Krieghoff K20
Gun Test
At Last
Practical Patterning
One-Eyed Target Shooting
Never trust a man who shows up at the range with a shotgun that sells for five times the going rate for his pickup truck. It can only lead to trouble.

by Dave Holmes
I have an old pickup. The other day when I showed up at the range most of the folks there seemed happy and well-adjusted. They were all a little slack-jawed and glassy-eyed when I left. Hard to believe what happens when you let some folks shoot your gun.

I was only trying to be neighborly. I didn’t lie to them when they asked where I got the gun, even though I thought it was kind of a dumb question. If I could afford such a gun, I would be driving a newer truck. If I’d stolen it, I wouldn’t be showing it off in the daylight (it ain’t like anybody would forget seeing it). I told ‘em my mother, Mrs. Krieghoff, sent me an early birthday present. Okay, I didn’t tell ‘em I had to send it back. It won’t hurt ‘em to wonder. I’ll bet they all send back a present or two.

Let me preface this by saying I base most of my opinion of a gun on how it handles. I don’t get taken in by “pretty.” Pretty is as pretty does. If a gun feels like a shooter, I don’t worry about the looks. If the gun doesn’t feel like a shooter, I don’t worry about the looks. If the gun is a shooter and pretty to look at, life is just peachy. A shotgun that doesn’t handle well is a waste of walnut, steel and time, in my opinion, a monument to what could have been. Giving credit where credit is due, most of the guys at the range that day were of the same ilk. The Super Scroll K20 is a good-catcher, but the guys were reasonably apathetic in their approach to it.

I wanted some opinions other than my own, so I arm-twisted just a little bit to get some guys to try it (yeah, right). Shooting opportunities are not extremely plentiful up here in the north woods this time of year. The sporting ranges have shut down, and five-stand and skeet are the only games in town. It had been snowing for two weeks prior to the gun’s arrival on a Tuesday. But I got lucky. One of the clubs shoots on Wednesday, so I knew I wouldn’t have to wait or throw my own targets. The temperature had crawled up near 40. Even more incredible, the sun was supposed to shine all day! When I took the gun out of the case and assembled it, I found the balance point was just in front of the hinge pin — my kind of gun. If I had only bought a lottery ticket!

The Super Scroll K20 came as a three-barrel set, all 30”. Per Krieghoff’s standard practice, the gun and barrels were housed in an American case. If you are wondering, the shipping weight was 38 pounds. The K20 is immediately identifiable as the K60’s sibling. You might consider it a K60 that got left in a hot drier a bit too long, which is a good thing in this instance. K80s are noted for being stout workhorses, capable of digesting tens of thousands of rounds with nary a whimper. They are noted for their quality workmanship. The K20 is downsized just enough to toe up to that “good-looking” line. Maybe it isn’t quite as swelle as a Boss-action gun, but I can’t imagine anyone being embarrassed taking this girl to the prom. It isn’t, however, a wispy 20-gauge field gun by any stretch of the imagination. My impression was of a very solid-feeling, well-balanced target gun that happened to be a 20 instead of a 12.

If any weight critique comes to your mind, remember Krieghoff didn’t design the gun for quail hunting. This 20 is for high-volume shooters — doves where there are more birds than you know what to do with, and skeet where its qualities will be much appreciated.

Sporting with a 20? Most 20-gauge guns are a bit light for sporting, but I wouldn’t hesitate to take this one to a shoot. One-once 20-gauge loads are available for those who think they need the extra pellets, but I shoot ¼-ounce loads in my 12 on a regular basis and don’t think I’ve missed one target because of the weight of the shot load. My favorite 20-gauge shell has been the B&P F2 at 1,290 f.p.s. They really smack targets. I had the opportunity to try Winchester’s AA Super Sport 20s in the K-gun — ¼-ounce of shot at 1,275 f.p.s. — and they broke targets with the same authority as the F2s.

By way of explanation, let me say when I break clays I like to see pieces of the target being driven through the air, as in “smacked hard and easy to tell it.” It’s good for my fragile ego. The Super Sports did that in fine style. I loaded an F2 in one barrel and the AA in the other, and I couldn’t see any difference in the quality of the breaks. They were gratifying and satisfying.

I know no serious competitor would give up his 12, but for the rest of us, I can’t see any real disadvantage in shooting a 20 gauge that weighs, moves and handles like the K20, especially when there are readily available shells with the punch of the AA Super Sports and B&P F2s. Frankly, there are very few targets where ¼-ounce might be a perceived handicap (i.e., the really long stuff where most shooters don’t score well with ½-ounce loads in a 12 either). I can only think of one target in the last two registered shoots I have been to when I might have been a little queasy with the 20. I can also tell you I have shot targets that far out with ¼-ounce loads in a 12 and not thought anything of it. I dropped one of the four targets with 1-ounce loads. Not even ½-ounce loads would have hit the one I missed, and I’ll bet a good ¼-ounce load would have broken the three I did hit. If I was told I had to shoot the K20 this next shooting season and I had a pile of the AA Super Sports or B&P F2s to do it with, I would have a big, toothy grin on my face and a soul full of anticipation.

