



Richard Atkins has decades of experience testing guns, cartridges and accessories, and is our expert on all aspects of ballistics, shotgun performance and technical analysis



“For me its biggest advantage was its trigger pulls, which are superb”

Both the fit and the finish of the Invictus VII were excellent

The million round shotgun

A very strong weapon in the marketing armoury for the Invictus is the claim that it can withstand over a million rounds being put through it over the course of its life. It is such a massive statement that it demands close inspection. What produces Caesar Guerini's massive confidence in their product?

Central to the exceptional longevity claim is the way the action and barrels are joined together. All drop down barrel designs require some sort of hinge arrangement, be that the full-width hinge pin used in Brownings and Mirokus, or side trunnions made famous by Beretta and much used by others.

The Invictus uses a unique system: the trunnions are on the barrel monobloc, while the recesses they fit into are machined into the side walls of the front of the receiver where the 'knuckle' area is thickened to provide reinforcement. This is a reversal of the usual arrangement, but CG's innovation goes much further than that. The trunnions the barrels pivot on are special replaceable inserts, which are precision located into the front sides of the barrel monobloc. They are much larger in diameter than the normal trunnions that would be mounted into receiver side walls, so they provide a large bearing surface area for reduced stress and longer life. Should wear ever develop, replacement trunnions can be fitted by the owner, as the parts can be removed and replaced via two retaining screws.

The locking lugs can also be replaced should any wear develop. The bifurcated bottom lugs are machined into the rear underside of the barrel monobloc and sit down into the receiver floor against a full width buttress. Many guns have a similar robust locking arrangement, which is combined with a

The patented locking system gives good structural strength and contributes to the gun's durability



TECH SPEC

MAKE

Caesar Guerini

MODEL

Invictus VII Sporter M/C

ACTION

O/U boxlock SST

BARREL LENGTH

30"

GAUGE / CHAMBER

12g / 70mm

OVERALL LENGTH

48"

PULL LENGTH

15"

WEIGHT

8lbs-5.5 oz (3.8Kg)

SPECIAL FEATURES

Invictus replaceable hinge cams and locking block; Palm swell pistol grip; hard case; stock wrench

SRP

£6,200

UK DISTRIBUTOR

Anglo Italian Arms

HAIL CAESAR!

Richard Atkins gives a thumbs up to Caesar Guerini's Invictus VII Sporter, a competition gun with a million round potential

Caesar Guerini is now a very well established name among UK clay shooters. Part of that recognition comes from the ongoing success of some of the brand's famous ambassadors, and they don't come much better known, liked and respected than the family team of Richard and Tanya Faulds (soon to be joined by Faulds Junior!). Richard is one of our only two Olympic clay target gold medal winners since Bob Braithwaite's success in the Olympic Trap event at Mexico 1968.

Richard's gold came in the Double Trap event at Sydney 2000, when he set what was then an Olympic record score. The following year the Queen honoured Richard with an MBE for services to GB sport. Richard is also a multi world champion in Sporting and Fitasc. This amazing talent saw him approached by Caesar Guerini. This is how Richard came to inform the UK press that he would be moving away from Beretta to CG. At that time he said: "I am delighted to have joined forces with Caesar Guerini and I am very excited to be

working with such a dynamic company that offers such a deep product range for both the clay and game Shot. I am looking to return to the Sporting and Fitasc circuit in a big way and to be doing it in partnership with Caesar Guerini couldn't be better."

With Tanya taking her share of major Ladies' titles alongside him and son Charles making his mark on the Junior scene, it was clearly a very smart move by Caesar Guerini to bring team Faulds on board.

As Richard stated back then, the brand continues to expand its range of models for both clays and game. The company works closely with top shooters from around the world to refine models for particular markets and purposes. Innovation is in the company's DNA and developments in their guns, both large and small, are clearly useful refinements rather than change for its own sake. The new Invictus VII Sporter is actually a very fine example of this development process. There are some major features that are unique to the Invictus range, and others smaller refinements that add significantly to the creation of a user-friendly, confidence-inspiring performance.



A full set of excellent chokes are included with the Invictus VII, negating the need for after market upgrades

glossy, with no ripples or imperfections – a sign of attentive hand finishing.

The barrels are joined by full length, ventilated side ribs that reduce weight and aid cooling. A neat, low-profile top rib tapers from 10mm at the breech to 8mm at the muzzles. The top rib has a neatly crosshatched, anti-glare surface with a narrow clear channel machined centrally. A small metal centre bead and medium size white front bead complete an excellent sighting plane arrangement.

The Invictus comes with a range of eight chokes in a hard case, and they pattern well, so you do not need after-market chokes – with plastic wad patterns were superb. The 80mm long choke tubes are relatively thin, and their

20mm extensions are lightly knurled for easy grip when inserting or removing. Four slots machined into the knurled extensions provide the latching points for removal and tightening using the special C-spanner choke key. This means the chokes do not have slots machined into their end face for the more usual key lugs to engage with, so the choke bore profile is not in any way compromised and cannot be marred by careless use of the choke key.

