

It feels more compact than it is and shortening it has made a real difference.

What do you see when you take a long and careful look at the Daystate Saxon? Most will see a standalone, limited edition rifle that Daystate collectors will ensure sells out its never-to-be-repeated production run of 150. That's fair enough, and there's definitely plenty to catch the eye on that basis alone. Those who have studied the formulation of the Saxon will be searching beyond its striking looks and unique features, to the rifle it will soon represent – the Wolverine 2.

ALL SHOW - ALL GO

As with all of Daystate's special-edition rifles, the Saxon is built to perform as well as looking remarkable. As the launch platform for one of the company's most important models, this LE needs to show more than a hint of what's to come when the next-generation Wolverine is released to the waiting public. The Wolverine has been an incredible success for Daystate and that's something the Staffordshire-based, pre-charged pioneers are bound to want to build on. Let's examine the foundation, then, with a tour of the £1990 Saxon LE.

HISTORY

The 'historic' theme of the Daystate Saxon is designed to signify the 950th anniversary of the end of Saxon rule, which came about with the coronation of William The Conqueror, on the 25th of December 1066. To establish this theme, the rifle carries colours, patterns and examples of literature used

throughout the Anglo-Saxon era, including Latin, that universal language.

Daystate has also commissioned master bladesmith, R. Harrington of Bison Bushcraft in the suitably historic town of Battle, near Hastings, to produce a bespoke, custom made hunting knife and leather sheath, crafted in an authentic Saxon langseax style, and numbered to match each rifle. Add the custom Huggett silencer and barrel shroud, the certificate of authenticity and an all-protecting lockable hard case ... and actually, you're still a long way off from appreciating the whole Saxon package. To do that, we need to go in closer.

A limited edition with limitless potential for the future.

LESS IS MORE

The Saxon, and eventually the Wolverine 2, is a full two inches shorter than the earlier model and that has a noticeable effect on the rifle's balance. That carbon-fibre Hi Lite (High capacity – Lite weight) buddy bottle air reservoir holds sufficient compression to power almost 300 shots in .22 at 11-plus ft.lbs., which should translate to around 220 in .177. FAC holders can opt for the 30-plus ft.lbs. version in .22, and that will yield 60, full-power shots per charge, which on the test rifle is 210 bar. All Daystates are individually set up at the factory, so individual rifles can show differing recommended charging pressures on the little decal set into the front-left of the breech block.

ambidextrous thumbhole laminate design that played such a part in making the original Wolverine the world-beater it became. Gary's design was

"built to perform as well as looking remarkable"

passed on to production maestros, Minelli of Milan, where it became an ergonomic reality in layers of multi-hued timber.

As stated, the Saxon is designed to deliver top performance and that starts with control, so an adjustable butt pad, fully scalloped, stippled grip and a scope height cheek piece.

The Saxon is fitted with a revised valve system that smooths out power delivery, improves consistency, reduces muzzle noise and imparts a more 'efficient' feel to the shooting cycle. This is enhanced by the Huggett silencer and shroud, with its trick ports and stainless mesh inserts. Andrew Huggett is a full-spec' genius in his own right and deserves his place in the Saxon's roll call of commissioned talent.

FEATURE-BY-FEATURE

Another master, this time stockmaker Gary Cane at his Techwood studio, was called upon to reprise and enhance the



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The editor gets first go with the latest Daystate supergun – the Saxon LE



The full Saxon time capsule.



The standard of presentation is superb.

INSIDE DETAILS

In addition to the uprated firing valve and its attendant air-flow dynamics, the Saxon, and again the new Wolverine, features bolt-open safety, an anti-double-load device incorporated within the magazine mechanism, plus the best safety catch on the market. The latter is manual, centrally mounted and can be operated by the flick of a thumb. Perfect.



History all over the place.



Simple, brilliant and perfect for the job.

