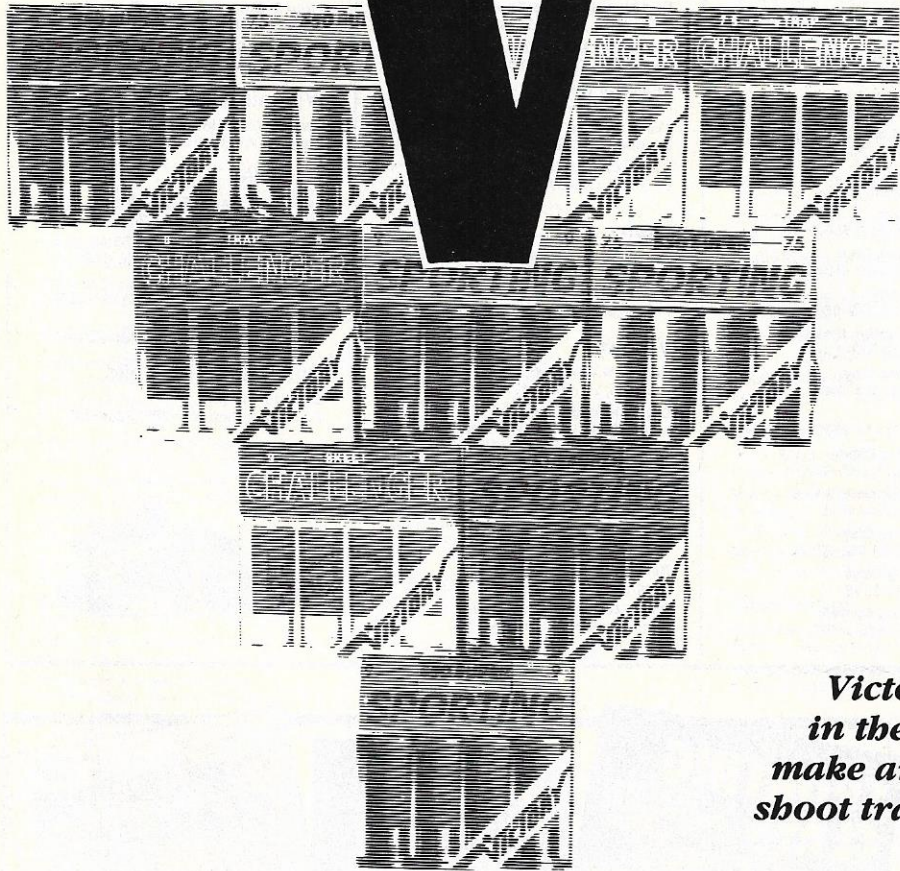


VICTORY



Has A Different Idea

By Don Zutz

Victory offers plenty of variety in their new line of shotshells to make anyone happy, whether they shoot trap, skeet or Sporting Clays.

Anyone who has ever been on a Sporting Clays course knows how some shooters frantically work their choke tube wrenches to change tubes between stands. After shooting a close-range simulation of a flushing pair of bobwhite quail, for example, they quickly spin out their Cylinder bore or Skeet tube and torque in Improved Cylinder or a light Modified choke for a couple of passing-mallard shots at 30 to 35 yards. Indeed, choke changing has been a way of life in Sporting Clays, and it certainly makes the game interesting.

The people who distribute the new line of Victory shotshells stateside have a different idea, however. Instead of continually changing choke tubes to manipulate patterns, they say why not just switch loads to get a pattern that is more suited to your particular range and/or target? It's much easier and you can concentrate on the targets, not choke changing.

Victory's line of target-grade ammunition is color-coded so you can readily select the right round without fumbling.

When going from a close-in quail or woodcock stand to a more-distant crossing shot, for instance, merely reach for the red loads with tighter-patterning 8's, rather than the green ones with 9's that spread more widely. And if you want more pellet energy in a tight-shooting load, there is always the beige cartridge with 7½'s.

Shooters who never pattern their guns and loads may not believe changing loads can affect performance from the same gun/choke combination, although my writing about reloads has continually mentioned this possibility. The potential exists; the only question is whether a given line of shotshells can actually deliver pattern variations reliably.

