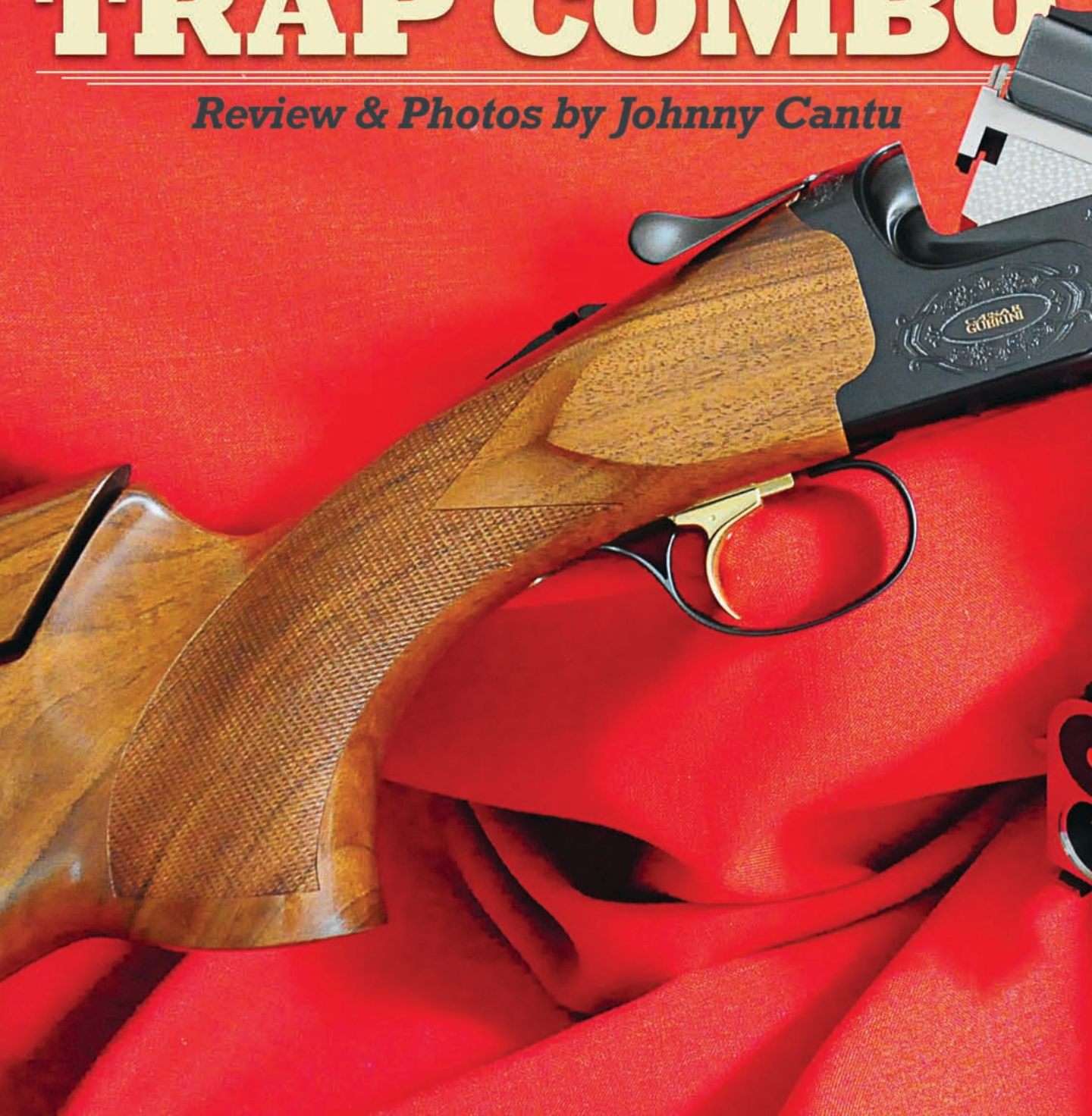


GUN TEST

CAESAR GUERINI
IMPACT
TRAP COMBO

Review & Photos by Johnny Cantu



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A full-length view of the Impact Trap Combo.



Photo courtesy Guerini U.S.A. (www.gueriniusa.com)

The Italian gunmaking company Caesar Guerini Srl. has been producing high-quality sporting shotguns for the world and U.S. markets since 2002. American shooters have taken these guns from the Val Trompia Valley to heart in a great way, and for good reason. Guerini firearms are well-designed, offer features sought after by serious shooters, are well-made from the finest modern materials and affordable to most shooters looking for an over & under with a reputable name.

