

GENERALLY SPEAKING, WHEN FINE CUSTOM MADE SHOTGUNS ARE THE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION, THE ENGLISH AND ITALIAN GUN MAKERS ARE OFTEN THE FIRST TO COME TO MIND. THESE CUSTOM GUNS WITH PERSONALIZED ATTENTION TO DESIGN – OR ‘BESPOKE’ GUNS – ARE MADE TO THE INDIVIDUAL’S TASTE, DESIRES AND DEPTH OF POCKETBOOK OF THE PURCHASER!

Sport-Kemen, a Spanish company located in Elgoibar, Spain, is a relatively ‘new kid on the block’ in this elite arena, but can certainly be included on the list of fine, custom built shotguns. The company manufactures a beautiful over and under shotgun, the KM4, and has earned quite a reputation in a relatively short time. Several of the World’s top competitors in the different disciplines of clay target shooting either shoot, or have shot this fine shotgun – and their compiled list of wins in World, International and National Championships is impressive.

Kemen basically builds each KM4 to the specific needs of the customer. Besides the basics – such as selection of barrel length and with or without screw in chokes – the rest of the gun is very much that of a custom gun. The

customer can, among other things, select the grade of wood and have it fitted to precise dimensions, select the mass weight of the barrels and choose the base gun, or any of the many high grade engraving and inlay of precious metal selections.

The degree of customer choice available to the Kemen buyer is impressive. For example – how do you take your ribs? (no not with or without barbecue sauce!). You need to know these things; do you want the mid rib solid or ventilated? The top rib can be flat or stepped, with center channel or plain. Then there is the width: 11mm parallel, 7mm parallel or tapered? With so many choices you start to get a flavor of how much thought needs to go into your ‘ideal’ gun before you place an order.

I suspect that not many shooters will have given much thought to the finer points of gun construction before, and in that sense buying a Kemen is perhaps a choice for the more mature and experienced competitor. As you progress through this sport you get to realize that every gun is a compromise somewhere along the line. If you have a Kemen built for you, you cannot eliminate compromise entirely, but you can minimize it. On the downside, there is no one else to blame if you don’t like the end result!

Most would think of

## THE NEW KEMEN PEREGRINE 34" SPORTER

BY STEVE FISCHER





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custom choice in woodwork to be all about selection of the grade of walnut and the stock dimensions and, of course, this is part of the 34" KM4 Peregrine package. But there are other decisions to be made. The fore-end for example can be full beavertail, schnabel or a plain type that Kemen call their field style – but which many sporting shooters prefer. It has a slight belly that sits well in the palm and tapers towards the front but without the pronounced lip of the schnabel style.

Moving back, the grip is another area for careful consideration. Kemen will build your gun with everything from a full pistol grip to a straight hand stock and I believe there are as many as ten different styles to choose from, including a palm swell for those who like them. This is one of the areas of custom building that really can make a difference, because the grip hand is the primary contact with the gun and no standard style can ever be right for everyone. Just look

around at other people's hands and see the variation in size and shape. Now throw in all the differences in shooting style and the permutations are legion. As you can see, you need to have done your homework before you place an order.

The basic action is that of the tried and true Boss system, although modified in several areas to Kemen's own specifications. The trigger assembly is removable and powered by leaf springs. The

trigger pull on the test gun was extremely crisp and clean at 3½ lbs bottom barrel and 4½ lbs for the top. Notable is the ease of removing the trigger assembly from the receiver. A simple lever, located behind the trigger, is pushed from right to left, and the trigger slips easily out into your hand with no tugging or pulling required.

Hand work to detail is quite evident when looking at the internals of the trigger assembly, as many of the parts are nicely polished. A cross bar barrel selector is located in the rear of the trigger body and a push right or left will select the top or bottom



barrel. Each gun is also supplied with an extra set of hammer springs, a set of firing pins and a take-down wrench, all in a very nice combination locked hard case.

Since 34" barrels have been so popular this season, I asked for the test gun barrels to be in that length. The specified gun for test was the KM4 Peregrine Sporter, with the barrels weighing in at a svelte 1585 gms. The inside bore diameters were a perfectly matched set at .737 and sported a set of five Briley thinwall screw chokes.

Kemen is another company that believes in the value of a mild degree of 'overboring' of the barrels from the nominal 12-gauge dimension of .729" – the Peregrine being close to the boring of the Perazzi MX2000 tested back in March/April. We are seeing a clear division now emerging between those companies going down that route and the (mainly Italian) makers who are sticking to their standard boring. In the case of the Italian trade this has usually been on the tight side of nominal, .724" (18.4mm) being common. The sea change in Italy of course was when Beretta moved to more open boring with their 'Optima Bore' barrels and those companies still doing it the old way are now in a shrinking minority.

