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CAESAR GUERINI
**INVICTUS
ARTCO
SPECIALIST**

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CAESAR GUERINI INVICTUS ARTCO SPECIALIST



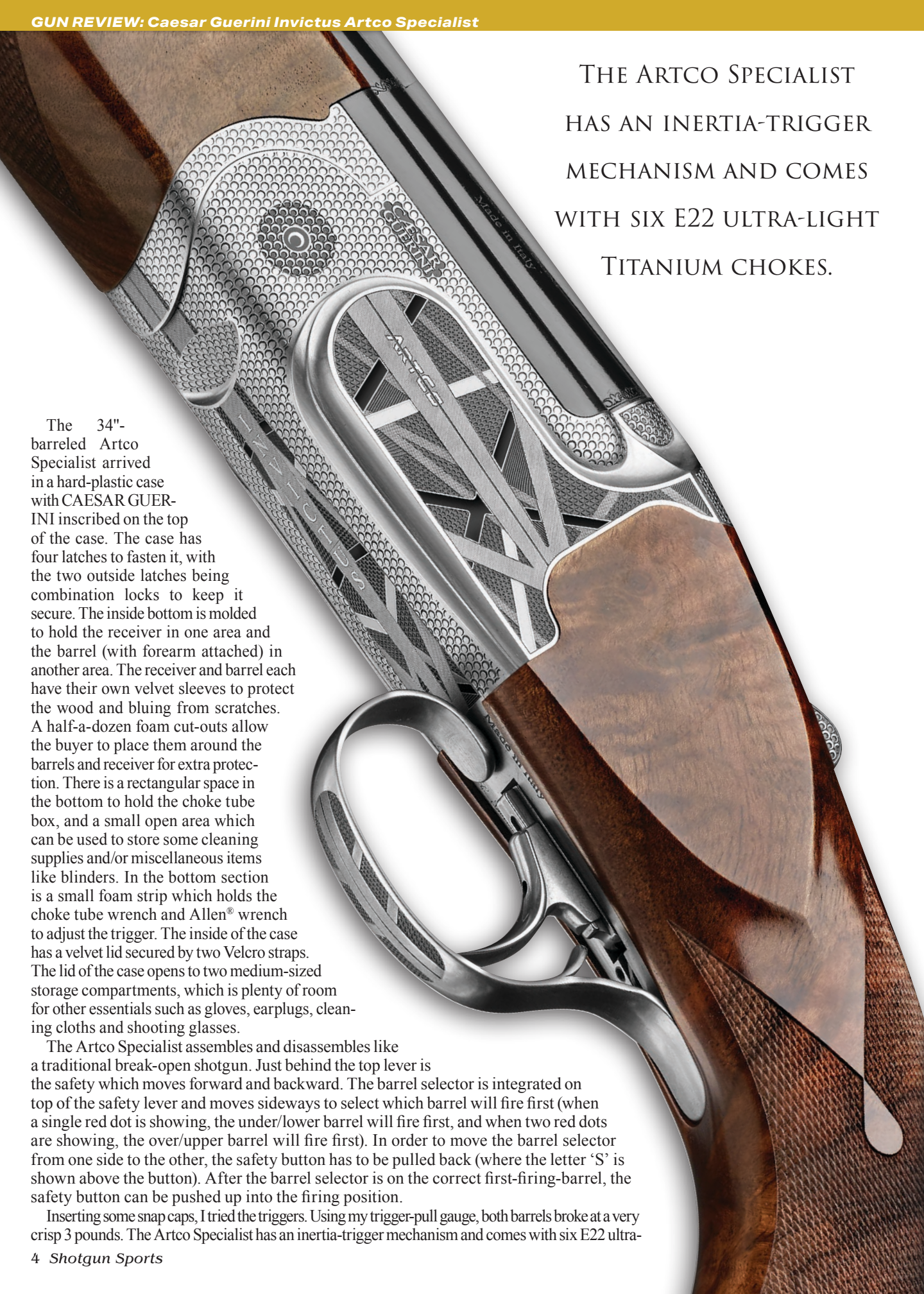


BY MARK H. TAYLOR

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

When I learned I would be doing a test on the Caesar Guerini Invictus Artco Specialist with 34" over/under barrels, my first thought was that it might be too barrel heavy for my liking (since I usually shoot a shotgun with 32" over/under barrels). However, once I got the Artco Specialist home and assembled, I was absolutely astounded on just how light and balanced this shotgun felt. Truth be told, it felt more like an over/under shotgun with 31" barrels. As I did more research into this shotgun, I discovered that Caesar Guerini started with extremely light barrel tubes, then topped these tubes with a 10mm to 6mm tapered rib. They also removed the mid-rib under the forearm and used an ultra-light set of choke tubes made from Titanium (they named their new chokes "E22™ MAXIS Ultra-lightweight Grade 5 Titanium chokes" since Titanium is the 22nd element in the periodic table). While these items may appear minor when examined individually, the result of them together is what makes the Artco Specialist feel so extraordinary.

