

Fabarm XLR5 Velocity



The first time I ever wrote about high adjustable-rib, high adjustable-comb shotguns was with the Caesar Guerini Impact. Some of the similarly equipped over-unders I've written about since then have been the Kolar Max Sporting, Krieghoff Pro Sporter, Zoli Bilanx, and Blaser SuperSport. But when I penned that first column in this column I posed the question, "I wonder how long it will be before someone comes out with a high adjustable-rib, high adjustable-comb semi-auto?"

Since Beretta and Browning semis are so popular in sporting clays, I figured that one of these companies would be the first. But I should have known Wes Lang of Caesar Guerini USA better. Wes' Guerini Impact was one of the first of these type guns that hit the market, and I will venture to say that his Impact has been the best seller by far. For months high-roller dealers could not get enough Impacts to satisfy customer demands. Interestingly, the Caesar Guerini over-unders, at least many of their important components, are made in the Fabarm factory in Italy under Guerini supervision, design, technology, patents, etc. Further, not long ago, Caesar Guerini bought Fabarm, thus the now-apparent connection.

At the recent SHOT Show in Las Vegas, the 12-ga. Fabarm XLR5 Velocity, the first semi-auto in this high adjustable-comb, high adjustable-rib configuration, was a big hit. There was another autoloader in this "high" configuration at the SHOT Show, but that's grist for a future shotgun column.

Even while still in its impact plastic case the XLR5 was impressive. There were several other customers at Schultz's Sportsman Stop (the FFL dealer my test guns come through), and there was a lot of oohing and aahing going on when the case



The Fabarm XLR5 Velocity features a step on top of the receiver to make the transition to the high rib.

opened. The gun was even more impressive when we pulled it out of the box. At home, after getting the barrel and fore-end on the rear of the gun, there were more impressive sounds.

My test gun is a definite prototype, and as this is being written there are only two in the country, though I'm told that many XLR5 orders were written in Las Vegas. Very impressive is the walnut on this test gun. As you are now looking at some of the photos accompanying this article, it's easy to note that this wood is very special. Hopefully there will be similarly impressive wood on the guns that eventually come



The back of the XLR5 Velocity's walnut buttstock has a step down that allows a "higher" adjustable comb to the stock.

SPECIFICATIONS

Action: Gas-operated semi-auto

Gauge: 12

Weight: 8 lbs., 9.5 ozs.

Barrel: 30" or 32"

Chokes: 5 Exis HP choke tubes

Stock: Dimensions: length of pull—14³/₄" to mid-point of the trigger that adjusts back and forth; adjustable-comb stock

Suggested Retail Price: \$2,535; \$2,885 for titanium-coated receiver version

Manufacturer/Importer: Made in Italy's Fabarm factory/imported by Fabarm USA, 700 Lake St., Dept. SC, Cambridge, MD 21613; (410) 271-7067; www.fabarmusa.com



Three 1½-oz. weights that screw right into the fore-end cap are provided with this Fabarm semi-auto, allowing fine tuning of the gun's balance.

out of the Fabarm factory. Not only does the walnut have wonderful grain, the finish is particularly pleasing to my eye, ending up with just a bit of a “blonde” color touch. Further, close examination shows that the wood’s pores are very well filled in, and I don’t find this characteristic on all the shotguns I test.

The gun is hefty at 8 lbs., 9.5 ozs. The fore-end goes 6.5 ozs., pretty light as fore-ends go, even though it measures 13” in length. Width is 1.85”. Barrels will be offered in 30” and 32” lengths. My prototype test gun has a 30” barrel that weighed 2 lbs., 9 ozs.

Like Caesar Guerini over-under 12-ga. barrels, this Fabarm XLR5 Velocity has the Tribore HP system. The bore is over-bored just in front of the chamber and extends for several inches. Further toward the muzzle the bore starts slowly tapering down, all the way to just behind where the screw choke starts. I measure the bore just in front of the chamber at .739” and just behind where the screw chokes start at .725”.

There are five screw chokes packed with the gun, and they are plenty long at just over 3.5”. One chokes is marked skeet/cylinder, with the remaining chokes marked in tenths of inches (2/10ths, 5/10ths, 7/10ths, and 9/10ths). These chokes had long taper and hyperbolic curved conical sections. The latter tends to mean a more gentle reduction (constriction) from the bore to the taper section. I measured the skeet/cylinder at .725”, the same as the muzzle end of the bore. The 2/10ths measured .716” for .009” constriction, the 5/10ths .703” (.022” constriction), 7/10ths .694” (.031” constriction), and 9/10ths .687” (.038” constriction).

Obviously, the most important and interesting features of this gun are its very high adjustable rib in conjunction with the very high adjustable comb. If you are going to have the former you have to have the latter. If using a normal-configured stock with a high adjustable rib, the shooter’s head/eye position would be too low. A shooter probably wouldn’t even see the rib.

