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Italy's Next Great Gun is a Fabarm

Wes Lang built the XLR5 for core American duck hunters. By John M. Taylor

THE LAST DAY of the season, and geese were piling into a pond like ants at a picnic. New out-of-the-box was a Fabarm XLR5 Waterfowler clutched in my hands. It showed up just as I was leaving for Maryland's Eastern Shore, and so taking a chance it would fit me and was ready to shoot, I brought it along. Was I glad I did, as the action was fast and furious.

Fabarm has been a pretty good secret for a long time as it bounced from importer to importer. Fabarm stands for Fabbrica Bresciana di Armi—literally Fire Arms Made in Brescia—and was founded by the Galesi family in 1900. Over the years various individuals and companies imported Fabarm shotguns,

including a subsidiary of British Aerospace, until finally being bought by Caesar Guerini. They have recently expanded to a new 10,000-square-meter factory in Brescia, the center of firearm-making in Italy, where they produce about 20,000 shotguns a year.

Wes Lang, president of Fabarm, is a top shot and dedicated hunter. His goal has been to bring to the American hunter and shooter shotguns made for us, with stocks that fit and features we Americans appreciate. The XLR5 Waterfowler is loaded with them.

My first shots were 3-inch steel loads for which this gun is made. Proofed to magnum pressures—higher than normal—they are also

tested in the Brescia Proof House for steel shot. The recoil was very mild, and feeding was slick as possum guts on a bowling alley.

The stock has a soft recoil pad that slides to the shoulder without sticking. The length of pull is 14½ inches and the drop at comb is 1½ and at the heel 2¼ inches, which fits me just fine. A set of stock-adjusting shims is included for tailoring it to your frame. There's a soft-rubber comb to take up any whack to your jaw and buried in the belly of the stock is a quick-release sling-swivel socket. The magazine cap holds the other end of the sling.

One quirk is that the bolt release is on the left side of the action. The XLR5 has the familiar Italian two-piece carrier and to hold the bolt





FABARM XLR5 WATERFOWLER


Gauge	12
Operation	Pulse Piston
Barrel	Tribore HP
Barrel Length	28" or 30"
Barrel Rib Height	10.4mm
Chamber	3"
Chokes	Inner HP (3) Medium, Long, Extreme and one EXIS DK with True Timber camo
Stock	Synthetic
Stock Finish	True Timber Viper Western Camouflage (Soft touch finish)
Action Finish	Cerakote O.D. Green
Length of pull	14.5"
Drop at comb	1.5"
Drop at heel	2.25"
Average weight*	7 lbs.
Warranty	5 years
Sight(s)	Front red fiber optic
Trigger	Standard with Oversized trigger guard
Safety	Oversized
Accessories	Sling swivels, shims, choke case and friction choke wrench

open there's a small lump that's big enough to feel in the dark on the left side just in front of the big, glove-sized, trigger guard. A slight pull on it drops the carrier and holds the bolt open. The receiver is armor-plated from the elements with O.D. Green Cerakote and the True Timber Viper camo takes care of the rest of the outside. There are some of the initial Krytpac Banshee camo guns in the pipeline. Internally, the bolt is PVD-coated and the bore and barrel extension are chrome-plated while the choke tubes are nickel-plated with a touch of camo on the extended areas. The stock and forend are treated with Soft Touch for a solid grip in rain, snow and crappy weather.

unique because it doesn't require extra venting. When you fire a shot it whacks the action to start it rearward

forget your upland gun, you could bag a quail or pheasant with the XLR5 like my dad and others who had one gun for everything.

Of special note is the extended rib. Back in the days of the Model 12 Winchester pump, you could order a vent rib with a "duck-bill" extension that went back onto the receiver. Lang and his guys at Fabarm have done that with the XLR5, adding 4½ inches to the sighting plane and when they coat the gun with True Timber Viper, Fabarm masks the top of the nearly ½-inch Velocity LR (Long Rib) rib so that it is solid matte black to lead your eye to the bird.

Fabarm's 12-gauge barrels are bored using their proprietary Tribore HP system. From the extended chamber forcing cone forward, the barrel extends at an even .736 inch (on the wide side) for about 18 inches. It then begins a gradual tapering toward the choke constriction where the Inner HP and extended Exis DK hyperbolic-curve chokes take over. 

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On those bad days you'll find the extra-large trigger guard and extended bolt handle perfect for loading and shooting. At a light 7 pounds, the XLR5 swings well with just a tad of weight-forward feel and with the sling it's an easy carry to the blind, ATV or through a gooey boot-sucking marsh. The Pulse Piston gas system is

then puts on the brakes to slow the bolt, cutting down secondary recoil that translates to comfortable shooting. If you want to practice before the season—I know you're genetically a great shot from birth, but it won't hurt your shell bill if you do some pre-season practice—the XLR5 will digest 2¾-inch target loads. If you