In September of 2009 I reviewed the premier sporting model

Impact Trap Combo is every bit a trap gun with regard to its overall design, dimensions, weight and amazing tunability but also allows a head-up style of shooting, if you want. Let's take a better look at this new clay-taker from Caesar Guerini.

My test sample came to me from the Cambridge, Maryland, corporate office of Caesar Guerini U.S.A. Wes Lang, a former workmate of mine, heads up Guerini operations in Maryland and was featured in an "Industry Spotlight" Look Who's Talking in the June 2009 issue of *Shotgun Sports*. He spends a great deal of time working with the Guerini brothers in Italy, Antonio and Giorgio, determining what features and dimensions each model should maintain for the U.S. market. The overall Impact model is based upon the Summit receiver. The

Summit carries the standard receiver

medallion on both the right and left sides. The underside of the Impact's receiver is also adorned with the vine-and-scroll motif, with "Summit" in gold fill. The upper tang, top lever and fences are likewise engraved.

Like most popular clay-target over & unders these days, the Impact's hinge pins are replaceable. The safety mechanism is of the typical design often seen in guns from Italy; it operates as both safety and barrel selector. Push it forward, it's off; push rearward, it's on. In both directions there is a positive click that indicates you've moved it fully to the on or off position.

Within the body of the safety lies the barrel selector. Move the center bar to the left, and one red dot is exposed, meaning you will fire the bottom barrel first. Move it to the right, and two red dots are exposed, allowing you to fire the top barrel first. The lockup on the Impact is the very solid, full-width underbite-lug design. Gunsmith replaceable, this lockup gives you confidence your Guerini will stay shut securely through many years of shooting. The sidewalls of the monobloc are jeweled, something I like to see on



A shot of the over & under rib being adjusted to the lowest setting, which gives the highest point-of-impact, 90/10.

from Caesar Guerini, the Apex Sporting, which offered an abundance of shooter-friendly features, with fabulous looks to boot. In this issue, I will take a look at the newest offering from Caesar Guerini, the Impact Trap Combo. The design of the Impact Combo makes it a dedicated trap target-breaking machine yet offers a stock that can also give a more head-up style of shooting. This allows a less strenuous effort of the neck muscles to keep your head on the gun and provides a more unobstructed view of the flight path of the bird. The Caesar Guerini

within the Guerini line of over & under shotguns and boasts lovely double-scalloped shoulders, a low profile of only 65.8mm and a width of merely 42.4mm. These lithe dimensions aid greatly in the handling characteristics of the Impact.

Finished in a shiny deep-blue/black, the receiver is engraved in a vine-and-scroll motif, with the name "Caesar Guerini" in gold fill in an elliptical

monoblocs. It adds that extra look of class in a shotgun.

The Impact's trigger is a gold-plated, tapered, teardrop-shaped blade. It is approximately 8.3mm wide, can be adjusted within the trigger guard to a range of .46" front-to-rear and is adjusted with a 1.5mm Allen key. For shooters with not overly long fingers like mine, an adjustable trigger blade is a welcomed feature. Trigger poundage on my



test sample was set at 3½ pounds for the bottom sear and 3¾ pounds for the top sear. Crisp let-off and very little take-up was what I enjoyed on these triggers. All Guerini triggers are adjustable for take-up, over-travel and length-of-pull. Additionally, two weight options are available, as are factory single and double-release triggers. Pretty cool.

The Impact's stock and forearm are shaped from fine-grained, well-colored Turkish walnut. The finish is a hand-rubbed oil. Checkering is a point pattern at approximately 26 lines per inch. My test Impact came with very nice grain and color. If they all look this good, Guerini will sell a bunch.

The Impact, like all other Caesar Guerini over & unders, is loaded with components of the Guerini Dynamic Tuning System (DTS). The name describes all the tunable components that aid shooters with regard to weight, balance, sight picture, point-of-impact (POI) and recoil reduction. The buttstock of the Impact Trap Combo incorporates an adjustable-comb system that not only allows you to tune eye alignment but is also very solid. Once adjusted and tightened down, it stays where you set it. Adjustable for both height and offset, total lateral adjustment range is ⅜" (8mm) to right or left of center. Length-of-pull is 14.75", drop at comb (face) is adjustable from 1.6" to 1.2", drop at Monte Carlo is 1.8", and drop at heel is 2.25". Cast at heel is .19"; at toe it's .31", with 5 degrees of down pitch.

