**Custom Stocks.**

Of all the various shotgun shooting disciplines, gear, techniques, guns and configurations, there is one common theme for shooters - they would rather hit more targets than not. This goes for the casual shooter of a case of shells a year or those who shoot several cases a week.

How each person fulfills that goal is multi faceted. While some shooters are naturals, having hand eye coordination that does not require methodical assistance, most of us struggle with getting the body aligned with what the brain wants it to do. When we watch a bird, the brain analyzes speed, angle, size and distance in a wink of an eye. It forms a model of fire control that includes lateral and vertical lead to put the shot string in a converging path with the target. It does all this naturally, regardless if we have a gun in our hands or not. The trick to shooting those targets is getting the gun in such a position and release the shot to capitalize on this natural phenomena unique to binocular predators like us.

To solve this tricky part, engaging a coach is a good start. Coaches can take an objective view of how you set up for the shot, mount the gun and when you pull the trigger. It does not matter which method of shooting you decide to use; sustained lead, pull away, pull through or any of the instinctive styles, because that is secondary, and even contingent on proper gun fit.

With shotgun shooting, your master eye is the gun's rear sight, so it needs to be placed in the exact same point for each and every shot. To some, this can actually be done with any gun once muscle memory has been established for consistent breaks. It does not even require placing their cheek on the gun at all (trick shooters). But if we are looking for consistency for all types of targets, we need to establish the optimal position for your cheek/eye for every gun mount. You may even be able to shoot instinctively without ever consciously looking down the rib, seeing the bead, or the gun at all for that matter, because your eye no longer requires assessing the gun's relationship to the target. The brain knows the gun is in that perfect spot and is then free to assess the target without distraction.

There are several methods to achieve this cheek/eye/gun relationship. Pad kits can be placed in various thicknesses on most any gun. Adjustable stocks serve the same purpose, but if you want to give your brain the best opportunity to break every target it assesses, you will need to consider a custom stock.

A good stock fitter/maker will assess your shooting style, measure nearly every aspect of gun fit to get your eye in that perfect position just like a dovetail does for a rear rifle sight. Length of pull, cast, grip, cant etc. are all taken into account. Some stock makers will build a 'try stock' for you that can then be fine tuned before they build a final stock from a blank you have chosen.

Is a custom stock worth the effort and cost? If you are only shooting a case of shells a year, then probably not, but if you want to do the best you can with those shells, then perhaps it is. For those who are shooting many cases a year, have a clear idea of how to self correct poor shots (shooting more does not necessarily equate to shooting better) or have engaged a coach, then a custom stock is far more justifiable than nearly every other long term financial consideration you will make in the sport.