

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Vic Harker reviews a Caesar Guerini that boasts traditional qualities and state-of-the-art performance



In terms of weight and balance, the modern clay shotgun can differ drastically from the qualities of feel and balance used by previous generations of shooters. Long barrels, interchangeable chokes, and elaborate ribs – adjustable or not – may be desirable, but they can alter the nature of shooting a shotgun.

I've been evaluating the Caesar Guerini Invictus I and it was a back-to-the-future experience I am still relishing. The Italian shotgun manufacturer is one of few in recent times to establish a significant customer base in the UK, and it's not difficult to see why.

Traditional forms of decoration that other manufacturers nod to are lavishly recreated and skilfully executed. Caesar Guerini guns are particularly good looking and the Invictus is no exception. The action body incorporates handsomely machined double fences and beautifully executed raised side panels that overrun the bottom plate. The engraving is restrained but equally attractive.

A sound, if conventional, mechanical design, high standards of finish and an excellent weight and balance – the Invictus possesses all these qualities. Together, with its excellent price-quality equation,

this makes for an outstanding gun in almost every department.

I would describe the lock-work as conventional, but that's not intended as a criticism. The hammers, situated side by side, engage with overhead sears off the top strap and are powered by coil springs. This arrangement is cocked by twin rods running through the action body that are activated off the forend iron when the gun is fired and then opened. The single trigger is selective and is operated by the safety-catch via the inertia block.

The jointing of the barrels to the action is by means of a tapered bolt moving forward under the breech face and engaging with a bite or slot integral to the rear of the monobloc. This aspect of the gun is relatively rudimentary and to be seen on numerous volume production guns, but the bearing surfaces that abut the barrels rear lump are replaceable by way of the Invictus block. This is a replaceable bearing surface fitted to the bottom plate that meets with the rear barrel lump and makes the rejoining of the gun a simple and inexpensive procedure. Likewise, the forward lumps that pivot the barrels behind the knuckles of the action body also incorporate easily replaceable

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

MAKER

Caesar Guerini

MODEL

Invictus I Sporter

BORE

12 gauge (18.6mm)

BARRELS

32in (81cm)

ACTION

Single trigger boxlock

CHAMBER

3in (76mm)

CHOKES

Fixed – Full and Half

RIB

Tapered

STOCK

Full pistol grip

WEIGHT

8lb 1.6oz (3.682kg)

PRICE

£3,650

DISTRIBUTOR

Anglo Italian Arms

01217 044098

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Gun Test

bearing surfaces. The system isn't overly sophisticated, but effective – the life of the gun's jointing is theoretically limitless.

Stock

The stocking of this Invictus is to the highest standards in terms of its wood-to-metal fit and configuration.

What constitutes a Sporter stock is much open to interpretation: ideally its dimensions should be dictated by the shooter's individual physical characteristics, and while this isn't possible for an off-the-rack gun, certain rules as to configuration should be applied.

Assuming the shooter adopts a classic gun-down hold before addressing the target, the comb should be relatively slim, tapering back-to-front, and the radius of the grip should be fairly open. Combined with a suitably slim forend wood, this creates that all-important hands-in-line positioning essential to a smooth coordinated gun mount. Caesar Guerini has incorporated all of this, plus an unobtrusive palm swell in just the right place. Carved from well figured walnut and fitted with a high quality recoil pad with sensible dimensions, only the addition of an adjustable comb would constitute a more attractive option.

Barrels

With an all-up weight of 1.418kg, 3lb 1.9oz, the 32in barrels have length and lightness that makes for fast but controllable handling characteristics, providing that all important

versatility essential to the Sporter. The slim, tapered rib is a contributory factor in this, as is the absence of screw-in chokes. There is, of course, a trade-off between having a choice of choke or the uncompromised handling characteristics that fixed choke barrels represent. That I would choose the latter option should not influence other people, as there is no doubting the benefits of detachable chokes. The right shot pattern for a target at a given range is the sensible option for the competitive clay shooter. I am, however, so enthralled with the handling qualities of this fixed-choke Invictus, I would be prepared to forgo this benefit.

Shooting impressions

Another factor that endeared me to this Caesar Guerini is its superb trigger pulls that rivalled any flat-spring trigger design, which I

generally consider the best option. I can only put the excellent trigger pulls on this gun down to the geometry of the sear hammer engagement and careful regulation.

I took the opportunity to shoot the gun at a number of different venues and over a wide range of targets. The long, light barrels provided fast target acquisition, with the correct sight picture quickly achieved, and, combined with the gun's excellent trigger pulls, I was breaking targets faster than usual. High driven clays could be taken particularly early and conjured up visions of being behind this gun on pheasants.

That is not to say this is a gun just for long targets – weighing a fraction over 8lb, fast incomers at close range were especially easy to deal with. This gun didn't disappoint and in my view, few other guns in any price bracket match its dynamics. ●