THE ARTCO SPECIALIST
HAS AN INERTIA-TRIGGER
MECHANISM AND COMES
WITH SIX E22 ULTRA-LIGHT
TITANIUM CHOKES.



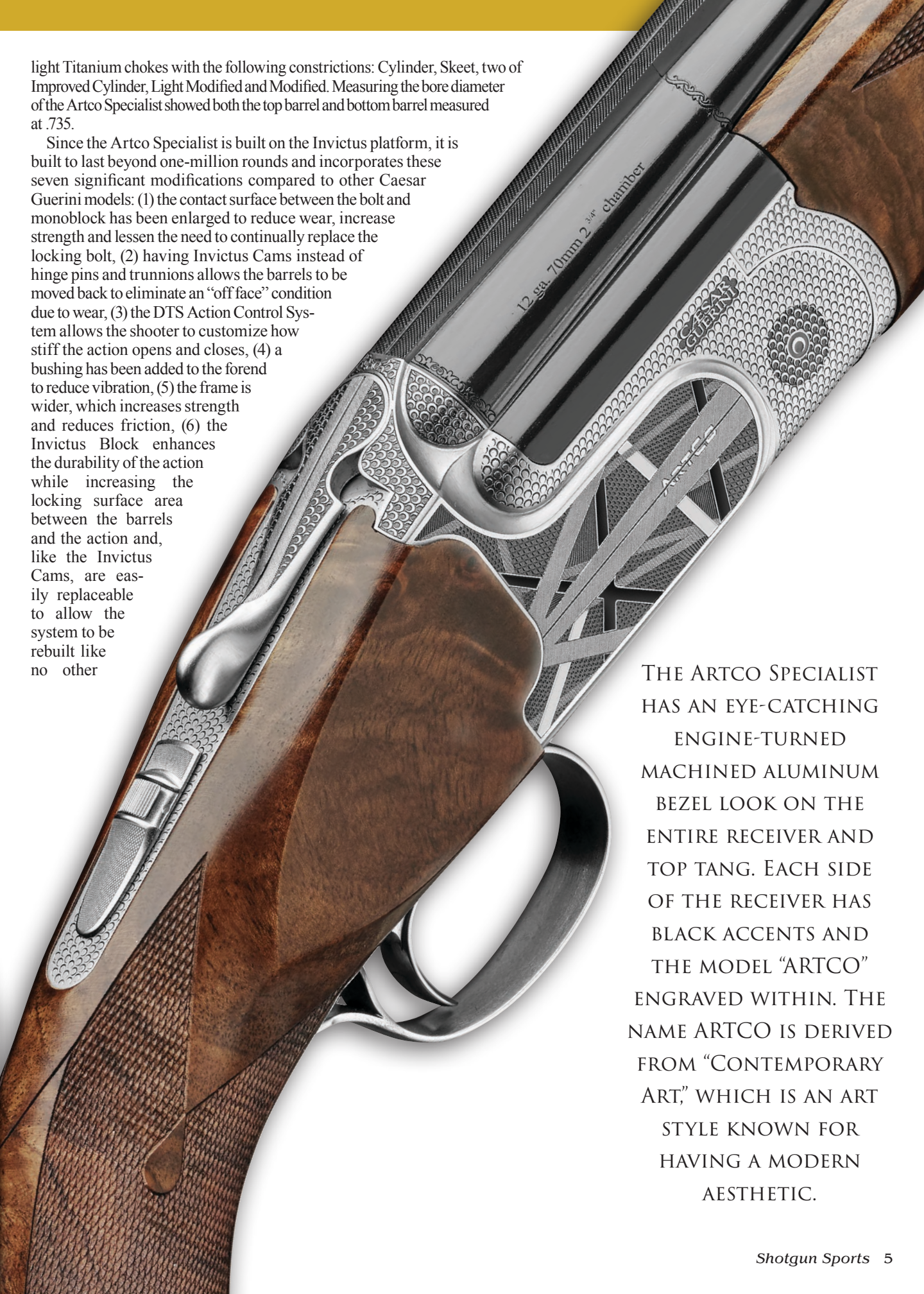
The 34"-barreled Artco Specialist arrived in a hard-plastic case with CAESAR GUERINI inscribed on the top of the case. The case has four latches to fasten it, with the two outside latches being combination locks to keep it secure. The inside bottom is molded to hold the receiver in one area and the barrel (with forearm attached) in another area. The receiver and barrel each have their own velvet sleeves to protect the wood and bluing from scratches. A half-a-dozen foam cut-outs allow the buyer to place them around the barrels and receiver for extra protection. There is a rectangular space in the bottom to hold the choke tube box, and a small open area which can be used to store some cleaning supplies and/or miscellaneous items like blinders. In the bottom section is a small foam strip which holds the choke tube wrench and Allen® wrench to adjust the trigger. The inside of the case has a velvet lid secured by two Velcro straps. The lid of the case opens to two medium-sized storage compartments, which is plenty of room for other essentials such as gloves, earplugs, cleaning cloths and shooting glasses.