Since I am a Southpaw, Kemen sent the test gun with a left

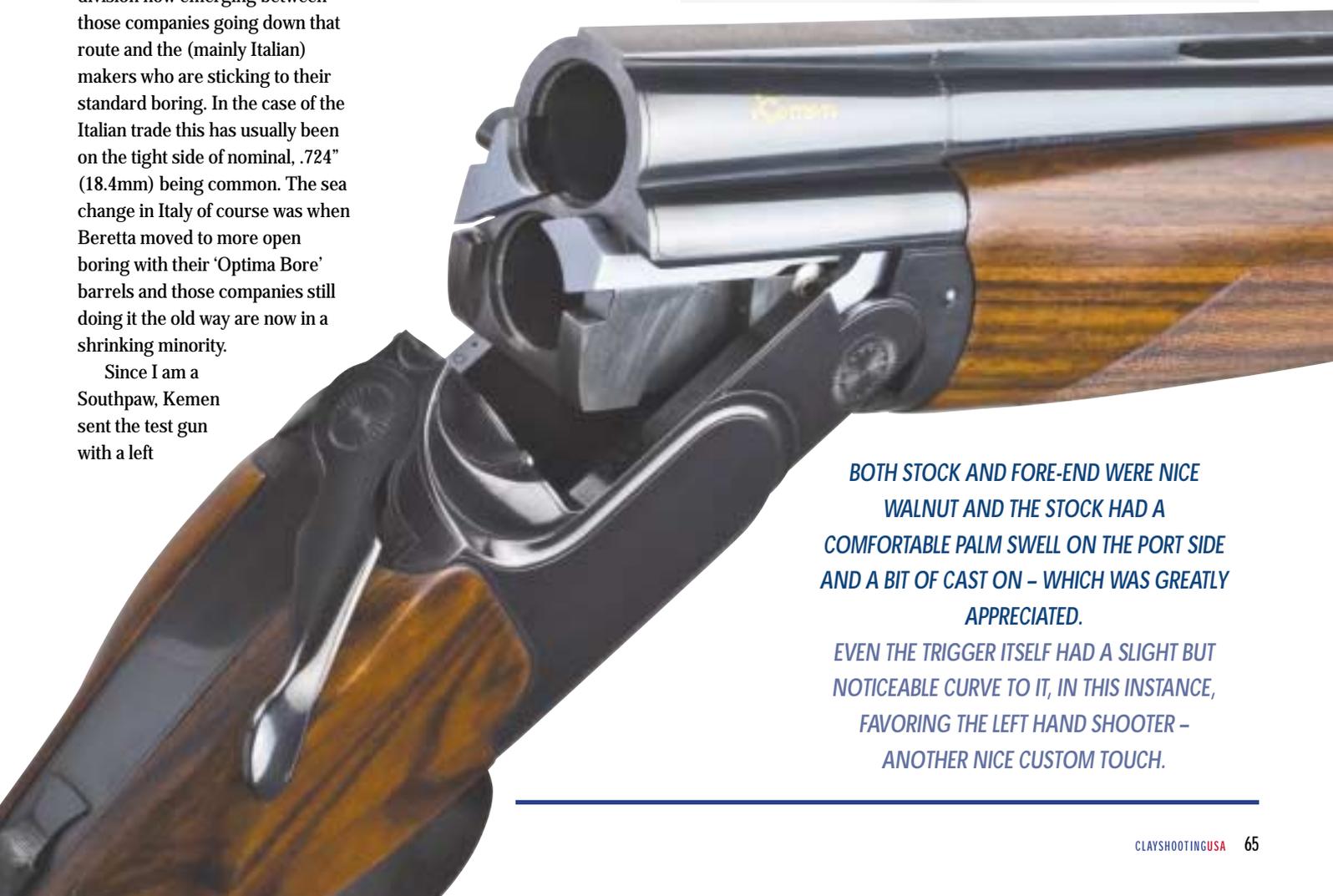
hand stock. Both stock and fore-end were nice walnut and the stock had a comfortable palm swell on the port side and a bit of cast on – which was greatly appreciated. Even the trigger itself had a slight but noticeable curve to it, in this instance, favoring the left hand shooter – another nice custom touch.

Balance of this gun was just a bit to the front of the hinge pin and felt good between the hands, weighing in at 8 lbs 4 oz. The safety is a sliding lever on the top of the receiver tang and came pinned for competition shooting. This feature can easily be undone, and the safety returned to a manual configuration for hunting purposes.

A trip to the patterning board was the next order of business, to check not only pattern

performance, but pattern placement. The tightest choke supplied with the test gun was selected – in this case an improved modified – and was used in both barrels for the pattern placement verification. At a distance of 40 yards, both barrels printed nicely

to dead center of the pattern plate with some 28 gm Lyalvale high velocity shells. I selected the 28 gm (1 oz) shell for testing purposes since in about 60 days, the 28 gm loadings will be SOP for FITASC as well as the new game of Compak Sporting.



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With all the testing and examining over with, it was time to go and have some fun! My curiosity was piqued to see how this 34 inch KM4 would handle on a skeet and trap field before heading to the woods for some sporting targets. I find starting on skeet and trap helps me to get acquainted with the feel of a new gun before I try some of the more serious targets. At first I thought those long barrels might be a bit over the top for the close and quick targets on the skeet field, but as I shot, I found the barrels moved pleasingly well. I managed to wring out a very satisfying 24, missing of all things, the very last shot from the low house! Oh well, it wasn't the first time I had done that!

Right next door was a trap layout, so once again armed with 28 gm shells, I exercised the tighter chokes from the 16 yard line, switching barrels occasionally between top and bottom, turning the orange domed targets into ink spots with amazing regularity.

After lunch, a round of 100 of Sporting Clay International's targets found me quite pleased with a score very close to my usual average.

Cosmetically, the Kemen KM4 Peregrine Sporter is pleasing to the eye and the tasteful gold work of the name 'Kemen' inlaid into the top barrel over the chamber is a subdued but stylish touch. The checkering on the buttstock and fore-end was sharp and crisp, although not too fancy. The finish on the stock

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and fore-end, typical European style, was hand rubbed oil. For those out there who prefer a more quiet simplicity in an understated way, the KM4 certainly fits the bill. However, that being said, there are several higher grade versions including some side by side models available with superb exhibition grade wood and custom engraving by some of the world's best artisans.

Coming in, as configured, at just under \$9,000, the Peregrine Sporter won't be for every pocketbook, but is certainly good value for the price. Kemen is distributed by Field Sport Ltd., out of Traverse City Michigan (231-933-4002) and Sportsman's Finest of Austin, Texas (512-263-1888). Sport Kemen's web site is: [www.sport-kemen.com](http://www.sport-kemen.com) ■