

The new 686CL Sports from ATA

John McDougall



John McDougall puts the ATA 686CL to the test.

This is the second ATA shotgun I've reviewed since they were introduced into Australia about seven years ago by distributor Nioa of Queensland. I must say the guns have been highly reliable as an import from Turkey, both models based on a copied Beretta action and named after the popular Italian 686 series of shotguns. I'm not sure how this arrangement came about but the guns seem well made and are backed by a five-year warranty, reflecting the confidence Nioa has in ATA shotguns. I haven't been able to fault them.

The 686CL has a black chromed barrel rather than a blued one, something obviously done to avoid any corrosion say, for example, in brackish swamp water where the gun would come into its own as a waterfowl hunter's delight. The case hardened finish on the receiver along with its black matte barrels avoids any unnecessary glints that may spook ducks.

I'm impressed by the price of this gun at around \$1650 along with its case and full set of internal choke tubes, again modelled on the popular Mobil chokes used by Beretta and other manufacturers, and the quality of the walnut in the stock and fore-end of the 686CL is also striking for a gun below \$3000, the price level at which I'd usually see such excellence.

Barrels

At 760mm (30") the barrels of the ATA 686CL look amazing with their matte black chromed coating. Topped with a 7mm parallel ventilated rib that's also black chrome plated and instilled with a stipple finished (non-reflective pattern on top), the ATA 686CL has all of the makings of a gun suited to sporting clays but additionally hunting, waterfowl in particular.

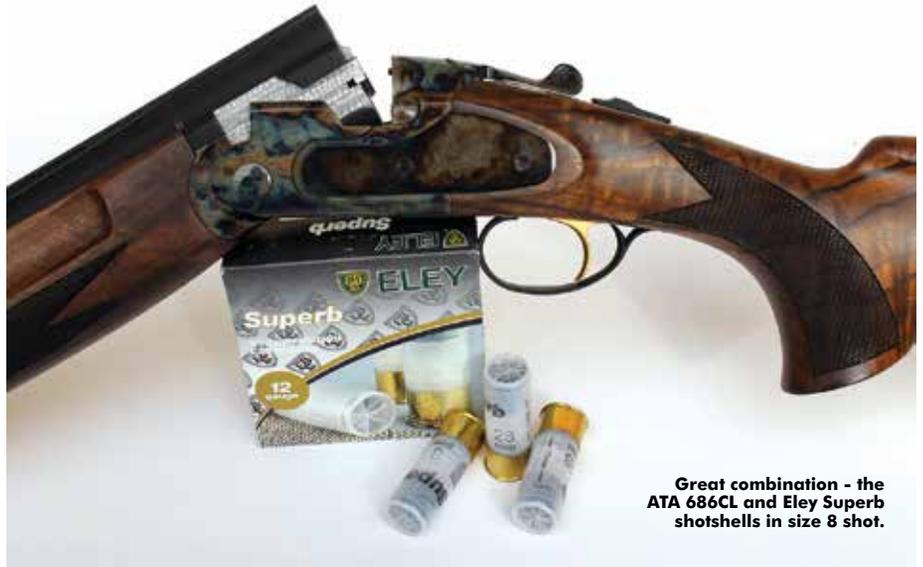
At the muzzle, the top rib has a red transparent filament sight which attracts light under most conditions to give the shooter some idea of the relative placement of the muzzle in respect to the target, even in

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lower-than-normal light conditions. There's no mid sight fitted to the rib to avoid gun canting.

The ribs joining the barrels are solid as opposed to ventilated and contribute nicely to the overall weight of the barrels at 1.48kg. There are no signs of residual solder from assembling the barrels, quality assurance in this area seemingly excellent which is not always the case with lesser-priced guns from Turkey. Fully internal Mobil chokes are installed at the muzzle, five supplied with the 686CL from skeet to full choke. Also supplied is a propeller-style choke tube spanner which is easy to operate and positive in its action.

The chamber end is suited to 76mm (3") cartridges in both steel and lead shot loadings and speaking with a representative from Nioa, it's recommended no more than half-choke should be used with the



Great combination - the ATA 686CL and Eley Superb shotshells in size 8 shot.



The action open.

686CL when employing steel shot loads and that all shot sizes are compatible with that combination. This is a reassuring directive as the guns are not proofed under CIP but guaranteed by the Turkish Government.

Also at the chamber end I particularly liked the jewel polishing around the monobloc, great for maintaining lubricants to avoid unnecessary wear as metal against metal operates. I prefer a light Teflon-based oil rather than grease which will attract grit. The ejectors are strong and well timed, expelling empties well clear of the breech in readiness for quick reloading, again much like Beretta.

Receiver

Many shooters will like the colour case hardening on the ATA 686CL and I don't

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The stylish ATA 686CL.



believe it has been done in the traditional manner with charcoal and bone under high temperature but nonetheless, whether it has been done with cyanide or through another heat treatment process then lacquered to preserve the case hardening, the finish is one of the better ones I've seen

on such heat-treated gun receivers.