The chokes do not weigh as much as some extended chokes. The Cylinder choke weighs only 24 grams, which is light for a steel choke. The barrels, with two chokes in, weighed just 1.544kg. This helps keep forward weight down, resulting in great balance and handling that in turn makes the gun as a whole feel lighter than it actually is. This became obvious when I asked some pals to shoot the gun; they all commented how light it seemed. The scales show it is comfortably over 8lbs, but it feels lighter.

The gun has 70mm (2¾") chambers, which is sensible for a dedicated competition gun, as there are no 3" clay target cartridges. The barrel size is marked 18.6mm bore. This is barely 4 thou above standard (0.729") bore size, so it should be fine with fibre wad cartridges. The forcing cones are lengthened to about 65mm, but their angle is not too steep and a small step is visible when viewing where chambers end and forcing cones begin. The result was that, when

full width, flat Browning-style locking bolt. The bolt emerges from the bottom of the standing breech face and engages with substantial, bifurcated barrel-locking recesses machined in the rear of the monobloc. Factor in the large trunnions and the massive locking lumps held closed by the locking bolt and it's clear that you have an enormously strong locking system.

Completing the unique set of locking features is the buttress in the receiver floor, which the locking lugs fit against. This buttress is another cleverly inserted removable component; it can be unscrewed from the receiver and, in the rare event of wear arising, it can be replaced just as easily as the trunnions. This combination of strength and modularity is how the Invictus can claim to be good for a million rounds.

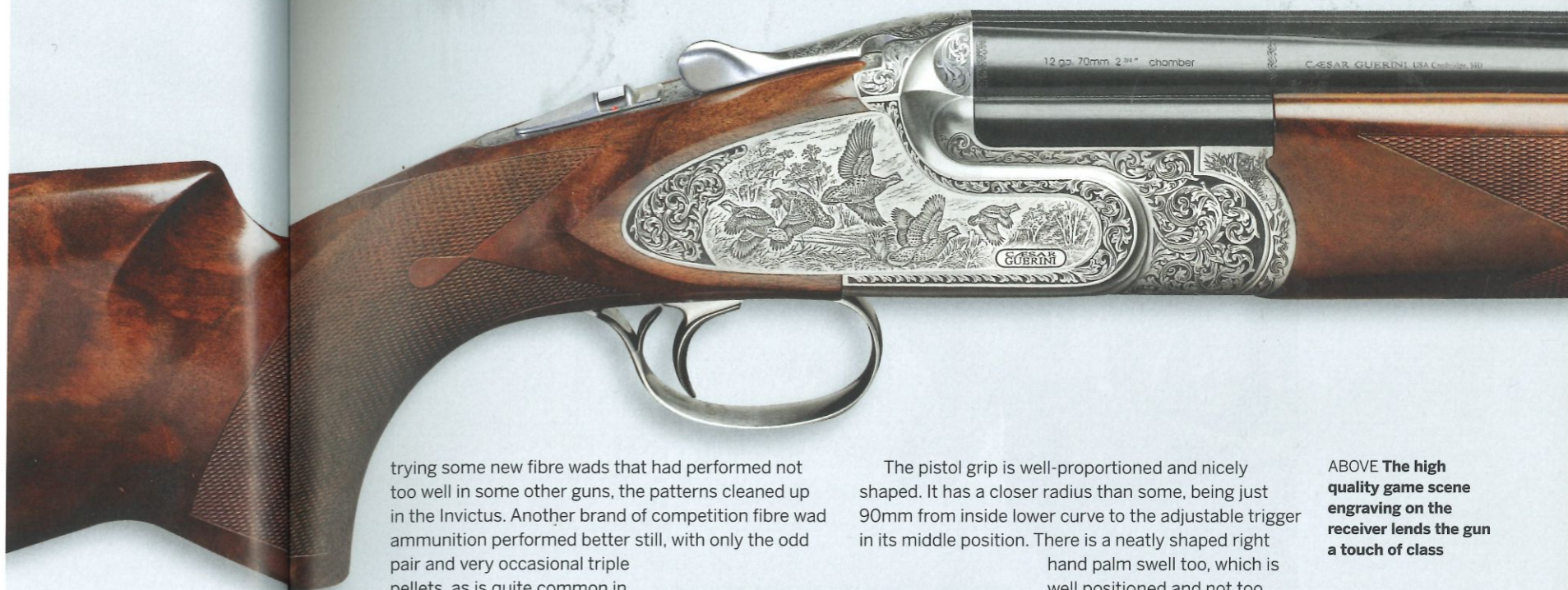
Barrels

The Invictus VII barrels are built on the monobloc system with two separate tubes brazed into the breech monobloc forged from a steel billet. The barrels are beautifully straight and have been well polished inside and out. The outside surfaces of the barrels have been precision ground to size and profile. They are slightly flared at the muzzles to accept CG's Maxis competition choke tubes, and have been polished to a deep black surface finish, which is



BELOW LEFT The gun's trunnions are easily replaceable, meaning common problems with wear can be remedied without fuss

BELOW RIGHT The barrel selector combines the necessary properties of being easy to use on purpose and impossible to use accidentally



trying some new fibre wads that had performed not too well in some other guns, the patterns cleaned up in the Invictus. Another brand of competition fibre wad ammunition performed better still, with only the odd pair and very occasional triple pellets, as is quite common in many modern guns.

