

SPORTING'S TOUGHEST TARGETS

Just about everyone has a target or two that gives them fits – you know the ones! Those targets that have your knees knocking and your heart racing, that then start pecking away at your confidence level while you're still looking at the preview target. In the last issue I discussed Teal and Rabbits – this issue it's Chandelles and Crossers.

LAST ISSUE STEVE FISCHER TOLD YOU HOW TO SHOOT TEAL AND RABBITS. THIS MONTH HE LOOKS AT CHANDELLES AND CROSSERS.

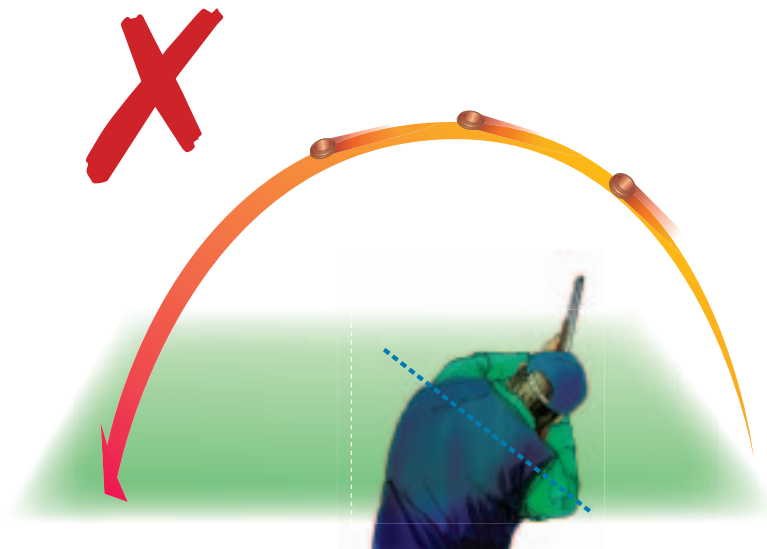
THE ELUSIVE CHANDELLE

Like the rabbit target, the chandelle shot can also be the ruin of an otherwise good round. Cussed almost as much as the rabbit, this target can really be problematic for some, almost to the point of quitting and taking up golf or Chinese checkers!

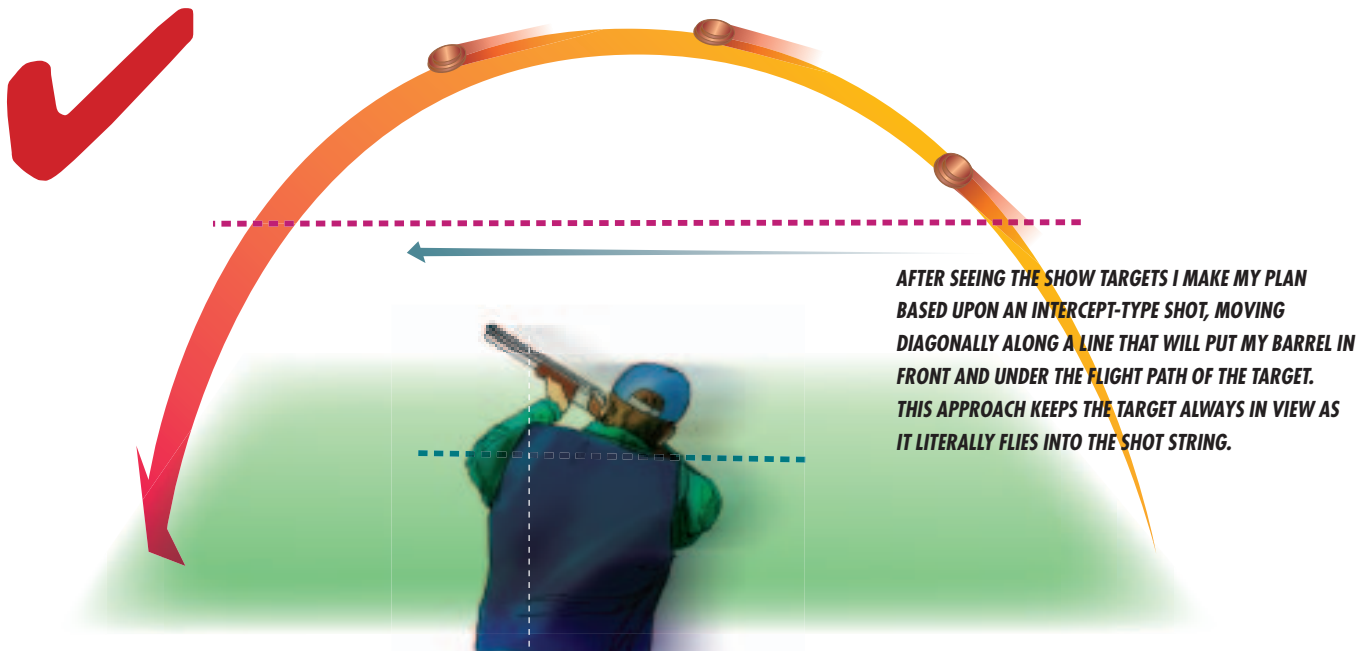
The chandelle usually rolls across the sky in a constant curve. The distance can vary considerably, and even the type of target used can be one of several choices that include the

