

Syren Julia Sporting

BRUCE BUCK

On his return trip from Troy, Odysseus passed by the isle of the Sirens (Syrens to the British). The creatures were so alluring that he had to be strapped to the mast to resist their enchanting singing.

The Syren Julia Sporting shotgun for women certainly is alluring. Many will find it so attractive that resistance will be futile. It might also be noted that the name Julia comes from Julius Caesar's daughter, who was said to have possessed remarkable personal charms, stunning beauty and elegance.

The participation of ladies in shotgunning has been increasing—and most welcomingly so. To serve this expanding market, it makes sense to produce shotguns with stocks more suited to fit the fair sex and engraving that will appeal to them. The Syren line from parent company Caesar Guerini USA certainly does that. Numerous other makers also have shotguns designed for women. The Blaser F16 Intuition, Beretta Vittoria, Fausti Aphrodite, CZ-USA SCTP Sterling, Rizzini Venus and more are intended for the distaff side.

Syren offers women 11 models of over/unders and semi-autos set up for field, waterfowl, trap and sporting clays. Our test Syren is the latest high-end sporter: the Julia Sporting. It retails for \$6,050 and has the looks you would expect for a gun of this price. A left-handed stock adds \$260, and an adjustable comb is an extra \$410. In the US the Julia comes in 12 gauge with 30" barrels, although 32" barrels can be had on special order.

I usually cover action mechanics first, but with the Julia you just have to mention the engraving. It is really something and unique in my experience. Intended to appeal to the ladies but appreciated by men as well, the sides of the case-colored action are covered in fine gold images of a long-haired damsel wafting dandelion fluff. The underside has bi-directional ladies' faces surrounded by tiny gold swirls. The gold technique by the premier Italian engraving concern Bottega Incisioni C. Giovanelli is one that I have not seen before. It may well be a modern gold metallic printing action.

The gold detail is extremely fine, and the coverage of the action is 100 percent. The trigger guard, top tang and even the opening lever have gold work. The gun is sideplated, to offer a larger canvas for this art, and the pattern is continued on the forend iron. The gold imaging really makes this gun stand out.

The gun's O/U boxlock action is straight out of Caesar Guerini's gun line. It is the same as the company's standard Summit, with monoblock pivot trunnions, a broad Browning-style lower locking tongue and two large passive locking lumps engaging the bottom of the receiver.

The trigger is adjustable over about $\frac{3}{8}$ " for length of pull to accommodate a lady's hand. It is inertial, not mechanical, so the first barrel has to go off to set the second sear. Trigger pulls were a light 3 pounds top and bottom. There was very little take-up before engagement. The





top-barrel trigger pull had absolutely no creep, while the lower-barrel pull had just a bit. In all, the trigger pulls were very good for a target gun. The manual safety (with automatic being an option) was stiff to operate and required that it be moved back to “safe” before the Beretta-style barrel selector could be moved left or right. In a target gun, this stiffness is not the problem it would be in a field gun.

The barrels on our gun were the standard 30" long. The side ribs are vented and run full length from muzzle to monoblock. The top rib also is vented and flat, close to the barrel. It tapers slightly from .40" (10mm) at the rear to .32" (8mm) at the muzzle. The top of the rib is machine-scribed, to reduce glare, and there is a white Bradley bead-on-a-block at the muzzle

and a small steel center bead, to help in pre-mounted barrel alignment.

The bore of the barrel is chrome lined for ease of cleaning and CIP rated for steel shot. As befits a target gun, the chambers are 2¾" (70mm), but the forcing cones, which Syren calls DuoCon, are a whopping 5" long. DuoCon forcing cones have two conical sections. The first ½" taper is said to maximize chamber pressure and permit the use of fiber-wad ammunition. The next 4½" cone section is supposed to increase pattern uniformity and reduce recoil. From the forcing cone to the chokes, the bore is .735". That's slightly overbore from the nominal .729".

