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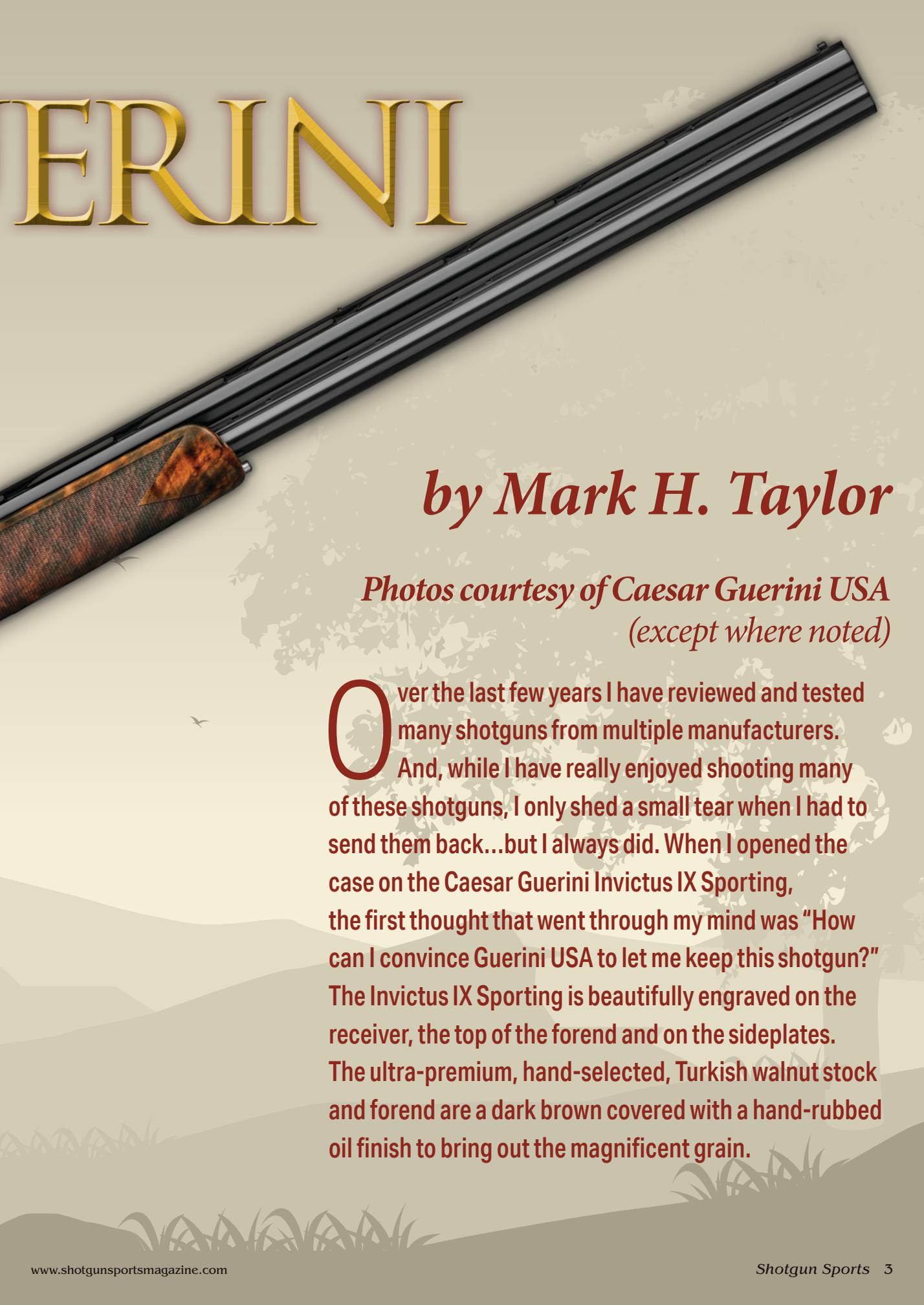
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Gun Test

