New From Benelli: The Vinci

A revolutionary modular design and exceptional performance make this one a winner.

FOR AS LONG as autoloading shotguns have been built, the design has remained basically the same. Contained in a metal receiver is the fire-control system, the breech bolt, the ejector, and parts that cause shells to travel from a tubular magazine tube to the chamber of the barrel.

The magazine is screwed into the front of the receiver and a buttstock is attached to its opposite end. The barrel slips into the front of the receiver and is held in place by the forearm, which is held in place by a cap at the end of the magazine tube. An action spring located either in the buttstock or the forearm pushes the bolt back into battery after the gun is fired.

The Benelli Vinci is like none of the above. In fact, it is like nothing you have seen before in shotguns. Of modular design, one module consists of the barrel and receiver, the two permanently joined together at the factory. This particular detail rules out the possibility of having more than one barrel for the gun, but that may be a moot point since doing so was long ago made unnecessary by the introduction of screw-in chokes.

It does eliminate the option of installing a rifled slug barrel on a bird gun, but various manufacturers tell me that few shotgun owners choose that option anyhow. Most either shoot suitable slug loads in their smoothbore barrel or they buy a dedicated shotgun with a rifled barrel, equip it with a scope, and use it exclusively for hunting deer, bear or other game.

Still, due to the rigid fit between its barrel and receiver, the Vinci should deliver excellent accuracy with slug loads such as the Remington Buckhammer and Federal's TruBall loading of the old Foster slug, both designed for use in a smoothbore barrel.

The Vinci's receiver is a simple cylinder and not much larger in diameter than the barrel. Rather than linking a return spring located in the buttstock with the bolt, Benelli engineers chose to locate the spring in the receiver where it is connected directly to the bolt.

They call it an in-line inertia system and they say it results in a noticeable reduction in both recoil and muzzle rise during firing. Many shooters don't realize that part of what they perceive as recoil is actually a blow delivered to the cheek by the stock as the shotgun recoils backward and upward. The in-line recoil of the Vinci reduces that quite dramatically.

Then we have the ComforTech Plus synthetic stock, basically a multi-section design with the pieces connected by shock-absorbing rubber chevrons. When the gun is fired, the stock flexes and in doing so it soaks up a great deal of recoil before it reaches the shooter's shoulder.

A rubber insert in the comb of the stock increases shooter comfort even more. Add an ergonomically designed butt pad made of the same material and you have a shotgun that can be fired comfortably all day long for days on end. The Vinci is built for hunting but its soft recoil should make it a favorite of serious clay target shooters as well.

And just how comfortable is the Vinci to shoot? I used the new gun on a

Extremely light recoil for a 12-gauge gun along with minimal muzzle jump during firing made triples on doves entirely possible.
Shotgunner's Notebook

dove shoot in Argentina and at the end of three days my fired shell count was 6,375 rounds. I wore a thin strap-on recoil pad on my shoulder and while it always helps, it does not totally prevent bruising, even when using a 20-gauge gun.

As it turned out, the edge of the pad had lightly indented my shoulder but I suffered no bruising whatsoever. My right cheek was a bit tender but otherwise I would have been good to go for another day or two of shooting.

Due to the high-volume shooting in Argentina I prefer the 20-gauge and often use the 410 and the 28-gauge. Shortly before our departure from home I thought I would be shooting a 12-gauge gun so I was not exactly looking forward to the trip. But once I had burned up a few boxes of shells with the Vinci, I realized I was shooting with the most comfortable 12-gauge shotgun ever built.

The Vinci also passed the reliability test with flying colors. On the first day of the dove shoot I fired 2,300 rounds without experiencing a single malfunction. About two hours into the second day I had two failures to eject and at that point I debbed a drop of oil to the rotating locking lugs of the bolt and applied another drop into the locking lug recesses of the barrel.

From then on I repeated the two drops of oil routine with every 50 boxes of shells and the gun never missed a shot. With the exception of the two bobbles on the second day (which were my fault) I would have gone through the entire shoot without a single malfunction.

What they claim about reduced muzzle jump seems to be equally true. Double proved to be as easy as having an ace of clubs. The gun was smooth and the five-inch barrels were the limit.

Occasionally this bird would catch in the field with ease. I took my hand back just as I kept the gun swinging smoothly.

The three modules (the buttstock, the barrel as a whole and the forearm) are the most interesting, since they combine the fire-control system and the magazine.

The three modules consist of the buttstock, the barrel and receiver and the forearm assembly, the latter containing the fire-control system and the magazine.

...and we have the award to prove it

The coveted Golden Bullseye Award is a "symbol of excellence and innovation" so it's no surprise that Shooting Illustrated has honored the Burris SpeedBead with its 2005 Optic of the Year for "products remarkable in their ability to shooters and hunters.

Shotgunners believe that SpeedBead is the most significant advancement since the vitreous fiber tube, making poor shooters into good shooters and good shooters into great ones.

Until SpeedBead, shotgun accuracy was dependent on consistent, precise shoulder mounting and head position. But, with SpeedBead, no matter where in the SpeedBead window the red dot is positioned, it's where the shot will go.

The editors at Shooting Illustrated know a great product when they see one...