The Julia comes with six extended, blackened, steel Maxis screw chokes. They are Cylinder (.000" constriction), Skeet (.005"), two Improved Cylinders

SNAPSHOT

Make & Model: Syren Julia Sporting

Gauge: 12

Action: Break-action over/under

Chambering: 2¾"

Finish: Fine gold figuring over case coloring, 100% engraving coverage

Barrel length: 30"

Weight: 8 pounds 2 ounces

Chokes: Six screw-ins extended ¾"

Stock: Sized for ladies, with Monte Carlo

Accessories: Case, chokes, wrench, manuals, lifetime warranty

Price as tested: \$6,050



(.010"), Light Modified (.015") and Modified (.020"). These constrictions are dead-on nominal for the choke designations—more of a rarity than you might think. Other constrictions can be ordered. The chokes are 3¼" long, with ⅞" of that in the extension. For convenience in knowing what you put where, the choke designation is printed on the extension. The choke wrench is an odd affair and a bit clumsy to use, but it does incorporate a handy thread cleaner in case soot accumulates in the threads, which it did not during our testing.

For ladies, the most important aspect of the Julia is its stock. Most women require stocks that are higher and shorter with more cast and pitch and with tighter pistol grips than stocks for the average man. The

dimensions of the Julia's stock are: 13.9" length of pull (slightly adjustable by moving the trigger blade fore and aft), 1.5" drop at comb, 1.75" drop at Monte Carlo, 2.5" drop at heel and 7° of pitch. Cast at heel is .25" and at toe is .50". (A typical men's stock would be: 14.25" length of pull, 1.5" drop at comb [with no Monte Carlo], 2.5" drop at heel and 4° of pitch. Less cast also would be common.) The Julia's pistol grip is target-sized but a bit tighter than usual to account for a smaller hand. The rear of the stock has a conservative ⅜"-thick black rubber pad to ease milady's shoulder.

The stock on our gun had heavily

figured walnut. Wood varies with each gun, of course, but Caesar Guerini has the reputation for having fancy wood. The checkering is 26 lines per inch, and the pattern is borderless and conservative. The wood was finished in an attractive hand-rubbed high-gloss oil that filled almost all the wood grain.

The 10"-long forend is slender, to better fit a lady's hand. It is checkered over most of its area for a good grip. The forend is attached by an Anson pushbutton at the nicely curved front end.

The Julia comes in a very impressive PVC Negrini takedown case. It would appear to be able to withstand anything that airport luggage handlers could inflict on it. The downside is that it is pure white—which is outstanding for looks but likely will require constant cleaning.

Inside the case you get the gun with stock and barrels in heavy flannel sheaths, the box of six chokes, the wrench, a trigger-adjustment Allen key, a long stock wrench that makes stock removal easy, some decals and an eight-language basic manual covering numerous Syren models. What isn't basic is the warranty. It's lifetime to the original owner. Caesar Guerini is renowned for its superlative and prompt repair service, so that guarantee really means something.

One more thing about the Negrini case. In the top of it, underneath a fold-down divider, are two large compartments for extra gear. This could prove to be most handy and is a nice touch.

Our 30" Julia Sporting weighed 8 pounds 2 ounces. The balance point was about 1" in front of the hinges, making the gun slightly muzzle heavy and most appropriate for sporting clays. Flush chokes instead of the extended might neutralize balance, if that is desired. I showed the gun to numerous women, and the general comment was that it fit them well. Those who shot it did quite nicely and were impressed. I also shot it and, despite being more than six feet tall with long arms, the gun was easy to adapt to. I was surprised at how well it shot for me and very much appreciated the excellent balance. The Julia functioned correctly in all mechanical respects, and the engraving drew many compliments, including a few absolute raves.

The Syren line is a great asset to our most important group of lady sporting clays shooters. The Julia model combines an excellent gun with an exceptional appearance. Fair ladies deserve fair guns, and this Julia Sporting certainly fits the bill. ✈

For more information, contact Syren USA, syrenusa.com.