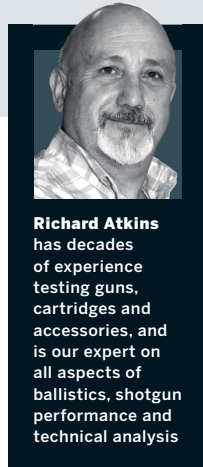




“Some guns require a bit of time to settle in with, but the Ascent and I were soon well acquainted”



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

TRIGGERING BETTER SCORES

There's a lot to like about the Caesar Guerini Invictus I Ascent, especially those triggers, says **Richard Atkins**

TECH SPEC

MAKE

Caesar Guerini

MODEL

Invictus I Ascent Sporter multichoke

ACTION

O/U boxlock SST

BARREL LENGTH

30"

GAUGE / CHAMBER

12g / 70mm (Steel proof)

OVERALL LENGTH

48"

PULL LENGTH

15"

CHOKES

8 Maxischoke Competition tubes supplied

WEIGHT

8lbs 5.5 oz (3.8Kg)

SRP

£4,530

UK DISTRIBUTOR

Anglo Italian Arms www.caesargueriniuk.com



We have featured several Caesar Guerini guns in these pages and they have so far proven very well received. This month's test gun is from the increasingly popular Invictus range, and is engraved with the designation

'Invictus I' on the underside of the receiver. There are several variations of the Invictus I; this is the Ascent, although that title is not actually engraved on the gun.

Being part of the Invictus line, the gun has replaceable hinges and locking lugs. If you remove the barrels, you can see this for yourself. Look at the hinge points either side of the monobloc. The arrangement is unlike any other, and actually reverses the more familiar trunnion or hinge pin format. The Invictus design has the trunnions set into the barrel monobloc and the recesses into which they engage are precision machined into the receiver side walls. But that's not all. The trunnions are considerably larger diameter than typical hinge trunnions, which can help to give a long service life. If they do ever wear loose, they can be easily renewed by removing two retaining screws and replaced with the next size up.

Furthermore the other potential key wear point is where the barrel recoil lugs contact their mating surfaces in the receiver. The Invictus design employs a sturdy bridge piece in the receiver floor, which provides a robust and hard wearing recoil face that is easily removed and replaced by the next size up if that ever becomes necessary. We are told that these features

ensure that a properly maintained Invictus should provide its owner with 'a million rounds plus' – now that is a bold claim!

Built for serious use

The Invictus receiver is the embodiment of a gun designed for serious and heavy clay target use. One example is the combined manual safety and barrel selector. This has the useful feature of only allowing barrel selection to be done with the catch in the rear 'Safe' position. This avoids any chance of the barrel selection being inadvertently reversed while shooting or reloading.

The overall width of the receiver is 43mm over the well crafted side bolsters, which serve to provide both additional weight between the hands and added strength and rigidity. This is achieved by the very intricate machining and finishing that creates the bolsters and deeply sculptured top fences.

The engraving is largely laser applied, but extremely well executed, with circular patterns, leaves and scrolls, plus some stippling. This produces an ornate embellishment while not being over-stated, further enhancing the overall appearance.

The engraving is signed by the famed Bottega de Giovannelli studio in Brescia who engrave guns for many leading makers. Their work is so good that it's hard to believe it isn't done entirely by hand, but that's just not economic today. I accept that engraving gains no targets but it is nice to own a good-looking gun.



The features continue, for within the Ascent internals are more helpful developments. Remove the fore-end and you will see a graduated dial within the extended fore-end iron tang. Using the key provided this can be rotated to increase or decrease the pressure applied to the rear of the fore-end loop on the barrel, adjusting the opening and closing resistance.

Barrels and chokes

The barrels are constructed on the near universal monobloc system. They are well bored, assembled with ventilated side ribs and neatly finished. The barrel tubes are bored straight, internally well polished, with the muzzles slightly flared to accept the 80mm long Maxischoke Competition choke tubes. Having been well struck-off for a smooth surface, the barrels have been, blacked giving a durable, semi matte, non-glare finish. The barrels are proofed for steel shot and carry the Fleur de Lys emblem to signify this. Bores are 18.6mm diameter with 85mm long extended forcing cones. The barrels printed their patterns close to one another at 20 yards on the pattern plate.

Eight chokes tubes are supplied, from Cylinder to Full, so there is plenty of choice. The tubes, although long, are not heavy, being smaller in external diameter than some. This is helpful because, even with the



20mm knurled extension, they do not add unduly to forward weight which helps with good feel and balance. The Cylinder choke weighs only 23 grams, the Light Mod 29 grams and Full choke 35 grams. Pattern tests showed the chokes worked well, so there is no need to buy after-market choke tubes.

