

ONE ON

NICK SISLEY TALKS WITH BLASER USA'S NORBERT HAUSSMANN AND RICHARD KAYSA

ONE

Some may say that no firearms company that specializes in competition shotguns is better set up for the future if you consider that Blaser USA has three men with unprecedented experience in the shotgun field. But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself.

Let's start at the beginning – with some background on Norbert Haussmann and Richard Kaysa. Haussmann was born in 1960 in the small town of Maehringen, Germany, very close to Ulm. He started his gunsmith training at the age of 15 and eventually went on to become Krieghoff's youngest manager. He was sent to the USA several times, often to train their gunsmiths.

He told me. "I was so impressed with how Americans appreciated good craftsmanship that I eventually moved to Ottsville to work for Dieter Krieghoff in 1992 and became a US citizen in 2003."

Rich Kaysa was born in Horseheads in upstate New York in 1972 and went to high school there, then to Corning Community College and on to gunsmithing school in Pennsylvania near Pittsburgh. After graduating from gunsmithing school he went

RICHARD
KAYSA

NORBERT HAUSSMANN
SHOOTING SPORTING
CLAYS WITH THE F3.



directly to work for Krieghoff in Ottsville. That was in 1994 – Haussmann was already there.

In 1998 Kaysa started Alamo Sporting. He was well versed in all aspects of gunsmithing, but was noted for his stock work. It so happened that Krieghoff USA was having a tough time keeping up with their stock work at that time, so Haussmann sent a lot of the Krieghoff stock work to Kaysa at Alamo Sporting. Despite the heavy load of stock work business, Kaysa began doing more and more service work. After a short time, Dieter Krieghoff offered Kaysa the opportunity to sell side by side double rifles. So successful was this arrangement that he was given a full blown dealership.

Within a few years, Alamo Sporting became the second largest Krieghoff dealer in the country. Kaysa told me, “I knew our Krieghoff sales would explode when Norbert came on board, having moved to San Antonio to share the Alamo Sporting workload.

Another Opportunity

In July of 2008 Haussmann and Kaysa flew to Germany to meet with Bernhard Knoebel and others of the Blaser company. “We shot the Blaser rifles and were impressed,” said Haussmann. “We saw how the workers interacted so well with management and it was obvious this was a family-oriented business with an impressive product range.”

Knoebel had received his gunsmith training at Frankonia. Later he studied business and became Head of Marketing at Krieghoff. Not surprising then that the three men had an immediate rapport. In September 2008 they moved the headquarters of Blaser

USA to San Antonio, with Haussmann as CEO and Kaysa as Vice President.

When it comes to opportunities, timing is everything. “We were indeed fortunate that Mike and Pam Young, formerly with Hal du Pont in Vero Beach, Florida, were looking for a company to buy at that time,” said Kaysa. “I think Alamo Sporting was a perfect fit for them and it was the right time for us.”

Haussmann added, “I was ready to expand my business horizons. Fortunately, I was able to work in every possible facet of gun making and gun repair over many years, so when Alamo came along I knew it would be a good fit. But when the Blaser opportunity surfaced I knew it would be an even better fit. I think we both saw our future as being a partner and sister company for service, sales and marketing to Blaser Germany, or maybe better yet, having our own business.”

F3 Detail

Knoebel, Haussmann and Kaysa enjoy their clay target shooting – particularly Kaysa, his success on the Trap field is well documented. I asked him how he had coped with the transition from a K80 to a Blaser. “It was remarkably simple.



THE BLASER F3 IN OPTIONAL AMERICASE.

I thought I liked the triggers after shooting them the first time, but after a stint of shooting the F3 many hundreds of times over a trap shooting weekend I called Norbert, and I told him, these triggers are great.” Right there Haussmann chimed in, “Bernhard Knoebel knew how good the Krieghoff triggers were, having worked in Ulm for many years, so they became his benchmark for the F3. They had to be as good as a K-80 trigger – or better – and I think he succeeded in the latter.”

