




DRIVING A 400-GRAIN BULLET TO A MUZZLE VELOCITY OF RIGHT AROUND 2,150 FPS, THE .450/400 IS, IN MY OPINION, A **PERFECT BLEND** OF MANAGEABLE RECOIL AND KILLING POWER.

A Brand-New OLD PAIR OF SHOES

BY PHIL MASSARO



There are few times in life, when you pick up a rifle and immediately know that everything about it is perfect for you. Not the usual “I can work with this,” or “with a few stock adjustments this will be okay,” but a rifle that absolutely fits as if it were custom-made for you. I have found just such a rifle, and had the opportunity to take it on the adventure of a lifetime.

I somehow found myself leaning on a sapling in the forest of Mozambique’s Coutada 11, whispering back and forth with Professional Hunter Poen van Zyl and his tracker Gorchie. I was looking at a nice Cape buffalo bull over the fine iron sights of a double rifle, mouth dry and heart racing. The small herd we found in the forest area of Zambeze Delta Safaris’ concession was on the far end of an opening in the thick forest, and the stalk required a trek of over a mile through some of the thickest bush in the area. Mahogany and teak – well covered with creeper vines – interspersed with the occasional acacia, all bound together with some lovely scrub bush made for a very interesting stalk. The difficult vegetation was coupled with the fact that my hunting partner Chris Sells, my wife Suzie, and cameraman par excellence Doug King were in tow. When Gorchie slowed his pace even further, and began that slow panning that is universal to all good trackers, I knew we were close. When he froze – mannequin style – I froze in like fashion. Poen motioned to me to hide behind the burned log to our immediate left.

The Heym 89B seems to float to the shoulder, the fine sights align in a most natural manner.

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“The herd is just here; we must crawl a bit closer to get the shot. There’s a good bull in this herd, and I want you to take him.” Poen’s heavy Afrikaans accent was music to my ears. It was late morning, late in the season, and the Mozambican sun was throwing a party, causing the winds to swirl. Though I was concerned about the herd getting our scent, I crawled behind this talented young man, hands and knees bleeding from the multitude of thorns and other wonderful sharp things on the forest floor. A very brief discussion pointed out the bull and the shot placement, and I leaned that rifle against the aforementioned leaning sapling, and settled in for the shot.

The whole hunt came together over a phone call between Chris Sells –of Heym USA – and I. We wanted to hunt buffalo together and he just so happened to have a new rifle coming out. Not just a rifle, but a double rifle, and a honey of a double at that. Heym has become an industry standard in the double rifle game, and with very good reason. Their popular Model 88B is simultaneously well-balanced, utterly reliable, and reasonably priced. There are varying grades, in a wide selection of calibers and accoutrements, and every one I’ve ever had the pleasure of shooting has left me with a positive experience. However, this double rifle was entirely new.

Chris told me, “This new Model 89B is an entirely different animal, compared to the 88B. We’ve really taken our time in revising the entire package. The receiver has been rounded, the barrel contour has been slimmed down, and the pistol grip has been opened up to give a much better feel. The 89B is a whole new rifle, and we’re very proud of it; it’s in the style of the classic British doubles, but with fine German engineering.”

He wasn’t incorrect, in the least. This particular rifle was chambered in the venerable .450/400 3” NE, a classic caliber that has is just about perfect for buffalo. CALLOUT FOR OPENING PAGES Driving a 400-grain bullet to a muzzle velocity of right around 2,150 fps, the .450/400 is, in my opinion, a perfect blend of manageable recoil and killing power.



Author’s safari kit, complimented by the Heym 89B in .450/400 3-inch NE



Professional Hunter Poen van Zyl and author in pursuit of Cape buffalo

I strolled into my local gun shop – Coxsackie Gun & Bow – to fill out the necessary paperwork, and when I opened the handy little travel case that contained the stock in one compartment and the barrels and forend in the other, a small crowd gathered around to see exactly what I was on about. A piece of marbled walnut, with figure that seemed to dance even in the fluorescent light of the shop, was carefully worked into a stock that immediately screamed classic. The hand-engraving on the receiver was spot-on; enough to give it class, but not so much as to be gaudy. The screws, from trigger guard to grip cap, were all timed perfectly, and embellished with a master’s touch; this was a labor of love. The slender 26-inch barrels had a deep, rich bluing, complimented by an island of express sights, with the wide V sight calibrated for 50 yards, and a finer, flip-up sight for 100 yards, and a bright white bead at the front. The package was rounded out by a slender forend, adorned with meticulously crafted metal, and when assembled, the marriage of steel and walnut came alive.

Two bronze-colored triggers, set at the perfect distance from the butt, needed no looking for; when the rifle is brought to shoulder, they are right where they should be. I was snapped back to reality when an innocent question was posed.

“Is that a shotgun with sights?” A young hunter, growing a small patch of facial hair and looking at me as if I were holding as foreign an object as he’d ever seen, was as clearly intrigued as I was, even if from different perspectives.

“Nope, kiddo, this is as fine a double rifle as you’ll ever see – the first of its kind.” I talked to him and some others for a bit, but I could not wait to get to the range.



A happy young man who decided the entire buffalo foreleg was his own.



The Heym 89B was a natural fit for a buffalo hunt, especially in the forest area of Coutada 11

Chris and I had booked with Mark Haldane's Zambeze Delta Safaris, to hunt Coutada 11, for Cape buffalo and possibly some plains game. It was the last hunt of the year, November 20 through December 1, with our goal being to take a buffalo in the forest area, with the famous Marromeu swamps as a contingency plan. Haldane has a very unique and special situation in Coutada 11 – it's really three eco-systems rolled into one hunting block. There are those famous swamps, where hundreds, if not thousands of buffalo per herd graze happily on the table-like flats, then there's the flood plain that is interspersed with the low palms. It all transitions onto the forest area, where open pans are surrounded by those vine covered thickets.

