

Pump-Action or Semi-Auto Shotgun ?

Is one really better than the other? That depends...

The pump shotgun has been glamorized in movies and TV shows and has been the beneficiary of continuous favorable propaganda indicating it's the best choice for combat purposes. There is no doubt that a pump action shotgun has many features that offer confidence to the gunner. With that said, most realistic comparisons will show the semi-auto to be a better choice under most circumstances. Both systems have a long history in military action and this is where the real differences begin to be seen.

Speed of action: To be sure, fast follow-up shots and general speed of action can be pretty fast with the pump type of action. However, when combat soldiers are already experienced with the pump action shotgun and then get the opportunity to use a semi-auto they invariably prefer it. The semi-auto is faster and therefore becomes the favorite. Some men will claim they (or their gun) can fire just as fast as a semi-auto.

To be fair these guys are usually pretty fast but a test with a timer and multiple targets-n-tasks will show that the semi-auto is significantly faster for realistic use.

Reliability: Others will proclaim that the pump action is more reliable and on casual reflection it may seem so. However, in the military training environment we see many forms of malfunction and difficulties with the pump action whereas these issues are rare with the semi-auto guns. It is a fact that the Remington model 1100 gas-operated semi-auto shotgun is the reigning king of reliability subjects. One un-modified 1100 is said to be still going after hundreds-of-thousands of rounds without mechanical failure and only normal routine cleaning. This having occurred over a period of more than 30 years of active shooting! No other firearm of any kind can boast such a record!

However: There is one important subject where the pump action might be preferred. That is when "specialty" ammunition enters the picture. Many types of specialty ammo just don't generate enough gas pressure or inertia to adequately work the action of a semi-auto shotgun. That situation is non-existent with a pump action.

So, the summarizing remark for this subject should go something like this... Both types of action must be considered as good to excellent. The semi-auto is usually a better choice for operations using standard ("store-bought") types of ammunition. After that, personal preference, cost and availability will all weigh heavily in choosing either system. Without exception it is training, practice and drill that will develop procedures to deal with any perceived shortcomings of either action type. It is the individual's responsibility to become proficient with his chosen weapon.

Remember, Smokey the Bear says, only YOU can return fire!