

WINCHESTER 101



A REVIEW BY **TOM CERETTO**

THOSE OF US THAT HAVE BEEN AROUND THE SHOOTING SPORTS A LONG TIME, ESPECIALLY SKEET AND TRAP SHOOTERS, REMEMBER THE WINCHESTER 101 AS A VERY POPULAR COMPETITION SHOTGUN OF YEARS PAST.

It was always a good-looking gun – with its blued receiver and well executed scroll engraving. It was also very popular with skeet shooters fitted with sub-gauge tubes. I expected the new version to be a ‘clone’ of the old 101 – but it isn’t. It looks like the old 101, blued receiver and scroll engraving and all, but the new version is not your fathers 101, but a totally different gun. Nostalgia aside, I think it is an even better shotgun than its namesake.

The engraving on both sides of the receiver is pleasing. There is also some scroll engraving on the bottom of the receiver, the trigger guard and the top of the receiver. The engraving on the top lever is also very well done. Together with the deep black bluing, the 101 is an esthetically pleasing gun to look at, just like its namesake.

The old 101 had chopper lumps and a cross bolt lockup similar to the original Browning system. The new version has a low profile receiver that locks up with a pair of

truncated cones, similar to the system used on Beretta 600 series shotguns. There is a shallow rounded chopper lump on the monobloc that nestles into a recess machined into the bottom of the receiver to absorb any twisting motion at the time of discharge. It locks up solidly. The machining on the forged receiver is well executed.

The safety hangs from the top strap. It also serves as the barrel selector when in the off position. Right is the under barrel and left is the over barrel and is marked as such. The top lever is checkered on both sides for both left and right-handed shooters. You would be surprised at the number of over and under top



levers that are not checkered on both sides. It is as if there are no southpaws that shoot! A nice feature that shows FN pays attention to detail.

The trunions that the barrels pivot on are a good size and should last a lifetime if kept lubricated. There are two cocking rods that run down each side of the bottom of the receiver that cock the hammers.

The trigger on my demo released at 4.75 pounds for the bottom barrel and 4.687 pounds for the top barrel. On most over and under shotguns I have reviewed, the opposite is true – the second barrel needs slightly more trigger pressure than the first.

SPORTING CLAYS



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There was absolutely no slack before the triggers let off and they required little effort to pull. The blued trigger is adjustable fore and aft about a half inch with the socket head wrench provided. The fit and finish on the receiver is well done for an entry-level shotgun.

BARREL WORK

The barrels on the 101 are machined from bar stock and are as smooth as glass inside and out. The deep black bluing is the best I have seen on a moderately priced shotgun. The barrels are topped off with a low ventilated rib sporting a Truglo front sight and white mid bead. The 10mm rib is cross-grooved and has a 4mm slot machined the full length of the rib. The side rib is solid from the

muzzles to 4 1/4 inches from the monobloc, slightly more than 22 inches in length. Both barrels are ported, sixteen ports on each side of the lower barrel and eleven ports on each side of the top barrel. The ports are a good size and should be easier to clean than on most ported shotguns.

The barrels are over-bored at 0.742 inch, which seems to be the standard bore size on all Browning/Winchester competition shotguns nowadays. The chokes are excellent and some of the best I have seen on an entry-level shotgun. The 101 came equipped with skeet, IC, modified, IM and light full chokes. Other constrictions are available from Browning/Winchester and Briley.

STOCK AND FORE-END

The stock is almost a dead ringer for the stock on the original 101. The dimensions are almost the same too. I got lucky – gun fit was as if it was made for me. The laser checkering is well done and the stock sports a nice grip cap. The stock had some figure to it and has a high gloss polyurethane finish. It is not often that I get a shotgun that has as nice a recoil pad as the one on my demo. It is solid, quite soft and is equipped with a hard insert at the top for ease of mounting. The wood to metal fit is almost perfect.

I like the fore-end configuration. It is large enough to fill the hand and very comfortable to grip. The checkering is commensurate with that on the stock. The fore-end showed quite a bit of figure, more than that on the stock. It is fastened to the barrel with a modified Deeley and Edge style fore-end iron. It fastened solidly to the barrel without the slightest bit of movement side-to-side and fore and aft. The fore-end iron has some nice scroll



THE STOCK IS ALMOST A DEAD RINGER FOR THE STOCK ON THE ORIGINAL 101.

engraving on the latch and the iron that contacts the receiver. All in all, a well executed fore-end. And best of all, it does not have an ugly Schnabel knob on it!

WRAPPED IN NOSTALGIA

At seven pounds ten ounces the 101 is heavy enough to give it inertia and light enough to be swift of movement. Transition to the second target on a true pair was very easy, even on those targets that had a short window and

required a quick change of direction to break the pair. The stock is slightly longer than what I usually shoot, but I had no problem with it. It mounted smoothly and came to shoulder nicely. Recoil with my one ounce sporting clay loads was mild. What else can you say about a gun that you can shoot well right out of the box – except that it is a very good handling gun? Retro look aside, this is a modern shotgun wrapped in nostalgia that anyone would be happy to own. I think it is a winner. ■

WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT A GUN THAT YOU CAN SHOOT WELL RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX – EXCEPT THAT IT IS A VERY GOOD HANDLING GUN? RETRO LOOK ASIDE, THIS IS A MODERN SHOTGUN WRAPPED IN NOSTALGIA THAT ANYONE WOULD BE HAPPY TO OWN. I THINK IT IS A WINNER.



SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURER: FABRIQUE NATIONALE HERSTAL, BELGIUM
IMPORTER: BROWNING ARMS COMPANY MORGAN, UTAH
GUN TYPE: MODIFIED BOSS STYLE BOXLOCK
RECEIVER: CNC MACHINED STEEL FORGING
GUN WEIGHT: 7 LBS 10 OUNCES (WEIGHED)
LENGTH OF PULL: 14 3/8" (MEASURED)
DROP AT COMB: 1 3/8"
DROP AT HEEL: 2 3/8"
OVERALL LENGTH: 48"
BARREL: 30" AS TESTED 28" AND 32" AVAILABLE
RIB: 11MM FLAT VENTED
MID RIB: SOLID 22"
BORE: 0.742/0.742
CHAMBER: 2 3/4"
CHOKES INCLUDED: SKEET 0.005"
IC: 0.011"
MODIFIED: 0.021"
IMP. MODIFIED: 0.027"
LIGHT FULL: 0.032"
TRIGGER: SINGLE SELECTIVE ADJUSTABLE
TRIGGER PULL: BOTTOM BARREL 4.75 LBS
TOP BARREL 4.687 LBS
SAFETY: TOP TANG SELECTIVE