

RICHARD RAWLINGSON SAYS YOU SHOULD STAY CALM WHEN SHOOTING THE SMALLEST CLAY TARGET OF THEM ALL

MASTERING THE MINI

The flying aspirin or bumble bee – just two of the common euphemisms you will hear used to describe the mini target. Most of the others are probably not printable in a family magazine, for these tiny clays arouse strong feelings out of all proportion to their size. Hard to see and easy to miss, they can provoke even the most laid back competitor into a spluttering rage.

There are many who think the mini is nothing more than a novelty target – and they have a point. But it is a legal part of the target setter's armory and sooner or later you are going to have to deal with them. Gimmick or not, getting steamed up gets you nowhere.

So what is the mini? In diameter it is at 60mm, not quite half the size of the 108mm 'standard' clay. The midi, for comparison, measures 90mm. As with all other targets, minis can be purchased in a range of colors and

against some backgrounds you may well be mightily relieved that the range owner splashed out a few more cents on the blaze colored version.

With so little weight, the mini is very difficult to throw any great distance – 30-35 yards is about the norm with a standard trap. They leave the trap at high speed and then seem to hit an invisible wall before settling gently back to earth.

This is the key to hitting these little devils consistently. If you react to what it is doing in the early stages of its flight, you will be bemused by the speed and fooled into throwing the gun after the target in a desperate rush. The trouble is, by the time you get there the clay will probably be slowing while your gun keeps on accelerating out in front. Your eyes have enough of a problem just picking out such a small object without coping with the speed as well.

THAT FIRST MOMENT OF PANIC WHEN YOU SEE A MINI SPEEDING OFF THE TRAP ARM IS EXACTLY THE REACTION THE TARGET SETTER WANTED. USE YOUR EYES AND YOUR HOLD POINT TO SLOW IT DOWN IN YOUR MIND AND WAIT FOR THE TARGET TO COME INTO YOUR COMFORT ZONE...



90MM
MIDI



60MM
MINI

Where you can, try to ignore the first half of the target's flight. Instead of picking a gun hold point a third of the way along the flight path, move it to the half way mark instead. Watch the target come on to your barrels and only start the move as it reaches the gun. A short, economical mount and swing should be enough to get the job done with the minimum of fuss. Both pull away and maintained lead will work with this style, but swing through (which is effectively what I described in the previous paragraph) is much less consistent. By the time we get to shoot it, the slowing clay will need very little lead in any case – just off the front edge should do it.

The only other concern is the line. Slowing targets are dropping, so leaving it too late can add an unnecessary complication. If you time it right and keep the muzzles under the flight line at all times, your pattern should take a miss over the top out of play.

Above all, stay calm! That first moment of panic when you see a mini speeding off the trap arm is exactly the reaction the target setter wanted. Use your eyes and your hold point to slow it down in your mind and wait for the target to come into your comfort zone. ■

CHOKES AND LOADS

The instinctive reaction with a target this small is to assume there will be gaps everywhere in your pattern for it to slip through. In fact minis are very vulnerable and do not need many pellet strikes to break them, nor do the pellets need great striking energy – the clay's own rotation provides enough impact shock for a clean kill. Keep to a fairly open choke – improved cylinder or even skeet is fine – and fill up the pattern by dropping down to a skeet load of no. 9 shot.