

“SIX HITTER”

DAYSTATE HUNTSMAN PH6 DELUXE

Daystate’s PH6 rifles aren’t known as some other multi-shot systems. Simon Moore discusses the merits of his own hunting rifle, the Huntsman PH6 Deluxe

FORM & FASHION

There would seem to be a trend these days towards buying the shortest rifle you can get away with. The ultra carbine rifle is seen by many as the way to go and longer rifles are passed over in favor of their smaller brethren. I personally subscribe to the “horses for courses” theory when it comes to choosing a rifle. When I originally went looking for a multi shot airgun, I had a short list of requirements drawn up. I wanted a rifle that would deliver at least 50 shots from a charge and it had to be in .177 caliber. On the basis of those two requirements alone, I knew I wasn’t going to be looking at one of the shorter rifles on the market, unless I was considering having an after market regulator fitted. I also like my air rifles to look like air rifles, on the basis of looks more than anything else, buddy bottle based systems were a no-no.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Bear in mind that if I hadn’t liked this rifle when I first set eyes on it, I would have bought something else. I have never seen a PH6 “in the flesh” but I’d never heard anyone say anything particularly bad about one. There’s been no hype, no massive advertising campaign mounted. . . Daystate seemed to have decided to let this rifle sell itself. This is a rifle which completely bucks the current trend for carbines. . . “It’s definitely a big un”. With my chosen scope on board, the whole set-up weighs in at around 11 1/2 pounds. With a moderator, the rifle is over 44 inches long, so you can see what I mean about the size. Because I like rifles to look a little different, I was also looking for a loading system that was unusual compared to the normal run-of-the-mill designs. The PH6 hasn’t sold in massive numbers like some other makes and so retains a certain air of mystery when I show it to other shooters. This rifle of mine has provoked a fair bit of interest amongst friends and a couple of them have even gone out and bought one for themselves.

I bought the model with the walnut thumbhole stock. This is a semi-target design with a nicely raked grip. The wood around the cylinder has been pared away to allow the cylinder to free float. There’s a chequering around the grip only and it’s fitted with the usual black and white line spacers and a thick, ventilated pad. The timber isn’t particularly well figured, but then again, it’s a hunting gun and not a show piece. I would have liked to see a thumbshelf added to allow me to shoot my favorite “thumb up” position, but that’s something I can easily add when I get around to it. I’ve always had a liking for thumb-hole designs which is odd considering that I don’t like to shoot with my thumb through them. . . I’m just strange like that I guess.

THE HEART OF THE SYSTEM

The magazine system is why I bought the rifle in the first place. Designed by a gentleman named Paul

Hogarth (hence the “PH” bit). It’s a fixed design that so far has worked flawlessly. The PH6 block is machined from solid aluminum and runs flush to the side of the cylinder, keeping the rifles lines nice and fluid. To my mind this gives the PH6 an edge over certain other makes because you don’t have a dirty great magazine protruding like some kind of growth from the side of the rifle. At the heart of the system is a stainless steel, six shot magazine that indexes each time the rifle is cocked. One of the best features about the rifles with fixed mags is that you don’t have to find somewhere to put the rifle down to load or change to another magazine. You can top it up as you go so that you don’t run out while you’re hunting (although I managed to do just this when I first bought the rifle and fired an empty chamber at a Magpie). There’s a quirk in the system which means that the magazine rotates anticlockwise. This means that if you were to only load one pellet in, you would actually be 4 shots away from firing it. As Tony at Daystate said to me; “as long as you can count to 6, you won’t have a problem with it”. It’s very easy to get into a routine where you become aware of the location of each pellet. The magazine itself is numbered and I find it easiest to keep each number aligned with the top of the breech clock so that I know which shot I’m on. On the early models, there was a tendency for the magazine to over rotate whilst it was being loaded, but this problem has been remedied by the fitting of a small spring to allow the magazine to align properly with the loading gate. Since I’ve owned mine, I’ve been keen to find out what people think of this rifle. One or two people have commented that the magazine is fiddly to load and to be honest, in the beginning I would have agreed. However, I’ve been using mine for over 6 months now and it’s all a question of technique. You have to allow the rifle to do the work for you. If you tilt the gun down slightly, the pellets almost load themselves. This technique works best with longer bodied pellets like the Air Arms Field. Shorties like Accupells for example, have a tendency to somersault on the way down the gate and can sometimes end up backwards. Anyone who’s seen me load mine now will understand that it’s not as fiddly to load as it looks. In .22 caliber, the weight of the pellet is sufficient to allow it to simply slide into the hole in the magazine, whereas the .177 caliber version requires you to just flick the pellet into the chamber with the back of your fingernail. I’ve owned a few multi-shot air rifles now and I can load mine just as fast as any other make of rifle and in some cases, faster.

