

# STEP LIVELY...

## Careless footwork costs targets...

*SLOPPY USE OF THE FEET IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF MISSED TARGETS AMONG SPORTING SHOOTERS. RICHARD RAWLINGSON LOOKS AT SOME TYPICAL ERRORS AND WAYS TO AVOID THEM*

**It was a harmless looking pair – a true pair of incomers, angled slightly off my left shoulder – the kind of station that has you marking down a mental straight on the card as soon as you see it. Take the straighter one first and there should be plenty of time to swing smoothly on to the second target.**

Perhaps it was because they looked so straightforward, but I paid no particular attention to my feet as I called for the targets. I just stood facing the point at which they came into view over a high bank. As soon as I fired my first shot I knew I was in trouble. The target angled off to my left a bit wider than I had first thought and I was rapidly running out of swing. The result was inevitable really – an unbalanced poke at the second target and a miss. What should have been an easy 8/8 had gone begging.

For the next pair I altered my stance by the merest fraction, so that my left foot *pointed towards*



8

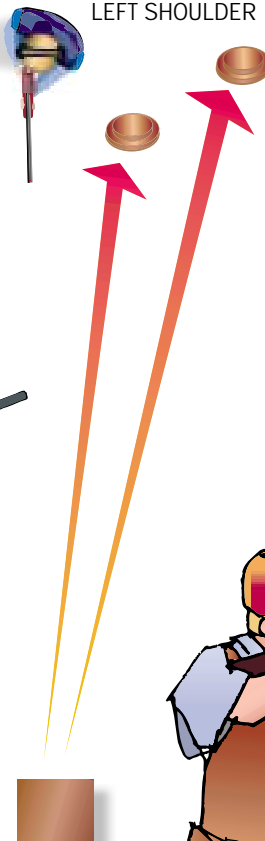
BY FACING STRAIGHT ON TO THE TARGET, THERE IS RESTRICTED ROOM TO SWING ON TO THE SECOND AS SHOWN BELOW.



8

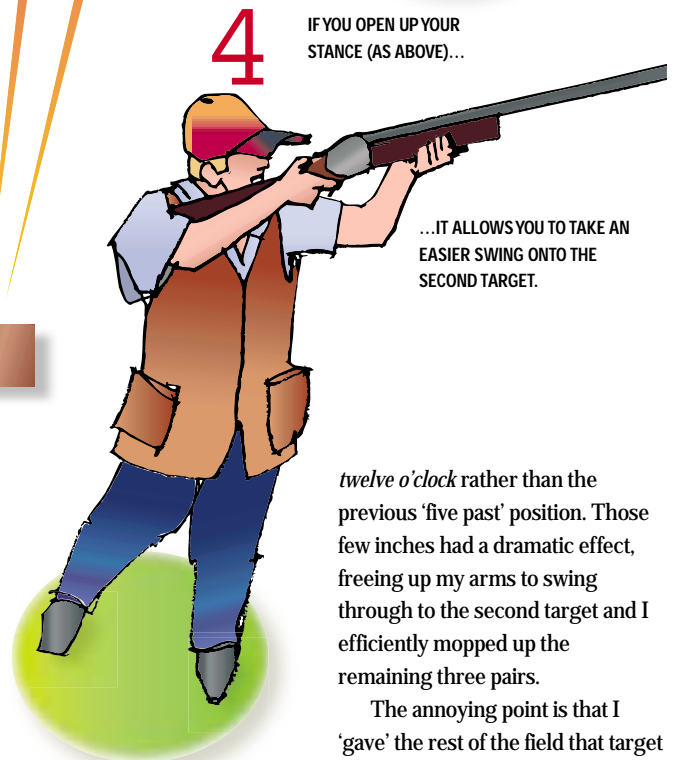
*...THE CLASSIC BEGINNER'S ERROR IS TO LOOK AT THE TRAP OR THE POINT AT WHICH THE TARGET IS FIRST VISIBLE AND IMMEDIATELY TURN TO FACE THAT POINT.*

TRUE PAIR ANGLED OVER SHOOTERS LEFT SHOULDER



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IF YOU OPEN UP YOUR STANCE (AS ABOVE)...



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...IT ALLOWS YOU TO TAKE AN EASIER SWING ON TO THE SECOND TARGET.

*twelve o'clock* rather than the previous 'five past' position. Those few inches had a dramatic effect, freeing up my arms to swing through to the second target and I efficiently mopped up the remaining three pairs.

The annoying point is that I 'gave' the rest of the field that target – and as we all know, the margin

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SO MANY SHOOTERS ACT AS IF THEIR FEET HAVE BEEN SET IN CONCRETE THE MOMENT THEY GET IN THE STATION...

GOOD SHOTS... ANALYZE THE FLIGHT OF THE TARGET AND ESTABLISH A CLEAR 'BREAK POINT' IN THEIR MIND – THE POSITION IN ITS FLIGHT AT WHICH THEY INTEND TO TAKE THE SHOT...

between success and failure is often that small. It was carelessness on my part and nothing more. It was entirely preventable.

The thing is, it is the kind of mistake many sporting shooters make, the sort of preventable error that keeps so many out of the prize-money. I spend a lot of time watching others shoot, both as a spectator and coaching novices, and I know how often such basic mistakes occur. It points to a failure to establish a consistent routine prior to every shot.

Another classic beginner's error when shooting crossing targets is to look at the trap or the point at which the target is first visible and immediately turn to face that point. Good shots work in reverse order. They analyze the flight of the target and establish a clear 'break point' in their mind – the position in its flight at which they intend to take the shot.

Everything now flows from that decision. The feet are placed so that the body is at its most comfortable at that moment. Styles vary, but in the classical position, if the line to the break point represents twelve o'clock, the feet for a right-hander would be pointing to approximately five past two. The body is then wound back to the point at which the target is first seen clearly.

Pointing the feet towards the break point becomes particularly important on the kind of shallow angle quartering targets that are now such a feature of so many Sporting layouts. Economy of movement is the key to consistency with these targets and correct use of the feet is a major factor.

Once again, coming back too far to the trap is the most common fault. By the time the gun reaches the break point, the shooter has run out of swing and a number of errors can result, including deceleration at the very point at which it is vital to keep the gun speed up. Right-handers will tend to push the gun off their face on targets quartering from left to right and from either direction there is a strong tendency to drop the leading shoulder, resulting in a miss (low).

### TACTICS FOR PAIRS

Sporting targets come of course not singly, but in pairs. It is vital therefore to set up accordingly. For a true pair the decision is fairly

simple – the break point of the second target is the key and the feet are set up to that point. Report pairs are a different matter, often coming from two totally different directions. Firstly remember that there is no rule against moving your feet between shots! So many shooters act as if their feet have been set in concrete the moment they get in the station. Good target setters will catch you out by setting targets that demand a change in position between the first and second shots if the pair is to be taken efficiently. Fail to do so and you will pay the price.

Sometimes though there is simply not time to make a conscious change in position and then you have two choices. The first

is to find a compromise position that favors neither target particularly, but allows both to be taken in reasonable comfort. The second option favors the more difficult target and is probably the correct choice when a tough target is paired with something straightforward. Most competent shots should be able to cope fairly well with a routine target, even though slightly out of position, as long as extra care is taken and the consequences are thought through properly in advance.

The key, as in so much in life is preparation, that wonderful thing that the old army motto tells us 'prevents poor performance'. Get the lead out of your boots and move those feet!

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