CAESAR GUN INVICTUS IX SPORTING



GUERINI



by Mark H. Taylor

*Photos courtesy of Caesar Guerini USA
(except where noted)*

Over the last few years I have reviewed and tested many shotguns from multiple manufacturers. And, while I have really enjoyed shooting many of these shotguns, I only shed a small tear when I had to send them back...but I always did. When I opened the case on the Caesar Guerini Invictus IX Sporting, the first thought that went through my mind was "How can I convince Guerini USA to let me keep this shotgun?" The Invictus IX Sporting is beautifully engraved on the receiver, the top of the forend and on the sideplates. The ultra-premium, hand-selected, Turkish walnut stock and forend are a dark brown covered with a hand-rubbed oil finish to bring out the magnificent grain.



Shooting any of the Invictus models provides the avid clay target shooter with an excellent shotgun platform to be successful, but what distinguishes the Invictus IX from other Invictus models is the beautiful engraving and upgraded wood.

The 12-gauge 32" barreled Invictus IX Sporting arrived in a hard-plastic case which has a woodgrain appearance on top and classy-looking black leather on the bottom-third and handle. CAESAR GUERINI is inscribed on the top of the case in black. The case has three latches to fasten it, with all three latches having combination locks to keep it secure from unauthorized entry. The inside bottom is molded to hold the receiver in one area and the barrel (with forearm attached) in another area. The receiver and the barrel each have their own velvet sleeves to protect the wood and bluing from scratches. A half-dozen foam cutouts allow the buyer to place them around the barrels and receiver for extra protection. There is also a small open area to the left of the stock and receiver area which can be used to hold the box of Caesar Guerini chokes which come with the Invictus IX Sporting and perhaps some cleaning supplies or small accessories. The inside of the case is lined with brown felt and has a leather Caesar Guerini patch on the top of the case.

The Invictus IX assembles and dis-

assembles like a traditional break-open shotgun. Just behind the top lever is the safety which moves forward and backward. The barrel selector is integrated on top of the safety lever and moves sideways to select which barrel will fire first (when a single red dot is showing, the under/lower barrel will fire first and when two red dots are showing, the over/upper barrel will fire first). In order to move the barrel selector from one side to the other, the safety button has to be pulled back (where the letter 'S' is showing above the button). After the barrel selector is on the correct first-firing barrel, the button can be pushed up into the firing position.

Inserting some snap caps, I tried the triggers. Using my trigger pull scale, I found both barrels had an excellent break at 3.6 pounds. The Invictus IX utilizes an inertia-trigger mechanism. I next used my shotgun bore micrometer to find out exactly how they measured. Measuring the bore diameter of the Invictus IX showed both the top barrel and bottom barrel measured at .735. The Invictus IX comes with long forcing cones and six MAXIS

competition choke tubes: Cylinder, Skeet, Improved Cylinder, Light Modified, Modified and Improved Modified. The choke tubes are 3-1/8" in total length and 3/4" of that extends beyond the end of the muzzle. On the outer ring of the extended part of the choke is the marking designating what the choke is. For this review, I measured the Light Modified choke and the Improved Modified choke for constriction. The Light Modified measured .015, and the Improved Modified measured .025 — almost perfect per industry norms.

The Invictus IX comes standard with 32" barrels (however, all Invictus models can be ordered in the "M-SPEC" configuration with fixed chokes and 32" or 34" barrels). The ventilated rib sitting on top of these 32" barrels is tapered from 10mm to 8mm. The rib is adorned with two beads: a white Bradley-style bead at the muzzle and a silver metal bead in the middle of the top rib. The Invictus IX has a full-length side rib which is vented to enhance air-flow between the barrels.

