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Cold steel twistmaster

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- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Folders -



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Description :

The cold-steel reproduction of Opinel.

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I was looking on the Wholesale Sports website in Canada when I noticed that they had a Twistmaster on sale. I'd been intrigued by reviews of the Opinel and thought that I'd like to see one of these too to compare. Naturally after ordering I found that I'd forgotten to get an Opinel at the same time to compare. I haven't owned one of those in years.

Many years ago when I used to take kids out into the bush for survival stuff, I'd picked up some Hackman folding knives of the balisong pattern except with plastic handles. They went along to people who wanted them - and are actually illegal now in Canada. I'd always thought that that design would be the best for a folding survival knife. Given the fact that that avenue is closed, the Opinel design seems the most logical for a locking blade. I was looking forward to handling such a knife to see if what I remembered was still true.

After weeks of delays because part of my order was unavailable, the Twistmaster finally arrived. I thought it strange that the box seemed heavy, since most of the order had been cancelled and I should just be getting a knife. I'd checked that the knife was Carbon V steel because I wanted to see if it was heat treated as well as the fixed blades - but I had assumed because of the price that I was getting the small model. I'd have to say that taking a large twistmaster out of a box is suitably shocking! It's huge for a pocket knife! No-one is going to be carrying one of these in a pocket unless they like hearing the Mae West line.. In the provided belt sheath you'd be able to take it anywhere since it looks more like a torch than a knife.





Basic Specs:

The handle is 5 3/4" long, and the blade is a little over 5". I have the drop point which has a maximum width of blade of a little under 1 1/4" - 3mm thick. That's some folder! The cutting edge is one large smooth curve with no straight section. You could make an awesome recurve out of this knife. The handle is sharply checkered Zytel and the locking ring is well stamped out of what appears to be stainless - with a matt finish. The knife came with a simple but tidy cordura pouch with velcroed flap.



Why??????

That's the question that I asked myself when I opened the package. It's sort of in three parts: Why did I get this monster knife without checking size, why would anyone want this - and why did I want such a design even in a smaller size?

I could have checked size - the mail order put me through to the department so that I check if the knife was still in stock. The clerk there was especially concerned that I knew that the Carbon V blade rusted since I live on the coast - decent! So we had no time to talk size, and he must have figured that I knew the size since I had read about the knife on the website. Anyway I got a steal of a deal!

After carrying the knife around for a while I got used to the size - and it really isn't a pain to carry. I can see where some people would like a large knife but are shy of carrying anything that might get in the way - or pose a safety hazard.

One is swamped with folding knife possibilities until one wants a cheap sturdy knife with good steel and an oval cross section handle. Then the choices evaporate. I can't think of any alternatives - except for the Opinel - with such a comfortable handle.



Details:

The knife arrived in fairly sharp condition but with a few dings in the edge. It took a fair bit of work with a flat surface and fine emery cloth followed by cardboard and green buffing compound to reprofile the edge. The grinding wasn't very consistent and I wanted to smooth out the curve of the edge right off. Once this was done performance in cutting took a dramatic leap ahead. There just isn't a short way to put a good edge on a cheap knife, and even with large abrasive surfaces this step took a lot of time. The good news is that the final edge is very good, retains sharpness as would be expected of Carbon V - and repays the effort.

The strange blade shape pays off when holding the knife well forward for peeling tasks. For sober adults only - if you are into trying the blade smith tests of cutting freestanding coke cans, falling paper, etc.. You just may have a real surprise when comparing this knife to your very expensive bowies. Properly sharpened of course..

The opening was fairly stiff, and even with some graphite sprayed in is taking a while to smooth up. It was tempting to disassemble the knife and smooth things up - but I'm curious as to normal smoothing by use. The locking ring is smooth and works fine! Initially there was some lateral blade play but this seems to be disappearing - I have no idea why.

The handle is great! It's comfortable to use with heavy cutting. The diamond texture is a little sharp, but if necessary that can be sanded easily.



The Test:

So far testing has been pretty basic. I wanted to test basic cutting before using a baton to cut down some trees. I had a couple of hours to sit on the beach and whittle some hard driftwood and spruce. I used three knives: a 3 1/2" Mora, a Gerber Bolt Action folder and the Twistmaster. As might be expected, for complex cutting the Mora with a narrow blade outperformed the folders. The greatest surprise of the afternoon was actually the Gerber: I had reprofiled the edge and polished it. The finer edge made an incredible difference in cutting and the edge held up remarkably well. Just as important was the fact that with the better edge and easier cutting, the handle didn't bruise the hand with heavier cutting. Eventually the better ergonomics of the Twistmaster and Mora handles proved out and this was actually more significant than the better blade steel since the Gerber edge held up well too for a short cutting session. For longer cutting sessions the Carbon V will far outclass the Gerber stainless.

The bottom line is that the Twistmaster is one awesome knife. It's one solid folder with a potential to be made more solid. If you need a solid folder with great steel for a great price it just can't be beat. The downside is that it doesn't take too long to see that a fixed blade is far more practical. A Mora is cheaper, has steel that is almost as good, is even more ergonomic and handier. I sure like the Twistmaster though, and I'll be picking up some smaller models which should prove handier.

To be sure I'm prejudiced against folders - simply because a knife is so much used in the bush. Opening and closing a knife leads to walking around with an open blade when all the opening and closing becomes tedious. With the large TM you pretty well have to use the belt case so most advantages of a folder being pocket able are lost. In addition it will take some work to get it to a one handed opening mode. With all of this against it - it is still one awesome knife.

Final Thoughts:

As explained the knife simply doesn't have enough strength in the locking mechanism to withstand much batoning. It's also a poor bet for prying of any type. Well those are the problems of most folders. Cliff Stamp did some tests on full grinding the edge on Opinel knives and it really does apply to this knife. If you are going to have a slicer, then you might as well make this into the slicer of all time by lowering the edge bevels as much as you can. You'll need a belt sander to go the whole way, but a simple coarse garden hone will let you do a lot of reprofiling. Then sharpen and

polish the edge.

So - a year and a half later - I'm still experimenting with the knife and its uses. I'm pretty happy about what I've learned and the fun I've had with such a cheap and effective knife! The bad news is that the opening mechanism is still very stiff despite lots of use. The good news is that the more you lower the bevels, the more slicing ability you get and the blade shape gives you lots. Very few knives will whittle very fine fuzzy sticks as easily as a reprofiled version of this one. Just remember that it doesn't have the capability of splitting wood to provide the kindling. But a hatchet or even a sharp rock will do that part...

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).