

TRULY, THE ELITE

Vic Harker puts John Jeffries' latest long-barrelled game gun, the Perugini & Visini Elite, to the test.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD FAULKS

What constitutes an ideal game gun? A best London sidelock, side-by-side or over-under? Until recent years, the general consensus was for the former and the choice of specification was equally predictable. Weighing between 6½ and 7lb at most, barrel length would be either 28" or 30" at the longest. As for choke boring, something like improved cylinder would be the usual choice for the left barrel and no more than ½ for the right. I am sure there are still many people who would find this kind of specification very close to their own requirements, however, there are increasing numbers who will not. While it was once generally understood that most gamebirds were shot within 30 yards, this may not be the case today. The reason for this being there are many sportsmen who now look for much higher birds and therefore need to equip themselves very differently.

John Jeffries of Custom Guns is a man who meets their requirements, with his long-barrelled over-under guns made in Italy by Perazzi and Perugini & Visini. They continue to attract a growing number of enthusiastic adherents and I've been looking at and shooting John Jeffries' latest gun from Perugini & Visini, dubbed The Elite.

The Elite is a 33"-barrelled, sideplated 20 bore which weighs 7lb 10oz, and as its designation suggests, its appearance is an opulent

one. I would say at this point, wood and engraving is not something I attach a great deal of importance to as compared to a gun's weight, balance and mechanical design. But I have to give credit where it's due. The action body and the sideplates are covered with a richly engraved acanthus leaf design that, combined with a stock of well-figured walnut creates a truly stunning looking shotgun.

As for the action, though far from original in conception – owing almost everything in basic design principles to English makers such as James Woodward and Thomas Boss – in

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terms of strength, elegance and mechanical function, it sets its own very high standards. Its bolting comprises the familiar bifurcated bolt coming forward each side of the breech-face and locating with bearing surfaces each side of the bottom barrel. This is reinforced by an equally familiar system of draws and wedges machined at the sides of the barrel monobloc

and integral to the internal walls of the action body. I would add this arrangement is dimensionally larger than seen on English guns of similar design, but this takes nothing away from the beauty and elegance of the gun and adds to its undoubted robustness.

STOCK

John Jeffries places great importance on the fitting of his long-barrelled guns, and while it is possible to obtain something ready-made, he does not always advise it. An avid high pheasant shooter himself, he brings his own considerable

experience of this rather specialised kind of sport by ensuring his customer has the kind of stock that meets its demands.

The stock on my test gun incorporated a fully adjustable comb for both height and cast – which is also an option. The grip was of particular interest with a rather closer radius in relation to the trigger blade than is usually seen

on a game stock. It also featured a palm-swell which provides a firm hold. Both make sense when you are manipulating a long-barrelled gun weighing 7lb 10oz.

BARRELS

On the subject of barrels, and most particularly ribs, we now must consider the Jeffries Reverse

Slope Rib (RSR). If Joseph Manton's sighting rib was higher at the breech-face than it was at the muzzle-ends, his intention was to raise the point of impact of the shot charge and allow the shooter a better view of the bird when pointing at it, rather than trying to blot it out. The Jeffries' RSR has the opposite effect of lowering the point of impact, which is compensated for by adopting a high stock which provides a greater view of the target without the gun shooting too high. In simple terms it is Manton's principle in reverse.

The first Jeffries ribs were rather conspicuous, however the RSR principle has been so refined that I would defy the unknowing to detect it. I can only say that after my own initial scepticism, and my experience with the RSR on both high quarry of every kind as well as clays, the system works because we can see more of the target all of the time.

The Perugini & Visini Elite incorporates a further development of this principle, with a short, lowered section in front of the breech-face which takes the eye away from the rear of the rib which then rises to the muzzle-ends by 1.5mm. Beautifully made and entirely inconspicuous, it has a more elegant appearance than many conventional ribs.

As with any gun developed by John Jeffries and incorporating RSR, all I can advise is to try one because they work. On this occasion and time of year, I only had the opportunity to shoot the gun on some testing targets that Ian Coley provided at his excellent shooting ground. I will, however, not stop there and at the earliest opportunity intend to be under some suitably high pheasants and with total confidence that if I'm on form, this latest development of the long-barrelled 20 bore will do the rest.

Technical Specifications

Make: Perugini & Visini

Model: Elite

Bore size: 20 bore

Action: Flat spring, hand-detachable trigger plate

Barrel length: 33" or to order

Chamber: 2¾"

Chokes: Constrictions to order

Rib: Ramped reverse slope tapered 8mm–5mm

Price: As test gun £28,000 inc VAT

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