The Artco Specialist assembles and disassembles 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 shown above the button). After the barrel selector is on the correct first-firing-barrel, the safety button can be pushed up into the firing position.

Inserting some snap caps, I tried the triggers. Using my trigger-pull gauge, both barrels broke at a very crisp 3 pounds. The Artco Specialist has an inertia-trigger mechanism and comes with six E22 ultra-

light Titanium chokes with the following constrictions: Cylinder, Skeet, two of Improved Cylinder, Light Modified and Modified. Measuring the bore diameter of the Artco Specialist showed both the top barrel and bottom barrel measured at .735.

Since the Artco Specialist 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 monoblock 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



THE ARTCO SPECIALIST HAS AN EYE-CATCHING ENGINE-TURNED MACHINED ALUMINUM BEZEL LOOK ON THE ENTIRE RECEIVER AND TOP TANG. EACH SIDE OF THE RECEIVER HAS BLACK ACCENTS AND THE MODEL “ARTCO” ENGRAVED WITHIN. THE NAME ARTCO IS DERIVED FROM “CONTEMPORARY ART,” WHICH IS AN ART STYLE KNOWN FOR HAVING A MODERN AESTHETIC.

target gun can, and (7) the DPS trigger has been redesigned making it more durable, more consistent and more precise.

The Artco Specialist has an eye-catching engine-turned machined aluminum bezel look on the entire receiver and top tang. On each side of the receiver, there are black accents and the model "ARTCO" engraved within. The bottom of the receiver has the name "INVICTUS" engraved vertically. The name ARTCO is derived from "Contemporary Art," which is an art style known for having a modern aesthetic.

The highly grained wood is a beautiful Turkish Walnut, which is hand-rubbed with oil. The Artco Specialist provided for my review was a right-handed model, as it was cast-off and had a very nice (but not too bulky) palm swell on the right side of the stock. I would consider the checkering on the pistol grip and forearm to be 'light-medium' — good at preventing hands from slipping but not sharp.

The stock on the Artco Specialist came without an adjustable comb, but the dimensions are optimal for a sporting model (i.e., the drop at comb and drop at heel are shallow enough to provide for a good low-mount approach while still providing the beads to line up perfectly when mounted). The Caesar Guerini website shows this model can be ordered with an adjustable comb and in a left-hand configuration.

The stock has a black rubber recoil pad, which will work well when using a low-mount, and the length-of-pull measured 14.75". The wood-to-metal finish is exceptional all the way around. The forearm style of the Artco Specialist is rounded, which is good for sporting as it is not too thin and not too bulky. The forearm release uses the Anson push-rod release where the button at the end of the forearm is pushed down to remove it. The overall weight of the Artco Specialist is 8 lbs., 6 oz.

