The Saved-Off Shotgun

Contrary to popular myth, shortening the barrel(s) of a shotgun doesn’t improve hit probability or damage at all. The practice serves primarily to render the weapon more compact. Hunting guns have long barrels, making them unwieldy in combat – and if you want to conceal one under a coat or wear it in a holster, removing the stock makes sense, too. Sawed-off double-barrel scatterguns are more handy on the seat of a stagecoach (the origin of the term “riding shotgun”) or in a belt holster!

On a double-barreled shotgun, cutting the barrels down from a normal hunting length of 26-32” to a “riot gun” or “trench gun” length of 18-20” removes -1 from the Bulk penalty. Weight drops by 1 lb., too. The barrels can be cut even shorter; to a “whippet” configuration of 8-12”; this removes -2 from Bulk and lowers weight by 2 lbs., but increases muzzle blast (+1 to Hearing and Vision rolls to locate it firing in the dark).

On a single-barreled repeating shotgun with a tube magazine under the barrel, the barrel can only be sawn off to the end of the magazine. Weight drops by 0.75 lb. Bulk is unchanged.

On any type of shotgun, sawing off the shoulder stock removes -1 from Bulk and lowers weight by 1 lb. It also reduces Acc by 1. Multiply ST by 1.2 (round to the nearest whole number) and increase Rcl by 1 (but not if Rcl is 1). A folding stock (p. 160) may be more useful.

These effects are cumulative. In some times and places – notably the U.S. from 1934 – such modifications will also lower the gun’s LC from 3 to 2.

Example: At the O.K. Corral in 1881, ”Doc” Holiday carried a Belgian Meteor 10G 2.875” double-barrel – similar to the LeFever (pp. 104-105) – in “whippet” configuration. The original gun, with 32” barrels, had Acc 3, Wt. 10.3/0.3, ST 12†, Bulk -6, and Rcl 1/7. With cut-down barrels and stock, it has Acc 2, Wt. 7.3/0.3, ST 14†, Bulk -3, and Rcl 1/8.

From 1985, it comes with a 3” chamber as standard, allowing it to fire 3” shells (Dmg 1d+2 pi, RoF 2×12, Shots 4+1) as well as 2.75” ammo. It’s also made in 20G 2.75” (Wt. 7/0.45, RoF 2×7). As sold off the rack at a sporting goods store, the magazine is plugged to take only two rounds (plus one in the chamber) due to U.S. hunting laws. The plug is easily removed; this requires five minutes and an Armoury (Small Arms) or IQ-based Guns (Shotgun) roll.

The Model 870P (1969-) is designed for police service, has a shorter barrel and an extended seven-round magazine: Wt. 8.3/0.8, Shots 7+1, Bulk -5, Cost $400. An optional folding stock, available from 1972, gives Bulk -5*. This weapon is also offered in ”cruiser” configuration, with a 14” barrel, no stock, and a pistol grip: Acc 2, Wt. 6.7/0.4, Shots 4+1, ST 12†, Bulk -3, Rcl 1/6. The KAC Masterkey (1992-) is a cut-down variant, mounted on a rail (p. 161) under the barrel of an assault rifle or carbine: Acc 2, Wt. 6.0/3, Shots 3+1, Cost $1,900, LC2. It adds -2 to the host weapon’s Bulk.

Franchi SPAS-12, 12G 2.75” (Italy, 1979-1994)

Designed from the outset for police and military use, but confusingly called the “Sporting Purpose Automatic Shotgun, 12-gauge” the SPAS-12 could function as either a gas-operated semiautomatic or, at the touch of a button, a pump-action shotgun. This allowed it to use any 12-gauge shell that fit its chamber – even if the load wasn’t powerful enough to cycle the action (such as 12G 2.5” ammo and many of the less-than-lethal rounds under Exotic Shotgun Ammo, p. 103). A folding stock came standard, but it was also available with a fixed stock (Bulk -5).

The SPAS-12 is still in service with several European and South American military and police forces.

Armsel Striker, 12G 2.75” (South Africa, 1983-1989)

Intended as a riot and home-defense gun, the Striker fired semiautomatically, feeding from a revolving cylinder with a loading gate. A clockwork spring turned the cylinder. Reloading was slow (three Ready maneuvers to put each round in its chamber; plus two more Ready maneuvers to wind the spring). The weapon had a 12” barrel and a folding stock.

Several U.S. producers manufactured this shotgun under license as the Street Sweeper (1986-1994). This version had an 18” barrel to comply with American laws: Wt. 11/1.3, Bulk -5*, Cost $2,000.

In South Africa, the externally similar Reutech Protecta (1989-2004) replaced the Striker in production. This weapon automatically ejected spent cases and did away with the clock spring (skip the two seconds to wind it when reloading), instead using a pump-action mechanism to turn the cylinder. The Protecta was available with a 12” barrel (treat as Striker but with RoF 2×9) and an 18” barrel (treat as Street Sweeper but with RoF 2×9), and as the Protecta Bulldog, with a 7.5” barrel and no stock: Acc 2, Wt. 6/1.2, RoF 2×9, Shots 11, ST 10†, Bulk -3, Rcl 1/6, Cost $1,500, LC2. Due to the Bulldog’s muzzle blast, Hearing and Vision rolls to locate it firing in the dark are at +1. It can be seen in the movie Desperado.

Benelli M1 Super 90, 12G 3” (Italy, 1984-2005)

The Super 90 is a recoil-operated semiautomatic shotgun, famous for reliability and fast handling. It features a full stock with a pistol grip. The weapon can fire both normal 2.75” shells (in the table) and longer 3” Magnum loads (Dmg 1d+2 pi, RoF 3×12, Shots 6+1). It’s widely used by police units and antiterrorist teams.

The M1 Super 90 Entry (1992-2004) had a short (14”) barrel: Wt. 7.2/0.6, Shots 5+1, Bulk -4, Cost $1,100.

The M3 Super 90 (1989-) can be switched to pump-action mode (RoF 2×9) when using low-powered ammunition (see Exotic Shotgun Ammo, p. 103): Wt. 8.3, Cost $1,170. The M3T Super 90 (1990-) is similar, but has a folding stock: Wt. 8.6, Bulk -5*, Cost $1,170.

The M4 Super 90 (1999-) is gas-operated but operationally identical to the externally similar M1: Wt. 8.3/0.7, Shots 6+1, Cost $1,470. In 2002, it entered service with the U.S. military as the M1014. The M1014 has a telescoping stock and integral rails (p. 161) for a sight.