

# SHOOTING SPORTSMAN

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## Gun Review

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### FAIR Iside Prestige 28-Gauge



**F**abbrica Armi Isidoro Rizzini (FAIR) was started by Isidoro Rizzini in 1971 in Marcheno, Italy. Isidoro's brothers, uncles and nephews started the shotgun firms of B. Rizzini, E. Rizzini, F.lli Rizzini and Caesar Guerini. Gunmaking is in the blood.

In America FAIR guns have been sold under the firm's own name and others, including Cortona, Savage, Padrone and Verona. FAIR has been represented by numerous companies in the past, but since 2011 its guns have been imported solely by the Italian Firearms Group (IFG), in Amarillo, Texas. IFG also handles Italian makers Sabatti and Pedersoli.

FAIR currently lists 61 different models, including side-by-side, over/under and semi-automatic shotguns as well as side-by-side and O/U express rifles and single-barrel break-open rifles. It is always encouraging when shotgun makers also make double rifles, because you know they will be experts at setting proper barrel convergence.

Our review gun is FAIR's Iside Prestige side-by-side. The Iside comes in four versions. The two extractor models are not yet imported. The two auto-ejector Isides are the EM and the Prestige. The Prestige has sideplates added to the EM's boxlock action. Isides come in all five gauges with sized receivers, except for the 28/.410, which use the 28 frame. MSRP for the Prestige is \$2,999 in 12 and 20 and \$3,075 in 16, 28 and .410. The EM models are about \$300 less.

Our test gun was a 28-gauge, because we all secretly want a 28-gauge side-by-side. The tiny action starts as a single investment-cast steel unit that is cut to shape with modern CNC machinery and finished by hand. Generally side-by-side actions have separate bottom triggerplates and often separate risers between the top and bottom tangs. Not so on this gun. The entire receiver is made of one piece of steel. I can't conceive of anything stronger.



The sideplated Prestige is cleverly engineered and offers classic proportions and handling.

And it definitely took some very clever machining.

The interior is classically simple. Sears hang from the top strap; hammers pivot from the bottom. Interior locating pins are solid, not roll pins. The single trigger is mechanical, not inertial, so the gun fires every time you pull the trigger, no matter what. The physical trigger blade offers a choice of two pivot points. The factory says that moving the blade to the rear pivot point will lighten the trigger but that it should be done by a gunsmith. If you prefer, proper double triggers can be ordered. Main-springs are linear coils. The hammer falls set robust ejector cocking rods, far sturdier than the thin wire ones we often see. The manual safety is in the Beretta style, with a lateral barrel-selector toggle. There are no aluminum parts anywhere in the gun. Everything is steel or walnut.

The locking system is the usual Purdey double under-bolt. It is pretty much standard side-by-side issue these days because it works so well. The auto ejectors are typical Southgate—also standard stuff for the same reason. The forend is held on with the usual Anson pushbutton mechanism so appropriate in a side-

by-side. The one difference is that the pushrod range of movement is easily screw-adjustable, to take up any slack due to wear. The barrels have some nice touches. They are chopper-lump joined, not by the usual bulkier monoblock. Chopper-lump jointure is usually found on more expensive guns. Visually, the

tubes were completely free of ripples inside and out. Chrome-lined bores were dead on nominal for the 28 gauge at .550". Both barrels were the same, and that is rarer than you might imagine. One thing that wasn't usual was the 1.25"-long forcing cones. That is a good bit longer than standard and currently is in vogue. Some people believe that longer forcing cones produce less shot distortion and thus more uniform patterns.

The barrels on our gun were 28" long, but they are available in 26<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" and 30". They come equipped with flush-mounted screw chokes. They are nicely installed, as you

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really can't see any muzzle swelling from the outside. The five chokes supplied were Cylinder, Improved Cylinder, Modified, Improved Modified and Full. The 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"-long screw chokes were of typical conical parallel taper, but they all mic'd with slightly tighter constrictions than usual. The fronts of the chokes were notched for the perfectly decent choke wrench and also had slight rim notches, to visually indicate which chokes were in place.

On the outside, the barrels were a flawless shiny dark blue, and the solder seams along the ribs were perfectly executed, even on the under rib behind the forend latch. In keeping with the classic lines of the gun, the top rib was the traditional English low-set swamped rib, not the usual flat rib of most Italian and American side-by-sides or the currently trendy raised rib. The top rib was uncheckered but had a smooth, matte finish in contrast to the brightly blued barrels. It was very nicely done. Up front there was a single tasteful small steel bead.