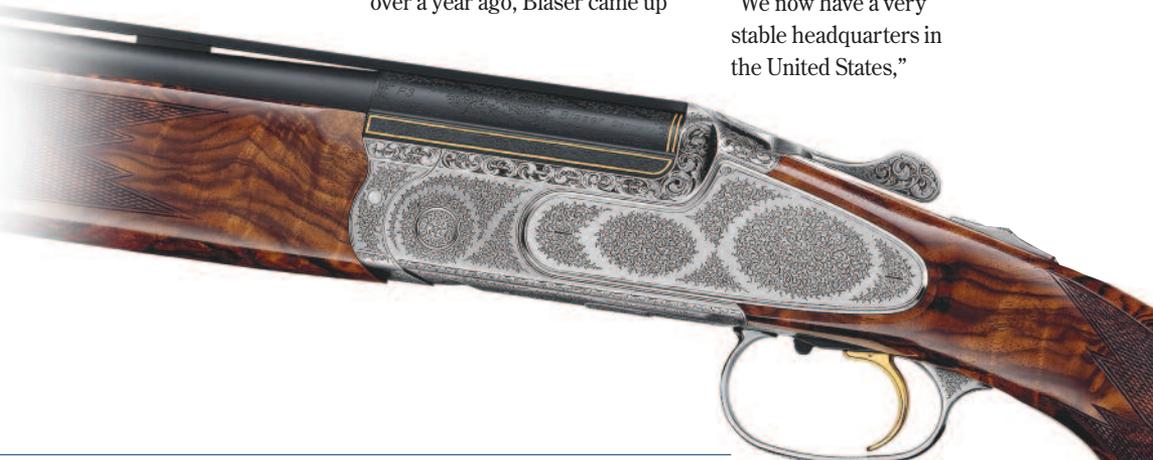
Both enthused when telling me about the balance factors built into the F3. Since the gun’s inception, there has been a movable balance weight built into the stock. By moving the balance weight forward or rearward (that weight is on a threaded rod) it’s easy to fine tune the balance. But a little over a year ago, Blaser came up

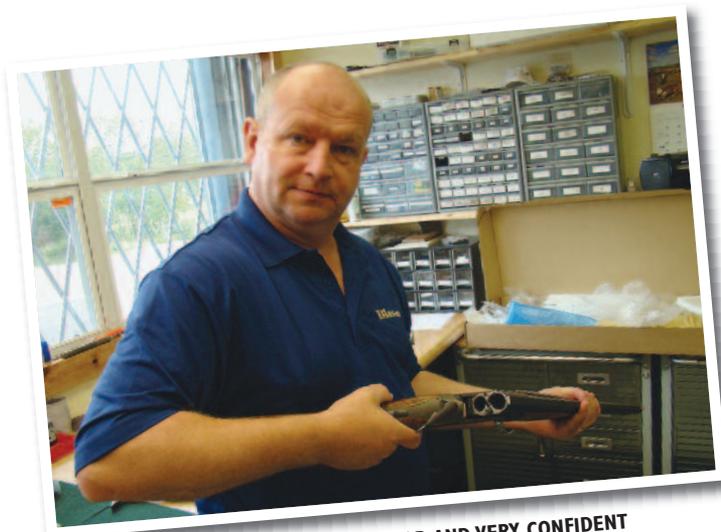
with a second balance weight on the barrel under the fore-end. The F3 now comes with six different tungsten plates for this feature – all of differing weights – to both add weight to the gun for recoil reduction, as well as to move the gun’s balance more forward.

Kaysa now believes that the F3 is the epitome of design for sporting. He’s not alone – Blaser USA has built a very professional sporting team which includes such top shots as Bobby Fowler Jr, Cory Kruse, Bill McGuire, Tom Mack, Brian Hughes, Mike Wilgus, David Radulovich (the 2009 US Open Champion), Maureen Danne and Janet McDougall (she is also the in-house accountant at Blaser).

Current Market

“We now have a very stable headquarters in the United States,”





NORBERT HAUSSMANN FEELS VERY GOOD AND VERY CONFIDENT ABOUT THIS RELATIVELY NEW COMPANY – BLASER USA.

Haussmann confirmed. “The staff here are capable of any necessary repairs, we can give the best advice on new gun purchases, and both Rich and I have the confidence in our advice because our extensive experience is based in shooting, sales and gunsmithing.”

What about the gun market? Kaysa says the sales of long guns have been tough for many months. However, their marketing game plan is pretty much on target for 2009. “Sales are picking up and we are starting to see the results of working closely with and for our customers.” Kaysa feels that the economy is turning around and thinks the last quarter of 2009 will result in a major sales pick up – putting them on target for the year.

Both also believe that the future of sporting clays looks healthy. Kaysa told me that sporting is successfully bringing in good numbers of younger shooters, and this is good for all

the clay target games. The way he put it was, “Sporting clays is going to be here for a long, long time.” Blaser shotgun sales will continue to be dictated by the sale of the F3 Sporter, which is why they are major sponsors of the Texas State Sporting Championship, the US Open and the National Championships.

With Kaysa’s shooting bias toward Trap, it’s not surprising to learn that the company are working on an updated trap version for the F3. Kaysa knows already how he wants to configure the stock and he was awaiting delivery of the special trap barrels as this interview took place. The new Trap model F3 will be available soon. The F3 is also offered in a Skeet model – sales are anything

but rosy in that market.

“The F3 is the most ‘modular’ gun built today,” says Haussmann. All barrels are interchangeable. Take a stock off one gun – put it on another – the fit is perfect. Same with fore-ends. As Haussmann puts it, “The wood and metal are so precisely made – that’s what makes this possible.” Blaser has seven patents on the F3. My take is that most of those patents revolve around this over and under’s complete interchangeability of parts.

In wrap up, Kaysa said, “We are going to be here for a long time. All our past experience is going to be of great benefit to our customers. We also are not afraid of change. We know that innovation is going to be the key to Blaser’s future.” ■

