

The transition from traditional sporting clays to FITASC can be a little daunting – especially when shooting it for the first time. Many shooters find it difficult to shoot their average Sporting scores in this game.

It's little wonder. FITASC is challenging. It's combination of unique target presentations, angles and distances, combined with the compulsory low gun position is what makes it so

challenging. The range of gun movement, often requiring the movement of body and feet to match ever changing target presentation speeds and line of flight, demands a wider range of shooting skills. Simply put, the targets give you more to analyze, plan and execute, at each shooting position. It's little wonder that it's often said that FITASC is the most challenging of the clay shooting disciplines.

## Brief Overview

Most FITASC competitions are 100 target events, though 50 target side events are common at some State and Zone shoots and 200 targets are offered at major events – such as the World Championship. Depending on the number of targets, the event can be shot over one or more days based on timed rotations.

The majority of events in the US are currently shot on the 'old system' while major events – such as the World Championship – are shot 'new system'.

**Old system:** Each group of 25 targets is shot on four different Parcours (layouts), making up the 100 target event. On each Parcours

# FIRST TIME FITASC

IF YOU'VE NEVER SHOT FITASC BEFORE, MAKE IT A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION TO DO SO IN 2010 SAYS CHRIS BATHA

there are up to five traps, each throwing a different target, and there are three separate shooting positions (often referred to as pegs or hoops). From two hoops, the competitor shoots 4 singles and 2 doubles (16 targets). On one of the hoops, the competitor shoots 5 singles and 2 doubles (9 targets) to make up the 25 total per Parcour.

**New system:** For major events, the new system can cater for 700, 800 and up to 1000 competitors, and as such, each Parcour covers a wider area of terrain. This allows each hoop on each Parcour to have its own set of traps. So, if each Parcour has 4 hoops, four different

squads can shoot at the same time – hence the higher throughput of shooters.

Sound complicated? Don't be put off, because new system is rarely shot in the US – so the 100 target old system FITASC is the norm at most events. Squads are made up of six competitors. When the squad arrives at peg 1 of the first designated Parcour, the referee will confirm the shooting order of the squad. For each subsequent set of single targets and doubles, the shooting order rotates so that by the end of the Parcour each competitor will have led off the shooting.

Each peg (or hoop) will have a target menu displayed in front of the shooting position. Each target, in turn, is shown to the whole squad, after which shooting begins. Full use of the gun (two shots) is allowed on each single target. After the squad has shot the singles, the squad rotates, and each competitor then shoots two sets of doubles. Scores are confirmed at the end of each Parcour and the squad moves to the next designated Parcour.

### Why so Difficult?

While the target presentations on each Parcour remain the same, the three different shooting positions on the Parcour vary the distance and angle of each target – an easy incomer from peg 1 may well be a tough crosser from peg 3. It's this variation of presentations that makes FITASC entertaining and challenging.

Compared with FITASC, your movements and arc of fire in Sporting is tightly controlled by a cage. This limits the target presentations available to the course setter. Sporting targets are traditionally thrown in some combination of pairs (report or

true). Having read the target, you establish your stance, gun insertion point and your visual and break points. You can even have a practice swing before calling for the target.

There are no such luxuries in FITASC! Each shooting position is designated with a hoop or frame on the ground, with no uprights to restrict your swing. Targets can be shot in any direction. This allows the course setter a larger canvas to set the targets upon.

An inexperienced FITASC shooter will set up to shoot the singles just as he would for the first of a pair in Sporting – planting their feet. If they miss with the first barrel, they quickly run out of swing for the second shot. Likewise, the pairs need careful consideration. Moving the feet to tackle the second target of a pair is often required to match the ever changing angle and direction of FITASC targets.

The differences in rules and target presentations means that those new to FITASC require a far

more flexible, mental and physical approach to the different targets presented. To shoot FITASC well, you really do have to think on your feet.

