

HEYM PH

A sensible double in lots of good chamberings

BY CRAIG BODDINGTON

Much credit for the resurgence of the double rifle belongs to the German firm of Heym. In the mid-1980s Heym's Model 88-B Safari was one of the first new double rifles marketed in the United States. It was a time when nitro express ammo was almost unobtainable and the classic double seemed destined to go the way of the dodo bird. Back then it was actually priced similar to vintage boxlock "working doubles," but it offered new steel and modern machining.

Times have changed, and the double rifle has come back strong. The double requires much hand fitting, and there's that knotty little problem of getting both barrels to shoot together. So the double is more costly than most (not all) bolt actions. But the gap has narrowed, with more work now done with modern machining. New, attractively priced doubles like the Merkel and Krieghoff have come into the market; and at the same time, as desirability increased and inventory decreased, prices for vintage doubles have skyrocketed. During this period the Heym 88-B Safari increased in price considerably, and for some years Heym has been fairly quiet in the double rifle market.

Enter the newest Heym double, the 88-B Professional Hunter, or "PH." The Heym PH is essentially an 88-B Safari simplified, and thus more economical. It uses the exact same boxlock action with double underlugs and Greener crossbolt. It is an ejector gun with cocking indicators left and right on the tang. It is built by hand, but the silver-finish receiver has no engraving, and primary options are limited to barrel length and stock dimensions except for one important difference. The Heym PH is available in more chamberings than any other "more or less production" double rifle. Ten centerfire rifle cartridges, plus 20-gauge barrels are available (additional barrels are also available).

Available rifle cartridges are .300 Winchester Magnum, .375 H&H, .375 Flanged, .416 Rigby, .500/.416,



My shot on this Zambezi Valley buffalo was about 90 yards, no problem for a well-regulated double like the Heym PH but pushing it with iron sights. The light was good and the presentation was ideal, and Hornady's DGX bullet dropped the bull within 40 yards, as good as it gets. The .450/.400-3" is truly perfect for buffalo.

.450/.400-3-inch, .458 Winchester Magnum, .450-3/4 inch NE, .470 NE, and .500-3-inch NE.

Personally, I'm jazzed by the rimmed cartridges. Compared to a bolt gun, a double has relatively weak extraction, so a cartridge with a rim for the extractors/ejectors to bear on is a sensible hedge against a slightly sticky case. However, in recent years the choices have been limited. The .375 Flanged and .500-3-inch have both made comebacks, despite current availability in the U.S. only from smaller manufacturers such as Superior. The .500-416, a Krieghoff development, is a great cartridge, but also not readily available in the U.S. Most available and most popular has been the .470, available from Federal for 20 years.

The Heym PH is available in all of these rimmed cartridges, but there are two additional chamberings that I find of special interest, .450-400-3-inch and .450-3/4-inch NE. Both are vintage rimmed cartridges, once quite popular in both double rifles and single-shots. Hornady has reintroduced both in available and affordable factory loads. The Heym PH is the first modern double rifle to be regulated with Hornady ammo.

Okay, what do I like about these cartridges? The .450-400 (.450 case necked down to a nominal .40 caliber) propels a long, stable 400-grain bullet at about 2,100 fps for about 4,000 foot-pounds of energy. With solids it was

found thoroughly adequate on elephant. In today's Africa it is still adequate for elephant, but I consider it absolutely perfect for buffalo. Its advantage, compared to the .450-and-over cartridges, is that it produces very mild recoil.

The .450-3/4-inch was John Rigby's 1898 cartridge, the first big bore case designed for smokeless powder. Its formula of a 480-grain bullet at 2,150 fps, producing 5,000 foot-pounds of energy, has been widely duplicated. However, the advantage of the .450-3/4-inch is that its straight case can be housed in a trimmer action than cartridges based on the .500 case (such as the .470), and since its straight case has less powder capacity, it offers better load density with modern powders.

