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Fabarm Elos 2 Elite

GREG CARPINIELLO

Five derelict Fabarm hats hang by my back door in Vermont. *I* think they bear witness to my hunting exploits. *My wife* thinks they smell and surreptitiously relegates them to the trash. For certain they are testament to my enthusiasm for the Fabarm brand. And that enthusiasm is not tempered by this issue's gun on review: a Fabarm Elos 2 Elite 20-gauge with 28" barrels. This is a review, so my praise is not unconditional; but I did not unearth any glaring shortcomings. The Elite, which lists for \$4,075, is distinguished in the \$3,000-to-\$5,000 shotgun space. Fabarm's components and assembly are superb, and when clients come to me clamoring for field guns, I am inclined to recommend a Fabarm Elite. It has an entry-level price but will last a lifetime. The Elite is also available in 12 gauge with 28" or 30" barrels, 20 gauge with 30" barrels, 28 gauge with 28" barrels and as a 20-/28-gauge combo with 28" barrels. Left-hand stocks are an option.

I highlighted Fabarm's century of pioneering accomplishments in my review of the Fabarm N2 RS Sporting (Sept/Oct '23). Phil Bourjaily's paean to

Fabarm in the July/August 2024 issue (see "Fabarm's Fast-Forward") further explored the company's evolution and success. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the firm's Tribore Barrels and HP chokes. The chromoly-steel barrels are deep drilled and chrome lined; however, their geometry is unique. They are ostensibly a long funnel from the chamber to the choke constriction. With the Elite's 20-gauge 28" tubes, 3" chambers and truncated forcing cones open to approximately 14" overbored sections of .631" (nominal bore for 20 gauge is .615"). These sections transition to 7" conical sections that taper to .622" and finish with 3¼" Inner HP chokes. The overbored sections, conical tapers and long chokes comprise the "three bores" of the Tribore barrels. Fabarm maintains that the bores and long radial transitions to the final constrictions reduce friction and shot deformation and offer less perceived recoil and improved performance.

Our Elite's barrels' flawless black finish with a hint of shine struck an attractive balance between gloss and matte. The muzzles had no burrs or anomalies and nicely finished rib end plugs. I am insistent about muzzle

finish, because it matters. I recently came across another Italian gun that occupies the same market space as the Elite, and the muzzles were marred by a dollop of excess solder and burrs. Well-finished muzzles reflect the paramount importance of attention to detail. The Elite's ¼" machine-filed, vented top rib is "capped" with a silver bead. A solid mid-rib extends 18" from the muzzles, with the remaining section open to the monoblock, helping to reduce weight. As I have come to expect from Fabarm, the jointures were perfect. The barrels joined to the monoblock with a barely visible seam that was disguised with a touch of engraving. The polished monoblock's machining for the hooks, lugs and bite was exceptional. The ejectors had keen edges and no excess movement.

The Elite's five ¾" Inner HP chokes are integral elements of the bores, so they are made of the same steel as the barrels and chrome plated. They have wrench cutouts at the ends and are notched to



The Elos 2 Elite's case-colored action showcases Fabarm's commitment to detail and artistry.

indicate constrictions. Constriction IDs are also etched on the shafts. The chokes measured: Cylinder, .000"; Improved Cylinder, .008"; Modified, .020"; Improved Modified, .028"; and Full, .035". The IC choke was a touch more open than nominal, with the others (save Cylinder) being a few thou tighter than nominal. All threaded easily and seated about ¼" recessed from the muzzles. All Fabarm chokes are steel safe through Full.

I love case-colored actions. Glorious pre-WWII Purdeys and Holland & Hollands rich with purples and plums

and hints of amber and gold are my benchmarks. The traditional bone-and-charcoal case-color-hardening process is steeped in lore. Recipes for various makers are guarded with grail-like secrecy and an amalgam of alchemy and artistry. Sadly, tradition is expensive and reserved for contemporary best guns produced in small numbers at dear prices. In turn, modern production guns employ cyanide salts to color harden steel. Often the results are cartoonish and dominated by violet, indigo and blazing maize. That is not the case with

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SNAPSHOT

Make & Model: Fabarm Elos 2 Elite

Gauge: 20

Action: Triggerplate over/under

Chambering: 3"

Finish: Blued/case colored

Barrel Length: 28"

Weight: 6 pounds 6 ounces

Chokes: 5 Inner HP chokes

Stock: 14¾" LOP, 17/16" DAC, 2½" DAH, ¼" cast-off at toe, ⅛" cast-off at heel, 3° pitch

Accessories: INTEGRALE clamshell case, chokes, choke wrench, adjustment tools, owner's manual, five-year warranty

Price as tested: \$4,075

Fabarm, and I was smitten with the Elite's case-colored action.