There is a right-hand palm swell that results in a grip circumference of 6" across the swell. Length of draw is 4.25". Height of grip to comb is 4.5", and distance to comb from face of receiver is 7.2". Left-hand custom stock dimensions are available, as is a soft comb option called the "No Impact" soft comb. This option replaces the standard wooden comb on the stock — no fuss, no muss. A ¾" medium-soft rubber recoil pad adorns the face of the butt. The Caesar Guerini logo is embossed on the pad; otherwise, the pad is smooth.

Mounted within my test Impact's stock was another component of the Guerini DTS, the Kinetic Balancer. This weight/balance and recoil-reduction system maintains 1.41-ounce weights on a hollow shaft. These weights are kept in place by two retaining springs and two control collars. Up to five weights can be placed on the shaft, although I suspect, for the sake of retaining some recoil-reduction value with the system, four would be the most you would want on the shaft at any time. The DTS Kinetic Balancer does not have to be removed if you're attempting to remove the buttstock. Just insert the stock-bolt wrench (supplied) through the hole in the recoil pad, and you will access the stock bolt through the hollow shaft of the DTS Kinetic Balancer.

With the Kinetic Balancer installed with three weights, the total weight of my Impact Trap was 9.35 pounds with the over & under barrels attached and two Maxis chokes installed in the muzzle. With the unsingle barrel and one choke installed, weight was 9.4 pounds. I would venture to guess the weight difference comes from the extra-tall rib on the unsingle, as well as the weighted false upper chamber. The DTS Kinetic Balancer added

approximately .45-pound to the total weight the way my gun was set up.

The forearm on the Impact Trap Combo is of the round trap/skeet style and locks onto the barrel lug by means of a modified Anson latching mechanism. Simply press inward on the release button located at the tip of the forearm and it comes off easily. The underside of the forearm has, within an unchecked diamond-shaped area, a decorative teardrop-shaped metal medallion. When I reviewed the Apex Sporter, it also had this same medallion in the center of the belly of the forearm. I thought it was a spot to have the owner's name or initials engraved, but it actually helps retain the forearm wood to the iron. The iron is appropriately finished in the same shiny, blue-black finish as the receiver and is equally engraved in the vine-and-scroll motif.

Barrels accompanying the Impact Trap Combo are chambered for 2¾" shells and have 5"-long, dual conical forcing cones. The Impact's barrels are hard industrial chrome-lined within the chambers, bore and even the threaded choke areas at the muzzle. Lined in this manner, the possibility of chokes rusting tight in the muzzles and



The Guerini Maxis Chokes included with the Impact Trap Combo provide smooth installation, easy identification and great performance.

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Here's the production version of the DTS Barrel Balancer. This weight/balance system is very simple to use and will fit into any vented mid-rib Guerini over & under barrel.

your bores ever developing a rust or corrosion problem is pretty much nil.

The bores in my test gun's barrels were .735 in both tubes on the over & under and the unsingle. This is amazing consistency and made things a lot easier with regard to determining constrictive values of the Caesar Guerini Maxis Chokes (but more on that a little later).

The barrels were matte-black and oxide-finished. Guerini offers the Impact Trap Combo as a 32"/34" set. This is probably the most popular combination of barrel lengths for a combo in today's trap. The ribs on both the over & under and unsingle barrels are adjustable and can provide POIs from 50/50 to 120% high on the unsingle barrel and 45/55 to 90/10 on the over & under barrel.

Speaking of the ribs on the barrels, both the ventilated ribs on the over & under and unsingle are made from high-strength aluminum with matte-black oxide finish. The over & under's top rib was 11mm wide at the receiver face and tapered slightly to 10mm at the muzzle. There was a 4mm white Bradley-style bead mounted at the muzzle and a 1.9mm round steel bead mounted 17½" from the front bead. The rib at the receiver face featured a 100mm ramp that started to taper toward the muzzle from a height of 18mm. There were five thin grooves centered in the top rib's surface that ran full length. I like a rib designed in this manner, especially for a pre-mounted game like trap. It gives the shooter another device to check his head and eye alignment before calling for the bird. The mid-rib boasts seven vents, each of which can facilitate the

new DTS Barrel Balancer.

