

THIS SERIES OF INSTRUCTIONAL ARTICLES FOR MID-CLASS AND CLUB SHOOTERS IDENTIFIES THE MOST MISSED TARGETS, WHY AND HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SCORES.

LONG CROSSERS

THE MOST MISSED TARGETS

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For the mid-class shooter, the long crosser can be the most daunting of all targets because the lead picture is big and there is always a tendency to look at the gun to measure the lead. Making sure is fatal, causing the gun to slow down – or even worse, stop. To prevent this, you must learn your perception of lead – some see inches, some feet, while others measure in barrel or finger widths.

One way to learn how you perceive lead is to put a clay on a post at 40 yards, then put another post 8ft to the left or right – this is the approximate theoretical lead a target needs at 40 yards. Then mount on the clay and move away to the 8ft marker post. This will achieve two things. It gives you your perception of what 8ft looks like at 40 yards and physically allows you to check that your eye-rib alignment is correct (you should be able to see the clay and the 8ft marker post without lifting or moving your head).

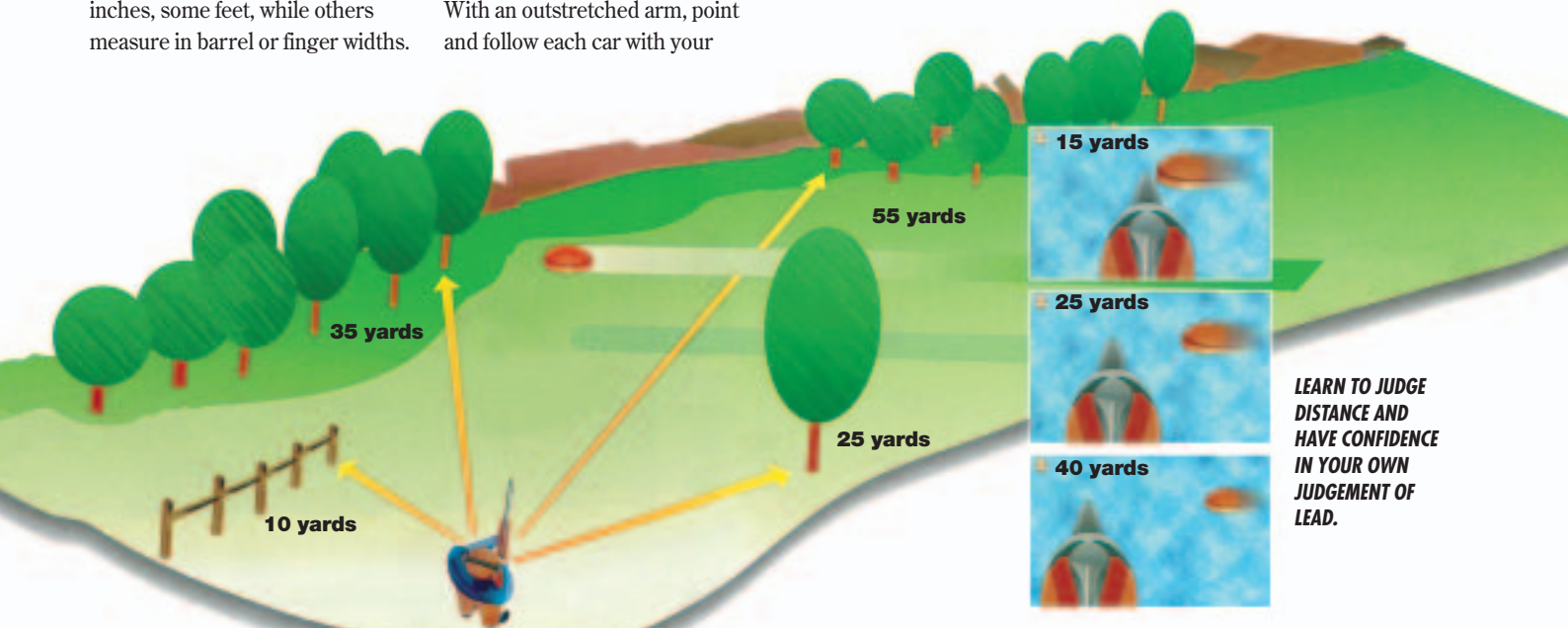
Another thing that must be taken into consideration is that the further away a target is, the slower it appears to move. Think of it like standing at the side of the highway with cars passing you at 70mph. With an outstretched arm, point and follow each car with your

finger, noting how fast your arm is moving. Now move back from the edge of the highway by 20 yards, then 40 yards, and do the same exercise comparing how fast your arm is moving – it's a lot slower although the traffic is moving at the same speed. The same applies to a clay target moving at the same speed at 10, 20 and 40 yards.

