

TEST FIRE

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Sako 75 Stainless Walnut 7MM-08

Rod & Rifle Vol21#6, Nov/Dec 2000

SAKO 75 STAINLESS WALNUT 7MM-08.



Sako rifles and ammunition have a wonderful reputation for very high-quality manufacture and design by a world-class European company. Sako rifles have always been very popular in this country and have commanded a price premium, justified by their quality. Never happy to rest on their laurels, Sako upgraded their earlier two lug actions and came up with the three lug TRG which was based on their highly accurate Model 21 sniper rifle. The TRG was Sako's first venture into a synthetic stocked rifle with a stainless barrel, but the action was still in the black. This model had a well earned reputation for accuracy.

THE ACTION

More recently Sako redesigned the TRG action and released the model 7S. This action is a three lug action like its parent, the TRG, but that is where the similarity ends. It is available in five different action sizes to more perfectly match the cartridge chosen and is even available in a single shot version. It is also available in Sako's first all stainless action, as well as a blued version. It has a 70 degree bolt lift, due to the three lugs not being evenly spaced around the bolt face and has five smooth guiding surfaces to prevent the bolt binding. It has a very smooth and silky feel to the bolt operation, with no hint of binding and a mechanical ejector underneath the bolt, not through a slot in one of the locking lugs as in the Mauser style actions. The extractor is the standard Sako style, a wide spring loaded claw fitted in the recessed bolt face between two of the lugs. This has proven to be a very reliable extraction system and is often copied in other actions. The bolt handle and shroud are more like the earlier actions than the TRG. The bolt release is located on the left side of the action in the usual place.

The underneath of the action is interesting in that it has a length wise square rib at the front of the receiver with a slot in it through which the recoil lug is bolted. The rear receiver tang is well supported and has a large flat bedding surface. The side rails on this action are quite deep also. All of this adds to its rigidity and makes a very solid base to hang a barrel on.

There is the usual integral scope mounting rib on top of the front and rear receiver bridges which does away with one more part that can give problems in a scope mounting system.

The trigger is a well-made unit, adjustable for weight of pull from 4 down to 1 1/2 pounds. The rifle booklet advised against adjusting the trigger lower than 2, but it was quite reliable and repeatable at 1 1/2 pounds. The safety catch when applied locks the bolt, but there is another lever just in front of it that allows you to open the bolt with the safety on, a very worthwhile feature.

The magazine options are either detachable box or standard staggered box with a hinged floorplate, either of which can be swapped for the other at a later stage. On the stainless versions there are very few blued parts, even in the trigger mechanism, which is excellent in an all-weather rifle. Even the Doorplate and box magazine are stainless with no alloy to be seen.

On all models, the barrel is free floated, something inherited from the TRG.

This shows Sako's commitment to precise bedding as a floated barrel soon shows up shoddy action bedding. Utilizing a floated barrel continues Sako's commitment to producing an all-weather and completely reliable rifle. Brittain Wynyard, the Sako Distributors, supplied me with a Sako 75 in 7mm 08, a stainless, walnut stocked version called the Hunter Stainless. The 7mm 08 comes in the number III action length.



THE BARREL

This model is fitted with a 22 inch barrel measuring .630 inches at the muzzle, which makes it about a number 3 or medium sporter taper. This size barrel is fairly rigid for its length which is an accuracy advantage, but with a small trade off in weight. There are no open sights fitted on this model, as they are unnecessary so long as you select a good quality scope and mounts. The twist rate is a fairly standard one turn in 9 1/4 inches. The metalwork fit and finish is excellent and has all been bead blasted to reduce reflection.

Specifications	
Barrel length	22 inches
Overall length	42 1/2 inches
Weight	7 1/4 pounds
Mag. Cap.	5 rounds
Twist	1 in 9 1/4 inches
Metal Finish	Stainless, matt
Stock	Walnut, oiled

THE STOCK

A straight grained piece of walnut has been used for this stock. It has a palm swell, cheek piece and a forend similar to what the earlier Sako Hunter had. It is fitted with a red rubber butt pad with a thick black spacer. The

