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Review: Holland & Holland Takedown Magazine Rifle

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Holland & Holland's takedown rifle can be opened up for easy transportation or storage. The Model Takedown's .375 H&H, and the dropped-hump African plains game version as well as North American elk.

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Gear Editor

By Joseph von Benedikt

Unlike most of the dangerous game cartridges of the era, Holland & Holland's .375 H&H Magnum was designed for bolt-action rifles. This was 1912, still pre-World War I, when the United Kingdom and Germany were on amicable terms. Paul Mauser's turnbolt was being hailed as the greatest development in sporting and military rifle technology, and H&H chose to use Rifle rimmed cartridges to work with the long magazine cartridge.

The rifle featured in this column was built with double-set triggers and a drop-box magazine that holds four cartridges. Its stock was checkered, and its barrel was blued and tapered. The rifle's sights were Holland & Holland's from 1914 to the 1960s. The front sight is a classic Holland & Holland and features a fine blade, a large folding ivory bead for low light use, and a folding hood.

Well-figured walnut, petite lines, and fine checkering define the stock. The only non-original part is Kendall's the Parkmaster "Old English" rubber recoil pad. A metal cap with a trapdoor is fitted to the grip, and generous sling loops are fitted to the bar of the stock and around the barrel a few inches in front of the fore end tip.

A lovely old-fashioned power Swarovski scope is mounted in a robust quick-detach rude mount. Interestingly, the rude scope mount consists of three main elements plus rings. The base is actually two pieces. One is screwed to the front left side of the action just aft of the front receiver ring; the other is both dovetailed and screwed into the rear receiver ring. The scope is secured in rings fixed to a cross piece platform that mates into the new pieces fixed by leveling in a deep slot in the front, then dropping into a rear slot above a cam lever rotates and secures the lot.

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Mechanicals

Holland & Holland's modified Mauser's function just like any other H&H bolt-action design, so rather than spending space on the basics, I'll detail a few of the unique characteristics of this rifle.

First, this rifle is a takedown and requires nothing to take it apart and put back in a case. Unlike many takedown designs, the action and barrel do not separate. Rather, the rear action lung is curtailed and formed into a bayonet-type element, and it slots forward a short long-dropped housing set into the rear of the action mortise. To assemble, hook the action lung in place, gently swivel the barrelled action down until it seats in the stock, and screw the front action bolt home with a coin, torquing it as firmly as possible.

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The Holland takedown design, the .375 H&H cartridge and sample ammo using nickel-plated brass.

A unique rear arrangement is fitted to the action to lieu of a trigger assembly and interfaces with the double set trigger that sits just rearward of the bottom metal. To set the triggers, simply pull the rear trigger firmly forward, then release. The front trigger is set by pushing the rear trigger forward, then pulling the front trigger alone, without first setting the rear, results in a fairly stiff pull of 3 pounds, 4 ounces.

Provenance

Video That May Interest You

This rifle belongs to renowned wildlife artist Michael Coleman, and he obtained it several years ago through Holland & Holland's bespoke gunmaking firearms in Kodi, Montana. Close examination indicates the metal parts, stock, and barrel were relieved at some point.

Once, en route to Arusha, Tanzania, the rifle got broken (non-through of the wrist. Understandably, agitated at the airline, Coleman sent it back to Holland & Holland, who refitted the wrist with a steel rod and bird-fix brass so perfectly that unless you know where to look, it's invisible.

Kit is Kitchen to pursuit of a big-boned, Coleman shoot out. However, Botswana wanted him a considerable price by offering up a tremendous bale. The .375 Holland & Holland spoke its piece, and Coleman brought home a 64-inch bull. To put that in perspective, a 60-inch bulls is the holy Grail of the species—the equivalent of a 200-inch whitetail buck.

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Over the years, Coleman has used the fine old rifle on African plains game as well as elk.

Rangetime

The rifle and the original case designate 300 grain bullets, so I selected a few good loads and fired two, three shot groups at 100 yards with each. Even though the bare rifle weighs only 8 pounds, 3 ounces, recoil was tolerable. Accuracy was outstanding, with the best load shooting a 1.25-inch group. Ammo used included Hodgdon's 300 grain Partition, and it produced three shot clusters with all three bullet holes touching.

With the scope removed, I tried a few fast shots with the iron sights. The stock is superbly engineered for the sights, and the rifle relaxes, points, and balances almost as well as a British side by side shotgun.

Holland & Holland's Takedown Magazine rifle is the perfect marriage of a versatile cartridge, an action that changed the world, and a craftsmanship that is unsurpassed. It's no wonder rifles such as it became the standard by which all others are judged.

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