Since the Invictus IX is built on the Invictus platform, it is built to last beyond



one million rounds and incorporates these seven significant modifications compared to other Caesar Guerini models: (1) the contact surface between the bolt and monobloc has been enlarged to reduce wear, increase strength and lessen the need to continually replace the locking bolt, (2) having Invictus Cams instead of hinge pins and trunnions allows the barrels to be moved back to eliminate an “off face” condition due to wear, (3) the DTS Action Control System allows the shooter to customize how stiff the action opens and closes, (4) a bushing has been added to the forend to reduce vibration, (5) the frame is wider, which increases strength and reduces friction, (6) the Invictus Block enhances the durability of the action while increasing the locking surface area between the barrels and the action — and, like the Invictus Cams, are easily replaceable to allow the system to be rebuilt like no other target gun can and (7) the DPS trigger has been redesigned making it more durable, more consistent and more precise.

The Invictus IX sent for this gun test
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was a right-hand model, as it was cast-off and had a palm swell on the right side of the stock which filled the palm area of the right hand but was not too bulky. However, a quick glance at the Caesar Guerini website shows this model can be ordered in a left-hand configuration. The stock on the Invictus IX is a straight competition sporting stock where the drop from the comb to the heel is only .75". The Invictus IX that I reviewed came with a four-way adjustable comb (up, down, left and right), which was easily adjustable with the provided wrench. The checkering on the pistol grip and forend of the Invictus IX is just below a “medium” (i.e., it is recognizable to the hands but not too pronounced to be considered sharp).

The stock has a black rubber recoil pad (which will work well when using a low mount) and the length-of-pull (LOP) measured 14.75". The wood-to-metal finish is beyond exceptional all the way around. The forend style of the Invictus IX is rounded, which is perfect for sporting as it is not too thin and not too bulky. The forend release uses the Anson push-rod

release where the button at the end of the forend is pushed down to remove it.

The receiver on the Invictus IX is deeply engraved with designs of dragons, griffins, parrots, lemurs, lions and cobras. The engraved, highly-detailed designs are stunning in the metal. In order to provide additional engraving surfaces, the Invictus IX has sideplates which (like the receiver) are beautifully engraved. The Invictus IX has a “Winged Forend” (i.e., “BOSS-style”), which means it has some metal surfaces on the top of forend wood which are also engraved. The magnificent engraving is also on the top lever and backstrap (under the top lever where the safety button is attached). Master Engraver Dario Cortini, who worked with Caesar Guerini on projects such as the Revenant and Syren Julia, came out of retirement to design the engraving on the Invictus IX.

Since I had reviewed other Invictus models from Caesar Guerini, I was sure the Invictus IX would handle just as well... but what would a gun review be without a trip to the range? So before heading out to the sporting clays course, I set the comb



Mark H. Taylor tests the Invictus IX Sporting. Photo courtesy of the author

all the way down. This presented my right eye with a half-figure-eight (where the middle bead is halfway up into the front bead) viewed straight down the rib. Before attacking any sporting targets, I wanted to pattern the Invictus IX. Standing back 15 yards using heavy 7½ shotshells and with the Modified choke installed in the lower barrel, I determined the Point Of Impact (POI) was 55/45 (since the bulk of the pattern was 1½" above where I was shooting). This was consistent with seeing a half-figure-eight bead pattern. Using the same choke and same shells, I was not surprised to see the POI for the top barrel was the same.

To shoot some sporting clays targets with the Invictus IX, I headed to the Long Meadow Game Resort & Event Center in Wiggins, Colorado. This sporting venue is fantastic and often hosts large competitions like the Colorado State Shoot and Western Regionals. While my go-to choke configuration for sporting clays is Improved Cylinder (IC) and Modified, I took the entire set of chokes with me in

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the golf cart, as I wanted to try them all during the round. Station 1 was a report pair with the "A" target being a springing teal and the "B" target being a crossing target appearing briefly between two large trees. I used the Improved Modified choke for the teal and the Improved Cylinder for the crosser. I hit all four of the teals on the bottom, as I am used to a higher POI on my shotgun. I hit three of the four crossing targets, shooting just behind the fourth. What was most noticeable in shooting this pair was how smoothly the Invictus IX came down from the top of the teal flight path to catch the crossing target.