To learn exactly what my Sporting Clays gun would do with different Victory loads, I set up my patterning boards and began plastering them. I have never been one for excessive choke-tube changing, so in recent months I gravitated to a Hastings No. 2 Skeet tube for my Beretta Model A-303 Sporting Clays gun with a 28" barrel. The tube has a 15-point constriction, which

might also be called a "light Modified" choke. I think it fits the demands of F.I.T.A.S.C. quite nicely.

With that tube in place, my gun was used to pattern at 25 yards, a distance I thought would be about the transition point from open to tighter patterns. It would also tend to show overall distributions and core concentrations better than 40-yard patterns.

The accompanying photos show some typical results from my three-shot tests on each load. The Victory 32-gram (1½-ounce) 550 Super Sporting load with 9's filled out the 30"-diameter circle very evenly, and some shot also impacted on the peripheral area. On each pattern sheet, the 9's gave a full 30" spread that would have scored the target.

A handful of Victory target loads showing the color-coding method used. The sectioned cartridge shows the typical wad design developed by G&I Calibers.

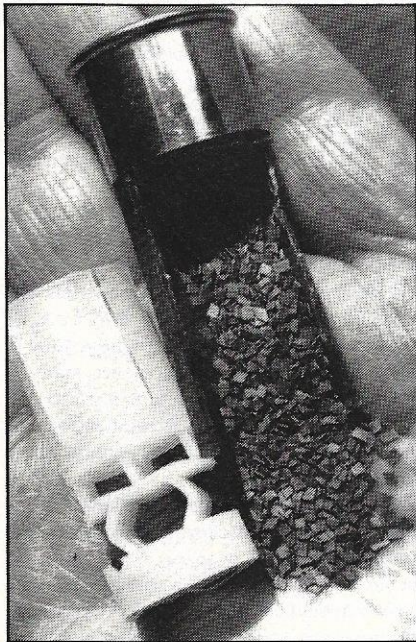
Victory Has A Different Idea

When the Victory 550 Super load with 32 grams of #8 shot was patterned, the results were entirely different. The photo shows a marked tendency toward center density at 25 yards, meaning the shot string's main expansion took place between 25 to 35 yards. That bodes well for longer-range effectiveness. Ditto for the rounds with #7½ shot.

The Victory Sporting loads did indeed alter patterns from my particular gun/choke combo. Will every gun do the same? As I have said time and again, each gun/load duo is a physical law unto itself, so you will have to pattern individually to be absolutely sure. From my own patterning, however, it seems the Victory line does accomplish these distribution changes and does it as reliably as any other line, more reliably than most.

The Company

Victory cartridges are the work of a company called G&L Calibers of Nicosia, Cyprus. (For those of you who have trouble with geography like me, Cyprus is an island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea off the southern coast of Turkey.) As I understand, the loads were originally engineered by a competition shooter named Lakis Psimolophitis, who wanted better ammunition for his own use. Considerable time went into the development of his loads. When he did finalize them and began using them in European and British competitions, they gave splendid results. Other shooters became interested in the Cypriot



The powder in Victory loads is a broad-flaked sheet powder made with nitro-cotton. It is soft-recoiling and clean-burning and is apparently from the fast-rate end of the Vectan powders by SNPE Group of France.

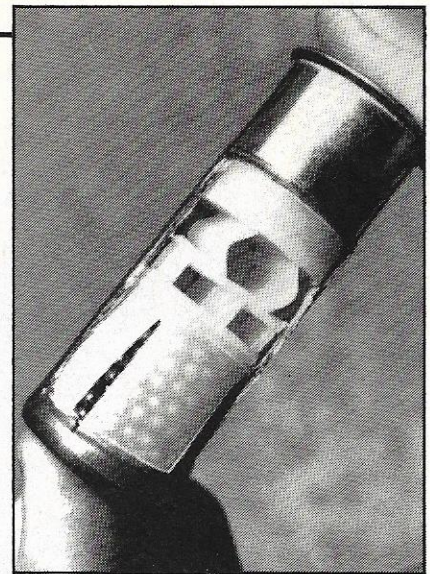
The Victory wad was designed by G&L Calibers for their own loads and fits for a good gas seal and excellent patterns.

shotshells, and in a short time a sizeable demand arose.