The last couple of years I've used the .450-3/4-inch in a Rigby double with perfect satisfaction. A buddy of mine, professional hunter Ivan Carter, also has a .450-3/4-inch and he's used it as his backup rifle for years. His is a fairly ornate Heym 88-B Safari, and until now his is the first and only rifle built by Heym in that chambering. He started with a set of .458 Winchester Magnum barrels and had Heym reamber them to .450-3/4-inch.

Me, well, I used Heym doubles back in the 1980s in both .470 and .500, and I was intrigued by the sleek, clean lines of the new PH model. I didn't need another true big bore, but I love

The Heym PH is a simplified version of their time-proven Model 88-B Safari, with good wood but no engraving. The action is a "triple lock" boxlock with two underlugs and Greener crossbolt, with raised cocking indicators left and right of the opening lever.

the performance and light recoil of the .450-400-3-inch. So I managed to get in the first order for a Heym PH in that chambering. Donna has no problems (or pain) with a Ruger No. 1 in .450-400-3-inch. I thought it would be a good thing to have a double we could share.

So, in due time, the first Heym PH in .450-400-3-inch arrived. It's gorgeous. Engraving is nice, but clean metal ain't bad, and the Heym PH is trim and beautiful. I ordered it with 26-inch barrels and a dead-straight stock with no cheekpiece, so righties and lefties alike could use it. At about ten pounds (just right) the rifle handles like a dream, and regulation with Hornady ammo is perfect. When I do my part, the barrels print side-by-side at 50 yards. Recoil is present but not unpleasant.

So far we've had the Heym PH .450-400 on two safaris, in Botswana in April and the Zambezi Valley in June. In Botswana, Donna used it on her first elephant and, almost but not quite, her first use of a double rifle and open sights. She and Ivan Carter were stalking a fine bull hidden behind a tall bush, hoping for a side-on brain shot. They moved right a few steps to clear the brush, but apparently the bull heard them. He moved to his left

(also our right), and they had a head-on encounter at about six yards. Donna wobbled a bit left on the tricky frontal brain shot, but that's what a double rifle is all about. As the bull spun around she saved the day with a fast second shot, and when we caught up she made a perfect shoulder shot. Yes, the .450-400 is adequate for elephant, even those Botswana monsters.

As I write these lines I've just finished a Zimbabwe safari, carrying the .450-400 for myself. I started with a tuskless elephant on license, but although we saw a couple, we were unable to wrinkle them out of their herds in thick jess. There were multiple mock charges, but thankfully, no shots fired, and I found the Heym PH in my hands to be extremely comforting. In midstream we made an area change, and a National Parks ration quota bull permit became available. PH Andrew Dawson found a bull that fit the criteria, and as we approached for a shot he came in a full-on charge. Andrew shot just after me, and I'm very glad he did, but the video replay was quite clear. The little .450-400 stopped the charge cold.

We also had some time to hunt buffalo. After playing cat-and-mouse with a big herd we caught a lovely old

bull in the clear on our side, the mass of buffalo just a few yards behind him. The shot was pushing 90 yards, not necessarily a long shot for a well-regulated double, but a long shot for me with iron sights. The presentation was good, slightly quartering to, and I had time to kneel down and get steady. The first shot with a Hornady DGX (Dangerous Game Expanding) looked good, but the bull swapped ends and ran behind a leafy tree. Just as he disappeared I fired the second barrel, but I knew the hit was a bit low and forward.

The herd exploded into motion, and there was no way to pick out the right buffaloes. Then they stopped and looked back, and we imagined (hoped?) that our bull was down behind that tree. Indeed he was, down and out less than 40 yards from receiving that first bullet. If I was primarily interested in hunting elephant I might consider one of the larger cartridges, whether .450-3/4-inch, .470, or .500. But if I were looking for a double for buffalo and such that I might someday use on elephant, I'd choose the .450-400-3-inch. And if I were looking for a well made, reasonably priced double rifle I'd take a close look at the Heym PH – in whatever cartridge appealed to me. 🐘



The Heym Model 88B PH is nothing more, nor less, than a plainer version of Heym's highly respected—and more expensive—Model 88B Safari double rifle. There are no mechanical differences, with lack of embellishment the major change.