



A longer stock places the eye further back along the stock

top rib, the gun barrels are pointing where you are looking. If you can see a little bit of the rib sloping up and away from you, your eye is slightly higher and you will line up the muzzle end of the gun slightly higher and therefore throw the shot pattern slightly higher. Most shooters have their guns set up within the boundaries of these two sight pictures.

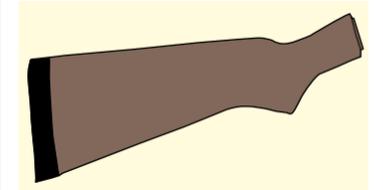
An important but rather second-order measurement is the length of the stock. A short stock means your eye is slightly higher when you place your cheek on the stock. And the centre of gravity of the gun is closer to your body. A longer stock means your eye is placed further down the ramp of the stock, when your cheek is in position. The gun's weight is further away from your body.

### Big money and stocks

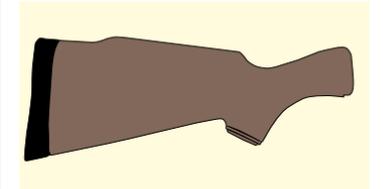
Shooting going away targets, both live pigeons and clays started to become very popular at the end of the 1900s and significant prizes were offered in many European countries at international competitions. This so-called trap shooting is a very specific discipline, with targets rising away from the shooter.

Precision and accurate repetition are important and the technique required that the shooter's eyes were as horizontal as possible so the shot could be accurately

### Stocks compared



A traditional straight comb, designed to support the user's cheek.



The Monte Carlo stock runs parallel to the top rib to aid sighting.

placed on a rising target, travelling at varying going-away angles and heights. It became the fashion to use gun stocks that elevated the shooter's right cheek on the comb of the stock (for a right-hander) to make the head horizontal, but also to offer more of the top rib in sight, making the shot placement higher, to hit the rising target.

Very frequently the comb of the stock was also made exactly parallel to the top rib of the gun, so that with a consistent mount to the cheek of the shooter, the gun would always place a rising shot in a reproducible place.

Thus there was no ramp on the comb of this so-called Monte Carlo stock. The Monte Carlo can be made to place the eye higher than on a sporting or skeet gun, but not dramatically high. Stocks of this type are still used on guns today for clay competitions in the trap disciplines.

### The new clients

I had a delightful but challenging couple >>



It became fashionable to use stocks that elevate the right cheek on the comb

# High stakes of Monte Carlo

Despite some expensive guns, all was not well with a father and son's shooting, as **Malcolm Plant** explains

I had an interesting phone call recently. Father and son, both with years of shooting clays and game behind them, wanted to come for a chat and some diagnostic shots at clays.

The younger enquirer said that he had a left dominant eye but was right-handed. He had decided to shoot left-handed, rather than close his left eye and shoot right-handed. A bit of a challenge, I said, but it was reported to be coming along reasonably well.

Do you shoot an over-and-under or side-by-side? "I can't get along with an over-and-under, so I shoot an English boxlock side-by-side with a Monte Carlo stock, which I have had specially made and fitted... Quite expensive really.

"We have done some pattern-plate work using a home-made plate on our farm.

"The gun is shooting high to the right."

Wow, I thought, who had been advising these folks who are coming to see me.

I didn't ask. It's an old problem for a coach: "Who sold you this, then?"

We fixed a date and I asked father and son to bring any guns that they wanted checking for fit.

### Stock design

Many different designs of gun stock have appeared over the last 150 years, but preferences have distilled down to two basic set-ups. The most popular for game and clay shooting is the traditional gently sloping stock. The key measurement is the height of the user's eye in relation to the top rib of the gun; if your line of sight is just grazing the



A Monte Carlo comb (top) and a standard straight comb



### The key measurement is the height of the user's eye relative to the gun's top rib

of hours with the aforementioned father and son and I looked at some expensive 'artillery'. The English boxlock side-by-side was in very nice condition but the expensive Monte Carlo stock placed the shooter's eye over an inch above the rib of the gun and displaced the eye sideways to look down the right-hand barrel.

We established why the gun was shooting high and to the right but I expected that the vertical error in shot placement would be very significant on a 40-yard crossing target. And that was the test I used later to convince my guests.

The son's eye dominance was not clear-cut. He had reported being right-handed and left-eye dominant, but an initial finger-pointing test indicated that neither eye was strongly dominant. In practice he could have

shot right-handed with the left eye closed or left-handed with the right eye closed. But we had enough challenges to get the gun-fit right and to reinstate his confidence in basic shooting technique, so we agreed he stayed left-handed and close the right eye for the moment. We could work on handedness at a later date.

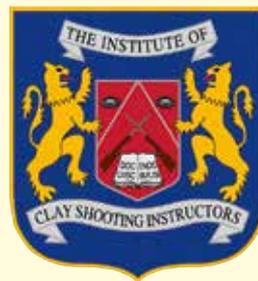
Dad had brought an 'off the shelf' over-and-under with adjustable comb. He had adjusted the fit very well and the gun was shooting exactly where he was looking. On the 40-yard crossers, from both left to right and right to left, he was consistently demolishing the targets. He proved to be a very competent shot.

He thought that 'maintained lead' was his (their) preferred technique, when you mount

**“The Monte Carlo stock placed the shooter's eye over an inch above the rib of the gun”**

**Dr Malcolm Plant is chairman of the Institute of Clay Shooting Instructors and a Clay Pigeon Shooting Association senior coach.**

The Institute of Clay Shooting Instructors was formed in the 1980s to provide qualified coaches with opportunities for further professional development, by the provision of seminars, workshops, practical activities and educational visits. ICSI coaches can be found at [www.ICSI.org.uk](http://www.ICSI.org.uk)



onto the lead picture in the sky without ever making direct gun to clay contact. In fact his technique was floating between 'maintained lead' and 'point at the target and pull ahead', which for game shooting is by far the most reliable and reproducible. After half an hour of practice he was more than convinced. Not a clay escaped with 'pull ahead'.

Dad also had a top of the range Italian gun with a Monte Carlo that I could see was far to high for game shooting, so I didn't ask!

### Monte Carlo revelation

The son's side-by-side was shooting way over the top at 40 yards. Shot after shot was too high. The usual remedy on a correctly fitted gun is 'keep your head on the stock and put a bit more weight on your front foot'. The only remedy for the Monte Carlo was shoot underneath, which I suspected had been happening inconsistently. No wonder his confidence had been blown.

We got to "Wow, I have to shoot that much underneath" after a few shots. Father and son were convinced the Monte Carlo comb needed to be lowered.

As I explained, it is challenging enough to provide forward allowance or 'lead' in one dimension, but to consistently do it in two dimensions, in front and underneath, is asking your brain to do some pretty serious calculations in a fraction of a second.

The Monte Carlo stock is going to be converted to a fully adjustable comb. We can then build confidence and reproducible technique. Right-handed, left-handed? Who knows? ■