I'm pleased to see that the Saxon retains the option of a user-changeable bolt-handle, which can be switched for right- or left-handers in a couple of minutes, as can the side from which the 10-shot magazine is inserted. This is, therefore, a fully ambidextrous rifle and all the

top echelon of airgun manufacture, Tony knows all too well that any high-performance rifle is only as good as its barrel, and the Lothar Walther match-grade versions used by Daystate are at the cutting-edge of that technology. These are scarily expensive items, and Tony Belas

respect for the Saxon's immaculate finish, but I put 200 or so, carefully sorted, perfectly matched, .177 pellets through it, and I took it on several strolls through several fields and woods. I actually requested that Daystate let me keep the test rifle right up until the last minute before the British Shooting Show, where it is due to be offered as a prize.

"the feature he kept returning to was the rifle's barrel"

better for it.

Trigger function is two-stage and adjustable, of course, with the curved, stainless blade offering let-off weight options that range from 'sensible' all the way down to 'you'd better have the dexterity of a neurosurgeon'. This superior rifle has a reassuringly superior trigger.

BARREL TECHNOLOGY

In preparation for this review, I spoke to Daystate head honcho, Tony Belas, about the Saxon, the upcoming Wolverine 2, and about countless related topics, but the feature he kept returning to was the rifle's barrel. Staying ahead in the barrel technology race, and race it surely is, is an intensive, costly business. Like all involved at

jokes that his company's barrels cost as much as some entire rifles. That's, literally, the price you pay for a declaration that no rifle in your sector will outshoot yours.

EXTENDED TEST PERIOD

Normally, the downrange performance of what is, after all, a collector's piece, can be slightly shoved aside in favour of detailing what the rifle is, rather than what it does. Not this time. As the forerunner of the Wolverine 2, and identically equipped to represent that rifle's performance potential, the Saxon needs to be fully explored on the test range, so that's what I did.

I was careful, and I avoided the unhelpfully hideous weather out of

SO HOW DOES IT SHOOT?

Whenever possible, I did my best to forget about the Saxon's array of 'collectable' features and furbelows and just got on with the shooting. The photos accompanying this test will display the bling, so I need say no more on that subject, anyway.

As a shooting machine, I consider the Saxon, to be the finest full-length rifle that Daystate has ever made. I'd be more specific but the previous holder of that accolade is the Renegade bullpup, and I've yet to test the two rifles side-by-side, so bets have to be hedged, for now.

The balance is truly excellent, making the Saxon's scoped weight of 8.5lbs just about perfect, and far lighter in the shoulder than it is

TECH SPEC

- Model:** Saxon LE
- Manufacturer:** Daystate
- Country of origin:** UK/Italy
- Price:** £1990
- Note:** Expected price of Wolverine 2: £1176 - £1357
- Type:** Pre-charged, multi-shot/single shot sporter/match rifle
- Calibre:** .22, .177
- Cocking:** Bolt action
- Loading:** Via removable, rotary 10-shot magazine, or single-shot tray
- Trigger:** 2-stage, adjustable
- Safety:** Manual
- Stock type:** Ambidextrous, thumbhole laminate, with 3D adjustable butt pad
- Weight:** 3.4kg (7lbs 5oz) Unscoped
- Length:** 1070 mm (42 ins)
- Barrel:** 430mm (17 ins)
- Fill pressure:** 210 bar
- Shots per charge:** 290 in .22, 220 in .177, 60 at 30-plus ft.lbs. in .22 for FAC
- Variation over 50 shots:** 11 fps for .177 on test
- Average energy:** 11.6 ft.lbs.
- Options:** High-power model
- Contact:** Daystate on 01785 859 122

£1990

on the scales. Even with two inches trimmed off its overall length, this rifle is still a full 42 inches long, but again, it doesn't present that way.

Pure accuracy extraction needs a bench, a beanbag and still conditions, and that last requirement was thin on the frozen ground during the time I was testing the Saxon, but I managed to match the very best of the groups I've managed during the past year or so. In fact, I was disappointed by the trio of 18mm diameter, five-shot groups I managed at 50 yards during my last week with the Saxon, because I know I could do better. It matters not; the Daystate Saxon, and the launch platform for the new Wolverine 2, is everything it needs to be, and whoever takes home this incredible rifle from the British Shooting Show is going to feel like a king. ■



The shape of things to come, and by the look of the local vegetation - that photo wasn't taken in Staffordshire.



The specially commissioned knife is of a suitably historic design.