For the range test of the Artco Specialist, my first stop was at Golden Gun Club in Watkins, Colorado, to do patterning and shoot their 5-Stand. For the Point Of Impact (POI) testing, I shot 1½ oz. of #7.5 using the Modified choke in both barrels from 20 yards. Measuring the center of the patterns to be 2" above where I pointed it makes the POI to be 56/44 for each barrel. This is a really good POI for a sporting clays shotgun. I moved back to 40 yards and shot at a 30"-diameter circle on the patterning board for distribution. Still using the Modified choke and the same shotshells, the pellet count in the circle was 258 (slightly more than the 236 normally associated with a Modified choke).

Being satisfied with my patterning results, I headed to the 5-Stand course and inserted the Cylinder and Improved Cylinder chokes in the Artco Specialist. The target presentations at this 5-Stand setup are somewhat close, which is why I chose this for one of the range tests. I knew the next day I would be shooting sporting clays at Kiowa Creek, where the presentations are farther away and shooting both would give me a good test of the Artco Specialist. This 5-Stand offered a good variety of target presentations: a chandelle, two fast-crossing targets (one in each direction), a long incoming target, a target which launches behind the stands and drops in overhead, and an outgoing trap-style target. I felt the Artco Specialist really excelled at the fast-crossing targets, with the 34" barrel providing a smooth swing and excellent follow-through. I shot two rounds and had a 24 on each round. Other than the outgoing trap-style target (which I pre-mounted when it was a single), I used an off-the-face dynamic mount. As expected, the 34" barrels made the gun mount exceptionally smooth.

THE OVERALL WEIGHT
OF THE ARTCO SPECIALIST
IS 8 LBS., 6 OZ.



To shoot the Artco Specialist at sporting clays, I went to Kiowa Creek Sporting Club in Bennett, Colorado. This range has 22 stations on the main course, with stations 12-22 usually set to be “challenging” to allow the NSCA competitors to practice on. I grabbed a flat of Fiocchi White Rino shotshells, loaded them into the golf cart and headed to Station 12. Shooting the back 11 stations at Kiowa Creek was an excellent way to put the Artco Specialist through its paces. All the presentations were farther away than Golden’s 5-Stand, and Kiowa Creek had rabbit targets, tower targets and springing teal targets, none of which were available to shoot at Golden. With the Modified and Improved Modified chokes in the Artco Specialist, this shotgun crushed targets regardless of distance. For each station I shot two singles, two report pairs (shooting the A target first then shooting the B target first) and two true pairs for a total of 110 targets. Given how well the Artco Specialist shot with a dynamic mount the prior day, I shot almost all the Kiowa Creek targets with an off-the-face mount. I finished with a score of 100 and felt really good about how well I shot, especially since it was a new gun to me.

The Artco Specialist felt so balanced and comfortable between my hands that I tried to utilize some of the target tactics which Don Currie describes in his book *Mastering Sporting Clays* and his DVD *Target Tactics*. (Editor’s note: see the book review in this issue on page 28 and DVD review in the June 2026 issue). On the springing teal targets, I tried using the Diminishing Lead tactic. On the rabbit targets, I tried using The Rabbit Move tactic. And, on the quartering targets,

I tried using the Quartering Move tactic. The 34" ultra-light barrels made applying these tactics smooth and easy, allowing me to hit all targets I attempted.

My impression of the Artco Specialist was extremely favorable. My initial thoughts on shooting a 34" over/under was that it would be quite front-end heavy. However, with the ultra-light materials that Caesar Guerini uses for these barrels, my initial thought was proven 100% wrong. Other benefits of the 34" barrels are: (1) the long-tapered rib helps the eyes focus on the target and allows the peripheral vision to feel the barrel position, (2) the long barrels provide for a very smooth swing and effortless follow-through and (3) virtually no recoil is felt on the face or shoulder. At the time of this writing, the MSRP was listed at \$11,800.

Sporting clays shooters have been asking shotgun manufacturers for longer barrels for the last few years. Caesar Guerini engineers listened to these requests and found a way to give shooters the longer barrels they want while still achieving the weight and balance needed to be successfully shot. **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.



My impression of the Artco Specialist was extremely favorable. A benefit of the 34" barrels is the long-tapered rib, which helps the eyes focus on the target and allows the peripheral vision to feel the barrel position. The long barrels also provide for a very smooth swing and effortless follow-through. Photo courtesy of Mark H. Taylor



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