

Firenock review by Glenn DesOrmeaux (Feb 10, 2007)

Firenock v1.1

I received the test package of Firenocks from Dorge, and was immediately impressed with the quality of the product and packaging. The individual components were packaged in little bags, and made everything easy to sort out. The instructions were easy to understand, and the color photographs were of great use. However, numerous spelling and grammatical errors were noted on both the installation sheet and the header card, taking away from an otherwise very professional package. I have included an additional file, in which I retyped all of the mistakes from the instructions and header card.

The installation began very simply. I would highly recommend a warning at the top for customers to completely read the instructions prior to attempting them. This would ensure complete understanding, and may result in fewer mistakes. On the first two installations, I used AAE Fastset Gel. Both installations went very smoothly, although I must recommend that it is much easier to put the gel on the battery holder instead of inside the arrow shaft, as it is much easier to get a bead on the outside of an object, rather than the inside. The last installation is where I hit a stop. I had worried about what would happen if the battery holder did not slide smoothly into the shaft, and on this installation, I found out - the hard way. The battery holder went about a half-inch into the shaft and stopped. The AAE Fastset Gel quickly bonded the two together, and I was stuck. That is, until I called Dorge for recommendations. I was given instructions on how to break the bond, by placing the point of a sheet-rock screw into the battery holder and hitting it's head on something solid. This did dislodge the battery holder. However, I wondered what would happen if I wasn't able to back the battery holder out of the nock end of the shaft, and couldn't get the insert from the other end removed. Fortunately, I was able to pull it straight out the nock end. I had to dislodge the screw from the aluminum battery holder, and then do some mild repair on the holder with a pair of pliers, in order for it to be able to contain the battery, and not have

a sharp edge on the outside portion. I was actually impressed that the o-ring kept itself in place, and intact. I re-installed the third Firenock with 5 minute epoxy, instead of the AAE Fastset Gel, and it slid into place much easier. My recommendation to everyone would be to use the 5 minute epoxy, as it is probably the best lubricant / adhesive for this purpose, and allows you more time to work with the nock install.

Now that I had all the nocks installed, I went into the process of fine tuning them, turning them slightly so that they lined my fletching up well with my Whisker Biscuit rest. On the first two, that I had used the AAE gel on, the lineup went easily. However, on the arrow that I had problems with, I discovered a new problem. The inside of the shaft had slight scoring / glue residue on it from the initial install, and the nock would "catch" inside the shaft, not allowing it to move smoothly within the shaft. Instead of finite adjustments, the nock would "jump" over a few millimeters each time I attempted to turn it with the Gold Tip tool. In addition, each "jump" would turn the light on or off, without me being anywhere near the actuator. So in a three step "jump", the light would go on, off, on again. It wasn't a problem, and I was able to get the nock lined up properly, but I wanted to note it, as I found it odd that the light would go on and off every time the nock "jumped" inside the shaft. Adjustments on the other two were smooth and easy. This may have been, and probably was, a one-time occurrence due to my problems during initial installation.

The placement of the actuator magnet went smoothly and easily. I used scotch tape to hold it in place temporarily while I checked for proper actuation. I would recommend this idea be placed inside the instructions, as it was much easier to check actuation without needing an extra hand to hold the actuator in place. The directions note using 91% alcohol to clean both the magnet and bow area. I have never been a huge

fan of alcohol for cleaning, due to residue that may be left there. Although it probably wouldn't be a problem in this application, I instead chose to use my favorite - Denatured Alcohol - instead of the recommended cleaner. I find that I receive a much cleaner surface, with no residue remaining. I have enclosed pictures of my actuator installation on the riser of a 2004 Hoyt ViperTec compound bow. At this time, I would like to make another suggestion - have the actuator magnet anodized some other color than shiny silver. To have a fully camouflaged bow, with a shiny silver button on it, is a distraction to many. Immediately after noticing how much it stood out, in conjunction with the shiny brass insert weights that Trophy Ridge puts into their sight bracket, I decided to make a change. I chose to color my actuator (and the TR weights, and anything else shiny) with a permanent black marker after the initial testing, and found no adverse affects.