Woodwork

The wood is of a nice grade, with tight grain that has been hand filled, polished and oiled to achieve a high gloss finish. It is easy to maintain these smart looks with the occasional light application of stock oil. The chequering patterns on fore-end and pistol grip are conventional, but very fine at 26lpi. This is a sign of quality wood, as otherwise fine lines would lead to the diamonds breaking away. These look and feel excellent.

I really like the fore-end style too; it is similar to a slim London-style form but with a bit more taper to its width going forward. It is deep and wide enough to be hand filling and yet provides a pointable feel.

The stock is not adjustable and has a fairly long pull length at 15 inches including a 15mm (¾") plain rubber butt pad. It has 35mm drop at comb and 55mm at heel, with around 3mm of cast of at the heel and 7mm at the toe. This came up nice and straight for me, with the two beads forming a neat figure of eight. Of the three others who tried the gun, none were my build. Two were noticeably taller and two more heavily built than I am, but the gun fitted us all! We all shot it well, each of us trying it for the first time doing as well or better than we had with our own guns. So much emphasis is put on gun fit that this came as something of a surprise; I think the extra length may have had something to do with it, but who knows?

The pistol grip is well-proportioned and nicely shaped. It has a closer radius than some, being just 90mm from inside lower curve to the adjustable trigger in its middle position. There is a neatly shaped right hand palm swell too, which is well positioned and not too obtrusive. Comfort proved excellent for all.

The fore-end also includes a special feature for the Invictus VII: it has a neat cam operated adjustment allowing the user to select their preferred tension for the fit of the fore-end. If too tight it can be backed off and if it becomes loose it can be easily tightened. Graduations designed to ensure you know

where it is set make it easy and intuitive to use. Another useful innovation!

The small-but-useful improvements don't end there. The combined barrel selector and safety catch,

ABOVE The high quality game scene engraving on the receiver lends the gun a touch of class

BELOW The hand finished stock and fine chequering speak quietly of quality

“The pulls are the lightest of any off-the-shelf gun I have ever tested”



The Invictus VII looks good, but it's not just a pretty receiver plate and well-figured woodwork; the internals are something special too





RIGHT Tester Peter Watson praised the gun's swing-through after using it to smash an incoming crosser

set conveniently on the top strap, has had its action modified. Firstly it is a little tighter and more positive in its operation. More importantly it has been redesigned so that the selector cannot be inadvertently actuated when rubbing the thumb over it to move the top lever and open the gun. On some guns, this can result in the order of barrel selection being accidentally altered when reloading, but not with the Invictus VII.

Smart side plates

A key feature of the Invictus VII, which has nothing to do with performance but everything to do with the pride of ownership, is the engraving work on the side plates. I'm the sort of guy who is happy with a plain black or brushed metal surface finish; I am not a fan of being glared at by faux-gold inlaid pheasants from poorly executed game scenes. However, although the bulk of the engraving on these side plates is no doubt the work of the highly developed laser devices, perhaps enhanced by some final touches by hand, the end result is very attractive to my eye. This does what it is supposed to do and enhances the satisfaction in owning the Invictus VII.

Summary

I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed shooting with this gun, and I was delighted that UK importer Anglo Italian Arms could allow me an extended time with it. This meant that I was able to shoot it several times and put in some scores I was very happy with, including a 46 and a 47 ex-50. Recoil is remarkably controlled. We know that actual recoil is primarily a function of shot

speed, load weight and gun weight, but the felt recoil of the Invictus VII was sufficiently smooth that everyone who tried the gun commented on it.

The feature of the Invictus VII that, for me, provides the single biggest advantage, is its trigger pulls. These are nothing short of superb. The action internals have obviously had their working surfaces polished by craftsmen with a meticulous attention to detail before being carefully assembled. The pulls are the lightest of any off-the-shelf gun I have ever tested, with both releasing at 2lb 12oz, yet they still manage to feel crisp and precise. This was a point that struck everyone that tried the Invictus VII. One of my testers was so struck by how good its pulls were that he immediately asked for the details of a gunsmith to work on improving the pulls on his own, fairly new, big brand gun! They really are that good; when your brain says 'fire', the Invictus VII seems to go off purely in response to your thought rather than any conscious effort put into the pulling of the trigger. Excellent.

I had been suffering an occasional recurrence of 'the yips' of late, a hangover from a trigeminal nerve problem a few years back. This totally disappeared while I was using the Invictus VII, so I am hoping it is a thing of the past now. Overall, handling is excellent – easy pointing, smooth swinging, no difficulty holding the line on long crossers nor too steady to make fast, close targets an issue.

A comfortable fit, decent weight and good balance right on the hinge point made this is an easy gun to shoot well with. The trigger pulls are the icing on the cake. Try one, but be warned, you might like it...a lot! 