

## FABARM

A REVIEW BY BRUCE BUCK

XLR5 VELOCITY  
SPORTER

SO MANY NEW GUN MODELS ARE TWEAKS OF EXISTING STUFF, BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY NEW. ENTER THE FABARM XLR5 VELOCITY, A FULL TILT, FULL RACE, ALL UP COMPETITION SPORTING GAS AUTO.

The gun has an interesting origin. Caesar Guerini had just assumed a major interest in long time Italian gunmaker Fabarm. CG had been doing business with Fabarm since CG's inception in 2000, but now they were owners. Fabarm had been marketed in the US by H&K, who sold a lot of Fabarm Red Lion semi-autos and some O/Us, but this situation was new. How should the new Fabarm USA start its product line in the US?

How about something unique? Something that no one else offers.

Fabarm's field semi-auto is good, but that market is crowded. There's tremendous auto competition from Turkey at the low end. In the middle and upper middle, Beretta's 391 and new 400 dominate. So Fabarm took it up a notch – or two or three – and introduced a feature-laden competition gas gun with all, and I mean all, the bells and whistles.

It's the XLR5 Velocity competition semi-auto and there is nothing quite like it. First the price. It begins at \$2535 for the basic black receiver gun. The more ornate silver receiver version with better wood is \$2,885. This is getting into nice O/U territory, but for the price, you get a competition gas sporter that's really ready to go.

The first thing you will notice is the high 11mm x 9mm tapered rib. It is easily adjustable via a thumb wheel at the muzzle for a point of impact ranging from 50/50 to 80/20. It permits the gun to double nicely as a trap gun. The rear of the rib is an elevated ramp to ease vision transition. In addition to the adjustable aluminum rib, there's another solid steel strip added to the top of the barrel underneath the adjustable rib. This spine increases barrel rigidity and also adds some weight to the barrel.

Adjustable ribs need adjustable stocks, and the one on this Fabarm is of good quality. The patented all-metal adjustments allow for about 1/2" of comb movement vertically and also horizontally for cast. It also comes with three stock head shims for additional drop and cast changes.



SILVER RECEIVER



Fabarm has taken the semi auto market up a notch or two – and introduced a feature-laden competition gas gun with all, and I mean all, the bells and whistles.



ADJUSTABLE STOCK

The test gun came with a 30" barrel, but 32" is available. Our gun weighed 8lb 10oz before adding any of the supplied weights. A 5.2oz weight fits inside the stock, attaching to the through-bolt, while up front, three 1.5oz weights can be screwed onto the forend nut. Add them all and the gun will push 9 1/4 lbs. With all weights in place, the gun has a heavy forward bias. With the front weights removed it is less so, but still forward.

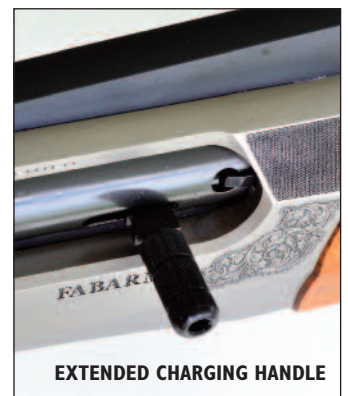
After the adjustable rib, stock and weights, comes the adjustable trigger shoe. I've never seen one on a gas gun before. It offers over 1/2" of fore and aft travel and

should prove useful in providing a comfortable grip.

Stock length is given as 14.3", but you can replace the standard 7/8" recoil pad with optional prefit 1 1/16" or 1 1/2" ones. Clearly, just



PISTOL GRIP



EXTENDED CHARGING HANDLE



TRIGGER GROUP



LEFT SIDE LARGE BOLT RELEASE

about everything on this gun can be adjusted. The pistol grip is the modern vertical type, but without a palm swell. Wood grain on our more expensive silver receiver XLR5 was definitely a step up. The matte finish, listed as 'hand oiled', was properly applied and fully filled the grain, though many might prefer it a shade or two darker stain. The laser checkering is a modernistic design in keeping with the overall look of the gun. The XLR5 Velocity comes standard with a competition-friendly oversized bolt handle and big bolt release button. You don't have to buy any extras to trick it out.

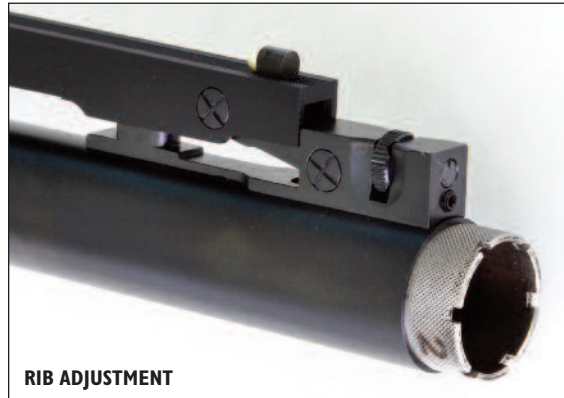
### Barrel and Chokes

Of course, the barrel has screw-in chokes, but Fabarm has a unique approach to barrel dimensions. They use what they call the Tri-Bore HP system. They start with a 2 3/4" chamber, not 3". This is most definitely a competition gun, not a dual-purpose field gun. There is a standard length forcing cone and then the chrome lined barrel is given a .740" overbore. Lots of makers do this, but what comes next is different. After running .740" about half way down the barrel, the bore starts a gradual taper down to .725" at the rear of





CHOKES



RIB ADJUSTMENT



GAS SYSTEM

the screw choke. That's a long taper. The rear of the 3<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" Exis HP choke tubes open up to .735", then taper down to the designated choke constriction and then flare back out a little for the front 1/2". The choke interiors are said to be cut in a hyperbolic curve, rather than the conventional straight taper and parallel. Basically, the bore opens, closes, opens, closes hyperbolically and finally opens. It is all intended to reduce recoil and improve patterns.