### Move your feet

With such a variety of target presentation, foot position and stance to address each target is essential. You have to learn to step into the line of flight of the target. When combined with the stringent and all important low gun rule, this can be akin to rubbing your belly and patting your head at the same time! It requires practice and rehearsal of gun mounting drills. Never be afraid to move your feet. When it's your turn to stand behind the competitor that is shooting, watch each target and rehearse each move to the target. Prior planning does and will prevent poor performance. When it comes to doubles, if there is insufficient time to move your feet to correctly address each

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individual target, then set up to shoot the most difficult target, and shoot the easiest target a little out of shape.

Gunmount is the other core FITASC skill. The compulsory low gun position when addressing the target must be below a permanent line across your chest, 25cm down from the shoulder. If the gun is moved before the target is seen, the referee will call no-bird. After a first warning, further infringements will result in a lost target.

A poor gunmount will mean a poor score. For FITASC, your gun fit is critical. It has to fit like a glove and be perfectly balanced. This game emphasizes flaws in gun fit and gunmount. Unwanted head movement, see sawing or teeter tottering of the gun will result in your barrels moving on and off the target line. Worse still, if your set-up is incorrect, you'll quickly find yourself running out of swing. This results in an involuntary dropping of the shoulder in the target direction, resulting in the muzzles windscreen wiping or rain bowing off the target line. The combination of the two adds up to another lost target.

A well balanced gun is one with the weight proportionately

between the hands – determining how much effort is required to start the gun moving. This balance point is usually on, or just in front of, the hinge pin. This gives the gun a feeling of 'life' that aids a smooth gunmount and assists in matching muzzle speed to target speed. The gun mount should be achieved with equal effort of the body turning and the arms lifting and pushing the gun towards the target in a 'bayonet' movement with the gun lifted to the cheek, not the shoulder first.

## Gun and Cartridges

Sporting guns in 32 and 34inch configurations give a combination of swing and steadiness that is ideally suited to the variety of FITASC targets and the often longer distance targets. A custom fitted gun is important – you cannot have a consistent gun mount without a well fitted gun. I have a fondness for fixed choked guns, Light Mod and Mod, but would always advise a gun fitted with multi chokes for FITASC.

Cartridge choice within the rules (1oz) is personal – but I am not a lover of recoil though I do like speed. It's a compromise

between fatiguing recoil that can make the second target of a pair more difficult, or a cartridge that cannot cut the mustard on the longer faster targets. Try to find a compromise between brisk and excessive recoil. Be prepared to spend a little more on the quality components that make up a good FITASC load. Be sure to make full use of pellet sizes and chokes within the rules to match the target presentations and distance.

## Another Tip

My final tip is to ensure you understand the principle of good shoulder, bad shoulder, particularly when shooting the doubles. For the newer FITASC shooter, it is an essential principle that will help improve your scores. If you are a right handed shooter and the target is traveling from right to left, you are shooting off your good shoulder. Your swing and rotation is natural – the gun is being pulled into the face by the hand movement to the target. If you are shooting a left to right target, you are shooting off your bad shoulder. The rotation and swing is against the grain of your natural movement and the hands are now pulling the gun away from

the face and destroying that all important eye, rib, target picture. A right handed shooter shooting a left to right target will always need to see more lead than a right to left.

You can simply prove this to yourself by shooting either station 3, 4, or 5 on a Skeet field. The vice versa rule applies to the left handed shot. If you're right handed, study the left to right presentations particularly carefully, be they single or pairs. Turn a small step further into the line of flight to help increase swing and rotation. This will minimize the bad shoulder effect.

## Give it a try

If you've never shot FITASC before, make it your New Year's resolution to do so in 2010. Your first steps may be to take time out at the next competition you attend to go and watch the action on one of the FITASC Parcours. Perhaps you can get your club to set up a practice Parcour – it's not difficult to do and could be more fun for club members than a 5-Stand layout.

And when you're ready to enter your first FITASC event, try and team up and get on a squad with a fellow shooter who can show you the ropes. I know you'll enjoy it. ■