read this far then you have an interest in these guns. Please feel free to post any questions you may have.

Sharptail & Straightshooter