

Euro Combo

MIXED-GAME SHOTGUN/RIFLE COMBINATIONS
GIVE HUNTERS THE EDGE.

By KEVIN E. STEELE

With overlapping seasons, you never know what might walk by your treestand. Who was it that said, "Be prepared"?





BRNO 802 COMBO

Last spring, my home turf of California's Central Coast was the scene for the filming of an episode for "Petersen's Hunting Adventures." The plan was a California combo hunt for spring turkey and wild hog. Joining me on the show was CZ's Jason Morton. After his arrival at the ranch that would serve as our base camp, we stowed his gear in the bunk house and then went out to the range to sight-in our guns. What I didn't know was that he had a surprise in store for me.

In addition to the CZ 550 American bolt-action rifle in .270 Winchester that we were planning to use on the feral hogs, Jason slipped a sleek over-under combo gun from the second gun sleeve. It was a CZ-Brno Model 802 with a three-inch, 12-gauge barrel on top and a .243 Winchester barrel below. A Weaver-base rail was secured atop the chamber end of the barrels, and fitted to it was a new Leupold 1x14mm Prismatic Sight.

This type of firearm has been a favorite among European hunters for more than a century. Called a *Buchsflinten* in German, or "shotgun-rifle," these guns will be found in many *hocksitzen* (elevated stands) and on driven hunts.

The concept behind the combo gun is quite simple. If fowl, small predators like fox or perhaps a roe deer appears at close range, the hunter can choose to use the shotgun barrel loaded with either shot or slug. For longer shots, or should larger game such as red stag or wild boar present itself, the rifle barrel is employed. In this way, the hunter has the perfect gun for the shot at hand.

Combo guns are ideal for close-range hunting here in the States as well. On a hunt like ours for turkey

and hogs, it would be most appropriate, as the shotgun barrel could be used on the turkeys in the morning and the rifle barrel on hogs later in the afternoon. A combo gun would be a perfect choice for the predator hunter as well. Rather than carrying two guns—a shotgun for close work and the rifle for longer-range use—the

combo gun gives you both options ready at hand in a single firearm. Likewise, many whitetail hunters would also benefit from the versatility of the combo gun.

The CZ-Brno 802 Combo is quick and handy. Measuring just 41 inches from muzzles to butt, it features 23½-inch barrels and tips the scales at just seven pounds. The gun's metalwork is nicely finished and blued, and the butt and fore-end stocks are nicely figured walnut with hand-cut checkering. The buttstock also features a stylish, sculpted cheekpiece and a black rubber recoil pad. Sling swivels are fitted to the underside of the buttstock and to the bottom rifle barrel via a barrelband, in



Spalling targets are a great aid in determining exactly where your shotgun is patterning.

LIKE ALL CZ RIFLES, THE 802 IS EQUIPPED WITH A SINGLE-SET TRIGGER AS STANDARD EQUIPMENT.



Europeans, many restricted to the number of firearms they can own, have long valued combo guns.



Top for chukar, bottom for blacktail. The single extractor services both chambers.

the European tradition.

A square-notch iron sight is mounted to a quarter rib and teamed to a square front blade. The top shotgun barrel is drilled and tapped to accept a Weaver-style base rail for mounting either a scope or dot sight.

At the range, we zeroed both shotgun and rifle barrels. The CZ 802 is a double-trigger gun, which gives the shooter the instant option to select between its smoothbore or rifled barrel. Like all CZ rifles, the 802 is equipped with a single-set trigger as standard equipment. The front

trigger controls the rifle barrel. By pushing it forward you set the trigger at an extremely light pull weight, which is adjustable down to several ounces. Pulling the trigger to the rear in the regular manner without setting it will release the sear at about 3½ pounds of pressure. The rear trigger controls the shotgun barrel. It has a bit of takeup, but otherwise its weight of pull is not objectionable.

When zeroing the rifle barrel, our goal was to have the shotgun pattern at 25 yards match the zero of the rifle barrel at 50 yards. We were able

to accomplish this with the Leupold Prismatic sight. With the sight zeroed to produce a respectable pattern on the turkey target at 25 yards, we found that the rifle barrel would print about 1½ inches high at 50 yards. That enabled us to use both the shotgun and the rifle at their respected optimum ranges with the same sight picture without having to make adjustments to the Prismatic sight or use a high degree of Kentucky windage.

At 25 yards, the 802 printed a nice kill pattern with the shotgun barrel, with 16 #6 pellets impacting the head

and neck area of our turkey target. The rifle barrel performed better than I had initially expected. Shooting Federal Premium 85-grain Triple Shocks, my first two shots struck within a phenomenal quarter-inch of each other, cutting two holes with touching edges. Unfortunately, I pulled the third shot to the right, which opened up the three-shot group to two inches. That's accuracy you can take to the bank.

If I were to level any criticism at all upon the CZ-Brno 802, it is that at the present time the muzzle of the shotgun barrel is not threaded to accept interchangeable choke tubes. Right now, the 802 comes with a single constriction option: improved-modified. While improved-modified is not a bad choice for a single, all-around fixed choke, it is less than ideal for turkey hunting. Interchangeable choke tubes would only improve this gun for use by those who elect to pursue turkey using an extra full constriction, at one end of the scale, to those who would prefer more open patterns for use at shorter distances.