At the airstrip, we met Poen van Zyl and company, and I knew we were in good hands. Though he's a young man – we actually celebrated his 29th birthday on this hunt – he exudes confidence in all aspects of the hunt. We checked the rifles on the first day, and got a feel for the concession. In the afternoon, we took a couple of young reedbuck for the community; that is a part of ZDS's agreement, and that protein was put to very good use. It was the second day of our hunt that we cut that buffalo spoor that led up to me leaning on that sapling, looking at that bull in repose.

"Take him just under the curl of the left horn," Poen instructed. I held the double as steadily as I could, in spite of the sheer excitement that is buffalo hunting, and felt myself go cold inside. That bright front bead settled down on the spot just under the horn, and I broke the trigger of the right barrel. Though I couldn't hear the impact, I could see he was hit, but he was immediately covered up by the rest of the herd, which ran from the forest's edge to a clump of trees about 120 yards into the open pan. Milling around the wounded bull, as bovines are so apt to do, it was a few minutes before the bull came clear again on the left side of the herd.

I gave him another, actually knocking him down, but in his resilience he ran off another couple hundred yards to a small patch of cover and lied down. On our

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A well-earned trophy: an old dagga boy taken with an iron-sighted double rifle

approach, I could see his head was still up, in spite of his stiffness and wounds. He looked at me with hate and fury in eyes, in the manner that only a buffalo bull can do, and gathered all his strength for the charge. His body was just off the ground when a left and a right from the 89B ended the fight; he was an old bull, bosses worn nearly flat from years of rubbing on trees, with the huge hooves that come with age. Though I stood over this magnificent animal, he wasn't mine; he belonged to the community – not just the meat, but the head and hide as well.

There were the congratulatory slaps on the back and handshakes – both traditional and the African three-point handshake – and a bit of video before the photos were taken. I was most happy to have had an opportunity to hunt an animal that I have an immense amount of respect for – Cape buffalo hunting is my favorite hunting, you see – with a rifle that, though brand new, is an immediate classic. Using a double rifle – or any iron-sighted gun – requires a bit more effort, in that you must get a bit closer to the animal to ensure the shot is placed properly. In this modern era of scope-sighted rifles, which I love dearly and will continue to rely upon, it was refreshing to change things up a bit, and the quick second shot engendered a ton of confidence. With dangerous game of any sort, confidence in your gear is paramount. As things were wrapping up, and we were making the preparations to load the bull

Technical Info

Heym regulates their doubles with Hornady ammunition – a company that provides a healthy amount of selection for the double guns, including some of the more obscure calibers like 9.3x74R and .500/416 – and their .450/400 3" ammunition worked just perfectly. Being a handloader, I wanted to cobble together my own loads, so I picked up some Peregrine BushMaster 400-grain softpoints and correlative solids, and Chris and I discussed the load data that would work best for this rifle. We settled on a suitable charge of Hodgdon's H4831SC in Hornady cases, sparked by a Federal GM215M primer, and were more than pleased with the results. A right and left printed under an inch at 50 yards, and at 100 would sit just about three-inches apart, in spite of a pair of eyes in their mid-forties. This is more than acceptable for a double rifle, and gave me a ton of confidence for our hunt. After a few weekends of diligent practice with the 89B, the rifle, gear and ammo were packed up for the long journey to Mozambique.



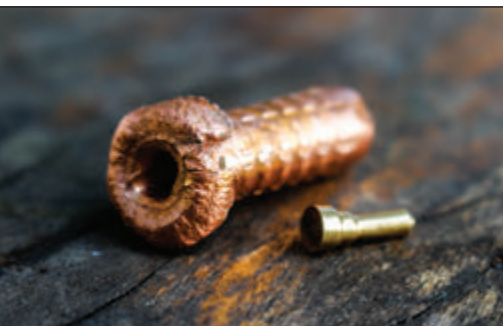
The Fight Against Poaching

Zambeze Delta Safaris runs an aggressive and effective anti-poaching campaign, using both helicopters and motorcycles. Each year hundreds of snares and gin-traps are removed from the bush, as well as their owners. The result is a block with one of the most flourishing game populations I've ever seen, and it's only getting better. After the Mozambican war subsided, the buffalo herds numbered less than 3,000. Today's game counts indicate a herd fast-approaching 30,000.

The same can be said for Roosevelt's sable: from a remnant herd of just over 400, ZDS has well over 3,500 sable, and we saw them every day. ZDS also has an irrefutable tie to the indigenous community; in addition to a brand-new school for the local children, they provide an incredible amount of meat to the community, and also provide a healthy source of employment.




Zambeze Delta Safaris uses a helicopter for anti-poaching, funded by a grant from DSC.



A recovered Peregrine BushMaster bullet, found against the offside shoulder of the Cape buffalo. Performance was perfect.

onto the cruiser for delivery to the village of Peau, I pulled Chris aside. "You do realize, old friend, that what you've done here is to make a brand-new old pair of shoes?"

The Heym 89B pays homage to the roots and traditions of the British gun trade, while taking full advantage of modern German technology. The classic lines, in a rifle that carries like a dream, and floats to shoulder, chambered for a cartridge that is equally effective and pleasant to shoot, makes for a guaranteed winner. 

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