



# Mount up!

This month, award-winning coach John Heagren talks about gun mount and fit, and how an ill-fitting gun can spell disaster for your chances of a successful shot

We have already touched briefly on some aspects of gun mount but it's such a vital part of every successful shot that it's worth spending more time on it. As with every aspect of good shotgun shooting, your mount should be smooth and should be part of your shot. What I mean by that is that you shouldn't mount the gun then move it after your quarry, rather mount as you are already starting to bring the muzzles to bear on it. All too often you see novice or inexperienced shooters looking like a gun turret, mounting in one direction then setting off in a different direction after the bird.

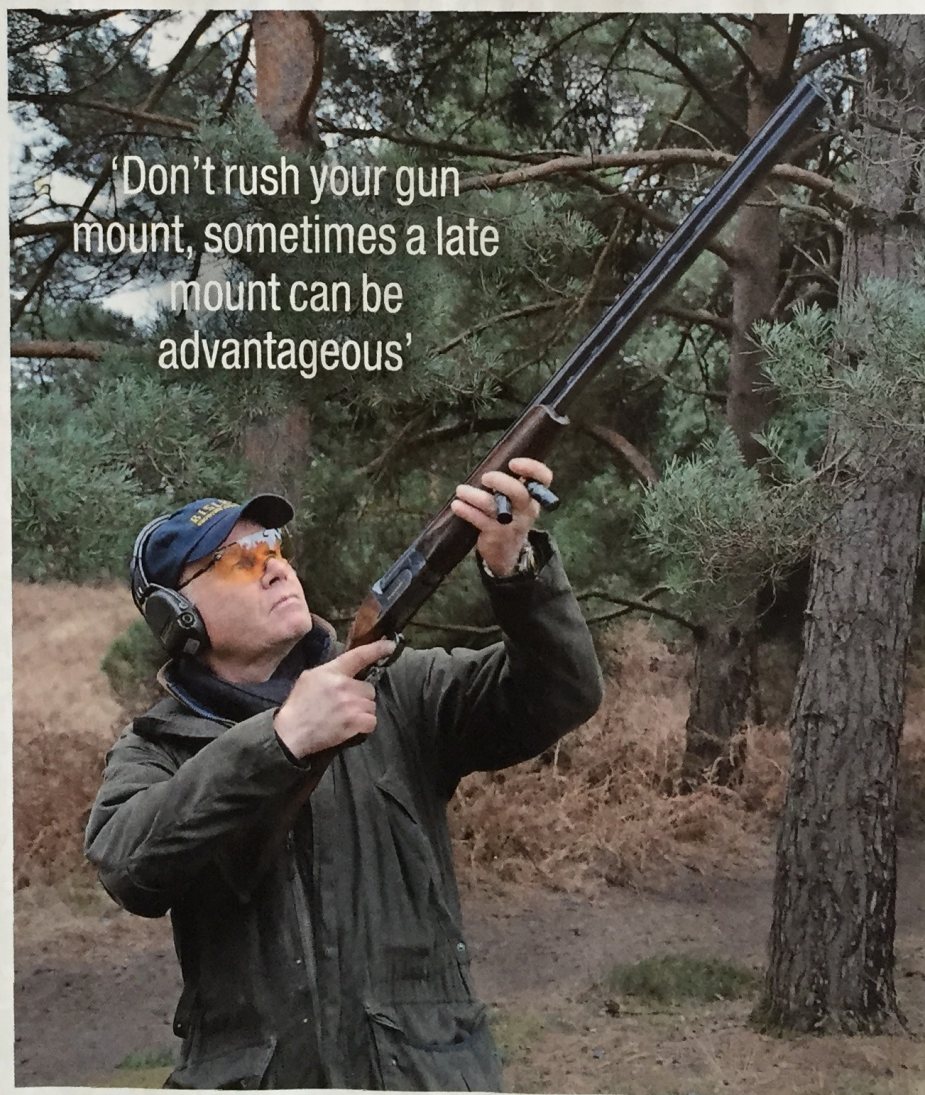
Don't feel that your mount needs to be rushed, in fact there are occasions when a slow or even a late mount can be advantageous. There is no benefit in rushing to put your muzzles on a pheasant that has just burst forth from cover 200 yards away and won't be with you for another 10 seconds or so. If you do lock on too early then there's a good chance that you will end up looking back to the gun rather than at the bird, which in most cases will lead to a miss. Instead, wait until the bird is much closer, mount the gun and take the shot in one fluid movement, it will be far more likely to end in success.