Bullet	Powder Grains	Muzzle Velocity fps	Comments
150gn Sierra Pro hunter	- -	2521	Federal Classic Factory
140gn Ballistic Tip	- -	2634	Federal Premium Factory
140gn Ballistic Tip	- -	2759	Remington Premier Factory
130gn Sierra MatchKing	H4895 42/43	2917/2995	Accurate Maximum
150gn Sierra MatchKing	H4895 39/40	2598/2668	Accurate
140gn Nosler Ballistic Tip	H4895 41/42	2777/2860	Accurate

checking is well executed with a curved dividing section. It looks good and provides a sure grip. There is a bronze Sako emblem under the pistol grip. Stainless sling swivel studs are fitted in keeping with the rest of the rifle. An oil finish has been used on the walnut, this started to fade after a couple of days hunting in the rain. The advantage of oil finishes of course is that they are easy to touch up by rubbing a little more oil in and they look great. The stock feels good between the hands and overall the rifle is very pointable. Also available is a stainless synthetic stocked version. The synthetic stock has soft rubber inserts instead of checkering, which is very non-slip.

THE CALIBRE

The 7mm 08 is one of the more recent and also the smallest in capacity of the popular 7mm cartridges. It was developed as an American version of the old favourite, the 7x57, by necking down the 308, although the capacity is slightly less. Being slightly shorter, it fits a short action better than the 7x57. If you are using factory ammunition, the 7mm 08 is a better bet, as it is loaded to higher pressures and therefore velocities. The 7x57 factory ammunition as a rule is loaded to much lower pressures because of the array of older military rifles available in this calibre of unknown condition. The same can be said for the 7mm 08 as is said about the 7x57, it is a pleasant shooting cartridge that provides good ballistics considering its size and recoil level.

ON THE RANGE

I fitted a T series 24x Weaver benchrest scope in Sako rings to this rifle for the range work. Sportways Distributors, the Weaver agents, have kindly supplied this excellent scope for use in Testfires. It is a pleasure to use for range work.

The Sako rings have a curved, plastic insert in them that allows the scope to line up straight without any torquing or bending of the tube which is a great idea and saves having to lap out of line rings.

I shot Federal Premium 140 grain Ballistic Tip's, Federal Classic 140 grain Sierra Pro Hunters, Remington Premier 140 grain Ballistic Tip's and handload's with Hodgdon's H4895 powder, Sierra's MatchKings in 130 and 150 grain and Nosler 140 grain Ballistic Tip's. All in Federal cases using Federal 210 match primers with all bullets seated to a 5 thou jump. This rifle was a pleasure to use off the bench and the largest group fired with it measured 1 1/2 inches down to the smallest of 3/8 inches. (I use three shot groups to test light or medium weight hunting rifles, but five shot groups to test heavier hunting, varmint or target rifles.) As usual, it was possible to beat the factory velocities by varying margins with good safe handloads, some by quite a substantial amount. Accuracy wise, all the factory ammunition performed well in this rifle, but not surprisingly the handloads cut the group sizes even further. This particular rifle shot best right at the maximum load, which is ideal for a hunting rifle where you want velocity to flatten the trajectory and increase energy.

The usual caution applies, these loads were safe in this rifle, but not necessarily in other 7mm 08's.

HUNTING

I fitted the beautifully clear Swarovski 3-9x scope testfired last issue, courtesy of New Zealand Ammunition Company and went hunting. The deer were particularly scarce, but we finally spooked a Sika hind and yearling on a scrub face and they made the mistake of pausing to look back in the tussock creek bottom. We were 200 yards up hill on a knob behind them and as they weren't going to hang around for long, I promptly sat down, rested on my knees, and squeezed off on the hind's neck as that was all I could see of her. I was pleased to see her jackknife to the ground. Once we reached her, we could see the 140 grain Ballistic Tip Remington ammunition had done the job.

The 8.25 lb all up weight of this rifle and scope made it easy to hold steady off my knees which helped with the shot.

CONCLUSION

Sako have done a magnificent job of designing this new series of actions/rifles. The combining of a stainless barreled action with a walnut stock gives you rust resistance with a traditional look. This rifle is of medium weight, which makes it very easy to shoot accurately with, yet still light enough to carry up the steepest hills. The 7mm 08 cartridge is a very popular medium

range calibre, capable of taking all New Zealand game animals with little fuss. The model 75 will be just as sought- after in the future as the earlier Sako's are now and I bet you'll see these actions showing up on custom built rifles the world over.

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