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I am totally confused about the choke tubes I have for a second hand Perazzi 12 gauge MX 8 shotgun that I purchased recently. It has had variable screw in choke tubes fitted after the first owner purchased the gun. It has four different chokes with numbers and markings stamped on the side of them that mean nothing at all to me. Can you enlighten me to what each choke tube may be?

Ken Nader, Cairns Qld

Ken this is not an easy question to answer without knowing the exact internal measurement (nominal bore size) of your barrel and of course the markings on each choke tube. You need to get the barrel measured before I can give you an accurate answer, but I will make some assumptions on typical Perazzi, and most Italian, barrels that I have seen.

If the internal measurement is .725 of an inch (sorry to use imperial measurements, but I am guessing the chokes that have been fitted after the factory built the gun may be American 'Briley' chokes which will be marked in imperial specifications) then for every 10 thousands of an inch the barrel is constricted or tightened then you are going up roughly one choke size. Therefore if you have a choke that is marked .715 then you have a quarter choke. .705 would equal half, .695 is three quarter and full will be marked .685. The latter gives a full 40 thousands constriction for this barrel on the assumption that it nominal bore size is .725. This is generally accepted as the maximum full choke.

No restriction in bore diameter is called true "Cylinder", but please do not shoot the gun without screwing in any choke tube at all as it may damage the barrel or the thread that the tubes will be screwed into. Five thousands of constriction above the barrel's nominal bore size is commonly called a "Skeet" choke. Quarter choke is often referred to as "Improved Cylinder" and is sometimes marked on many screw in choke tubes with four stars or four lines, half choke is "Modified" and identified with three stars, three quarter choke is known as "Improved Modified" with two stars and full choke is pretty much just known simply as "Full" and is identified often with one star or line on the choke tub.

A quick check as to your barrels bore size may be found underneath your forend as it is stamped on the barrel on most Italian shotguns as part of their barrel proofing laws. It will be a number such as 18.4, this is the metric version of approximately .725 of an inch (it is actually .724 to be exact). Generally Italian barrels are most commonly made with a bore size of 18.4mm, but it is not uncommon to find barrels of 18.3mm (.720), 18.5mm (.728) or 18.6mm (.732). Don't confuse this with the other numbers stamped on the barrel such as 1.55, 1.58, 1.62 etc etc as this refers to the net barrel weight in kilograms and has nothing to do with bore size or chokes.

As to what chokes you should be using is a whole different subject altogether. This will depend on what distance you are shooting at, what shot shells you are using and what you are trying to knock out of the sky with your shotgun.

With all of this knowledge don't forget the words one of advice I once received from one of the oldest members of my local club at Werribee, Mr. Les Hendra. He said "Sonny, there has been no choke ever made that will replace accuracy". Great advice!

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