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**CAESAR GUERINI'S
WES LANG**

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*Wes Lang, President of
Caesar Guerini USA,
says he is "as passionate
today as on day one"
about his job.*

WES LANG PRESIDENT OF CAESAR GUERINI USA REACHING FOR THE STARS



Wes Lang, along with Italian brothers Giorgio Guerini (far left) and Antonio Guerini (right photo), formed the Caesar Guerini group in 2001. Its first imports arrived on U.S. shores in April 2002.



BY TONY MONZINGO

Photos by Terry Allen

"Do what you love, and you will never work a day in your life." This quote and variations on this theme have been attributed to philosophers ranging from Confucius to Thoreau, and author Mark Twain, as well as contemporary authors and celebrities.

In the firearms industry, perhaps the most ardent practitioner of this philosophy is 57-year-old Wes Lang. Lang has been President of the Caesar Guerini group since its inception in 2001 with its first imports arriving on U.S. shores in April 2002.

Another literary reference from poet Robert Burns is: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." This famous line aptly describes Lang's approach to product development.

Lang reached to acquire an equity stake in Fabarm, a sister Italian shotgun manufacturer, in 2011. The Fabarm division produces quality over/under and semi-automatic shotguns that offer high quality at a mid-range price point. If that reach was not far enough, Lang created the Syren division in 2014. The Syren division of Caesar Guerini produces over/under shotguns designed exclusively for women. The Syren's successful design includes weight, stock dimensions and styles designed for the growing number of lady competitors. The next reach for Lang? His answer is a Zen-like, "We'll see."

After graduating from college with a degree in marketing, Lang spent time in self-reflection. He concluded his best chance to be good at something was to follow his passion. His passion at the time was sporting clays, reaching Master Class and winning the Maryland State Championship.

Lang spent over a decade working at various jobs in the firearms industry, including stints with Beretta, Petersen's Publishing and SIG. He met and began a relationship with the Guerini brothers while working for SIG. Lang, along with brothers Antonio and Giorgio Guerini, formed a mutual admiration society that resulted in the formation of Caesar Guerini USA. Together, the trio sought to create a corporate culture where every employee enjoys what they do and shares their passion for product improvement.

After two decades in the same job at Caesar Guerini, many would be tempted to set the pace of work on cruise control until retirement. However, Lang's enthusiasm quotient remains off-the-charts. In conversation, he comes off like a kid in his first candy shop saying daily "this is a sweet job" and that he is "as passionate today as on day one."

As president of a successful corporation, Lang is required to wear many hats. I asked him his favorite hat, and he quickly replied: Product management, particularly the creation of new products.



Wes Lang's desire to take customer service to a higher plane led to the development of the PitStop Program, which permits the original owner of a Caesar Guerini shotgun to return the firearm for a free mechanical bumper-to-bumper service up to three times.

"I like to create new toys!" he exclaimed. Expanding on that thought, Lang pointed out with pride some noteworthy products developed under his watch. Lang bubbled with enthusiasm discussing the Invictus; a high-grade competition over/under designed to last a "million rounds." Fueled by this "next best toy" philosophy of design, the innovative Invictus was designed to challenge each owner to prove that it is, as its Latin name implies, unconquerable.

When a shotshell is detonated in an over/under shotgun, the rear of the barrels attempts to move upward. After tens of thousands of rounds, these rotational forces wear on all bearing surfaces and, eventually, the barrels begin to separate from the standing breech. This results in the barrels and action being "off face," referring to the tiny gap between breech and barrels. The gap between the face of the action and the barrels, though measured in thousandths of an inch, is critical to optimal function and safety. Through skill and a bit of witchcraft, highly trained gunsmiths can manually restore most high-end shotguns to acceptable tolerances. For engineer Antonio Guerini and Lang, the question became: Is there a way to design a shotgun whose tolerances can be quickly returned to factory specifications without extensive and expensive gunsmithing labor?

Antonio Guerini and a team of seven engineers accepted the dare to create a high-end shotgun whose durability would exceed anything on the market. For designer Guerini, the answer lay in an unprecedented solution to this universal problem: the team created a design where replaceable cams are attached to the barrel monobloc rather than the traditional design where stationary trunnions mate into slots machined into the side of the barrel monobloc. To restore the Invictus quickly and accurately to original tolerances, the cams can be removed with a single torx screw and replaced with a new cam.