I spoke with Fabarm USA President Wes Lang, who said that there is "still art to this process." Fabarm uses a proprietary technique where white receivers are dipped in molten cyanide and transferred to a quenching bath. A "very skilled technician" uses an "artisanal and technical" approach that creates an alluring aesthetic. Unlike the traditional process that permeates deeper *in* the steel, the modern process imparts a hard, albeit thin, finish *on* the steel. Afterward a thin,

durable coating is applied to preserve the colors. While most modern case colors are bereft, Fabarm's intermingled deep greens, blues and gold tones approach those of yesteryear.

The Elos 2 Elite's action reveals Fabarm's commitment to detail and artistry. Gold birds adorn an exquisite, low-relief game scene. The upper edges and fences are engraved with a stylish pattern of intersecting lines, and "Fabarm" is engraved where the action meets the monoblock. A gold scroll oval with "Elos 2 Elite" is on the bottom. The

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machining of the action was commensurate with that of the monoblock. Some trivial tooling swirls appeared deep in the well, and I had to look beneath the colors to see them. A stout cocking rod runs along the bottom.

As for lock-up, replaceable trunnions engage hooks on the monoblock. A wide underbolt engages a bifurcated bite in the monoblock, and lugs sink deep into cutouts at the rear of the action. The gun closed with the satisfying *snap* that I expect from higher-end guns. (I see plenty of Fabarm loaner guns that are shot often and treated like rented mules. After myriad indignities they still lock up tight.)

The blued toplever had a slight hitch when opening that I occasionally notice in Fabarms. I am inclined to believe that it indicates tight tolerances between the bolt and bite and will become negligible with use. The movements of the stippled, blued manual safety and barrel selector were effortless. The fixed gold-blade

trigger contrasts with the blued trigger guard, and the 4½-pound pulls for both barrels were crisp, with scant take-up and zero creep.

I look at the internals of plenty of modern production triggerplate actions and can say shortcomings abound. However, that is never the case with Fabarms. Hammers pivot from the bottom, and sears pivot from the top. Coil-spring assemblies run along the bottom. The inertia block and steel lifter ride in tandem on a bearing. Ejector trip rods and firing pins sit in the front. Every part is blued or white steel and is polished, precise and perfect.

Our gun's deluxe Turkish walnut had stunning waves of horizontal figure. The wood-to-metal fit was remarkable. The matte, hand-rubbed oil finish was excellent. While the pores and grain were not filled entirely, this was hardly detrimental. The pistol-grip geometry was agreeable even while wearing thick leather gloves. The palm swell was subtle and

felt good in the hand. The symmetrical checkering, with defined borders and flat-top diamonds, offered a secure, comfortable grip. The inside of the stock was appropriately finished with oil except for the recesses for the ejectors and near the draw-bolt hole. Stock measurements were: 14¾" length of pull to the back of a ¾" rubber pad, 1¼" drop at comb, 2⅛" drop at heel, ⅛" cast-off at heel and ¼" at toe, and 3° of pitch. (Fabarm's specs state that there is 1½" drop at comb and 2¼" at heel with 5° of pitch.) There are also ½" and 1" pre-fitted pads available for altering LOP, which is great for shooters who like to change pads seasonally.

The checkering on the Schnabel forend was equal to that on the buttstock, although the figured wood was a touch darker. The blued iron was well fit, and the inverted teardrop escutcheon for the release is a clever touch. The forend detached easily and attached with a secure and precise fit. Some early incarnations of the Elos field guns had incon-