A few words about this unique barrel weight and balance system. The DTS Barrel Balancer is a spring-loaded device measuring 2.9" long. Within and between the two halves of the Balancer are three tungsten rods and a spring mechanism. The entire unit weighs just about 1 ounce. To attach the DTS Barrel Balancer to the barrel, you simply squeeze the two body halves together, insert the two slender hook-like pieces into whatever slot in the mid-rib you've chosen, press slightly inward to fit snug against the round contour of the barrel and release. You'll more than likely use two or more Balancers to achieve the forward weight and balance you want, but with seven vents to choose from on each side, you're bound to find a setting that's ideal for you.

I used a single DTS Barrel Balancer on one round of Doubles and, even though it weighed only 1 ounce, its presence on the barrel was felt. Even more weight and balance options are available with the Caesar Guerini Impact over & under barrel. Two interchangeable DTS weight rods allow the barrel's weight and balance to be adjusted. Optional rods of steel and tungsten are available for the utmost in barrel-swing tuning.

The rib of the over & under barrel was supported at the front and rear by major posts. Beyond that, it's free-floating. On the over & under barrel, there was one screw at the face of the muzzle with which to make adjustments to POI. The supplied 3mm Allen key will do the duty here. Clockwise turns lower the rib and counterclockwise turns raise it. Five

hash marks on the rib post tell you how much movement up or down you've given the rib.

The unsingle's rib was 12mm wide at the receiver face and 9.5mm wide at the muzzle. Like the over & under barrel, it was supported at the front major post and at the rear by the false upper chamber. The false chamber measured 13¼" long and stopped even with the front edge of the forearm. A feature I liked was the nylon-and-brass snap cap that filled the upper false chamber. Designs like this are well thought-out, in my opinion, and take the best interest of the equipment and shooter into consideration.

Like the over & under barrel, there were five full-length longitudinal grooves in the unsingle's rib, and the ramp at the rear was 112mm long and stopped at a height of 19mm. The front bead was another 4mm white Bradley-style bead and the mid-bead was the steel 1.9mm bead seen on the over & under barrel.

Adjustments on the unsingle are made by slightly backing out the lower set screw at the face of the muzzle with the supplied 2mm Allen key, then turning the adjustment wheel. Clockwise lowers the rib; counterclockwise raises the rib. There are seven hash marks indicating height adjustment on both sides of the rib post.

Caesar Guerini shotguns are known for how well they hit targets. One of the main reasons they crush targets is the Caesar Guerini Maxis Chokes. These well-designed and produced screw-in chokes do not sport notches for a choke wrench to bite into on the muzzle edge. Nor did I see a need for

them. The chokes screwed in and out smoothly, without any tight or loose areas along the way. They bottomed out firmly and stayed snug throughout my entire shooting session. I did smear a small amount of lube on the outside walls of the chokes before I inserted them into the barrels. This is my usual practice and one I advocate to friends, students and readers.

The Maxis Chokes have a semi-gloss, black-oxide finish, are 3.19" long and maintain a knurled extended section that protrudes .78" beyond the muzzle. This extended section has three panels with single or double-letter abbreviations denoting the constrictive values, as well as words underneath repeating the value (Light Mod., Modified, Imp. Mod., etc.). The side-walls of the Maxis Chokes have three lines of information: "Maxischoke Sporting" on the top line, "Caesar Guerini" on the second line and the non-abbreviated constrictive name on the third line.

I received some extra chokes with my test sample. Wes Lang informed me a proper set includes Light Modified, Modified, Improved Modified, Light Full and Full. My set included all those chokes. All had internal diameters at the skirt of .750". The Light Modified tapered to .719" and maintained that to the muzzle, for a constriction of .014" in all barrels. The Modified tapered from the skirt to .715", for a constriction of .020". The Improved Modified showed an internal constriction of .027". The Light Full came through with a constriction of .032", and the Full tallied up a constriction of .036".

Testing of the Guerini Impact Trap Combo took place at the Coon Creek Trap & Skeet Range in Lincoln, California. My choices of ammunition for this test session were B&P Mach loads with 7½s, NobelSport's Trap Gold 3-dram 1½-ounce loads of 8s, Remington's Premier STS Light Handicap load of 3-dram 1½-ouncers with 8s and Rio's Trap 32 Paper load of 2¼-dram 1½-ouncers with 8s. First stop was the patterning board to check the POI of the barrels and chokes.