Both hands should bring the gun up to the cheek/shoulder in parallel. This removes any danger of the muzzles see-sawing up and down as the mount takes place, and ensures that when the mount is complete that you are looking down the gun and are ready to shoot. Another common

error amongst inexperienced shooters is that they bring their head down onto the stock, whilst in fact the top or comb of the stock should move upwards until it connects with the bottom of the cheekbone. The head shouldn't need to move downwards at all; if it does then that suggests that the gun may well be too low in the comb. If, when the gun is mounted, you see nothing other than the back of the action, then there is little doubt that the gun is far too low for you. In order to even see the target, let alone shoot it, you will be forced to lift your head off the stock, which in turn will result in you getting a sharp knock in the face from the recoil. Conversely, if you can see the rib of the gun rising up in your field of vision like a ski jump then the comb is too high; this will make the gun shoot

high and will require you to see daylight under any crossing targets you shoot, which just adds in another thing for you to think about. The ideal sight picture should allow you to see the rib at a shallow angle, or even as a flat plane, without any danger of it disappearing behind the back of the action.

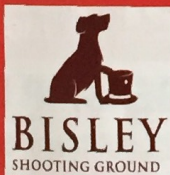
If the stock is too long it may well snag on your clothing during the mount, and it may leave you having to stretch your fingers to get a positive connection with the trigger blade. A short stock can mean that you find yourself having to pull the gun backwards into the shoulder as you mount; your face may well be almost rolling off the front of the comb and your fingers may well go too far through the trigger guard and you may end up pulling the trigger with the second pad of your

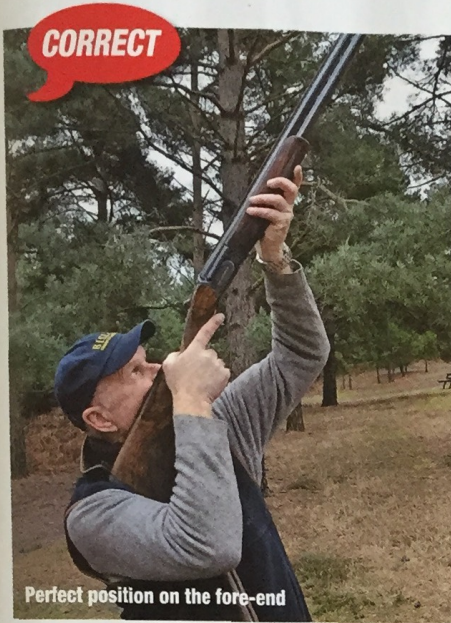


## THE VENUE

Bisley has been the nation's 'Home of Shooting' since the 1800s and Bisley Shooting Ground has long been an integral part of the shotgun shooting community. Set amidst 3,000 acres of stunning heathland and woodland, its two shooting locations, Long Siberia and Cottesloe Heath, offer a perfect environment in which to shoot. With targets that both educate, entertain and challenge shooters of all abilities, BSG offers tuition, guided practise, automated 'Pay and Play' and hosts popular competitions throughout the year.

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finger. A good guide to whether a stock is the right length is to check to see if you can, when mounted, put the width of two fingers between the point where your face touches the stock and the front end of the comb. If you can't fit them there, then the gun is probably too short; if you can fit them with plenty of room to spare, then it's most likely too long.

The amount you have to reach can also be dependent on the size of your hands. If you have small hands and a slim, swept-back semi pistol grip stock (as you might find on a game gun) then you may have a bit of a reach to the trigger, meaning you end up using your finger tip to get the shot off. Similarly, if you have large hands and a very pronounced pistol grip with a close radius, then you may find it becomes uncomfortable to hold the gun when shooting as you will, in effect, have to lift your hand off the grip a little to get your trigger finger in the right place, at which point the gun may become a bit on the 'lively' side when shooting and you may feel more recoil than you otherwise would if it fitted you correctly.

Remember that your head should remain upright when the gun is mounted; if you have to roll it over to the right (assuming you are a right-handed shooter) then it may be that you are mounting the gun too far out on your arm, rather than in the pocket of your shoulder, or that the gun is cast incorrectly for you.

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### THE COACH

John Heagren is well known in both the clay and game shooting community as a coach who gets results, with more than 25 years of experience as a full-time coach and a shooting career going back to his eighth birthday. Having returned to competitive shooting, in the last four years he has topped the FITASC rankings, represented England in international competition and last year won the prestigious Stratstone Super 7 Challenge. He is also a respected shot in the game field and spends much of the winter coaching on the peg.

That has hopefully given you a good idea as to what is required at the back end of the woodwork; however, that is only half of the story as getting our grip on the fore-end correct is also vital to success. Don't be tempted to bring your hand too far back down the fore-end towards the action, as this will increase the speed at which the gun reacts to any movement of that hand. It will also be difficult to be smooth and it will require more physical effort to get the gun swinging. At the opposite end of the scale, putting your hand at the far end of the fore-end will slow everything down and may cause you to have to stretch the arm, at which point it won't have as much strength as it should and may be slower to react to rapid changes of direction. Instead, try to find a middle ground between the two where the hand is comfortable and you feel you have a good level of control with the gun being responsive to your inputs in a predictable way. ■

