1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?

Posted by Salguod - 19 Aug 2011 20:06

I'm looking at the WE Pro package. I definitely want the 800/1000 grit diamond stones. But then we can compare the 1200/1600 ceramic stones against the leather strops with 5 micron and 3.5 micron diamond paste. The 1200 stone is 5 micron and the 1600 stone is 2.85 micron. So this strikes me as duplicative.

But then I'm sure that they act slightly differently. I have read SEVERAL "strop or stone?" threads on other forums and I have my own experience with strop and stone. But I'm not sure how well this relates to the Wicked Edge system because the WE has the sharpening angle really LOCKED in and people who are free handing or using less precise systems do NOT have their sharpening angle locked in.

So if we assume that we are using the WE, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using the ceramic stones or the leather strops? I gather that the leather strops are better for smoothing out the multiple bevels when you want to convex a blade. It seems logical that the stones would act like a steel and be a good way of straightening a turned edge. Would that make them better than a strop for light maintenance? Is there anything else that I'm missing?

Where do the balsa strops fit in?

Doug

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?

Posted by wickededge - 19 Aug 2011 23:41

Salguod wrote:

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Hi Doug,

That's a great set of questions and a good analysis. As you pointed out, the leather and the stones have very different action. If you look at the chart and photos on this page: Grit Chart and Photos and click on the thumbnails, you can see how differently the two act. I have yet to add images for the 3.5 strops and the finer grits along with the balsa strops, but you can see a big difference between the finishes of the 5 micron strops and the 1600# ceramics. I believe (and am working with Sandia National Labs to test) that the leather causes some plastic deformation of the metal, drawing the peaks of the scratches into the valleys.

To further confuse things, the 800# and 1000# diamonds function in a very different manner than the ceramic stones. The diamonds are much harder and have a harder substrate than the ceramics so that even though the diamonds leave deeper and less consistent scratches than the ceramics, they burnish at the same time polish and the appearance of the bevels after the diamonds have been used is much brighter. I tend to use the ceramics to refine the edge and help remove the deeper scratches from the diamonds when I'm being really picky about a knife. It's possible to exchange the 1200/1600 ceramics for the 800/1000 diamonds in the Pro-Pack and the jump from the 600# stock diamonds stones to the 1200# ceramic stones is very reasonable. To sum up - the 800/1000 grit diamonds are faster and leave a brighter finish due to their hardness. Their hardness also means that they leave deeper scratches. The ceramics leave a slightly clouded finish but give a more refined edge and shallower scratches. The ceramics require a little more maintenance than the diamonds in the form of periodic cleaning.

The balsa is a neat option as well. They don't have quite the same action as the leather in terms of the finish they provide, but they are excellent as a one step, high grit maintenance tool. Most times, the leather is sufficient for honing the edge and refining it after use. Occasionally, the edge can get rolled to the point that the leather is not able to push the edge up straight again and a stone is required which can mean dropping backward in grit and making the touch-up a two step process. In those circumstances, the balsa is firm enough to stand the edge back while still working at a very high grit and making the maintenance a one step process.

Then there are the Choseras and soon to come Shaptons.....

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by dschur - 21 Aug 2011 10:14

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I really like the ceramic stones. When I hit them in my progression I notice a huge change in edge refinement and overall reaction in scratches. I do not think I would like my wicked edge nearly as much without them and I'd recommend them as a big upgrade (not in cost, but performance). Currently I then start stropping from 5 or 10 micron on after the 1600 ceramics. It may be repeating the grits, but I feel the results are very different as the ceramics add a haze/cloudiness (while removing the diamond scratches) that the strops then take out.

You are right on the edge angle being locked down on the wicked edge. I think it gives us a unique ability to stay on the stones further into the process, which I like. I think the stones by their nature have a higher level of exactness. I am hoping that the upcoming Shapton stones just build on this and let me start stropping even later.

