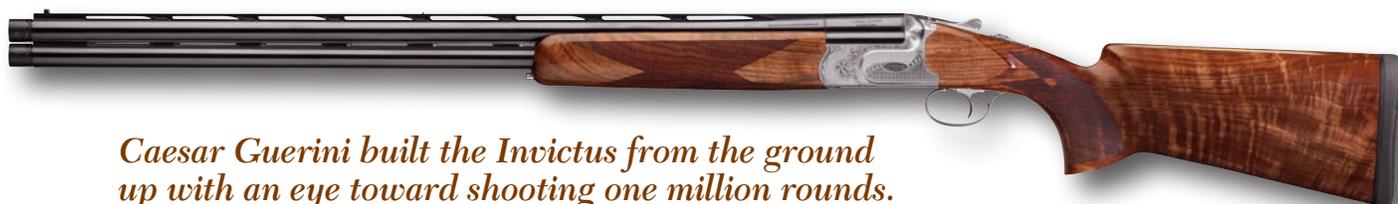


# Shotguns

Robert Matthews



*Caesar Guerini built the Invictus from the ground up with an eye toward shooting one million rounds.*

I spoke with one of our readers a few days ago, and he expressed the commonly held opinion that all reviews of firearms are “bull.” He even interjected that he had never seen a bad review in my column. I had to confess that some other gun reviews are BS. There have been times when I read another writer’s glowing evaluation of a gun that I knew from my own testing was not quite up to snuff. It happens.

The magazine business is very much advertiser-driven, which sometimes adds a modicum of pressure to give a report that is a bit optimistic regarding an advertiser’s product. The bottom line is that if the manufacturer is not happy with the review, he may spend his advertising dollars with some other publication that is more appreciative of his wares. The same can be said of lodges, outfitters, clothing manufacturers, or any other company that has something to sell. The advertiser pays the bills.

And it’s true that I don’t make a habit of writing bad reviews. How do I handle the problem of covering substandard products? Well, I start by restricting the stuff I test to products from reputable makers. I have little tolerance for shoddy

stuff and avoid it like the plague. Then I follow my Momma’s dictum: If you can’t say something good about somebody, don’t say anything at all. I simply don’t do a report and return the product to the maker. Often, I will suggest how the product can be improved, and offer to test it again if the manufacturer follows through with improvements.

All of which leads us to the new Caesar Guerini Invictus sporting clays gun that I just received. Everybody who reads this column knows that I’m not much of an over-and-under man. Not much of a “sporting” shooter, either. Left to my own devices, I mostly shoot birds with side-by-sides.

The other side of the coin is that I really like to get guns from Guerini, because I don’t ever have to worry about the quality of their product. I don’t have to worry about getting mindless, ill-considered doo-dads for testing either. Wes Lang and his crew spend their time and effort thinking through their shotguns and trying to improve what they offer—and I’m talking about *real* improvements, not sales gimmicks.

All of the above applies to their new Invictus. And, if truth be told,

I was really surprised to find out that Guerini had developed a new clays gun because they already have a slew of them—and they’re all good. On the other hand, the guys at Guerini don’t work that way, and it didn’t keep them from backing up and taking a good hard look at their existing shotguns with an eye toward improvement.

The company’s current line is based on sound, proven designs that work quite well for their intended purposes, but clays guns take a terrible beating compared to field models, and Guerini decided to fundamentally redesign the traditional over-and-under. They set out with the lofty goal of producing a gun that would survive one million rounds.

They began by building the new gun on a heavier, wider frame that provides larger bearing surfaces. Then they went to the heart of the firing system and created their new DPS trigger with redesigned hammer geometry and tighter tolerances than previous designs allowed. To complete the firing-system modifications, the hammers are coated with a new industrial chrome that not only

*The innovative design of Guerini’s Invictus is geared toward durability.*

protects the hammers, but also reduces friction.

The next step was the development of a gizmo they call the Invictus Block (patent applied for). It's a replaceable locking device that engages the front of the barrel lug, providing a broad, heavy-duty locking surface that supplement's the conventional rear bolt.

The beauty of this device is that it not only enhances the gun's durability, but in the unlikely event that it should wear out, it's easily replaced. In addition, the rear locking bolt itself is redesigned to provide an increased bearing surface, which enhances both strength and durability.

Since all of the goodies listed above guarantee a dramatic increase in durability, you would think that the folks at Guerini would've been satisfied. Not so! The next thing they came up with is probably the most revolutionary of all their redesigns.

All double guns, whether side-by-side or over-and-under, are dependent on the receiver mating properly with the barrel faces—or the face of the monoblock, if there is one. The problem is that most designs rotate on a hinge pin or on trunnions that fit into recesses in the receiver. Of course, like all mechanical devices, these are subject to wear. Over time the gun becomes loose and then the barrels don't mate properly with the breech face. When this happens, the gun is said to be "off face." At that point, the gun is either effectively trashed or requires an expensive re-build.

To cure this problem, Guerini came up with a new system that incorporates eccentric cams that are mounted on the monoblock and fit into recesses in the receiver. As a result, the relationship between the breech-block and the monoblock is



adjustable. If and when the gun comes off-face, the cams can simply be adjusted to put it right!

The combination of this comprehensive redesign is nothing less than a staggering achievement in the evolution of the over-and-under shotgun.

Did the folks at Guerini achieve their goal of building an over-and-under that will withstand a million rounds? I don't know, but having seen and shot the Invictus, I

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*The Invictus is built on a heavier frame than other Guerini over-and-unders.*

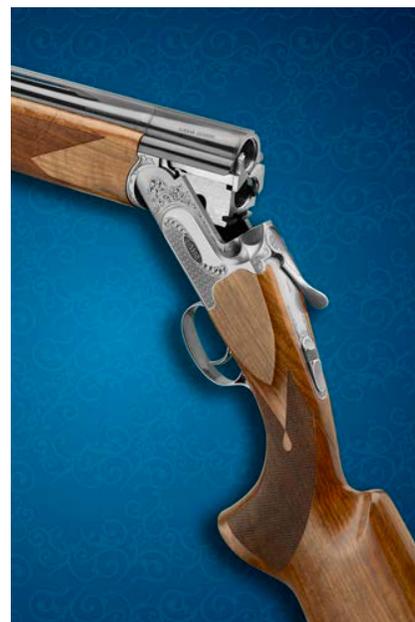


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*Easily replaceable parts and an adjustable breech-block add to the gun's longevity.*

wouldn't bet against it, but it will take someone much younger than me to prove the point either way.

### MORE GOOD STUFF

For the last couple of years I've been playing with Brian Board's proprietary gunstock finish that he calls Timberluxe. It's an oil-based formula that appears, to my eye, a lot like the finish on a well-preserved, vintage Winchester. It's hard, durable, repairable, and looks like a million bucks—and it easily qualifies for inclusion in our Good Stuff list.

I've finished three guns with it now. One was an old Ruger #1 in 7x57 that I've had for around 40 years and was once my favorite deer rifle. Simply put, it was beat up from its many years of hunting in far-flung places. My other projects included a custom Browning high-wall in .45-70 and a Browning Model 42. The little .410 pump had a perfectly fine, hard, durable finish, but I wanted a more traditional look, and got it with Timberluxe. All the guns look great and the finish wears extremely well. Good Stuff! —

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