



Test Report

by Nick Harvey

HATSAN ESCORT — THE WORKING MAN'S OVER-UNDER



Highland Sports has turned to Hatsan in Turkey as its source for an over-under at a price and quality level to suit today's budget-minded sportsmen - and it's just too good to ignore.

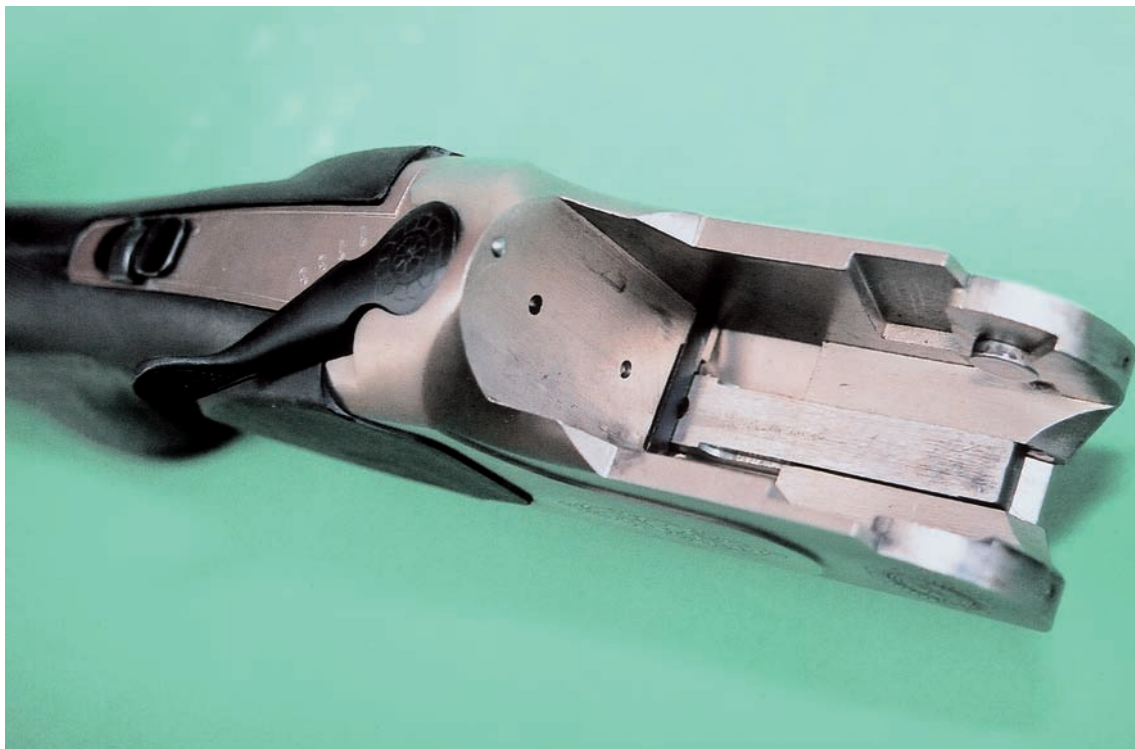
WHAT THE AVERAGE fieldgunner is looking for is a reliable, inexpensive over-under shotgun. The new Hatsan Escort aims to fulfill that need by becoming the working man's stackbarrel for the 21st century.

Why introduce another inexpensive over-under now in this era of recession, particularly since there's plenty of \$1200 "entry-level" over-under on offer? When I put this question to the guys at Highland Sports, they replied: "Obviously, there is a steady market for over-under field guns, and we believe that selling so cheaply, the Hatsan can not only fill that need, but do a lot to swell the numbers of hunters. There will always be a market for a rugged no-frills field gun built rugged enough to withstand the most extreme weather conditions."

The new Hatsan Escort is making its debut in modern guise with a synthetic stock, but unlike many other low-priced guns it is loaded with nearly all the features most bush shooters want, with the single exception of selective ejectors; the Escort has extractors that lift the fired hulls out far enough to be pulled out with the fingers. Those who reload their shotshells will like this feature. On the plus side there's a single-selective trigger, five screw-in choke tubes, slim lines, and a receiver with a touch of decoration. And rather surprisingly, the Hatsan Escort delivers all of these features at a remarkably low price. How can they do it? The simple explanation is: it's made in Turkey.

With a long history of manufacturing shotguns, Hatsan's Escort embodies almost everything the average field shooter perceives as desirable for waterfowling in swamps and rough work on upland game. The lines of the Escort's stock are as racey as an over-under can get and the odd line on the butt actually betrays an adjustable comb. More

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LEFT: Action is a boxlock with Browning-style single underlug which engages slot in bottom of monobloc. This is interrupted by clearance for cocking slide.

BELOW: Barrels are fitted into a steel monobloc which has sides engine turned to retain lubricant. Extractors lift shells out far enough to be removed with the fingers.

