

YOU MAKE IT
**LOOK
 SO
 EASY**

THIS MONTH'S GUEST IS RICK MEIN, WINNER OF THE RECENT SEMINOLE CUP IN FLORIDA. NATURALLY WE TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK HIM TO TAKE US THROUGH ONE OR TWO OF THE TOUGHER STATIONS AT THE SEMINOLE. IF YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS FOR OUR NEXT HIGH PROFILE GUEST THEN EMAIL THEM TO: info@clayshootingusa.com

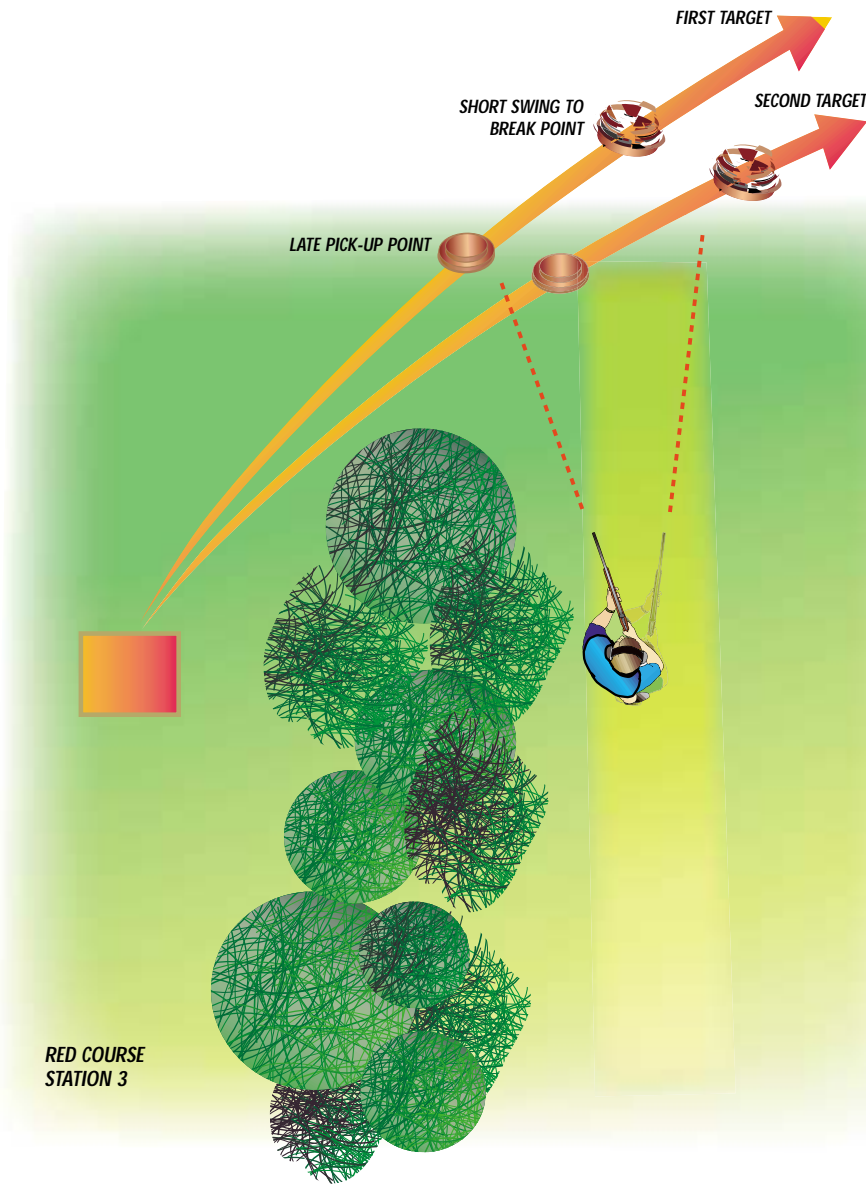


rick **MEIN**

I thought the hardest pair of targets at the Seminole Cup was on Red 3 – a report pair of quartering tower targets from the left. How did you shoot this station and do you think it is possible to be consistent on such a difficult pair?

■ I agree, these were tough targets. What made them even more difficult was that the shooting position was set back, with fir trees to your left, so you could not see the tower or trap. This meant that the target was already 30 yards into its flight before you saw it emerge from behind the trees – and when it did appear (at speed) the shooter was still in the hold position with a stopped gun. The target quartered away at such an angle that there was only a very short swing before reaching the break point – hardly enough swing to catch up with the target and put on the necessary lead. Very difficult!

If the shooters could have seen or even heard the trap throw the target, we could have begun our gun swing while the target was behind the tree – but the way it was set up, the target got the jump on us and so it was easy to panic and lunge the gun at the targets. I



RED COURSE STATION 3

broke my first pair and then fell into the 'look for the lead' syndrome; missed the next pair, hit the panic button and missed the third pair! I finally settled down, really focused on the target, tried to control my gun swing, buried my face in my gun stock and broke the last pair. The three things I just mentioned are the only way I know of to break difficult targets like these with any consistency.