To meet the international demands, G&L Calibers built an entirely new production facility, complete with the newest equipment and computer controls. The company has developed its own plastic formula for these hulls, which are of the Reifenhauer type with a cylindrical body, plastic base-wad insert and high-quality brass head polished to a high luster.

The powders used in the Victory loads are imported from France and are said to be made of nitro-cotton. A main source of pride at G&L Calibers is the high velocities they can achieve without significant recoil, thanks to the lower number of "calories" per grain of powder. The charges have considerable bulk, as the powders have big flakes of the cut-sheet type. I'll talk more about load velocities when we get to the individual loads available stateside.

The wads in the Victory shells are devised by G&L Calibers for each respective loading. The one-piece plastic wads have a cushioning segment comprised of two layers of square, compressible voids



separated by a secondary gas seal. There is one square void directly atop the overpowder disc and two such squares beneath the shotcup. The overpowder flange is deep, and as is often encountered on overseas wads, the shotcups are split but remain attached by a thin web of plastic linking the petals. On the outer sides of the shotcup there is a series of rings which apparently attempt to keep the entire shotcup away from the bore walls to reduce friction and maintain a centered position. This may

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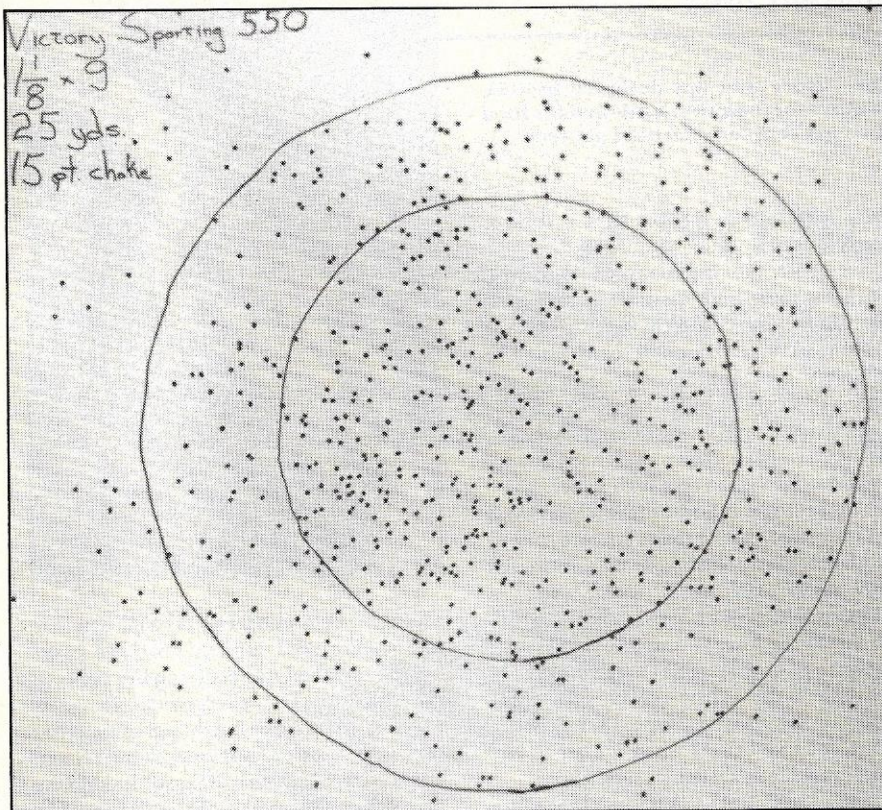
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also act as a final up-front seal. It is interesting to note that on retrieved wads there was virtually no gunk ahead of the molded ring. Patterns shot at my anticipated working

ranges for each respective load, such as 20 to 25 yards for the 9's and 30 to 35 yards for the 8's showed effective spreads that were quite symmetrical. Since its incep-