The next item that I would like to discuss is arrow length. If you begin the installation on arrows that may be too short, without reading the full directions, you may be very upset when you get to this step (installing the actuator). I know the recommendations from most arrow manufacturers is to have an arrow that extends 1 _" past the far side of the riser. However, I have seen several people, including myself, that have their arrow shafts cut short. "Short and fast" is what I used to say. Little did I know that it wasn't that much faster, and by cutting them that short, I was actually stiffening the spine to the point that I was almost over-spined. However, some archers like their arrows short. If they install the Firenocks into their short arrows, and then begin to attempt to find a place for the actuator that is 2" away from the tip of their arrow, they might have a problem. The magnetic field created by the actuator is a problem if tips are placed to close. I pulled back one of my shorter arrows, without a Firenock installed, just to check this theory - Yes, it does affect it. I was amazed that the actuator actually affects the tips position within

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something as stiff as a Whisker Biscuit rest. I will no longer be able to shoot these short arrows from this bow with the actuator installed. Not a big deal for me, as I have started using longer arrows late last year, but this may cause problems for others, and should be addressed - either with a warning at the top of the page, discussing this fact in detail, or with a warning at the top of the page telling the customer to read the entire directions because of this potential problem, and then putting the warning in red at this step, so the customer sees the problem that may be created.

Now that I have the Firenocks installed, I went to my target in my back yard for initial testing. I do not have enough room on my range for long distance testing, but I wanted to do some initial tuning anyway. At 15 and 20 yards, I saw absolutely no change in where the arrows were hitting, compared to my arrows without the Firenocks installed. The arrows with Firenocks installed all flew true, and the lights lit every time, with no failures. I shot 33 rounds with the 3 arrows - grand total - 99 shots without a single failure. That evening, I had to shoot right before dark, in that portion of the evening that would be considered "the witching hour" while in the field. That last half-hour between sunset and pitch black dark would be a great test. Luckily, my backyard is pitch black after dark, so I was able to get a good feel for what these would look like at night. I shot another 20 rounds of 3 arrows. Not a single failure. No distractions when shooting, but I was able to see my arrow all the way to the target. My wife, as well as my next-door neighbor quickly got interested in what I was doing. Neither are archers, but watched intently as I loosed each arrow. "That's pretty neat", my wife exclaimed. "I've never seen that before", was my neighbors reply. Both watched me intently until dark, which was a first time occurrence. My neighbor, although friendly, is a quiet person, who normally just waves and says hello, then continues what he is doing. My wife, although supportive of my habits, does not

express interest in archery. However, both were transfixed on this practice session. I found that meaningful enough to mention that two non-archers took interest in the sport simply because of lighted nocks.

With no adjustments made so far, I took a trip a few weeks later to a friend's house that has much more room in his back yard. I was able to shoot at 25, 30, and 35 yards. I learned a few things quickly. I did have to make minute adjustments to my sights (gang adjusted them just a hair to compensate for an average 1" drop at those distances), and I also found out that I need to start practicing a bit more at 30 and 35 yards! I got "into a groove" after my first dozen shots, and started placing arrows closer together. With the need to practice a bit more at longer distances, I spread out my sessions to 18 arrows at a time - 6 arrows (3 with, 3 without Firenocks), 3 rounds each, and then a short break. I did this for 5 sessions that day, all during broad daylight, totally 90 shots (45 shots without Firenocks, 45 with Firenocks) The 45 shots taken with the Firenock arrows were much easier to see, all the way to the target, even in broad daylight. Not a single failure in the group - 15 shots per arrow, 3 arrows - 45 shots. Towards the end of our day, I didn't want to shoot the unlit arrows any longer. I forced myself to, simply because I wanted to continue the verification of my sight adjustments.

I intended to take these Firenock nocked arrows to the woods, shoot them into the woods right before dark, and see exactly how far I could get away from them and still see them. I have not been able to do so, mostly due to inclement weather, but my college studies have also taken up much of my time, and have not allowed me to perform this all-important portion of the testing that I wished to conduct. I have not given up on getting this done, but found it important to submit a preliminary report in the meantime, as I promised Dorge I would do so over a week ago.

My preliminary findings on the Firenock are good. I had a few installation issues, which I noted above, and I believe the packaged directions and header card need a lot of work. Such a fine product deserves to be promoted correctly, and I believe the wording on the enclosed literature does not do it justice, and may otherwise detract from a fine product. These truly are the best lighted nock system on the market, and I am excited to be part of the staff testing them out, and helping to make suggestions for improvement. I will definitely recommend this product to friends and fellow archers.

One warning before I close - If you are shooting with a friend, or in competition, I do not recommend shooting first. My friend was kind enough to refrain from shooting my lighted nocks, but he did admit that it was "mighty tempting", not to mention "distracting" to him when he shot. He had to make a genuine effort not to shoot my nocks.

All the best,
Glenn DesOrmeaux
Firenock Field Tester