I found Seminole Blue 7 tough! It was a true pair of standard teal with the left target climbing the highest.

How did you shoot this pair - which target first and why? What choke and shell combination did you use?

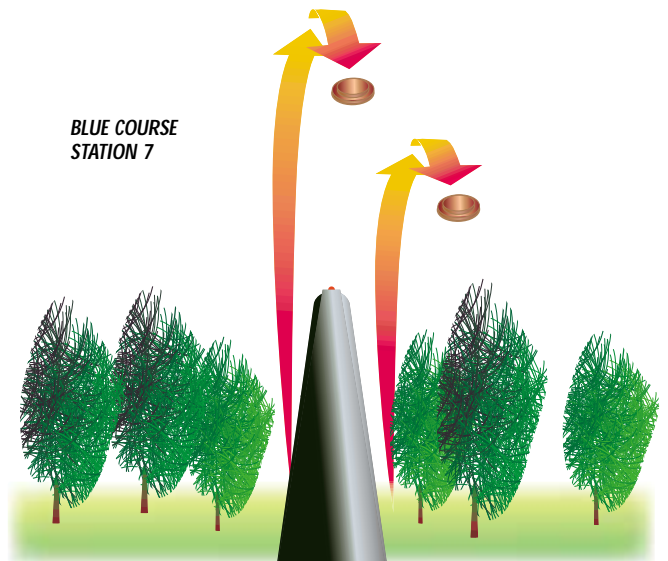
■ I shot the right bird on the way up, and then went to the left bird and shot it just as it peaked - but missed my second shot of my first pair. After that, I shot the right target just a little faster to prevent the second target from dropping out from under my shot pattern. I broke the rest of them doing that.

I shot the right target first because it peaked out sooner than the other target - otherwise I would have had to shoot it

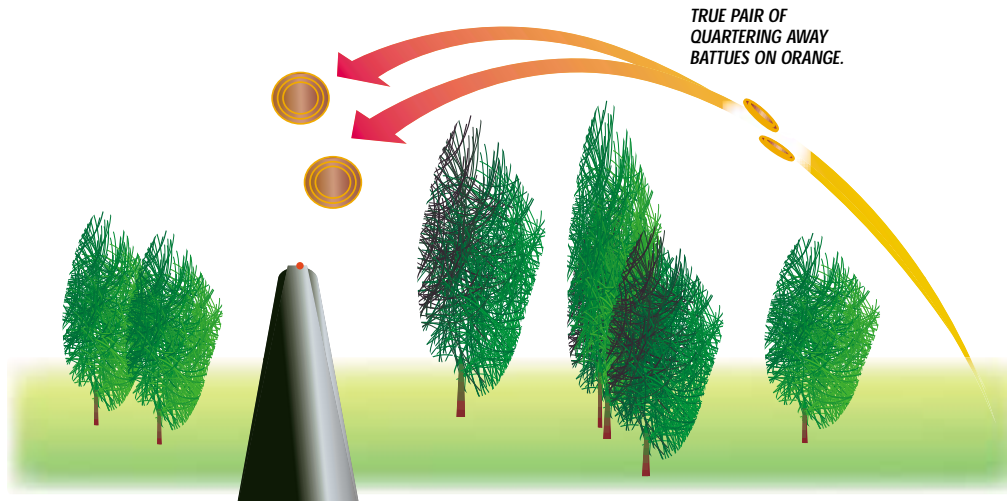
dropping had I taken it second. I saw some guys shoot both of them dropping, but because of the inconsistency of the wind, I was afraid they might be way out there and really hard to hit. I used the Mirage 1¹/₁₆ ounce 1290 fps loads which they sold at the club. I like speed when shooting a peaking target. Skeet and lite-mod would have broken this pair, but I used lite-mod and improved modified. I shot most of the stations with this combination because of the confidence it gives me. It also makes me focus harder on the closer targets.

Half way around the Seminole Orange course there was a true pair of quartering away battues. Fired from a manual trap, there were inconsistencies of target presentations. How did you cope with these - did you shoot one target early or leave both until they showed full face and were dropping?

■ As soon as you see battues off a hand trap - beware! The slightest change in where the trapper places the targets on the arm can produce inconsistency of target flight. In this instance the targets came into view edge on and only started to turn in the last third of



BLUE COURSE STATION 7



their flight – once they had started dropping. Some pairs came out close together, others were wider apart. I re-learned a lesson on this pair! I was first on my squad and just shot at the first target I saw. I got my first pair, but on the subsequent two pairs, I missed the second shot because the target was almost to the ground and I'd stopped my gun. I then rushed my shot on the first bird of the last pair and missed it, but got the second one. My son was behind me and as I stepped out he said "Why did you shoot them that way?" I instantly realized what he meant and of course he stepped into the stand, and with one fluid motion, shot the back target first moving then to the front one and ran the station!

Always explore all of your shooting options such as 'which one do I shoot first' or 'where do I hold my gun' or 'where do I look when I call pull'. Don't be afraid to ask the rest of your squad. They might bring something to light that you might not have thought of.

