



## PERSONAL INSTRUCTION

Most shooting instructors have strong opinions regarding the technique they teach. For some, their coaching has its roots from their days as successful competitors, having honed their skills through trial and error on the shooting circuit. This will have established a very individual style based on their personal reaction, visual acuity and the adoption of a technique that works well for

them. Other instructors are graduates of the major shooting schools or base their instruction on having completed various coaching courses.

However, what works for one student will not necessarily work for another. We are all distinctly individual. Just glance up and look around you at the difference in people close by – height, size, weight and features. These

differences are the same in the hidden internal workings of your personal co-ordination, reaction time and visual acuity.

Using the game of golf as an analogy (in many ways comparable to shooting a round of sporting clays), an individual is required to negotiate a set course in the least number of shots. The competitor is allowed 14 clubs in his bag. This is to allow him to choose the right club to best tackle the variety of shots he will encounter during his game. No golfer at the top his game would dream of starting a competition without the full compliment of clubs or without knowing when to use which club for what shot.

**LET THE SHOT DEVELOP  
SAYS CHRIS BATHA**

# THAT KODAK MOMENT!

**SCOTT ROBERTSON WAS ON GREAT FORM AT THE RECENT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP, USING EVERY TECHNIQUE AND ALL HIS SKILLS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS.**





In any round of sporting clays, competitors require a similar bag of clubs or variety of techniques – Swing through, Pull away, Maintained, Spot shooting or Moving spot. These techniques must be paired with the correct amount of gun movement to match the target.

When a golfer takes up the sport he is shown the basics of stance, posture, head position and swing. He will begin with a short swing and more usually a 7 iron or pitching wedge. As the fundamentals are grooved and skills increase, the remaining clubs are introduced – each having

**ONE OF THE DEFINITION'S OF MADNESS IS REPEATING THE SAME ACTION TWICE, EXPECTING A DIFFERENT OUTCOME. YET THIS IS WHAT THE BEGINNER AND INTERMEDIATE COMPETITOR IS PRONE TO DO.**



being designed for a specific shot, angle and distance.

The learning curve in shotgun sports is exactly the same. As the beginner grooves the fundamentals and increases his consistency and performance, he should learn to apply different techniques to match the specific target speed, angle, distance and amount of gun movement to break each target.

Watch most top shots and you will notice that they are consistent – all have developed an effortless way of shooting that makes it very difficult for the spectator to pinpoint exactly what technique they are using for each individual target type.

A few years ago I was watching just such a top shot in a shoot-off for a sizeable cash pot. It amazed me that he shot five pairs using several different techniques – and was the only person to straight the layout and took the prize money. I had to ask him why he was playing around with different techniques when there was so much money at stake. His answer: “I never worry about how I get the muzzles in front of the target, I just pull the trigger when the picture is right.” The important part of his quote is **“when the picture is right”**.

## PRECISE RELATIONSHIP

It is a given that certain fundamentals are always present – but the biggest difference between one technique and the other is the picture of the relationship between target and muzzle. Many top shots are adamant that they shoot the same technique regardless of target presentation. From observation of these top performers in various disciplines over the years, they do use a ‘majority technique’, but during a competition they change, adapt and modify their first choice

technique on certain target presentations. This is a core skill in solving the riddle of some of the myriad of target presentations that they encounter in a major competition. In fact, this micro managing (or adjusting) of their first choice technique occurs on every target they shoot, and can be best witnessed when they miss (rarely), chip or are late on a target of a pair. These adjustments are very subtle and totally unconscious actions. Their highly tuned ‘onboard computer’ reacts to every target shot – and alterations to technique and swing speed are constantly adjusted.

## MADNESS!

One of the definitions of madness is repeating the same action twice, expecting a different outcome. Yet this is what the beginner and intermediate competitor is prone to do. This can be because of a lack of experience or skills.

If you are looking to increase your scores, you need to practice and learn all of the techniques and match them with correct gun mount appropriate to target speed and direction.

A good rule of thumb is that the longer you can see the target, the longer the gunmount. The shorter you see the target the shorter the movement. If a target presentation replicates a fast trap target, then shoot it like a fast trap target with the gun pre-mounted. If it is a slow long incoming looper, then it should be shot from a low gun position with a smooth slow action to match the target flight and speed.

It is a self inflicted handicap to have only one technique and move to the target. With one hundred target presentations in a competition, there will always be one that could be more

consistently broken with a different technique, particularly in the pairs, where often the second target is required to be shot with a swing through method. Competitions are often won by a margin of one target and the equivalent of a full bag of golf clubs could give you the range of shot options that gets you that target.

## STUMBLING BLOCK

When I introduce clients to different techniques and different gun mount options, the stumbling block to progress is not the technique, but the muzzle to target relationship (or picture) that will consistently break a particular presentation. Golfers have to learn the ‘feel’ for the different swing speeds of each club, and in the same way, I have come to recognize that the shooting equivalent of the golfer’s ‘feel’ is to learn to **“pull the trigger only when the picture is right”**.

Given that the fundamentals are learned, the gunmount grooved and all techniques mastered, the reason for many unexplained misses is the premature pulling of the trigger before the correct muzzle to target relationship is achieved. This is the direct result of rushing the shot with a failure to match the technique to target. It results in chasing to catch the target up, or being so far in front that the swing slows or stops completely. **Rushing ruins rhythm.** Using the correct technique that suits your own personal co-ordination and visual acuity creates the time for a more controlled and smoother move to the target. The extra time created allows the shot to develop and assists in total concentration on the target that culminates in that Kodak Moment! ■