Daystate triggers have come in for some stick in the past for being a bit “agricultural”, but this is the first rifle I’ve ever used where I didn’t have had to adjust the trigger as soon as I started shooting. It’s got a nicely curved brass blade and the release is very crisp with no overtravel or creep. I did adjust the trigger just to have a fiddle and I’ve actually managed to get the release at about the same weight as the one on my Ripley, which is like breaking glass when it goes off. I like my triggers to be set light. Not too much so but light enough that the release of the shot is almost subconscious. I know that many sporting shooters prefer to leave plenty of meat on the sears, but my idea of a nice trigger isn’t one that needs a bottle jack shoved between the guard and the blade to get it to go off. If you’re ever worried that the trigger on your rifle is set to light, cock it then while your pointing it in a safe direction, slap the butt to make sure the gun doesn’t go off. . . if it does, then you need to adjust things back to a safer and more responsible pressure. A couple of my Field Target shooting friends have tried that trigger and they’ve all commented on the predictability of the unit.

When I first bought this rifle I was a little concerned about how I was going to clean the barrel. With the magazine being fixed into place and me not having any desire to attempt to remove it, I thought that the only option I’d be left with shooting would be to fire cleaning felts through the barrel. As it turns out I needn’t have worried. On either side of the breech block, about two inches from the front, there are two small grub screws. If you undo both of these, you’ll be able to slide the barrel out to clean it. A word of warning though, be careful how you pull it through the fixing clamp at the muzzle or you’ll end up scratching the blueing. When you’re finished cleaning the barrel, simply slide it back into the block, mak-

ing sure that you've lined the transfer port up the right way around, (it should face down). Tighten the two grub screws back up and the job's done. . . easy!

I'm not going to bleat on about the safety catch, because that particular gripe has to be commented on for donkeys years. . . it does what it's supposed to and it's positive to operate. I would like to see it operate the other way around because as it is now, you have to reach over the bolt to disengage it. It would be better if you could press down on the right hand side instead. The answer to the safety catch issue is simple. . . if you don't like it, either don't use it or remove it. It's only attached by one screw at the back of the action, so it's not a major gunsmithing job.

RANGE TIME

In the 8 months I've owned this rifle, I've tried many different brands of pellet, with the best of the bunch being the Air Arms 4.52 Field. Using these pellets I can put a nice little one-hole group at 35 yards from a bench rested position and from 55 yards, the group stays inside the size of a 5p piece, apart from the duff shots that are my fault and not the rifles. Using a Combro CB625 chronograph, I worked out what the best pressure is and the amount of good, consistent shots I can get out of it. This takes a bit of trail and error but it's definitely worth it in the long run. If I fill mine to 2500psi, I get 70 shots at 11.60 foot pounds, with a spread of 15fps over the charge. I can tighten things up little more and get the consistency into single figures, but to be honest, at the ranges we're talking about 10fps here or there doesn't really make that much difference to where the pellet lands.

I use this rifle for a specific task. . . I like to get out onto my farms, set out my stall where I know I'm likely to find some action and settle down for some nice static shooting. If the ground is dry or stable enough, I'll take an old army kip-mat out with me, put the Huntsman on the bipod and just lie down under a hedge somewhere. The big Hakko scope I use on the rifle precludes any real opportunistic hunting, but for some nice steady longer range hunting, it's the only way to fly. This scope will only zoom down to 8X, but for fast reactive shooting it can still be too much. As I've said before, this is a big, heavy rifle. This combo of mine balances about 6 inches in front of the trigger blade, so there's quite a nose heavy feel to the rifle. It doesn't bother me because I'm 6'2" tall and weigh in at nearly 250 pounds. I'll cover the way I hunt with this rifle in another article, but suffice it to say that I'm planning on being lazy and I don't fancy doing much walking, this is the rifle I reach for.

MOANS & GROANS

What don't I like about the rifle? There's not allot of room on the dovetails, so choose a scope carefully if you buy a PH6. Daystate could have increased the length by about 10mm by straightening the curved edges near the mag system. The safety gripe has been done to death, so I won't go over that again. One minor thing that does annoy me is the resonance that comes from the hammer spring on firing. It's not loud, rather just irritating because my head is fairly close to the source. Having a regulator fitted will cure that, and it's something that I will be having done at some point. Other than that, I can't find anything to pick fault with.

LAST WORDS

Multi-shot PCP's are emerging from the woodwork almost monthly at present. I had the opportunity to

choose from most of the major makes when I bought this rifle, and I've never regretted buying the Huntsman PH6. If you're in the market for a multi-shot pneumatic, give Daystate a good serious look. Don't be a sheep and follow the crowd, but make up your own mind instead. The model I bought came with a brass cocking bolt and moderator as standard. It costs £619.00, but a basic Harrier PH6 will set you back about £449.00 if you wanted the same system in a more "no frills" rifle.

TECHNICAL DATA FOR THE HUNTSMAN PH-6

O/A Length - 38"

Barrel Length - 18"

Caliber - .177, .22, .25

Weight - 8.4lbs

Manual Safety

Beech Sporter Stock: Thumbhole Sporter Walnut Stock

Action Finish - Traditional High Grade Blued Finish

PERFORMANCE FOR THE HUNTSMAN PH-6

.177 cal - 80 shots at 12ft lbs.

.22 cal - 90 shots at 12ft lbs.

.25 cal - 100 shots at 12 ft lbs.

Fully regulated shots with a +/- of 5 feet per second

FAC VERSION OF THE HUNTSMAN PH-6

.177cal - to 20 ft lbs.

.22cal - to 50 ft lbs.

.25cal - to 50 ft lbs.