The Victory idea is to change loads instead of choke tubes for Sporting Clays. This is how my 15-point Hastings tube patterned with Victory's Challenger 32-gram load of 9's.

tion, G&L Calibers has found its shells winning all sorts of international competitions. One of America's highest-averaging Sporting Clays shooters, Andy Duffy (89 percent), fell in love with the loads and the Victory concept while in Europe. He now uses them both for his successful shooting, changing ammo for each station rather than switching choke tubes. Some of the top-ranking British shooting magazines have featured the Victory rounds, and one article described them as "The Gentle Giants" among shotshells because of their speed and very tolerable recoil.

Ballistics

I happened to be at George P. Van's Grinders Switch Club in Tennessee when the first truckload of Victory ammo arrived. During the next couple of days, I managed to shoot a box of them with pretty good effect. I used the 32-gram 8's and some 28-gram 9's interchangeably, and they worked my Beretta A-303 perfectly. I purposely shot some very long ranges on George's "Little Switzerland" course, and it was amazing the way the 28-gram Victory loads of 8's or 7½'s would find the target at 50 to 55 yards from a quarter-choked barrel. In an evening fun session, I used a Marlin 40"-barreled (yes, 40") pump gun and some Victory 28-gram loads of 9's to break targets consistently at 43 to 45 yards. That seems like a long way for 9's, but a good swing broke the target every time.

I must digress to point out a difference between the way Victory load-speed data is given and U.S. ballistics are listed. Shooters who casually skim Victory's catalog data will see some exceedingly high muzzle velocity figures. For example, the 28-gram Challenger skeet load with #9 shot has a published muzzle velocity of 1,400 f.p.s., which would make it seem to be a mile ahead of Yankee loadings. However, state-side ammo data is not given as a muzzle-velocity reading. It is instead tested at 3 feet from the muzzle, and there is a significant difference between the two!

According to research done by E.D. Lowry, former ballisticsian at Winchester, a shot charge can lose nearly 100 f.p.s. in its first yard of free flight due to the impact of air resistance (drag). What the Victory data shows as a 1,400-f.p.s. muzzle velocity turns out to be about 100 or so f.p.s. slower when stated in terms of U.S. testing methods, namely, a 3-foot instrumental chronograph technique.

My own shooting bears this out. When I chronographed the Victory Challenger 28-

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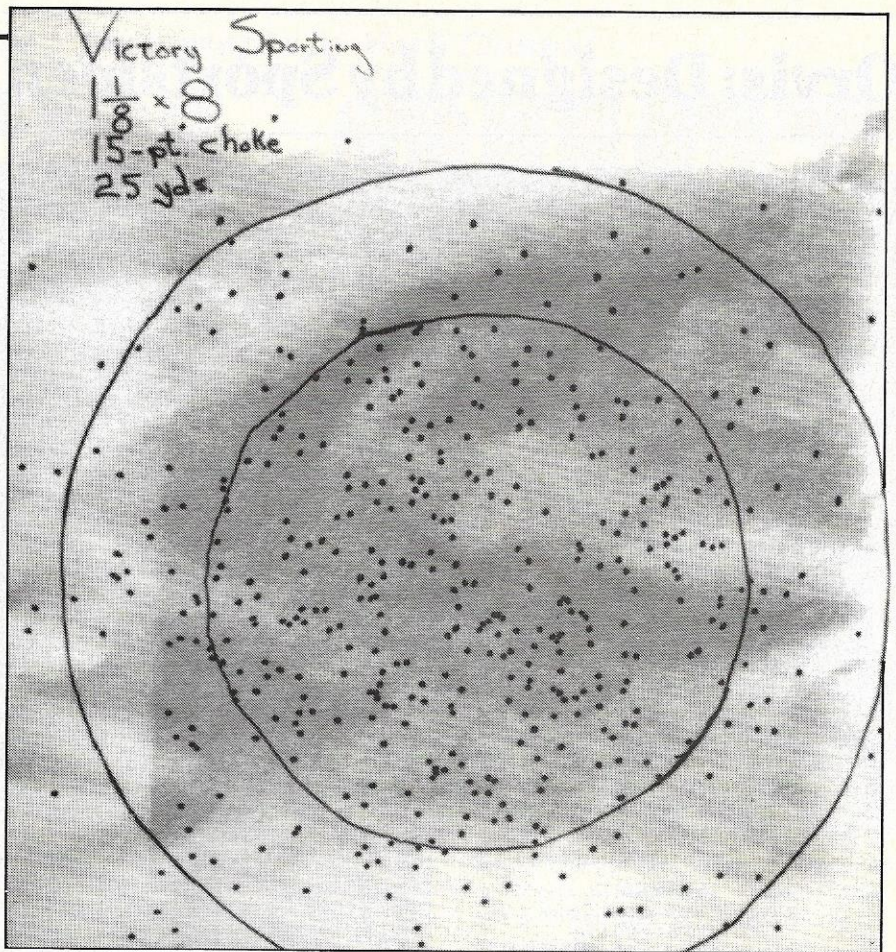
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This is how the same choke patterned with the Victory Challenger load of 8's, also in the 32-gram persuasion. Note how the 9's spread more widely, while the 8's held a tighter core density for longer shots.