The stock on the gun had a traditional English grip and splinter forend, as so befits a side-by-side field gun. Wood-to-metal fit was quite good, especially the fit of the forend and the mating around the sideplates. The trigger tang was short, and I think the stock would have looked nicer with a long tang, but that's really whining. The wood had some grain to it, but it certainly wasn't over the top. I'd give it 2.5 stars out of 5, due to a knot. The finish was just the right color of rich reddish brown. The grain of the wood in the stock was not fully filled. That's an omission I see on many Italian guns. That said, the interior of the forend and head of the stock were properly finished to forestall any errant oil seepage. That's a good thing.

The laser checking on the stock and forend was nicely done in a well-executed and attractive pattern. The butt was finished off with a pretty-average-looking buttplate. Removal of the plate permits access to the drawbolt, which holds on the stock. It provides easy access to the receiver for cleaning and maintenance. A long trigger tang would have added a bit of extra work here.

Stock dimensions on our gun were 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" length of pull, 1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" drop at comb and 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" drop at heel, with a slight right-hand cast and about 6° of pitch. For Joe Average, that is a little higher than usual and a touch more pitch. Personally, I like my side-by-sides to be stocked a touch higher than my O/Us. That may be because of barrel flip or my perception of the way most side-by-side ribs set up. Others shooters like their side-by-sides stocked the same as their O/Us, so it is a personal thing.

The computerized engraving on the gun's silver nickel-plated receiver and decorative sideplates consisted of fine acanthus-leaf scroll with gamebirds in flight on the sides and bottom. It was OK and perfectly adequate. I personally prefer the look of the Iside EM model, without sideplates, because of its nicely sculpted receiver rear, but that's just my opinion. On less-expensive guns, it is middle of the road and won't offend. If you want a gun engraved to your preference, IFG will handle that.

Our Iside came in a plain cardboard carton. It contained the gun, stock and barrel sleeves, a little bottle of

oil, five chokes, a nice wrench in a good plastic box, a manual and a guarantee. The guarantee from IFG is for the life of the original owner and covers the metal. IFG provides the servicing. Field guns usually don't get shot to death, but a lifetime guarantee is always a nice thing to have and shows confidence on the part of the importer.

I received the gun two weeks after the close of quail season. That was a shame. It really would have been at home for bobwhites as well as grouse, woodcock and preserve pheasants, chukar and Huns. Twenty-eights are like that. They shoot bigger than they should.

With the slightly rounded receiver and an all-up weight of 5 pounds 6 ounces, this would make an ideal gun for all-day carry and in rough terrain. The balance point was 1/2" in front of the hinge, but more importantly the gun had a good moment of inertia for its size and weight. Guns less than 6 pounds can be whippy unless the barrels contribute a bit of stability. This FAIR really had "the feel." It was marvelously balanced. That said, as with any light gun, straightaway shots were more conscious follow-through than with heavier guns.

Mechanically, the gun was correct for the most part. The chokes did not come loose. The ejectors functioned properly. The safety was neither too hard nor too soft. There were no firing malfunctions of any kind.

But there were some issues with that single mechanical trigger. It never failed, but it was begrudging. Both sears let go at 3 pounds. In my mind that's a bit too light for a field gun. But the bad part was that both sears had more creep than a teenager sneaking home after curfew. Admittedly, this gun was a sample of one, and it was a display gun at the SHOT Show, where it received all sorts of meddling. The FAIR over/under I reviewed in 2008 (the Dewing Prestige Limited, Sept/Oct '08) had decent trigger pulls, so I'm not too concerned. Besides, you would insist on the available double triggers anyway, right?

At about \$3,000, the Prestige sits sort of in the middle of the moderately priced side-by-side competition. Dick-Edwards sells a very nice Plantation completed 28 through Cabela's for \$2,200. SKB has a raised-rib sideplated Model 250 in 28 for \$2,725. Both guns are made by AKUS, in Turkey. The cute little Fausti Dea 28 starts around \$4,200, while Connecticut Shotgun's RBL 28 begins at about \$5,000. And that's just a sample. There are plenty of others to choose from.

Still, I found the FAIR Iside Prestige to be a very interesting gun. It is well made for a production gun and definitely cleverly engineered. The proportions are classic, as are the feel and handling. And it's a 28-gauge side-by-side. The birds will fall out of respect.

*Author's Note:* For more information, contact Italian Firearms Group, 800-450-1852; [www.italianfirearmsgroup.com](http://www.italianfirearmsgroup.com).

*Bruce Buck's most recent book, Shotguns on Review, is a collection of 38 of his recent Gun Review columns. It is available in bookstores and online.*