Seminole Orange 7 was my worst station. An edge on quartering teal from the right was tough enough, but the descending crosser from a tower on the left at 45 yards was even tougher. Where was your pick

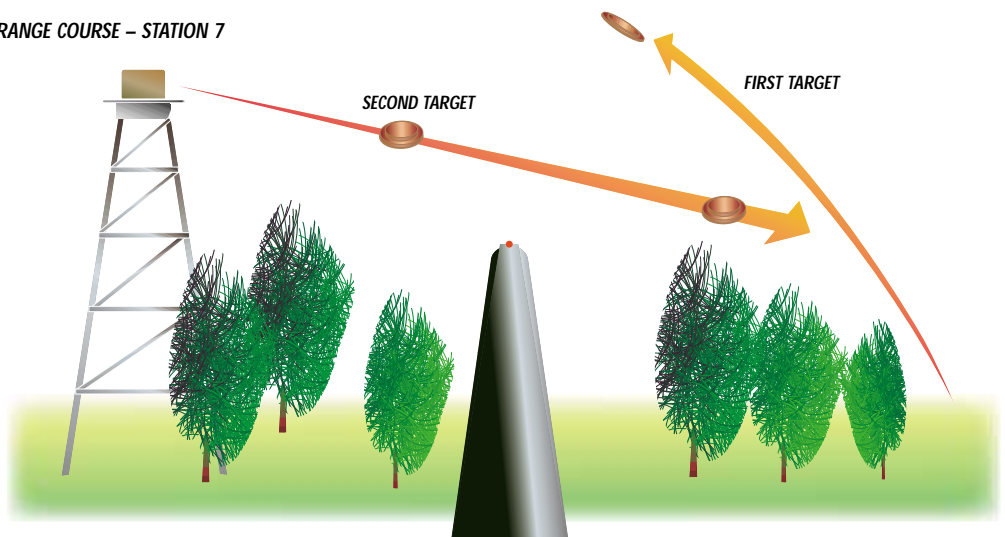
up point and how easy was it to keep a good line?

■ After breaking the teal, I waited until the crosser was nearly half way down it's run before I started to move my gun. In addition to the correct lead, you had to keep under the target – most people missed over the top. Again, I think hard focus, smooth controlled gun

chance and did you know who else was in contention, or did you just shoot the last day without knowing that you could win?

■ Usually, I steer clear of the scoreboard. However, shooting with my two sons, I usually find out what is going on. I knew I was close – but certainly didn't expect to win. I think shooting early on the

ORANGE COURSE – STATION 7



swing and burying my face in my stock helped me run this station. I often find that looking at the scores half way through a competition can make my task even harder. When you won the Seminole Cup, did you think you were in with a

last day is an advantage because you really don't know what you have to shoot to win – so you know you have to hit all you can.

What gun and shell combination do you use and how long have you used

this combination? Did I notice at the Seminole that you use a trap gun – why and what are the benefits when shooting sporting clays?

■ My favorite shell is the Winchester Lite-Handicap 1 ounce load. It's very fast and the recoil of the 1 ounce load is tolerable. My gun is in fact a trap gun – a Browning Citori Special Trap which I bought in 1994. I had not shot a registered target of any kind when I bought it, and I didn't know anything about over and unders. It just happened to have 32 inch barrels, which is probably it's biggest asset. I had to cut nearly a half inch off the comb to make it fit me. It is also fairly heavy, so that helps on recoil and ensures a steady and controlled swing.

I regularly see your name in Hélice shooting – does Hélice help or hinder your approach to sporting clays?

■ I think shooting Hélice helps me because the stakes are usually

higher – which puts more pressure on me! The more pressure one encounters, the more accustomed you will become to it – and hopefully the better you will perform on the big occasions.



Your sons are regular championship competitors – how do you manage to balance the need to support and encourage them while wanting to win a championship yourself? Do you shoot together or on separate squads?

■ My sons and I almost always shoot together. I have no problem at all supporting and encouraging them – if my son wins, Dad wins also!

What color lenses do you favor?

There is such a wide choice – is there benefit in selecting just two or three color choices? If I did this, what colors would you recommend?

■ Farming for a living I am in the sun a lot. My eyes seem to be very sun tolerant because I hardly ever wear sun glasses. So when shooting I almost always wear light yellow lenses. I have a pair of rose colored lenses which really make the orange target stand out, but don't wear them unless the target goes right through the sun. Those two colors would be my recommendation.

What is your practice routine?

■ I really don't have a practice routine, but I think that shooting tournaments is the best practice. However, if I have a certain target presentation that is giving me trouble, I'll try and simulate it with my trap at home. I will shoot it from up close first and then gradually move back as I learn to break it.

As for lessons, I have to admit I was pretty sarcastic at my first lesson with Steve Middleditch. I kept trying to justify 'giving' money to someone for 'something' I thought I could learn on my own. I do not regret a single one of those lessons! What he taught me may not have soaked in right away, but I am certain he is a big part of the reason I am shooting at the level I am shooting at today. ■