gram skeet load, I had an average of 1,297 f.p.s. when clocking the leading pellet over my PACT II screens. All my chronographing was done with a Ruger 30"-barreled Sporting Clays gun with a slightly over-bored upper barrel and at a measured 3 feet from the muzzle.

The point is, although Victory loads are impressively swift, keep in mind they are reported at an earlier point in their flight than American loads, which seems to give them a 100 to 150-f.p.s. advantage. To put Victory published muzzle velocities on the same plane as published American shot-shell ballistics, you must subtract at least 100 f.p.s. from the Victory figures to obtain the approximate 3-foot reading that equates with U.S. testing practices. This isn't a rap against Victory data; it's just the way many European manufacturers do things, and we Americans must be alert to the discrepancy.

Although there is a difference in reporting starting velocities, I must say the Vic-
(Continued on Page 52)



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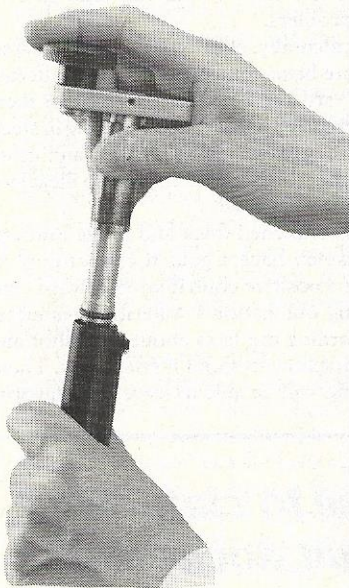
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VICTORY

(Continued from Page 45)

tory loads are some of the most-consistent performers I have ever tested. With the Challenger 550 Super Sporting loads, for instance, I fired five across my screens for an extreme spread of only 11 f.p.s. My highest reading was 1,246 f.p.s.; the lowest was 1,235 f.p.s. A 10-shot run with the Challenger 28-gram #7½ trap loads also held tight tolerances, with the highest load clocking 1,278.5 f.p.s. and the lowest doing 1,268.4 f.p.s., a mere 10-f.p.s. spread.

When I chronographed the 32-gram Super Sporting 550 load of 9's, I found a 10-shot string delivered 1,291 f.p.s. for the lowest load and 1,300 f.p.s. for the highest, an impressive extreme spread of just 9 f.p.s.

When I got around to chronographing, I had unfortunately already shot away most of my 32-gram 550 Super Sporting loads with #8 shot, but the pair of remaining rounds went 1,239 f.p.s. and 1,241 f.p.s. over my chronograph, a meager differential. In any case, my velocities were indeed uniform from the same boxes, and my patterning followed suit. This would seem to suggest tight quality controls.