Sometimes when I shoot the second target I come down too fast and overrun the target, but not with this gun. Station 3 was a true pair with two crossing targets going in opposite directions. I used the Modified choke for my first shot and the Light Modified for my second shot given the distances of these targets. My approach to this type of presentation is to shoot the lower target first so I can come up to the second target. This tactic worked perfectly, as I hit all eight targets on this station.

Unlike the springing teal target for which I used a pre-mounted/static mount, I used a low/dynamic mount for these crossing targets so I could get a clear view of the flight path before bringing the gun to my face. The Invictus IX came up to my face smoothly and quickly, and I did not have to adjust my face after the mount. Station 8 had a report pair with the "A"

target being a rabbit target and the “B” target coming in from a tower. The rabbit was thrown, staying airborne for six feet before dropping to the ground and rolling left to right. It was not that far from the stand, so I used the IC choke, while I shot the tower target with the Cylinder choke since it came in close to the stand at the end of its flight path. Normally, I shoot the rabbit with a low mount so I can see how the ground will affect its roll, but with this rabbit being in the air, I went with an off-the-face dynamic mount so I could shoot it before it hit the ground. And, with the tower target being in the air for so long, I dismounted between shots so I could see any deviations in flight due to wind. The Invictus IX came up so cleanly on both shots that my head position never moved down or sideways to make it right. On such a long incoming target I felt the tapered rib allowed my eyes to pick up and follow the target much easier than a parallel rib. I hit all six on this station and was feeling confident in how the Invictus IX shot.

Station 14 was the last station I shot that day. It was a report pair with the “A” target being a crossing target with the machine placed 55 yards downrange from the cage, and the “B” target quartering away from the cage. To shoot the “A” target, I installed the Improved Modified choke in the lower barrel and the Skeet choke in the upper barrel for the “B” target. Using an International Skeet-type low mount in order to get a good look at the “A” target, I missed the first two I shot at since I was not giving that target enough lead. The third time I shot that target I gave it six feet of lead and hit the back end. With my fourth shot, I gave it seven feet of lead and got a solid hit. On all four shots, the Invictus IX came up to my shoulder and face effortlessly, and the good balance of the Invictus IX allowed my left hand to point the 32" barrels right in-line with the target's flight path. On the “B” target, the Skeet choke turned all four of these targets into smokeballs. Given the angle of this target, a good follow-through was essential...and the 32" barrels on the Invictus IX helped make this happen.

Having tested other Invictus models, I felt very comfortable shooting the Invictus IX. Shooting any of the Invictus models provides the avid clay target shooter with an excellent shotgun platform to be successful, but what distinguishes the Invictus IX from other Invictus models

is the beautiful engraving and upgraded wood. At every station, someone always commented on the elegance of the Invictus IX. With an MSRP listing of \$20,995, the Invictus IX Sporting takes it to the next level by adding attractiveness and splendor to outstanding functionality and longevity. Caesar Guerini USA President Wes Lang sums it up this way: “We make the Invictus IX for the same reason Ferrari makes their top-of-the-line cars — it’s a statement for the brand.” **SS**

Mark H. Taylor has over 40 years of shooting experience. He has won many regional, state, national and international clay target competitions. He is the author of the book *Clay Target Shooting - The Mental Game* and co-author of the book *Break 'em All*. Mark is a NRA Certified Advanced International Shotgun Coach and a High-Performance Shotgun Coach for USA Shooting. He is a Caesar Guerini and Cabela's (in Thornton, CO) Pro Staff shooter, and teaches monthly beginner shotgun clinics at Colorado Clays in Brighton, CO, and travels nationally and internationally teaching coaching courses and working with world-class athletes. You can email him at coloradotaylor@gmail.com.

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