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The Hunting & Shooting Buyers' Guide

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ATI

ACCESSORIES

BY MASSAD AYOOB



A Rock River Arms AR-15 equipped with some of the latest offerings from ATI, including their 8-Sided Aluminum Forend and Strikeforce Stock Package.

ADVANCED Technology International—ATI for short—has become one of our most useful suppliers of firearms accessories. Their focus is long guns, both the tactical side and the hunting side.

I recently got some face time with John Chvala of ATI, and that gave me some insight into the innovative way the company collectively thinks. Among other new items for 2012 was a attachment system for spare shells on shotguns. It allows the shooter latitude as to shell placement, and how many of same the shooter wants to put on the gun. With the carriers being a series of individual containers, the shooter can position each shell exactly where he or she is most comfortable reaching. Ergonomics in this business is all about the shooter's interface with the firearm, and this approach simply makes more sense than a set-up where the manufacturer says, "We say the accessory goes here, and if that doesn't suit your preference or range of movement, well, you'll just have to adapt."

Let's look at some of the products that have earned ATI its solid, and growing, reputation.

STOCKS

AT THE RISK OF A PUN, stocks are the stock-in-trade of ATI. Gunstocks, that is. It is here that I have the most experience with their products. More of my work involves training than anything else, and with any firearm, gun fit is critical. Teaching someone to shoot a rifle or shotgun effectively when the stock doesn't fit them is like trying to teach someone how to drive in a car in which the seats are adjusted for someone with much longer or shorter limbs. In either case, the interface between user and machine is compromised, and the user will never reach his or her potential skill level with the misfitted machine.

Let's look at shotguns first. The recoil of the ubiquitous 12 gauge is famously violent with full power loads, and all the more so with the 3-inch and 3.5-inch Magnum shells that have become so much more popular with the coming of the steel shot requirement for waterfowl hunting. Too long a stock forces the shooter to cantilever his shoulder back to hold the shotgun on target. When the recoil hits, since the shooter's weight is not "into" the gun, the muzzle cantilevers sharply upward. This does a couple of undesirable things. First, the comb of the stock is driven painfully



Mossberg 500 shotguns wearing an ATI Talon Tactical Shotgun Stock (top) and Talon Pistol Grip. Both shotguns are also equipped with ATI's Talon 5-Sided Aluminum Forend which is highly customizable with the addition of various length Picatinny rail strips.

upward into the shooter's cheekbone. Second, the muzzle rises far more than it needs to. Both of these things greatly slow the shooter's ability to get the gun back on target for a follow-up shot. These effects also reduce the shooter's ability to see the target and determine whether or not it has been hit.

Even the gun that fit the owner when he tried it in shirtsleeves in the gun shop can become too long when that owner is out hunting in cold weather that requires thick clothing. The garment material now pads up between shoulder and shotgun butt, and suddenly the stock is "too long" again.

All of this is simply and effectively solved with a shotgun stock that is adjustable for length, in turn adjusting the critical dimension shotgunners call "length of pull." And ATI offers such stocks in abundance.

Remember that painful impact into the cheek when a 3.5-inch Magnum 12-gauge shell sends two ounces of buckshot downrange at a velocity around 1,500 feet per second? ATI offers cushioned combs which greatly cushion that impact. Adjustability is available in this dimension also, resulting in a much more natural and repeatable alignment of eye to front bead when the gun is reflexively thrown to the shoulder and shooting must commence instantly.

My many students who've used ATI-stocked shotguns at my classes have all done well with them, and are walking advertisements for the product. Indeed, I don't recall hearing a single complaint about an ATI-stocked shotgun at any of my classes.

My friends and colleagues, Marty and Gila Hayes, can bear witness to this. They teach full time at their Firearms Academy of Seattle, and of the loaner guns they keep on hand, they make a point of having some ATI-stocked shotguns available. They tell me that this allows them to expeditiously fit the guns to the students, greatly enhancing both student comfort and learning curve, two factors which tend to go together well.

Both also have ATI stocks on some of their own favorite shotguns, and there's a lesson there as well. Marty is a bear of a man, at least six-feet-three and about 250 pounds. His wife Gila is average height for a female, and of delicate bone structure and slender build. That's not the body shape we associate with rapid-fire control of very powerful shoulder weapons, yet Gila has been to Alaska to teach game wardens how to accurately



With a high level of adjustability and recoil absorption, the Talon buttstocks make shooting 3-inch Magnum buckshot loads much more pleasant for shooters of any stature. Shown here are Olympians Tracy and Lanny Barnes who are sponsored by ATI.



Above: Tracy and Lanny Barnes taking full control of a pair of Saiga 12-gauge shotguns, thanks in part to the controlability afforded by the ATI components.

Below: A Saiga 12-gauge shotgun—which has had the trigger assembly moved forward—equipped with the ATI Strikeforce Elite Stock Package.



ATI's John Chvala, right, shows the author one of the company's latest shotgun accessories.



and rapidly plant 12-gauge rifled slugs into charging bears. She has been known to win tactical shotgun matches, shooting rifled slugs from her 12-gauge Remington 870 against male SWAT cops who look as if they just stepped out of an advertisement for Gold's Gym. This lady knows her shotguns . . . and she swears by ATI stocks. Because of their height difference, no one conventionally-stocked shotgun would fit both Marty and Gila. The adjustability of the ATI product, however, makes that possible.

SUPER SURP STUFF

IN MY YOUNGER DAYS, when sporterized military surplus bolt actions were the hot ticket, companies like Fajen ruled the market with fancy walnut sporter stocks. Today's mil-surp runs more to the SKS type of gun. ATI has lots of useful stocks for those, particularly if you have one of the Chinese variations stocked way too short for the average American male.

Personally, I think the coolest mil-surp item in the ATI catalog is their item MSS1500, a synthetic replacement stock for the K98 Mauser bolt-action rifle. It has a built-in Weaver scope rail that should accommodate a forward-mounted Scout Scope as well as a conventionally mounted telescopic sight. With a "spaced" recoil pad, it looks stunningly like the stock of the modernistic Steyr Scout Rifle.

UNEXPECTED ACCESSORIES

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, the break-open, single-barrel shotgun was a staple of American farms and ranches, for both predator control and hunting. Those guns are still

out there, and are now available with center-fire rifle barrels as well, in brands such as Harrington & Richardson, New England Firearms and Rossi. Because of their low, entry-level pricing, they're quite popular.

I would have thought that low-priced guns wouldn't provide much of a market for accessories, but I would have been wrong. ATI sells a lot of their accessories for single-shot H&R, NEF and Rossi rifles and shotguns. All the other ATI stock attributes are there, and the extra shell carriers ATI makes for these single shots are particularly welcome for obvious reasons.

BOTTOM LINE

ATI HAS TAKEN a classic approach to their product line. These guys are shooters, not bean counters. They look at how people shoot guns for best performance—at a recent seminar, they brought in a pair of Olympic biathlon competitors—and they look at where popular firearms are deficient in those respects. Then, they simply engineer replacement products expressly designed to work better. They make them to work: sturdy and ergonomic.

Like their products, ATI's business model works, and has made the company a lot of friends in the shooting community. If you haven't looked at their stuff, you are missing out. Check out the ingenious, innovative ATI line at your firearms retailer, or contact **ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL**, Dept OT; Tel.: (800) 925-2522; Web: www.atigunstocks.com