

GIANT ANNUAL GEAR ISSUE

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HOW TO HUNT SHEETWATER
SURVIVE DEADLY WATERS
SITKA'S TIMBER SLAYER
USE MOTION SMARTER

It's
ALMOST
TIME

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15 DREAM HUNTS

- AMAZING LOUISIANA
- ALL ACROSS CANADA
- SOUTH AMERICA
- MEXICAN MALLARDS

Fabulous Fabarm

Love Italian auto-loaders? Of course you do. The new XLR5 is a must-have. By John M. Taylor

WES LANG HAD a surprise waiting at the 2016 SHOT Show—a brand-new soft-shooting 3-inch 12-gauge loaded with features.

The Fabarm/Caesar Guerini president grew up hunting the marshes of southeastern New Jersey, and having been in the gun trade for many years, knew what he wanted in a waterfowl gun.

“When it’s really cold, duck hunters wear gloves, so I designed this gun to be glove-friendly,” Lang said.

So you’ll find an enlarged trigger guard—1½" deep—for easier access and safety. The trigger pulls averaged 6.19 pounds, light for any semi-auto,

and forend have a Soft-Touch finish that grabs your hand and holds it in in nasty conditions with cold/wet hands. Both stock and forend also have molded checkering.

The XLR5 includes a shim kit to adjust the drop and cast of the stock for a custom fit. Atop the synthetic stock is a black soft cheek-cushioning comb backed by a recoil pad. Kryptek Banshee camouflage covers the gun stem to stern with one exception: the rib.

Harking back to the legendary Winchester Model 12’s “duckbill” rib that extended onto the receiver, so does the XLR5s, providing an

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and behind the guard is the large trigger-blocking safety. The deeply knurled, extra-long bolt handle extends a full 1½" from the bolt for non-slip performance in the worst weather.

Like other Italian-made semi-autos, the XLR5 has a two-piece carrier, which means that in order to hold the bolt open you must push a little flipper located on the bottom left side just in front of the trigger guard in order to trip the carrier into the down position. In that position, it will allow the bolt to be locked open. One quirk of this semi-auto is the bolt release is located on the left side of the receiver. Handy for right-handers, whose left hands are on the forestock anyway. The stock

additional six inches of sight plane. Coupled with the 30-inch barrel, the rib runs 35 inches. To add definition to the sight picture, the rib is masked during the camo dipping process so that it is as black as a moonless night, contrasting against most backgrounds and light conditions.

A SKEET MAN'S DUCK GUN

You might think 30" is a little long (the XLR5 also comes in 28-inch model), but over the years many of the great duck guns (like the Winchester Model 12 Magnum) sported equally long barrels. It's a matter of preference. Many target shooters prefer a longer barrel because it helps place more



weight forward and maintain your swing. Plus, Fabarm and CG make a variety of target guns, so it makes sense they would engineer a duck gun with this 30" option.

An extra two inches has never made much of a difference to me in terms of shooting comfortably from a blind. It does get the muzzle a little farther away from your buddies ears, which he will thank you for. I recall years ago hunting geese in Southern Illinois and the guy sharing my pit had a Browning BPS 10-gauge with the barrel cut to 22 or 24 inches. He shot near my head and it took about a week to get over it.

The Fabarm barrel is bored with the company's Tribore HP system that tapers the bore from .735 at the mouth of the long forcing cone to .721 at the start of the screw-in choke skirt, gentling the shot's trip. In addition, the bore and barrel extension are chrome-plated for corrosion resistance, and the bolt has a powder vapor deposited finish with the bulk of the gun camo-coated for durability.

At the heart of the XLR5 is its gas-operating system, which can run through five shells in .31 seconds. Of course shooting fast usually means three misses on a duck, but being able to cycle quickly also means excellent reliability. The XLR5 uses Fabarm's Pulse-Piston system that acts as a brake when the gun is fired. When heavy loads are shot, this system slows the bolt's movement to the rear, dampening the



secondary recoil of the bolt. There's only a single large, heavy piston that impacts an equally massive action bar whose inertia drives the bolt to the rear, ejecting the fired shell and, if there is a fresh round in the magazine, pushes it home into the chamber. To further simplify the system and greatly add to its reliability, the action-return spring is wound around the magazine tube.

HOW DOES IT SHOOT?

On the patterning range, shooting Browning's new BXD No. 2 steel ammo, the 5/10 Fabarm choke tube with .018 inches of constriction—between light modified and modified—provided excellent 40-yard patterns averaging 70 percent, which is the typical density for a full choke. The tighter 7/10 tube with .0265 inches of constriction—improved modified—provided slightly more open patterns averaging 67 percent.

My test gun arrived a couple days before the close of Maryland's goose season. Out of the box, the 14½-inch stock with drop at the comb of 1½ inches, 2¼ at the heel and ¼-inch cast fit me like a glove. It proved reliable, fast-pointing and lethal.

On that final day, the grand finale to an otherwise slow season because of that darned El Niño, we were set up on the fringe of a pond where the geese wanted to be. It didn't take long to bag our limits. Throughout, the XLR5 functioned perfectly, and I took my two honkers without issue.

If you love Italian-made autos, here's another for your gun closet. I'm adding one to mine.

FABARM: XLR5 WATERFOWL

ACTION TYPE: Gas-operated semi-automatic

GAUGE: 12 (3" chamber)

TRIGGER PULL: 6.19 lbs

MAGAZINE: 4+1.

BARREL: 28" or 30" Tribore with 4 screw-in chokes

SIGHTS: 10.4 mm wide, raised all-black vent rib with fluorescent red bead

STOCK: Synthetic with Soft Touch finish

DROP AT COMB: 1½"

DROP AT HEEL: 2¼"

OVERALL LENGTH: 50¼" with 30" barrel

WEIGHT: 7 lbs. 8 ozs.

FINISH: Kryptek Banshee camo

MSRP: \$1,650; \$1,825 (lefty)