A feature of the Ascent model, designed to complement the stock form, is a medium height raised and ventilated top rib. It's 10mm wide at the breech and tapers down to 8mm at the muzzle. Maximum height is 9mm with a ramped section rising from the breech. The top surface has a finely cross milled anti-glare top surface with a smooth narrow central groove that leads the eye to the small central metal bead and medium sized white bead front post. I really liked this arrangement, as I like to check my mount regularly. »

BELOW LEFT **The patented adjustable comb works well**

BELOW RIGHT **Sears and bents are well made, giving light, crisp trigger pulls**





Superb trigger pulls

If there is one aspect of any shotgun that can make a big impact on how most shooters can perform with it, it's the quality of the trigger pulls. This is the Achilles heel of many budget guns, and plenty of more expensive guns leave something to be desired in this area too. I am pleased to report that the Ascent's trigger pulls most definitely enhance this gun, and really can improve the user's performance.

The action geometry has been developed to provide top rate trigger pulls. The sears and bents are carefully assembled and finely adjusted. The key mating surfaces are then highly polished before being chrome plated. The result is trigger pulls that are reliable, light, crisp and very smooth and consistent at 2 lbs 12 oz. This gun has possibly the best trigger release I have experienced on any shotgun – simply superb.

Inspecting the internal action components clearly reveals the quality of the parts and their assembly as well as refinement in the design. Guerini call this action DPS – apparently this stands for Durability, Precision and Speed, and who am I to argue?

Woodwork

The stock and fore-end are made from a good grade of walnut with tight grain and good

figure. This has been polished smooth and oil finished for a lasting, easy care and good looking finish. The fore-end is long and has a rounded lower edge beaver tail style with finger grooves above the hand-filling portion. There is extensive fine chequering at 20 lines per inch, which provides plenty of effective and comfortable gripping area.

The stock is another defining feature of this Ascent model. It has a semi Monte Carlo form with a raised comb section, although this is not quite so high as was once popular on the out-and-out Trap guns where the Monte Carlo stock originated. The comb on the Ascent is fitted with Guerini's patented adjustable stock. This gives a nice, deep section and broad, adjustable comb that is both comfortable and effective. The components providing adjustment are made from machined metal, easily adjusted and robust.

The pistol grip has a close-radius competition-style pistol grip. It features a slight right hand palm swell which fitted my hand well. The stock and fore-end shape and fine chequering allowed me to feel the gun was under control while held with a fairly relaxed grip.

On the range

Taking the Guerini Ascent for a first outing at Sporting clays was a pleasant experience. The gun weighs 8lbs 13oz, which I consider full weight for a Sporter these days. However, the



TOP The walnut stock is polished and oil finished

ABOVE RIGHT The extended chokes are easily identified by their markings

RIGHT The dial adjusts the fore-end's tension on the knuckle





ABOVE **Richard** liked the engraving which is ornate but not overstated

BELOW **Eight** Maxischoke tubes are supplied with the gun



excellent balance and quick but steady handling quickly saw some 9 ex-10s and even a 10-straight stand on this first outing.

Some guns require some time to settle in with, but the Ascent and I were soon well acquainted. The weight and more relaxed, upright, head position combined to make recoil feel very modest and smooth. This can be a great help when shooting a lot of targets. The upright head position and excellent rib also helped me pick up targets clearly as there feels to be greater peripheral vision.

I only had the chance to set the comb position by mounting the gun and viewing the relative positions of the centre and front beads. Getting them aligned with a figure of eight certainly worked on the Sporting clays. I then fancied trying some DTL. At Park Farm I put Light Mod in the bottom barrel and Mod in the top and, using some budget cartridges, I shot a 24 ex-25, all first barrel kills on my first line. I was very happy with that, bar the lapse in concentration on target 17, a beginner's error!

The stock is quite long and gave me a length of pull of almost 15ins (378mm) with the adjustable trigger fully to the rear, but with the rounded top butt pad I avoided any snagged mounts. A subsequent point of impact test showed that my 2mm raise of the comb was putting patterns from both barrels almost on top of each other and about 2.5ins high at 20 yards, which seemed to work!

One thing we all need to be mindful of today is the growing move against plastic wads. These had become the go-to choice for almost all serious competition use, but with more grounds insisting on fibre wads it's important to check that any gun you buy is suitable. Noting that Guerini guns now have a slightly increased bore size and lengthened forcing cones, I felt it essential to check this aspect.

The bore diameters are only marginally larger than the 'standard' size for 12 gauge (0.729in) at 18.6mm. My gauge measured them at 0.733in, which is fine with any decent fibre wad. The diameter and length of the forcing cones is the key factor, and I was pleased to note an identifiable 'lip' at the end of the chambers, indicating that the bores did not start at chamber size as some do.

I took some fibre wad cartridges that had previously produced significant shot balling in some guns and tried them in the Ascent. I'm pleased to report that I experienced no significant shot balling. Yes, there were some occasional 'pairs' but no true 'balls'. Entry diameter of the Ascent forcing cones measured 0.768in, meaning that fibre wads need to expand around 0.031in less to form a gas seal than they would with some larger forcing cones.

Well worth a try

The CG Invictus Ascent is a very nice gun to own and shoot with. It is the sort of gun that anyone considering a new competition clay gun really ought to try. There are open days at venues around the UK where this is made possible. The gun looks and feels good, and it handles very well indeed. You may well find the trigger pulls a revelation. Indeed you may discover that they help your scores merely by firing the gun exactly when you want it to – I know they helped me. 📺