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Can you tell me the advantage of buying a gun with a case hardened action? I like the appearance of them, but don't really understand if this process is only for cosmetic reasons, how it is done and does it actually make the gun stronger?

Reg Southby, Docklands, VIC

A good question Reg. Case hardening is a process in which the guns metal action or receiver has its external appearance changed through a chemical or heating process. Originally the case hardening was done through heating the guns metal work up and then applying a bone meal and charcoal process to make the metal discolor. In recent times the same process has been done using chemicals such as cyanide. Case hardened metal will lose its color a little over time unless the metal has a quality varnish finish applied at the end of the process. Generally case hardening is done during the shotguns manufacturing, but standard actions can be given a case hardened appearance as a customizing feature after production. Be wary about who you chose to do this as I have seen some that didn't look quite right and no doubt have eroded the resale value of the gun. If not done properly the surface can not only fade, but worst of all it can promote and enhance rust. I believe the process today is purely cosmetic and does not do anything that is necessary to make the action stronger that it needs to be. When case hardening was originally introduced it truly was meant for the purpose of hardening soft metal which of course limits the life and safety of the shotguns receiver.

I was at a major Sporting Clays event late last year watching several competitors whom I am told are the countries best. I am only a C grade shooter so I hoped to pick up some tips. The only thing I learnt was the art of "claiming targets". On every single stand at least one person in the squad claimed a fault with a target that they missed. To my amazement the squad actually all worked together to claim each other targets. What is the rule here and does this happen overseas?

Name not supplied

Without being there to watch the incidents you are talking about I am hesitant to comment on the particular rule that these shooters are "claiming targets" under. Rules on what constitutes a "no target" in clay target shooting vary from event to event. However I do admit I hear the same criticism of Sporting Clay events so many times that it seems there is a "sub culture" developing amongst selected squads of competitors. It is certainly something that the sport needs to get on top of and by no means is it confined to Australia. England's George Digweed, probably the world's best ever Sporting Clays shooter, wrote an open letter to F.I.T.A.S.C (the organizing body of International Sporting Clays) last year condemning this practice at all levels of competition. For the governing body of the sport to publish this letter on their website it tells me there is a problem that needs to be attended to. It's sad to say it, but when groups of friends are allowed to squad together and are allowed to referee and score themselves then temptation to take advantage of certain situations may inevitably happen. I have often wondered would shooters elect to pay an extra few

dollars per event at the major competitions to have qualified and paid referees on each stand?

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