Winchester is also adding 28-gauge Super Sports ¼-ounce loads at 1,300 f.p.s. and 140 ¼-ounce loads at 1,300 f.p.s. to their line. The 28s and .410s weren’t available for testing, but I like the sound of target loads in all three small gauges of matching speeds. Combine that with a gun that gives the shooter the ability to shoot all three in a platform that feels like a target gun, and the stage is well set for consistent performance on the small-gauge ranges.
The K20 stock retains the K80 double palm swell. The wrist measured 5¼" in circumference at the back of the tang. By way of comparison, a Beretta 682 Super Sport stock that happened to be at my house was 5¼" in circumference at the same point. The double palm swell has a bit of a unique feel but offers excellent support to the back hand. I found the comb nose a bit too far forward for my taste. I suspect it would be moved back ½" to better accommodate my hands and even larger ones. The finish is described by Krieghoff as “satin epoxy.” My gun had a Pachmayr SC100 recoil pad bringing up the rear.

The K20 has the #3 Sporting/International Skeet Monte Carlo stock. Listed dimensions are 1¼" x 2¼" x 1¼" x ½". Also available is the #9 Skeet/Field stock at ½" x 2½" x 1¼". You can have your choice of forearms: Schnabel, Schnabel or Schnabel. I chose the Schnabel. I found it quite pleasantly shaped, with sufficient radius on the bottom to make it feel comfortable in my hand.

The barrels were indeed 30", with 3" chambers, tapered flat ribs (11-7.5mm rib on the 20 gauge and 10-5.7mm on the 28 and .410 sets). The rib is adorned with silver mid-beads and white front beads. Bore diameters were 0.617, 0.542 and 0.400, respectively. The barrels are joined in typical Krieghoff fashion with interchangeable front hangers and no side ribs. The K20 measures 2.4" at the hinge pin, barrels included. The receiver, sans barrels, is 1.5" top to bottom on the sides and 2.325" over the sliding top cover. The receiver is ½" shy of 1½".

I finally got my “You paid how much for those!?” digital scales and was able to get the K20 weighed within 0.1-ounce, according to the label. I wasn’t surprised at the results. The 20 gauge came in at 7 pounds, 15.6 ounces, the 28 at 7 pounds, 11 ounces and the .410 at 8 pounds, ½-ounce. The receiver makes up 3 pounds, 13.8 ounces of the listed weights. My three-gauge set was “put together” from on-hand barrel sets. That accounts for the difference in the 28-gauge weight. New sets will be quite closely matched.

You may feel this is too heavy for the small-gauge guns, but there are lots of guys shooting long and short tube sets in 12-gauge guns that weigh significantly more. An 8-pound 20 gauge isn’t a freak of nature on any clays course and, in fact, would be a help in keeping up with the tubed 12-gauge guns which seem to dominate small-gauge sporting events. This gun has the dynamics to shoot casual trap, also there would be no need to have a 12-gauge gun to shoot skeet with the K20 around. A loaded 20 gauge with a balance point about ½" off the front edge of the trunion moves wonderfully for me in the negative or suggestive mode centered around the aesthetics, but then it is a Krieghoff and they have generated passion in both directions for many, many years. One of the judges, a small-gauge lover who shot the gun extensively, suggested a case-colored frame with an oil-finished rib. That combo, I agree, could be very interesting.

Would I buy one? Well, I’m still driving that old pickup. Krieghoff didn’t intend for the gun to take any market share from the $1,500-$2,000 guns. It costs what it costs: $8,150 for the standard K20, $2,600 more for Super Scroll engraving and a wood upgrade and $3,575 for extra small-gauge barrel sets. Price rationalization is an exercise in futility. Those actually contemplating the purchase have to figure out whether they think the gun is worth the price. I’ll just hope someone I know buys one so I can enjoy the opportunity to shoot it occasionally. I certainly don’t think Krieghoff will have any K20s stacked at three gun clubs. Everyone who shot it had nothing but good things to say about how it handled and shot. All comments in the negative or suggestive mode centered around the aesthetics, but then it is a Krieghoff and they have generated passion in both directions for many, many years. One of the judges, a small-gauge lover who shot the gun extensively, suggested a case-colored frame with an oil-finished rib. That combo, I agree, could be very interesting.
up in their warehouse looking for a home.

I have a dozen guys up here in the north woods wanting to know if they can be sponsored by Krieghoff. They can’t reach a consensus on which beer to drink, but they all liked the K20. On a handling scale, I would have to give it a 9 out of 10. On an aesthetics scale, place it wherever you would rank the K80, since it shares the lines, looks and engraving patterns. If you shoot one, you’ll end up, in the words of the old B.J. Thomas song, “hooked on a feeling.” And what a sweet feeling it is!