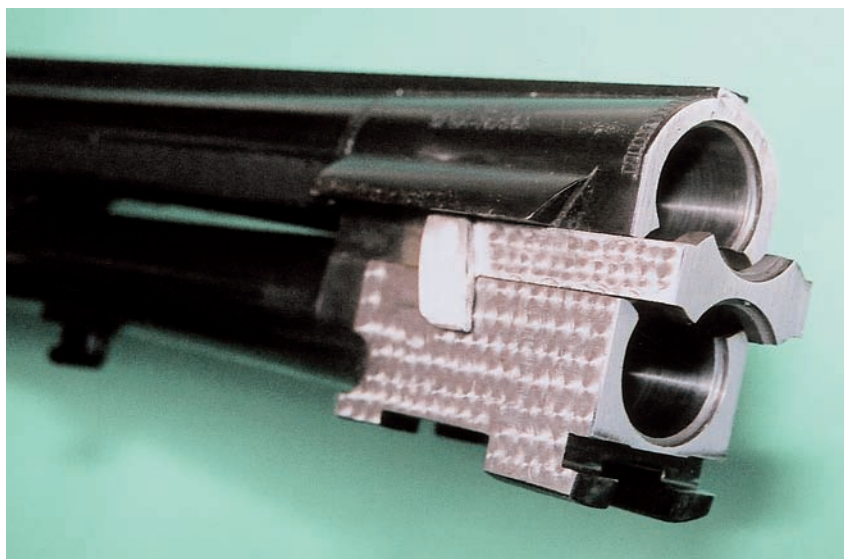
OPPOSITE: Fox ran into a brick wall when he came to fox whistle. The Escort is a rugged all-around field gun that is capable of handling any kind of shotgun sport.

about that later. It has a gracefully curving pistol grip and a forearm with just the slightest hint of a schnabel. In place of molded-in checkering there are inserts of a grey rubbery material with raised dots which furnish a secure grasp for wet hands, as well as affording some contrast to the black stock. Cosmetically, the Escort has a lot to like, if you're the kind of gunner who favours the term "functional."

Naturally, the Escort is a boxlock and the frame is a carbon steel forging with a dull satin chrome-like finish. The sides of the frame are sculptured with a machine cut that flows into the matching contour of the barrel's monobloc, while another line swoops into a scallop on the frame's receiver and resembles a partial false sideplate. The frame, has a limited amount of light scroll engraving on each side as well as the exterior of the trunions. the trigger guard, top lever and forearm metal are blued. The overall effect is pleasing to the eye. An unusual refinement for such a cheap gun; the sides of the monobloc are engine-turned. There's also a gold trigger.

The Escort is a high-framed gun with a bolting system that imitates the underbolting of Browning's Superposed and measures a lofty 68mm to its tallest point. Inside the gun is robust and the barrels are held solidly in the receiver. It is equipped with a Browning-style single underlug that engages a slot in the bottom of the monobloc. The traditional underbite runs completely across the barrel face and there's also a pair of lumps that extend downward to enter cavities in the floor to securely lock the action.

The barrels are swung on a pair of trunions (bifurcated



lumps), round buttonlike appurtenances found on opposing sides of the receiver which fit matching recesses in the front edges of the monobloc. In general, the Hatsan Escort has much in common with a good many other over-unders I've reviewed of late since there are a good many basic similarities in frame style, action bodies and bolting systems, many features being copied from the Browning Superposed.

The single selective trigger is mechanical, with a tang-mounted barrel selector of the Browning type built into

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ABOVE: The comb is adjustable for height. After retaining pin has been removed, comb is slid onto fin at the correct interlocking ridge and groove, and pin replaced.

BELOW RIGHT: Polymer insert screwed to sides of barrels acts as a spacer but also ensures a close fit between forearm and barrels.

the manual (non-automatic) safety for easy selection. The selector button is moved to one side or the other while the safety is in the rearward (safe) position. The lower barrel is fired when the selector button is to the right. When the action closes, the rear face of the barrels press a small button on top of the breech inward which enables the trigger. But while the gun has spring retracted firing pins, it lacks a disconnecter device to prevent operation of the triggers until the action is securely closed and locked.

The two hammers are cocked by a slide that passes along the centreline of the action bottom. This is pressed rearward by an extension of the forearm iron as the barrels are lowered.

The Escort has 710mm barrels with 76mm chambers. The bores and chambers are chrome-plated. The barrels are joined with ventilated side rib and the rearmost space between the barrels is left open for a distance of 105mm. A polymer insert between the barrels and the forearm acts as a spacer and is held to the sides of the barrels with four tiny

screws and nuts. It also serves the purpose of cushioning that portion of the steel barrels where they bear against the plastic forearm, making it a neat, close fit.