First to be checked was the unsingle with the Light Full Maxis Choke. I set the comb to the lowest setting, as I do not normally shoot an elevated comb. Next, I adjusted the rib to provide the lowest POI, about 50/50. I stepped off roughly 35 yards and took a slow, deliberate aim at the center spot on the

steel plate. The first, second and third shot with the Rio Trap 32s all landed right where they should have, giving me the near-perfect 50/50 POI I was hoping for. Pattern size and density was appropriate for the Light Full's .032 constriction at that distance.

The next components to be checked were the bores on the over & under barrel with a Light Modified in the bottom and Modified in the top. I left the comb as it was to attain the same 50/50 setting for the rib. Patterns were representative of proper POI, size and density. The Rio loads did a fine job on the patterning board.

Next stop was the trap field for a couple rounds of Singles. For the first round, I shot the unsingle barrel with the Light Full choke I had used at the patterning board. The Guerini Impact, with its DTS Kinetic Balancer in the stock, was a bit heavier than the guns I normally shoot but gave a very comfortable recoil sensation to my slightly arthritic right shoulder. The 50/50 POI was just the ticket with the setup on the stock. I had to move the comb over to the right as far as the system allowed to permit my face to center up behind the

rib. The first round went well, with all targets hit very hard.

Midway through the second round, I felt that the meaty lower part of my thumb was being pressed up against the exposed edge of the comb under recoil. I adjusted the comb up about ¼" and continued the round. The remainder of the day's session was without discomfort and hits were just as impressive.

The Maxis Chokes deserve the reputation they enjoy. Trigger sensation was quite nice. The Guerini triggers responded very precisely and quickly to my finger commands. I did miss a target here and there but no fault of the gun or the triggers, that's for sure.

A few rounds of Doubles with the Light Modified and Modified installed using the NobelSport Trap Golds and Remington Premier STS Light Handicaps gave excellent performances. The Guerini Impact Trap Combo was very pleasant to shoot on Singles and Doubles. The DTS Barrel Balancer was given a ride on one of the rounds of Doubles and did what it's designed to do, give just a hint of forward barrel-weight preponderance. I only had one Balancer, but it was enough to let me feel



A view of the Impact's adjustable-comb hardware. Lateral movement of the comb is 5/16" and maximum vertical range is .55". This is another component of the Guerini Dynamic Tuning System (DTS).



The DTS Kinetic Balancer system accepts up to five 1.41-ounce weights. The Kinetic Balancer also helps reduce recoil and does not have to be removed to access the stock bolt.

about. I adjusted the rib to give me approximately a 60/40 POI and tested the adjustments on some simple incomers from a trap positioned about 35 yards out.

The head-up style was a bit alien to me, but the Guerini had no trouble hitting these targets just as hard as it did the Singles and Doubles on the trap range. A few misses later, I returned the comb and rib to my preferred position and was much happier with the results. Maybe the top dogs can shoot a head-up style, but I prefer my old

wherever I point!"

Caesar Guerini guns are not only known for their reliability, outstanding design and performance, they are known for the customer service that backs them up. Caesar Guerini guns are backed by a lifetime warranty and Guerini's acclaimed Pit Stop Program. The Impact is available in other receiver models, such as the Maxum and Apex, so you have other styles to choose from.

With an MSRP just a little more than \$7,100, the Guerini Impact Trap Combo gives you great style, design, performance, reliability, massive adjustability and superb after-sale service in an affordable combo package. Check out the Impact Trap Combo at your nearest Caesar Guerini dealer (see ads in this issue) or visit Guerini online at www.gueriniusa.com. If you're reading this while attending The Grand American in Sparta, Illinois, take a walk down to Caesar Guerini in building 409. When you talk to them, be sure to let them know you read about the Impact Trap Combo in your favorite shotgunning magazine, *Shotgun Sports*. **SS**

the job it could do.

I finished the day with a 100-target round of sporting clays. I mentioned earlier some shooters are maintaining a more head-up shooting style these days, so I adjusted the comb upward a bit more to help me see what this is all

solid-on-the-gun style. The Guerini Impact proved it could perform on trap fields with the best of them and even let you blow up some sporting clays targets, if you want. Given all the adjustability the Impact provides, you'll most likely say, "It shoots

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