The barrel has been over-proofed to 1630 BAR. For reference, 1200 BAR is standard steel load CIP proof in Europe. 1370 BAR is their high performance proof. 1630 BAR is very strong indeed and Fabarm says that you can use steel shot – even with the tightest choke.

Five chokes are included with constrictions of .000" cylinder bore, .008" IC, .020" modified, .030" light full and .038" full. The front 5/16" of the chokes extend from the muzzle, are knurled and are notched for the included wrench.

The gas action is designed to handle a wide variety of target

loads. Two conventional gas bleed holes vent gas from the bore into the gas chamber. The gas pushes against a heavy metal piston with metal gas seal rings. Fabarm's field guns, built to handle a wider variety of loads, use a polymer collar on the piston to regulate gas pressure. The XLR5 Velocity competition gun uses an all metal piston. Both the piston and gas chamber are steel with a PVD (physical vapor deposition) high tech metal coating. The piston pushes a collar attached to chromed dual action bars. The bolt rides on the action bars and locks by a bolt engaging a notch in the barrel extension just like Remington and Beretta. There is a large nylon buffer in the rear of the aluminum receiver behind the bolt to absorb overtravel shock. The

mainspring surrounds the steel magazine tube and is not in the stock as it is on many other autos. In all, it's a relatively conventional and proven setup with some obvious fine tuning.

The gun comes in a huge lockable plastic case which can probably defeat the airlines baggage gorillas. Contents include Allen and Torx wrenches for the adjustments, five chokes in a box, a good wrench, extra stock shims and an informative manual. The manual goes through all the adjustments in detail and has a helpful parts diagram. Warranty is for five years.

## On Test

Describing the technical side of a gun like this is one thing. Shooting it is quite another. In the rack at the range, the gun stands out like a Shelby Cobra in a used car lot. There is simply nothing like it. The comments most often heard were "high tech", followed by "huge". It's most definitely a lot of gun.

Everything on the gun may be

adjustable, but the gun remains big no matter what you do. Big and heavy. This gun is not going to appeal to everyone, but those who like it will like it a lot. If someone is looking for a combination American trap/sporting clays gun, look no further.

As with any big, heavy gun with a high rib, most shooters will feel comfortable pre-mounting and using a short window sustained lead. I'm a low gun, swing through shooter and tend to shoot more responsive, less steady guns, so I took this as a most welcome opportunity to learn about "the other side".

The XLR5 was smooth. Really smooth. Follow through was almost automatic due to the weight. The correct pick up point was critical with sustained lead as it was hard to make a quick gun movement to correct a big error. Subtle changes were fine. That's one of the things that makes me think that this is really a pro's gun.

The pre-mounted heads up stance promoted by the high rib fits in perfectly with a sustained lead. Pre-mounting has the plus of requiring no complicated physical gun mount and it is faster to the target. It has the negatives of a more limited visual field and less body follow through.

At first the high rib made me want to aim the gun. On the short stuff, that made me stop my swing. But on the long targets, I found the XLR5 to be very precise, allowing me to hit targets at distances I blush to recount. I felt that the gun



DISASSEMBLED

Recoil was extremely low. There was virtually no barrel movement on firing sturdy 3 dram 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> oz loads. The gun even digested my wimpy <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> oz 1150 fps reloads.

was a precision machine, rather than an instinctual one.

When I use a gas gun at sporting, it's either a Beretta 391 or 303. This Fabarm was totally unlike either. It felt different. It handled differently. It shot differently. More importantly, it made me shoot differently. This is a case where the gun determines the technique, not the other way around.

I had trouble with the gun when dealing with widely split true pairs which needed a lot of quick lateral gun movement between shots. The gun builds a lot of inertia and you can overswing if you don't do things correctly. More time with the XLR5 should remedy that. On the plus side, the gun's precision gave me confidence that I could take the second bird as a distant dropper.

Recoil was extremely low. There was virtually no barrel movement on firing sturdy 3 dram 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> oz loads. The gun even digested my wimpy <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> oz 1150 fps reloads. I use those light reloads in some of my O/Us because I don't like the recoil of a 'real' shell. The Fabarm simply takes recoil out of the equation. You select your shell based on ballistic efficiency, not

physical abuse. The Fabarm definitely shot softer than my lighter 391.

The gun suffered a malfunction or two, but no more than my Berettas and nothing particular seemed to be recurrent. All gas gunners have to get used to an occasional hiccup. It comes with the territory. The trigger pull was a steady 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> lbs with little creep. Excellent for an auto. Hulls ejected about 6 to 10 feet at 2 o'clock. You lefties should note that the gun also comes in a left-handed version ejecting from the left side.

Operation of the gun quickly became familiar – almost. The gun was easy to unload if you hit your FITASC single with the first shot. The extended charging handle provided good leverage. My only slight grump was the bolt release button on the left side. It was nice and big, but I'm used to it being on the right – so it always felt awkward. The action internals seemed to dirty quickly, but the carbon build-up never caused a problem.

Although I think that the gun is ideal for a pre-mount with an upright head and a controlled short window swing, I did try it low gun with swing through. The bulk of the gun and high rib made it a bit harder to shoot that way and I had to adjust my timing and pick-up points. This Fabarm isn't going to suit everyone, but for a certain style of precise shooting I can't think of anything that would do the job better. If you can learn to shoot the way the gun was designed to be shot, the Fabarm XLR5 Velocity is unmatched.

That's all for now. Boots off. Beer open. I'll put them down side by side. ■

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*Got a question or a comment?  
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