

# YOU MAKE IT LOOK SO EASY

OUR GUEST THIS ISSUE IS FEDERICO DEL TORO. HE STARTED SHOOTING SPORTING CLAYS ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO – QUICKLY REACHING MASTER-CLASS. CURRENTLY FOCUSING MORE ON THE MENTAL SIDE OF HIS GAME AND IMPROVING HIS PERFORMANCES AT THE BIG CHAMPIONSHIPS, HE'S AN UP AND COMING BIG NAME IN THE MAKING. IF YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS FOR OUR NEXT HIGH PROFILE GUEST THEN EMAIL THEM TO: [info@clayshootingusa.com](mailto:info@clayshootingusa.com)



**When you turn up at a big competition on your own, your squad has been decided – as has the station where you start. Perhaps it's the hardest station on the course! How do you handle these negative thoughts and get off to a good start?**

I usually don't worry about where I start – although it's always nice to start on an easy station. Everybody has to shoot all the stations sooner or later, so don't worry about it. Imagine that each station is a separate competition and keep focussed. Build your score, target by target, and then move on to the next station. Even if your first station does turn out to be the hardest on the course and you drop a couple of targets, stay positive.

**What are your views about looking at the early rotation scores and frightening yourself listening to others who have just come off the course before you've fired your first shot?**

I try not to look at the scoreboard before I shoot, but at some Championships you can't miss it – or the word gets out about a big score. You have to block this information out and play your own game – chasing other people's scores only produces negative thoughts. The same goes for looking at the course before you shoot – there's little point, particularly if the conditions change. And don't listen to other people. Experience shows that

everyone has their own view about what's difficult and what's easy – listening to others will again cause doubts. Believe in yourself, not the judgement of others.

**I recently came across a presentation of a pair of following flat crossers thrown from right to left at about 30 yards. As the leading target slowed and reached the break point, the second target overtook the first target – causing a lapse of focus and zeros on my scorecard! How would you have shot this pair?** Technically, you should shoot the lower of the two crossers first, to give you more time on the higher second target. But if the higher target is the fastest of the two, you may need to take that first because it will turn into a longer shot after taking the first slow bird.

That indecision is exactly what the target setter is trying to achieve. If I'm undecided, I look closely at the 'show' pair and let my eyes go instinctively to one or other of the targets and stay with it. Remember, your instincts are one of the best tools you have, so if you go with them, chances are you are going to be able to repeat the shot over and over. You must make your mind up and stick with it – don't just copy what the shooter in front of you is doing. It's your choice.

**I hate five yard rolling rabbits crossing directly in front of the station. I never know whether to shoot it quick off the trap arm or let it roll – and take it late. Any tips (pick up point, kill point, choke or shell)?** This is another shot where you are going to have to trust your instincts. There is a club near me that throws one of these targets at almost every shoot they have. The

only way I can break them consistently is to pick a kill point, then come back towards the trap about half way. When the rabbit comes out focus on it real hard and let it pass your gun. Catch it up with a steady swing and when you are either on it or just past it, let the shot go. The main thing is to focus and trust your hands. For this target I favor a cylinder choke and #9s.

**I'm in my late 40s and in my second season of attending three or four day championships – and often feel exhausted by the time I get to the Main Event. Can you shoot too much at these events (Prelims, 5-Stand, Small Gauge, FITASC, Games and the Main Event)? Is there a benefit in just one warm up event and then going for the Main Event?** It depends on your physical condition. I play a lot of racquetball so I don't easily get tired physically – but I do get tired mentally (burned out). This depends how much I have shot during the season. If you asked this question to five different people you would probably get five different answers. In your case, I would definitely consider not shooting everything if you want to be at your best for the Main Event. Weather conditions during a championship also play a part in exhaustion – particularly in hot conditions. Keep yourself well hydrated and keep your energy levels up during the day by eating the right food at the right times.

**In the major championships I can't help noticing shooters of all classes, including our top champions, coaching, advising and helping each other on each station. Do you think this should be allowed? It's not a 'team' event and I think the**

**winner (of class or HOA) should win because of his own ability – not some one else's.** You have a good point. Right now, competition rules allow comment and advice between shooters during competition – usually it concerns 'lead'. But even so, it's their ability to interpret the advice and execute the shot that depends on whether that advice is helpful or not. Until the rules change why not take advantage of that help – though you need to be sure that the advice given is correct!

**I can't stand delays! It's bad enough when traps breakdown but when competition rotations get seriously delayed I get agitated and my focus drifts. How do you cope with delays and late rotations?** Delays are a way of life in tournament shooting. I used to be the same way until I learned to quit worrying about the things I can't control (delays, rain or wind). You have to learn to go with the flow. If I get a delay, I take that time to relax and pass the time with my squad mates. Use the time to your advantage and refresh your mind.

**I really dislike targets thrown from a long way to my left or right that are rising fast and quartering (away) across the shooting position. If I go for an early pick up point the target is too fast at the break point. If I take it later it's too far away – but the hardest part is finding the line – any tips on how to shoot this target?** This is a hard target for anybody. I try to pick a break point that gives me a chance to take a good look at the target and the line. I just come back a little bit towards the trap and execute a controlled pull through the target, shooting when I'm ahead of it. This works best

for me. If I pick an early break point and try to do a quick swing through I find that I have not given my eyes enough time to see the target – or the line.

**On targets that come from a long way out – such as high incomers – and hang in the air, is it best to select an early break point so the moving target encourages gun movement, shoot at the stall point with a stopped gun or take the target as it starts to fall?** I always shoot this kind of target as it starts to drop – because at that point it's not going to get any closer. I keep the target above my barrel at all times and when it starts dropping I come down with it, then speed up away from it and shoot. This way I know my gun is moving a little faster than the target.

**I've been shooting for two years and am enjoying myself in E Class. I'm right handed and can handle right to left crossers well. But for left to right crossers I consciously give them just a little more lead than they look to need – with good success. Why is this?** Swinging the gun right to left across the body is easier for a right hander than swinging left to right (opposite for left handers). This is because your right to left swing is matched by the natural turn of the right shoulder. Swinging left to right is not so natural and requires more of a 'push' or will result in a slower swing. For left to right crossers you can give yourself a better chance by paying particular attention to your foot positioning – or compensate for the slower swing by giving more lead – just as you are doing. Either way, practice and more practice will eventually make perfect! ■