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by Salguod - 27 Aug 2011 00:48

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Clay wrote: "It's possible to exchange the 1200/1600 ceramics for the 800/1000 diamonds in the Pro-Pack and the jump from the 600# stock diamonds stones to the 1200# ceramic stones is very reasonable."

Hmmm...now that's an interesting thought. My initial plan was to get the 800/1000 diamonds and then pick up the ceramics later. At first blush, the jump from 600 diamond to 1200 ceramic seems large, but maybe not? Since I know that I won't be happy until I get the 1200/1600 ceramics, it makes sense to get them first. I can always go back and get the 800/1000 diamonds if I find that the jump is too large. If the 800/1000 diamonds aren't necessary, I can save some cash. But then I know that I'll want the 5/3.5 strops too.

I'll have to put my Credit Card on Stun!

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by dschur - 30 Aug 2011 19:15

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Salguod wrote:

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I'll have to put my Credit Card on Stun!

I just re-read Clay's response. If you can swap the ceramics for the 800/1000 in the pro-pack, I say do it. Spend more time on the ceramics (1200) if needed and it will pay off a great deal before heading to the strops.

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?

Posted by Salguod - 01 Sep 2011 15:34

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Ok, so the real answer is that I want the Pro Kit with the 800/1000 diamonds plus the 1200/1600 ceramics and the 14/10 strops and the 5/3.5 strops. I'll probably want the semi-round ceramics for recurved blades as well. Then I'll want 1/.5 micron strops. But I can't afford all that right now, so I'll have to settle for less and build my kit over time. So the question is what should I get now and what should I defer? I'll definitely start with the basic kit (diamond 100, 200, 400, 600) plus the Paperstone base. Then what should I add with an additional budget of $100?

I was leaning toward the 1200/1600 ceramics (5 and 2.85 micron) and the 5/3.5 strops. But now I am thinking of getting both sets of strops (14/10 and 5/3.5) instead. So my finest diamond hone would be the standard kit 600 grit (16 micron). Then I would strop with diamond paste at 14, 10, 5, and 3.5 micron. This seems like a better progression to me just from the grit size. Also, the 14/10 strops can be used on recurved blades and they are useful when making a convex edge as well. Lastly, when looking at the pictures on the Grit Comparison Chart, the strops seem to produce the best LOOKING edge. I'm not sure if that translates into performance, however.

But I wonder about if I am expecting the strops to do too much of the work. Will I be over stropping? Will I turn the edge? Would I be better off with the ceramics and the 5/3.5 strops as originally planned?

What do you guys think?

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by dschur - 01 Sep 2011 16:01

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I would go with the ceramics and the 5/3.5 strops, but I see the dilemma when optimizing for price as the strops cost a lot less, almost half.

I really like the ceramics though, and I've never jumped from 600 to them (always go via 800/1000) so I don't know how manageable that jump is.

Another thought is, if you ever add the ceramics later, the 14/10 strops will be unnecessary and you won't want to use them (my experience).

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by Salguod - 04 Sep 2011 00:26

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I know that Clay said that the jump from 600 diamond to 1200 ceramic is reasonable. I'm sure that he is correct. But I'm kind of anal about taking all the steps, and I really like the quick action of the diamonds on hard to sharpen steels like my favorite ZDP-189. So I'll probably just get the Pro Package and then add on the ceramics just as soon as my credit card recovers. I just want it all, is that unreasonable?

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by davidmcm77 - 04 Sep 2011 22:43

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I'm with you, I got the pro pack, and the ceramics will be on order here soon. I saw what Clay was able to do with the pro pack plus ceramics and 3.5u strops on the knife forums. Fantastic results!

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Re: 1200/1600 ceramic stones or strops?
Posted by gofly - 05 Sep 2011 07:20

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.(I just want it all, is that unreasonable?)

I did the same thing, just wanted the ceramics just because, I also ordered the 10/14 strops to go along. I think I can just touchup an edge with the strops that way. I don`t think that is unreasonable either. I figure when all the new do-dads come out I will probably get those too. Dang it this knife sharpening thing is addictive and I haven`t even got my WE yet:lol:

Lucky

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