I feel it necessary for the benefit of newcomers who may be looking for a first shotgun to mention that side-plated guns don't always equate to much more expensive 'side-lock' options. Side-plated guns are more often a boxlock gun with the firing

mechanism located behind the breech to the rear of the monobloc, whereas side-lock guns have the firing mechanism attached to the side-plates. The ATA 686CL is actually a boxlock gun with side-plates to accommodate greater coverage by the colour case hardening - the firing mechanism is not attached to the side plates and it's not a side-lock gun.

The monobloc of the 686CL is like Beretta's, from the locking pinions extending from the breech face to close the gun to the bifurcated trunions that join the barrels to the action/receiver, the similarities are amazing. Probably the only major difference ATA have adopted as opposed to the Italian giant on which the gun has been modelled is the adoption of mechanically operated triggers.

I have a preference for such a trigger system to enable selection of the second barrel to fire independent of the first to

Stylish lines are complemented by extensive colour case hardening.



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shift the inertia block in an inertia-operated system. With a mechanical trigger system you'll always have the ability to fire a second shot, which I like not only in a sporter but also a hunting shotgun.

Design of the top lever for opening the gun is well tensioned and comfortable to use, placement of the barrel selector-cum-safety catch also conveniently located on the top tang to the rear of the breech. This operates positively with some resistance which means it can't easily be shifted from its selected position. The barrel selector has one dot to indicate firing of the lower barrel and two dots for firing the upper barrel first, such as you'd use for an incoming target.

The size of the triggerguard is generous and complements the lines of the 686CL. It's not colour case hardened but black chromed, again to provide protection from unsavoury elements. Shape of the triggerfoot is good with triggers adjusted to release at around 5lb each which, although I found a little heavy, can be adjusted by a competent gunsmith to around 3½-4lb for better control.

Stock and fore-end

The walnut woodwork on the review gun was sound and according to Nioa is Grade 2 woodwork, the character and colour excellent. Chequering about the stock and fore-end is not overly generous and was obviously done with a laser-guided machine as overruns were absent, the ATA shield carved into both sides of the 'tulip' or Schnabel-shaped fore-end. Chequering is completed at around 18 lines per inch with a single line border struck around the fore-end and stock chequering.

It's comforting to see a significant recoil pad fitted to the the stock, this one a 'slip pad' style whereas the top segment is hard plastic polymer to brush over clothing without catching loose garments. I was appreciative of the 15mm rubber recoil pad as I shot some heavier recoiling loads during assessment whereas the Eley



The ATA 686CL's choke tubes and spanner.

Superb loads I mainly used were a delight, well matched to the weight of the gun and smashing targets with ease.

In the field

A visit to several gun clubs during horrendous weather provided a great deal of enjoyment and shooting Eley 28g Superb loads in size 8 shot seemed a perfect match for the quarter and improved modified chokes I installed in the barrels. The wind played havoc with targets but the 686CL with its lighter weight at 3.5kg moved about and if anything I shot in front of targets I missed due to the liveliness of the gun. Scores posted around 17/25 to 20/25 were pretty good for a gun straight out the box under such testing conditions.

In conclusion, I'd be hard pressed to find another shotgun that offered the features of the ATA 686CL as standard. The forcing cones could be lengthened to cut back a touch on recoil and the triggers adjusted marginally but otherwise this brilliant shotgun from Turkey with a five-year warranty is top value. I'd have enjoyed some field shooting on ducks or quail

but sadly the review coincided with the off-season.

During the NSW rice shooting season for example, I'd recommend the 686CL or try it as an-entrance level gun for sporting clays. Just like the last ATA shotgun I reviewed the 686CL is very good to excellent value for money especially with suede case and all accessories. Recommended retail price is about \$1650 but if you shop around you might find it for a little over \$1525. More at nioa.com.au ●

SPECIFICATIONS

Maker: ATA Turkey

Distributor: Nioa

Model: 686CL

Overall length: 1205mm (47½")

Barrel length: 760mm (30")

Barrel weight: 1.48kg (3lb 4oz)

Chamber: 12-gauge, 76mm (3") chambered

Proof: Recommended for use with all steel shot sizes with no more than half/modified choke

Bore size: Under 0.722", over 0.722"

Chokes: Skeet 0.720", Imp. Cyl. 0.715", Modified 0.703", Imp. Mod. 0.672", Full 0.688"

Stock dimensions: Length of pull 370mm (14½"), drop at comb 35mm (1⅜"), drop at heel 55mm (2¼")

Trigger pulls: Under 5lb, over 5lb

Warranty: Five years

Accessories: Suede case, all chokes and spanner in plastic case and gun socks

Price: RRP \$1650 but shop around



The walnut stock on the ATA 686CL is exceptional for the price.