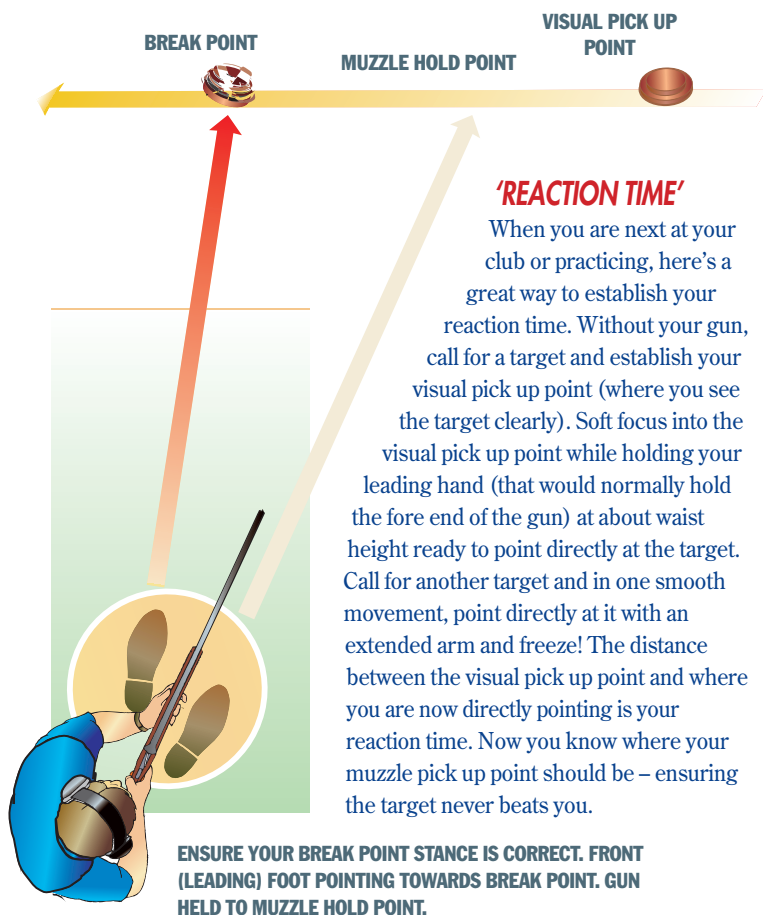
All these factors have to be taken into consideration when tackling the long crosser – you must do your homework before you get in the stand. Find your happy zone to break the target, assess your reaction time and make up your mind which method of achieving lead you are going to use. Pull away always works well with long crossers and should be your first choice – or the fall back method if the wheels fall off when using one of the other methods. Maintained lead works well if you

have a tendency to look at the end of the gun to measure the lead – as you have to be looking ahead of the target all the time to see the correct lead picture.

Now you are on the stand, ready to call for your target. You know where you are going to break the target so ensure your stance is balanced at this point. You know your reaction time to seeing the target, and you know your hold point is in the right place along the flight line – so the target cannot beat you. As you pick up the target, move with it to ascertain its speed and direction. Spend a bit longer on this type of target to give your brain a little longer to work out its speed and direction. With long crossers I always teach my pupils to say to themselves, at normal conversation speed “LOOK AT IT, LOOK AT IT AND LEAD”. This