The chrome-lined barrels are topped with a low, narrow vent rib which has a width of 7mm from breech to muzzle and is serrated to reduce glare. It is fitted with a brass centre bead and a green TruGlo bead at the muzzle.

Each Hatsan comes with five choke tubes. In ascending order of inside diameter (constriction) these are Cylinder-Skeet, 0.12mm; Improved-Cylinder, 0.25mm; Modified, 0.50mm; Improved- Modified, 0.75mm; and Full, 1.0mm. Pattern percentages at 37 metres are listed as being: 40-53%; 57%; 67%; 73%; and 75% respectively. Hatsan says the Modified, Improved-Cylinder and Skeet tubes are good for steel shot while Full choke is for lead only.

Their constrictions correspond to the number of cuts on the edge of the tube. The more cuts (from one to five) the more open the choke.

Another unexpected refinement on this cheap gun. The Escort's recoil pad contains air voids that are designed to reduce the kick, and although the Turkish pad feels fairly hard these vents work very well. The pad is scalloped into the lines of the buttstock and is accompanied by a 9mm spacer that allows the owner to adjust the length of pull.

The lines of the stock are radical; there's nothing much reminiscent of the classic stackbarrel about this gun. The Escort offers the gunner not only the all-weather advantages of a composite-stocked gun, but an adjustable comb as well. Removing the retaining pin and sliding the separate comb fore or aft along a rib allows the drop at comb to be varied to suit the individual shooter. Both the comb and the rib it slides on have matching ridges and grooves which interlock to control the comb height, and once this has been adjusted to suit the shooter the pin is replaced in its elongated hole to anchor the comb against any fore-and-aft movement. It appears to me that once the gunner has the comb properly positioned to suit his individual build - neck and arm length - it should stay put under the heaviest recoil. It certainly did for me.

The Escort looks unconventional but the gun's overall handling dynamics make lively enough. Better still, there is very little muzzle rise, so you stay on the target (or bird). The trigger has a slight amount of free travel, and is a bit heavy, letting off at 3.6kgs on the first pull and 3.175 on the second barrel.

The Escort was pattern tested with the Winchester Super-X 70mm throwing 32 grams of No. 6 shot at hand-thrown clay targets with the modified and improved-



SPECS

HATSAN ESCORT

MANUFACTURER:	Hatsan Arms Co, Izmir, Turkey
MECHANISM TYPE:	Hinge-action, boxlock, over-under shotgun
GAUGE:	12, 76mm
OVERALL LENGTH:	1130mm
BARREL LENGTH:	710mm Weight: 3.6kgs
TRIGGER:	Single-Selective, 3.6kgs pull lower barrel, 3.175kgs upper
STOCK:	Walnut, hand-finished oil walnut or polymer (tested); length of pull, 352mm; drop at heel 64mm; drop at comb adjustable.
ACCESSORIES:	Five choke tubes, choke tube wrench, buttpad spacer
LIKELY RETAIL PRICE:	\$ 800.00
TRADE ENQUIRIES:	Contact Highland Sports Ltd. Or check their website: www.highlandsports.com.au

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ABOVE: Boxlock action is carbon steel with satin chrome-type finish. Frame sides are sculptured and carry light scroll engraving.

cylinder tubes installed. There were no malfunctions of any kind and the test gun patterned dead on at 25 metres which is appropriate for a field gun. Pellet distribution was even and close with no obvious gaps that a duck might fly through unscathed. The gun's hefty and relatively thick recoil pad dampened recoil considerably so that the gun was quite mild to shoot.

With no furred or feathered game readily available I hid me forth with a fox whistle and a pocket full of Winchester



ABOVE: Pistol grip is gently curved and has grey rubber insert with raised dots. Scalloped recoil pad has air voids to reduce the kick

Supreme XX Magnum loads chambered in the Escort. This load which throws 36 grams of BBs at 1275 fps stopped three foxes dead in their tracks from 30 metres as if they'd run into a brick wall.

In terms of an entry level gun the Hatsan Escort is obviously aimed at the lower end of the market. Waterfowlers and upland hunters working on a tight budget want a rugged gun, but one that's reasonably technically advanced. If they are willing to forego selective ejectors and accept an extractor gun, they now have it in the Hatsan Escort. ■

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This model was designed for silent stalking in low to medium rolling bush land in NZ and Australia. Meindl supplied samples of this boot for renowned hunters to trial in conditions Downunder. Lukas Meindl himself also hunted in our conditions recently and the Torup is the product of experimentation in real conditions.

With 100% waterproof Gore-tex lining and fully orthotic shank this would have to be the most comfortable, light weight and supportive stalking boot developed.

Make: **Meindl**

Model: **TORUP MFS**

Sizes: **6-12**

Weight: **650g (size 8)**

Lining: **Gore-Tex**



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