Our hunt took place in April, and normal weather should have given us balmy temperatures. Unfortunately, a cold front had moved down the coast from Alaska, and the next morning the thermometer registered 28 degrees when we exited the truck in the pre-dawn darkness on our way to our first set-up.

We were hunting with my friend and neighbor Jaime Smith, who with his wife, Holly, operates Wild Country Hunting Club (805/610-1719). Jaime's territory consists of leases on six or



This was a successful turkey hunt, but it could just as well have ended with a feral hog headed to the dinner table.

eight local ranches in the Santa Lucia foothills, which run between Paso Robles and King City.

Our first go at the area's Rio Grande turkeys was in a canyon just below Jaime's house. A seasonal creek flows through the bottom, and ancient live oaks line its bank. These trees are preferred roosting sites for the turkeys. A week before our hunt, Jaime and I had selected a spot about 100 yards from an active roost tree. A natural blind was built to conceal Jaime, myself, Jason and our cameraman, Conrad, and we really thought we had things wired.

In the dark we crept quietly into our blind without incident or notice from the sleeping birds. As dawn broke, the woods were still, and not a sound

could be heard but our breathing. We waited patiently for the birds to begin sounding off, and about 15 minutes later a hen began to cluck, which set off a symphony of other hens and gobblers.

We glanced at each other and gave the universal thumbs-up signal as Jaime began to gently cluck on his box call. Immediately, several gobblers answered. Jaime clucked a little louder, and the toms responded in kind. I tensed up behind the gun, and my eyes and ears were tuned for the sight and sound of birds leaving the roost and plummeting to the ground.

Here they come, I thought when I heard the birds hitting the deck. The light was just right for both a shot and the camera, and I was ready to

WITHIN MINUTES TWO TOMS WERE MOVING UP BEHIND THE FENCE AND INTO VIEW.

draw down on a big old tom. The birds began moving closer, and I knew that within seconds they would move into view.

Right then is when I heard the seductive calls of another group of hens beyond our roost tree and in the opposite direction from our blind. Believe me, we tried every trick in the book that Jaime and I knew, and all our efforts were in vain. Those turkeys joined the insistent interlopers, and we never did get a chance for a shot in our "sure bet" blind.

The next morning found us on another neighbor's property. We set up on a small rise under the oaks. To our front, about 25 yards away, was a barbed-wire fence line. Beyond the fence, the ground sloped down into a draw that was chock full of roost trees. Repeating our performance from the day before, we waited until the roosting birds sounded off and then gently began our calling. What sounded like three or four toms responded with gusto, and soon we had them moving in our direction.

Within minutes two toms were moving up behind the fence and into view. These boys were hot to trot, moving fast and coming to a stop as they reached the fence. I had a perfect shot on one of the pair, but I had to shift position slightly to make it work. When I did, that darn gobbler immediately spied my movement. Putting in agitation and alarm, he backed off and swiftly made tracks back the way he had come, drawing his wingman with him.

Just when I thought the jig was up, I noticed movement to my right. A third tom had moved into view and was quickly going to take advantage of the first pair's unwillingness to commit to what this bird thought was a couple of hot hens.

The longbeard dipped his head down for a moment into the tall grass,

and I took this opportunity to shift my position and raise the 802 to my shoulder. As soon as he lifted his head, I centered him in the Leupold Prismatic's ring and crosshair reticle and squeezed the trigger. The resultant charge of shot immediately flattened him, and he was down for the count.

Later that morning we headed off to another ranch down along the Nacimiento River. Following several false starts, we heard a gobble from a long way away. We began hiking to the call, and several small ridges later we judged ourselves to be a couple hundred yards away from what we believed were a tom and a couple of hens. We quickly set up and began tickling our box calls.

This time it was Jason's turn to shoot. Jamie and I called softly, and the birds returned the calls. Ever so slowly, they continued to move in our direction. Finally, after what seemed a very long time but was more like 20 minutes, we knew the birds were just out of sight. On high alert now, Jaime and I hunkered down with our heads

pulled between our shoulders...not a muscle moving.

Just then, a hen came into view down the slope, followed by a big tom and another hen. All three were unconcerned as they slowly pecked their way along the ground. I cocked one eye and saw Jason tense up. As the tom moved behind the trunk of a big oak, Jason ever so slowly raised the combo gun's buttstock to his shoulder. When the tom emerged from the other side of the tree Jason punched his ticket.

As things turned out, we were not able to nail a hog on that hunt with the 802 Combo, but I know that in the future the opportunity will present itself. If you like the idea of having both a shotgun and a rifle in one package, then the CZ-Brno Model 802 is worth checking out. With its 12-gauge shotgun barrel over your choice of .243 Winchester, .308 Winchester or .30-'06 rifle chamberings, it's a well-made and versatile hunting arm that just might give you that little extra advantage you've been searching for. 🍗



Waddling their wattles and strutting their snoods, two members of *M. gallopavo* venture across open ground. A load of Federal #1 heavy steel would be fine, but what if a snort of hogs burst from the treeline? Having a Fusion .243 in the lower barrel might be just the ticket.