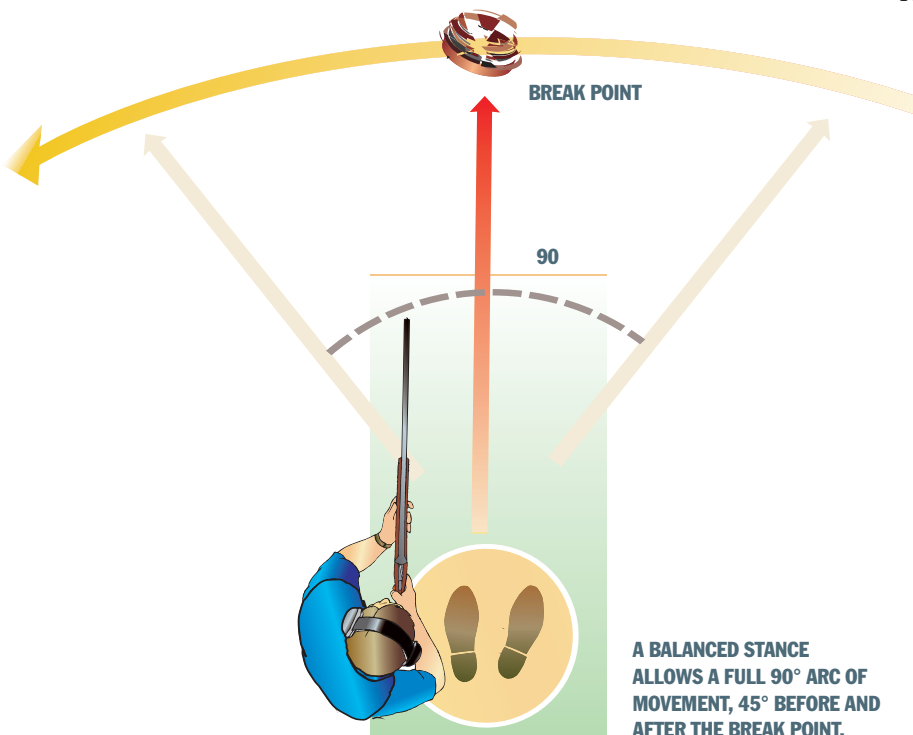


LEARN TO JUDGE DISTANCE AND HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR OWN JUDGEMENT OF LEAD.



'REACTION TIME'
 When you are next at your club or practicing, here's a great way to establish your reaction time. Without your gun, call for a target and establish your visual pick up point (where you see the target clearly). Soft focus into the visual pick up point while holding your leading hand (that would normally hold the fore end of the gun) at about waist height ready to point directly at the target. Call for another target and in one smooth movement, point directly at it with an extended arm and freeze! The distance between the visual pick up point and where you are now directly pointing is your reaction time. Now you know where your muzzle pick up point should be – ensuring the target never beats you.

ENSURE YOUR BREAK POINT STANCE IS CORRECT. FRONT (LEADING) FOOT POINTING TOWARDS BREAK POINT. GUN HELD TO MUZZLE HOLD POINT.



A BALANCED STANCE ALLOWS A FULL 90° ARC OF MOVEMENT, 45° BEFORE AND AFTER THE BREAK POINT.

makes you spend that split second longer on the target – as opposed to the fast short target “ON IT AND OFF IT”. Remember the clay on the post picture – and when it feels that the target will break, go with that feeling and pull the trigger. Do not check, as checking is fatal and will always result in a miss behind.

You will have to practice quite a lot on this type of target to get to know your own perception of lead and what method works best for you, but this is what will take you from a mid-class shooter to a more advanced shot. Your lead has to be instinctive, not measured. You may see inches, but your shooting partner may see feet, yet you both break the target. Lead is very personal, don't ask and then copy other shooters' perception of lead, learn your own.

Another factor that must be taken into account when shooting crossers is that it is easier for a right-handed shooter to shoot a right to left target as he has more natural movement right to left than left to right. When a target is coming onto your good side, the lead hand is pulling the gun onto the target. It is easier to control the gun when pulling than it is when pushing. The gun is also coming onto the face. So, due to the lack of free movement left to right, a target moving onto your bad side (left to right) will always need more lead for a right-handed shooter. This is because it is harder to push the gun and keep good control and there is a tendency for the gun to be pushed off the face. So be wary of targets coming onto your bad side (left to right for a right-hander, right to left for a left-hander).

To finish with, a few facts you might like to consider that could influence you in your approach to crossing targets.

Big long targets need long slow movement, as opposed to close fast targets that need short fast movements.

At 30 yards a 1/2 choke pattern is 30 inches in diameter at the front (slightly less at the back) and 10ft long. So, if in doubt over lead, be bold – there is always the chance of catching the target in the shot string. But, if you are behind the target, nothing can help you!

Do not worry about the drop of shot. Shot falls 3 inches at 40 yards – with a 30 inch diameter of spread at the front of the shot string, drop of shot will not be a factor.

Next month we start a two part article on the advantages of shooting gun down (Part 1) and how to achieve a perfect gun-mount (Part 2).

Shoot safe, shoot straight and keep those questions coming. ■

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