

AYA No.1 side-by-side

After admiring it from afar, Mark Heath finally gets his chance to break a few clays with a stunning AYA No.1 sidelock and is not disappointed



The action has some impressive colour hardening and a first-class finish to it

Normally when I write reviews for *Shooting Times*, different shotguns are on the schedule to test throughout the year. This month is a little different as the gun – an AYA No.1 – is one that I asked to review, having seen it at the shooting school and at a number of gun trade events

in the hands of its owner Edward King of ASI, the importer and distributor for AYA and Rizzini. I have picked it up a couple of times and admired the weight, balance and aesthetics, but I've never had the chance to shoot it.

My own guns are all over-and-unders, both 12- and 20-bore, but I do enjoy shooting side-by-sides

“The clays were getting the full benefit of the 40mph wind, but the AYA took it all in its stride”

The first test for the AYA was the 40ft tower where it dealt with some very sporting clays with ease



NEED TO KNOW	
Manufacturer	AYA
UK distributor	ASI UK
Model	AYA No.1
Bore	12
Barrels	30in
Action	Side-by-side sidelock ejector
Weight	7lb 3oz
Price	£17,000 (standard price without additional options)

and, perhaps because I handle different guns every day, I am comfortable switching between the two configurations. My favourite AYA in standard format is the No.2 round action with 30in barrels and double triggers; Edward's gun is an AYA No.1 with a single trigger and semi-pistol-style grip with an open radius.

First class

While a standard AYA sidelock weighs 6lb 13oz, the gun on test tips the scales at 7lb 3oz. The barrels weigh 1,316g, which is a little lighter than I was expecting, and are fitted with Teague chokes and finished with a raised, tapered rib. The gun has a beavertail fore-end with plenty of wood for the front hand, so less need for a glove when shooting. The stock is highly figured dark walnut, which perfectly complements the colour hardening on the action to provide an incredible-looking gun. The overall finish is first class, with the excellent wood-to-metal fit that we have come to expect from AYA.

The measurements on the gun were as expected: 15in length-of-pull to the centre, with an additional 1/8in at heel and 3/8in at the toe. The drop measurements were not quite standard: slightly higher at the comb with 3/8in, the standard 2in at the heel and 3/8in of cast, which is always the starting point. The balance was exactly as expected on the pin.

Shooting the gun promised to be entertaining; indeed, the constant

The gun handled superbly and was a pleasure to shoot, just as Mark expected



40mph south-westerly wind would give the clays a speed boost. We started on a 40ft tower on the downwind side and the clays were very sporting. Whereas in normal conditions only a small amount of lead is required, a bit more effort and concentration was needed here.

I was using 24g No.7½ cartridges with fibre wad, which were doing the job exceptionally well. The gun handled superbly, and the clays were being ground to dust by some great patterns from the Teague chokes.

Impressive breaks

We moved on to the 80ft tower where the straight bird was suitably dealt with, together with the right-to-left crosser. We were in for a surprise with the left-to-right, which had the wind behind it and was very entertaining to shoot. The AYA took it all in its stride and, with a little extra lead than you would expect, the breaks were very impressive. The gun was a pleasure to shoot. The trigger-pulls were excellent, crisp with 3lb to 3½lb of pressure, and the ejectors were powerful and well timed.

For the craic, we decided to test the gun on the 130ft tower on the side that meant the clays would have the full benefit of the wind. The clays straight overhead and left-to-right had the wind behind them and were travelling somewhere in the region of 200 yards at incredible speed. The AYA did the job superbly and, though I was using some 30g No.5s, I didn't feel undergunned. This gun would be a joy to use on shoot days.



The ejectors were powerful and well timed, making them perfectly reliable in the field



The open-radius semi-pistol-type grip is perfect for the single trigger on this AYA

CONCLUSION

The AYA No.1 lived up to my expectations – it was superb to shoot. In this price bracket there is not much that compares; a William Powell Zenith, perhaps, but otherwise only second-hand English guns. With AYA you can have the gun made to your measurements, with a true left-opener if you shoot off the left shoulder. Self-opening is another option.

Action and barrels	A great-looking gun with some impressive colour hardening and a first-class finish. I wonder what it would be like with some 32in barrels, which I believe AYA produces.	19 / 20
Trigger and ejectors	A lot of side-by-side manufacturers seem to struggle with making a reliable single trigger, but AYA is not one of them. The triggers functioned perfectly. The ejectors, as is always the case on an AYA, were powerful and well timed.	20 / 20
Stock	The stock was highly figured and well finished. The grip was comfortable and the open-radius semi-pistol grip is perfect with the single trigger – there is no need for the straight-hand grip to slide your hand back for the second trigger.	19 / 20
Handling	Great handling on a wide variety of targets, including some off the high tower which were, quite frankly, ridiculous. If I were to be really picky, I would like a little more weight in the 30in barrels, but this is just personal preference.	19 / 20
Value	The standard AYA retails at around £17,000 including VAT. In the form tested, with beavertail fore-end, single non-selective trigger and the semi-pistol grip, the price increases to around £20,000, which may sound a lot but the standard of finish really is first class, as is the reputation for reliability.	19 / 20
SCORE		96 / 100