

Evaluation of
Wilson Combat Starburst Suru
Carbon Fiber with Titanium PVD Frame Lock folding knife
Item Number WTK-Suru-PVDB

By

Kevin Hutchison

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INITIAL IMPRESSION

Several features of this little lady immediately caught my attention: the unique ball tip at the end of the pocket clip, the thick but petite blade, the bronze-colored screws set against the contrasting black starburst handles: one side being titanium and the other G10, and the Physical Vapor Deposition finish of the blade and titanium handle. This is a very attractive folding knife that may offer tremendous potential.

HANDLE

From end to end, the handle measures a mere 3.5". At its widest point, it measures only 1.25" and 0.75" at the narrowest. The sum of these dimensions produces a very compact package.

This Suru has two different handle materials. The left side is G10, a very strong resin composite and the right side is made from titanium – an incredibly strong metal. In high-grade form, Titanium has a tensile strength of around 65,000 PSI. Essentially, tensile strength is a given amount of force necessary to pull an object apart. This scale will be, for all reasonable intents, indestructible. Additionally, the critical components of the blade's locking mechanism are contained within the titanium handle and can be replaced by the user if need be, further enhancing its potential for sustained rugged use. This pairing of scales will also reduce the knife's overall weight, making it more comfortable for everyday carry.

Both scales were created with Wilson's renown starburst-like finish, offering the user the benefit of a very secure grip, which is critical on such a small knife. Those having large hands will greatly appreciate this attribute.

The handle's pocket clip is also titanium, and it is strongly attached to the handle by two brass-colored screws. This clip holds on like a snapping turtle; it will keep the knife secure in your pocket. The end of this clip contains a zirconium ball for ease of insertion into a pocket. This also provides a unique and pleasing appearance. Zirconium is a very strong metal, physically similar to titanium. It is lighter than steel and is extremely resistant to corrosion.

BLADE

The blade steel is Boehler M390. Boehler is a leading manufacturer of tool steel, headquartered in Vienna, Austria. M390 steel was developed for knife blades and offers extreme hardness (60-62 on the Rockwell scale) along with substantial corrosion and abrasion resistance.

Although the length of this blade is a stubby 2.5", it is robust, having a width of 5/32". While not specifically intended for piercing, the tip has a nice point that is backed up by a significant amount of steel. It is strong.

The blade is opened by a flipper, and it's a thing of beauty. It rises about 6/32" above the top of the handle and is extremely easy to manipulate. It is fast to get in to action and locks the blade firmly into place via a traditional frame-lock mechanism which is user-replaceable. It is equally friendly to left hand users.

The blade is a modified clip-point, offering the user pinpoint control. The blade also has a rather significant belly, making it ideal for slicing. Although I am not a hunter, I believe this could be used quite effectively as a skinning tool.

The double choil design is innovative and practical. The choil is simply the end of the cutting edge closest to the handle. Some choils are quite small while others can be large. The choil on this blade is of significant size to allow the user to place his index finger within the half-moon cutout in order to exercise greater applied cutting force and control. Those with large hands may find this feature most useful. The choil worked perfectly for me without injury, even while I was cutting heavy and thick material. One will have to determine for one's self whether using the knife in this fashion is appropriate.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first WC folding knife having a PVD finish. This is interesting because it is frequently used for kitchen and bathroom fixtures. Physical Vapor Deposition is a finishing process that results in a hard, long-lasting surface that's immune to metallic corrosion.

EVALUATION

Even though this knife is small with a blade being shorter than most other pocket knives, it is a real back-alley scrapper. I used this knife to cut over a dozen different tough materials and it sailed through them all without complaint. The real question, however, is how well does the cutting edge hold up to extreme use?

One of the primary inquisitions I like to perform when evaluating the durability and stability of a knife's cutting edge is an ice block test. This is abusive but does provide a lot of valuable information about the steel. This evaluative process involves placing the cutting edge at a 90-degree angle against a solid block of ice and then using a wooden mallet to strike the spine so as to drive the edge violently into the block. I struck the spine ten times with absolutely no damage to the edge.

Not many cutting edges can survive a vicious pounding with a hammer. This is terrible abuse in every sense of the word. After striking the edge five times, I observed a small amount of rolling, but the edge remained sharp enough to shave hair from my arm. I then cut the same items I had prior to this test and found the process nearly as easy. Our resident bladesmith easily restored the cutting edge to better-than-new condition. This is some seriously tough steel.

Because PVD finish is hailed by many experts for its advanced protective properties, I decided to dispense with other plans I had to evaluate this finish and go right for the jugular. Equally abusive as the hammer test, I submerged the entire knife into a quart of water with two heaping tablespoons of salt for a period of two days. An external examination showed absolutely no signs of corrosion or oxidization. While protecting the knife from harsh environments, the PVD finish also does a very nice job of protecting against scratches and abrasions. In addition to cutting material which could mar and scratch the surface, I also scrubbed the blade with grades of steel wool having consistencies varying from very fine (0000) to coarse with no damage.

WARRANTY

As with all Wilson knives, the warranty is a no-brainer. If the knife ever fails because of a manufacturing defect, Wilson will make it right.

When one combines the physical attributes of the Suru with Wilson's promise of enduring service, I am reminded of the words of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322B.C.), today considered the father of Western philosophy. He wrote that we are what we repeatedly do and that excellence is not act but a habit. I can't think of more appropriate words to describe Wilson's promise to their customers.

FINAL ANALYSIS:

This little blade was called upon to cut some pretty tough material, in addition to being brutalized by salt water and a hammer. The end result is that this blade can perform well under extreme duress and survive, thanks to high-end components and precise manufacturing techniques. It is amazingly lightweight and so comfortable to carry that it's easy to forget that one has it on one's person.