Consequently, the stock has that step-down right at the rear of the top of the buttstock that results in the added comb height. This stock configuration was pioneered by trapshooters some decades back, and, of course, it was trapshooters who also pioneered high ribs. The high and adjustable ribs are a more modern innovation.

Adjustment of the adjustable stock is conventional: loosen hex-head screws to remove the top comb. Once the top of the comb is off, there are two threaded posts that you can turn



Fabarm’s XLR5 Velocity includes five screw-in chokes at just over 3½” long.

up or down. Replace the comb without tightening the hex-head screws and start mounting the gun until you see the sight picture you want looking down the rib. If you need further adjustment, remove the top comb, make another adjustment to the threaded posts, and replace the top comb while checking again for the sight picture you want. When you achieve that desired sight picture, tighten the hex-head screws.

Your next job is to head for the patterning board paper or a pattern plate. What do you want, a pattern that throws 50% above and 50% below the point of aim, or 55/45, or what? Use the adjustment on the adjustable high rib for this. Right at the muzzle end of the rib is a small adjustment wheel. This is easy. Push down on the top of the rib, which takes the tension off the adjustment wheel. Turn the dial clockwise to lower the rib (raising your point of impact) or turn the wheel counterclockwise to raise the rib (lowering your point of impact). Unless you have to move the rib height significantly up or down, your sight picture looking down the rib will still probably be fine.

Now it’s time to shoot. The advantages of shooting clay targets with this system have been stated in every previous column that covered these types of guns, but it’s always important to reiterate them because some new sporting clays shooters might not yet be aware of these guns. First off, the head is in a more erect position, which offers several advantages: 1) recoil tends to go past a higher head position rather than up and into the cheek, 2) the eyes tend to be level as opposed to with a tilted head, and 3) with the high rib the barrel is out of sight, thus there’s a thinner, more defined relationship with the target—that being the rib.

This “look” is very different as compared to shouldering and looking down a traditional shotgun. But it is working. The last several NSCA National Championships have been won with such guns. I’m told that every year more and more of these high adjustable-rib/high adjustable-comb guns are seen at the Nationals and elsewhere. I hear that a significant number of skeet shooters are now shooting these types of over-unders. Since gas-operated, lighter-recoiling autoloaders are very popular in sporting, is there any doubt we won’t see plenty of sporting buffs making the switch to guns like the XLR5 in the near future? I think some shooters already have done this since for years Dennis DeVault has been offering such high ribs.


What's not to like about the XLR5 Velocity? Its gas system sucks up recoil, and while my prototype did not have a recoil reducer in the buttstock, I'm told that the guns that will be sold will have a recoil reducer similar to the one installed in the various Caesar Guerini Impact over-unders. I shot 1-oz. reloads at 1,100 fps out of this gun, and the action did not always function with them. The barrel has a 2³/₄" chamber, and the gas system is regulated to work with lower-power loads (as opposed to gas semis with a 3" chamber). I also shot 1-oz. steel Kent Velocity shells at 1,290 fps with no malfunctions. After all my shooting was completed for this project, it was suggested that I should have tried running a very light film of oil on the magazine tube to improve performance with very light loads. Some tweaking may be done by Fabarm to enable the gun to fire extra-light loads, but most sporting clays guys and gals do shoot loads hotter than 1 oz. at 1,100 fps.

The grip-to-trigger distance is fairly long. It was a comfortable fit for me with the trigger in its most rearward position (the trigger is adjustable back and forth). I had folks with smaller hands shoot the gun, and the grip-to-trigger distance was too long for them, even with the trigger in its most rearward position. This should be an easy fix.

I shot the gun extensively on three occasions. During my first session I unknowingly did not get a shell inserted all the way into the magazine, although I thought I did. The gun will not fire unless the shell in the magazine is fully inserted. This is a good thing from a safety point—but a potential loss of target(s) in competition. In my next two sessions I made sure I had the shell in the magazine inserted fully, and there was no problem. I've asked Fabarm to look into this, perhaps making it easier on the thumb to get the shell fully inserted into the magazine.

Don't get the wrong impression. These are small, nit-picking points, and I fully expect them to be addressed when the guns come out of the factory. Bottom line is that these are great semi-autos, and I'm betting that 10 months from now, they are going to be backordered by most Fabarm dealers.

There are two versions, the only difference a blued look to the aluminum alloy receiver I had on consignment compared to a bright receiver look to the second version, which means a titanium-coated receiver. Cost of the latter is \$350 more. All versions come with an extended bolt release. Further, three 1¹/₂-oz. weights are included that thread into the existing nut that secures the fore-end, so you can add one, two, or all three to attain the gun balance you want. I liked the feel without these weights, which had balance at the rear of the chamber with the gun unloaded.

Note how the top of the receiver has a built-in ramp that leads to the high rib. A shim system will also be incorporated into the XLR5 Velocity, allowing change of the buttstock's drop and cast dimensions. The rib tapers from 11mm to 9mm. By the time this appears in print, you should be starting to see some of these XLR5 Velocity semi-autos at your Caesar Guerini/Fabarm dealer. They're well worth a close look. 

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