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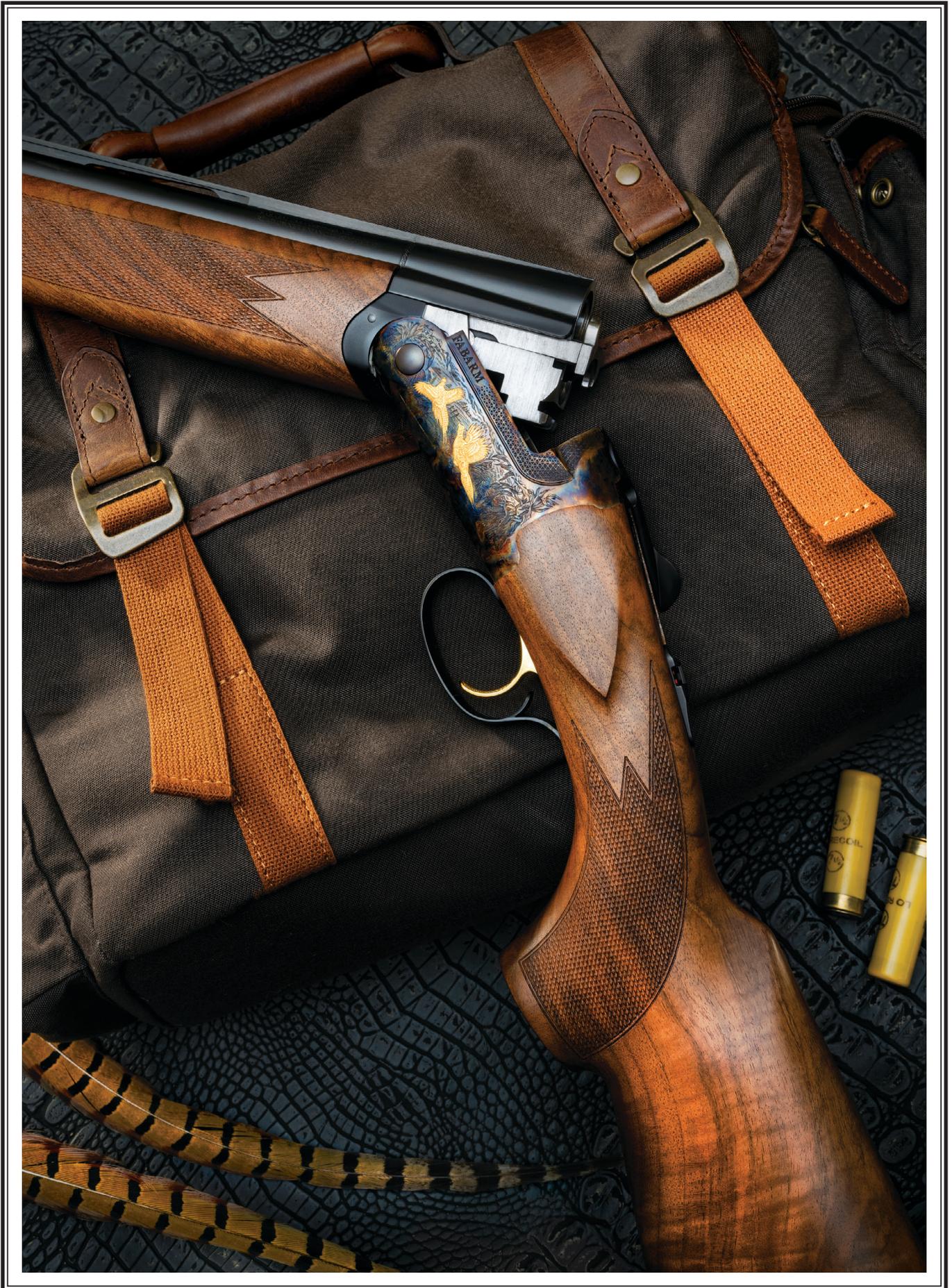
sistent fit and faint play between the forends and the barrels. This is not the case with current Elos guns. I did have one small gripe with the forend, in that it lacked oil finish on the underside. This was not in keeping with Fabarm's otherwise obsessive attention to detail.

Our Elos 2 Elite weighed 6 pounds 6 ounces—3 ounces less than listed in the specs. The gun balanced at the knuckle with a little more weight forward in the hands. Loaded with RC T3 20-gauge 2¾" 7/8-oz 1,200-fps loads of No. 7½ shot and using IC/M chokes, both barrels patterned 50/50 and barrel regulation was perfect. The rounded action carried nicely, and recoil was negligible. The timing of the ejectors was great, but the hulls were thrown only a short distance—which might have been a result of ours being an oft-used demo gun.

Two good friends, a grizzled guide and I headed to the bird fields at Orvis Sandanona on a blustery Thursday in December. We loaded up the truck with Vivian and Lenny—two rambunctious Brittany's—and headed for an area loaded with pheasants. After a couple of embarrassing misses, I settled in. At one point Vivian pranced back with a retrieve and slammed on the brakes with a rooster still in her mouth. I stepped in, flushed the bird and then dropped it in tight cover. Later I stood in scrubby corn as a rooster flushed right-to-left at the edge of the field and I folded it in a maple grove.

After the hunt I sat on the tailgate enjoying a few final laughs for the day. I considered that the Elite might just be the perfect bird gun. It is easy to carry, maneuverable in tight cover and swift to the face. On long crossers it is whippet quick without being whippy. While I do not expect ethereal handling qualities or a lot of soul from production guns, Fabarm has come close with this well-executed field gun. It is a classy piece that one could brag about in terms of both its appearance and performance. It would serve nicely for clays and likely would work well in the duck blind. Fabarm has something special here, and it just might be the best kept secret in shotguns. 🐦

For more information, visit fabarmusa.com.



An Elos 2 Elite 20-gauge featuring a case-colored receiver, intricate game-scene engraving with gold inlays and deluxe Turkish walnut, from Fabarm USA—see Gun Review (p. 81).