Problem half-solved. To make the restoration complete, a metallic gold-colored block is attached to the bottom of the action with two torx screws. This "Invictus" block straddles the central cocking rod. Its function is to securely snug the barrels against the standing breech, both vertically and laterally. Like the cams, the Invictus block can be removed and replaced. With properly sized cams and block, the Invictus is essentially rebuilt and ready for another 300,000 rounds or more.

Not all brainstorm results in a completely new design. Lang's view of product development also incorporates his motivation to, as he says, "build the next Porsche 911." The racy look-

ing Fabarm Elos N2 RS, a redesigned upgrade from the previous Elos N2, is evidence that Lang is not content to rest on his product management laurels. The Elos N2 RS adds enough weight to cross the 8-pound threshold, reducing the recoil sensation. Other new features include the addition of a more substantial forearm and upgraded wood. This was done with a very modest increase in price, making the Elos N2 RS the best bang for the buck in its price range. Variations on the RS, including Trap versions and available unsingle, have hit the sales racks this year.

Yet another tweak from Lang's fertile imagination has been an addition to the already successful Invictus line. The Invictus M-Spec model, designed for Master Class and Pro shooters, features 34" barrels and fixed chokes. The combination of 34" barrels and fixed chokes contributes to "between-the-hands balance" and an "alive swing" by keeping weight out of the front of the barrels.

Changing hats, Lang says "I also love gunsmithing and customer service." His desire to take customer service to a higher plane led to the development of the PitStop Program, which permits the original owner of a Caesar Guerini shotgun to return the firearm for a free mechanical bumper-to-bumper service up to three times. Quality control for this service is achieved by all authorized repairs being completed at the company's Cambridge, Maryland, facilities. The turnaround time, according to Lang, is typically 15 days or less. Since most complete services occur after 30,000 rounds or so, the PitStop Program should keep even an avid competitor trouble-free for a decade or more.

This commitment to service is bearing fruit. A thorough check of popular shotgun chat rooms (often known for their oft-anonymous negative comments), produced a plethora of positive comments about Caesar Guerini's outstanding customer service. Even for the best of designers, making what you like rather than what customers want can result in slippage of sales. I asked Lang what crystal balls he uses to determine what customers want in a competition shotgun. "I don't use surveys or focus groups. I often talk to the Caesar Guerini pro-staff, and I talk to customers at the big blast shoots I attend. I am actively engaged in gathering input." With the products previously described, it is clear that Lang is, in fact, an active listener.

I followed up by inquiring how Lang uses the input when designing or improving a product. Taking my question and running with it, Lang proceeded to provide a peek behind the curtain of gun design. At its most elemental, all competition over/under shotguns are combinations of lock (the action), stock and barrels. According to Lang, great designs achieve a symbiotic relationship between the three components. A "more-than-the-sum-of-all-parts" design goal results in a lively swing and natural pointability. The achievement of excellence in design is immediately recognizable when you pick up an over/under off the rack. Weak knees, sweaty palms and the promise of a lightened wallet are common symptoms of this design phenomenon.

Contributing to this mutually beneficial relationship between components is the fact that Caesar Guerini makes their own barrels, which is the exception rather than the rule. As a result, Caesar Guerini can easily experiment with both external and internal dimensions in its constant pursuit of excellence.

Manufacturing their own barrels has also led to refinement in the design of the choke tubes. "Our research has found that putting the threads at the top of the removable choke allows us to make

the barrels with a more graceful taper," said Lang. "That, too, contributes to improved handling."

While we were on the topic of weight, Lang explained that too much weight contributes to the gun moving sluggishly and too little weight magnifies felt recoil. "A gun with 32" barrels and weighing between 8¼ and 8¾ pounds has proven to be the happy place."

Sales are the proof that each hat Lang wears makes its own positive contribution to the bottom line. According to Lang, sales have been through the roof since Covid and, at the time of this interview, production was spoken for and sold out through mid-fall of 2024.

Through all the innovation, Caesar Guerini continues to manufacture the Summit and Magnus, popular original models whose sales are a testimony to their timeliness in design and continued quality of production. Although he cheekily declined to provide details, Lang assured me that "next year's (2025) models will be even better." Lang's vision compels him to strive for the improbable today with the impossible taking a bit longer. **SS**

Tony Monzinger is a full-time instructor who has coached National, U.S. Open and World Championship Gold medalists. He has coached over 30 All-Americans. A Master's degree in educational psychology and a law degree fuel his positive, Socratic teaching style that seeks the best in every competitor. Tony was inducted into the National Sporting Clays Hall of Fame in 2015.



The innovative Invictus was designed to challenge each owner to prove that it is, as its Latin name implies, unconquerable. Photos courtesy of Caesar Guerini USA



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