The Challenger 1½-ounce (32-gram) Sporting load carries a "550 BARS" designation on the box. Many shooters will

wonder just what the heck that means. I'm not sure myself, but "bars" are a way of reporting pressures. One bar equals 14.504 p.s.i., so if you multiply 550 by 14.504, you come up with 7,977.2 p.s.i. If that is indeed the average working pressure of the Victory 32-gram Super Sporting loads, it is very low for shotshells generating velocities up to 1,300 f.p.s. (3-foot instrumental).

All the loads I checked cycled my Remington M/11-87 and M/1100, as well as my Beretta A-303. A box of Super Sporting 9's was used on American skeet and registered a 25x25. When patterned, the same load showed impressive evenness of distribution and an overall 34" diameter of effective pattern at 20 yards.

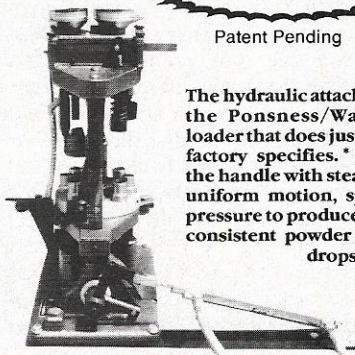
Although G&L Calibers makes a full range of shotshells, .410 through 12-gauge Magnum, it is the target-load line that is currently coming to these shores. Whether more loads will arrive remains to be seen. For now, the Challenger and Super Sporting 550 loads remain the focal point, and it will be interesting to see how U.S. and Canadian shooters accept the idea of switching loads rather than changing choke tubes as they progress from stand to stand on a Sporting Clays course. Moreover, I will be curious to see if conventional skeet and trapshooters take to these loads for their games, too.

There is one final load I should mention

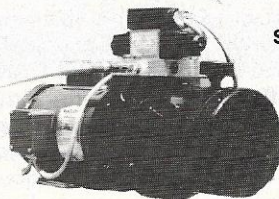
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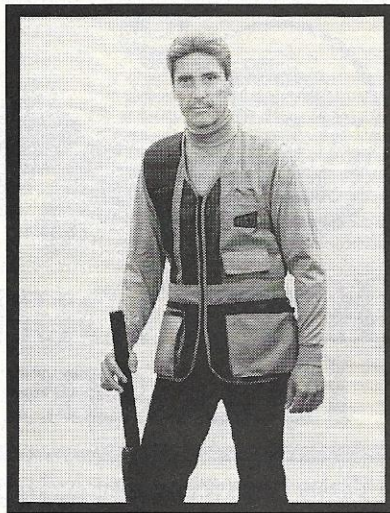
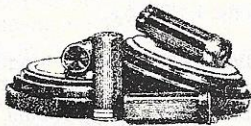
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— the Challenger felt-wad load with a 28-gram shot charge of anything from 6's through 9's. People who like a degradable wad or who think they get a different patterning performance without a plastic shotcup will want to try these. My samples didn't include any of these loads, but Victory says they're coming. The felt-wad loads supposedly have a muzzle velocity of 1,350 f.p.s., which converts to about 1,250 f.p.s. in U.S. ballistics, and G&L Calibers recommends them for hunting, as well as clays. We'll see.

Meanwhile, the Victory Challenger and Super Sporting 550 loads made an appearance at the World and National Sporting Clays championships at Okemo Mountain Resort in Vermont in August. For additional information, the American importer and distributor for these loads is Victory USA, P.O. Box 1021, Pine Bush, New York 12566. Telephone (914) 744-2060 or Fax (914) 744-5181 or see their ad on page 42. We've had imported ammunition before, but this stuff will really make you sit up and pay attention! **SS**



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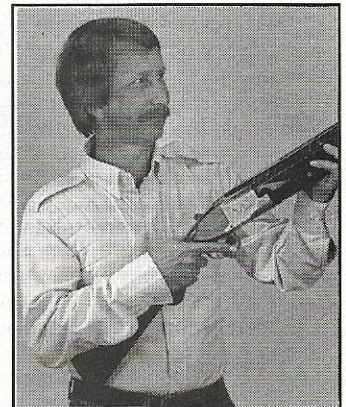


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