battue, rabbit, standard, or midi (90mm) and it can be presented from either side and at just about every angle. Most of the time it is presented as a crossing shot.

For this target I like to use an approach that moves my barrel on a diagonal plane to get in front of the target near or just after it reaches the peak of its flight. There are a couple of things to remember about the flight trajectory of a chandelle type target. First of all, its speed is deceptive because you are seeing an



MANY SHOOTERS ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW THE ARC OF THE TARGET FLIGHT PATH WITH THEIR BARREL BY DROPPING THEIR SHOULDER, TRYING TO CATCH IT UP AND SHOOT IT ON THE WAY DOWN. IF YOU DO THIS YOU WILL MIS-READ THE NEEDED LEAD.



AFTER SEEING THE SHOW TARGETS I MAKE MY PLAN BASED UPON AN INTERCEPT-TYPE SHOT, MOVING DIAGONALLY ALONG A LINE THAT WILL PUT MY BARREL IN FRONT AND UNDER THE FLIGHT PATH OF THE TARGET. THIS APPROACH KEEPS THE TARGET ALWAYS IN VIEW AS IT LITERALLY FLIES INTO THE SHOT STRING.

entire side of the target. Full top or bottom views appear slower than they are, and that can make them seem closer than you think. Secondly, when the arc of the target heads toward the ground it is doing two things. It is increasing in speed and it is still moving forward. On this type of shot you need to plot the trajectory and to have a plan of where you will shoot the target along that arc.

Many shooters attempt to follow the arc of the target flight path with their barrel, trying to catch it up and shoot it on the way down, desperately mis-reading the needed lead. Most of those attempts will end in a miss inside and behind the target.

Here's a method that works well for me. After seeing the show targets I make my plan based upon an intercept-type shot, moving diagonally along a line that will put my barrel in front and under the flight path of the target. (See above). This approach keeps the target always in view as it literally flies into the shot string.

The type of chandelle presented can also influence how

much lead is needed for a solid hit. True enough, battue targets will break fairly easily with just a few pellets hitting it. If the target setter is using a standard or midi target remember that they are a bit stronger and need a fairly good hit for a good break. The rabbit target, being heavy and thick, requires a good center pattern hit to break.

Depending on distance and speed, most of these chandelle targets need three to six foot of lead, although they may look as if one or two feet will be enough. More distance means more lead. If you miss, it's likely that you've not given enough lead – the battue on station 15 Azalea of the Triple Classic, for example, was out 50-55 yards and needed 10-12 feet of lead!

And, just because you are seeing all face or bottom on the target, be sure to use enough choke for the distance the target is from the stand. A solid hit will guide you much more as to where you are than the chippy break from a spray and pray wide open choke selection.

THE CROSSER!

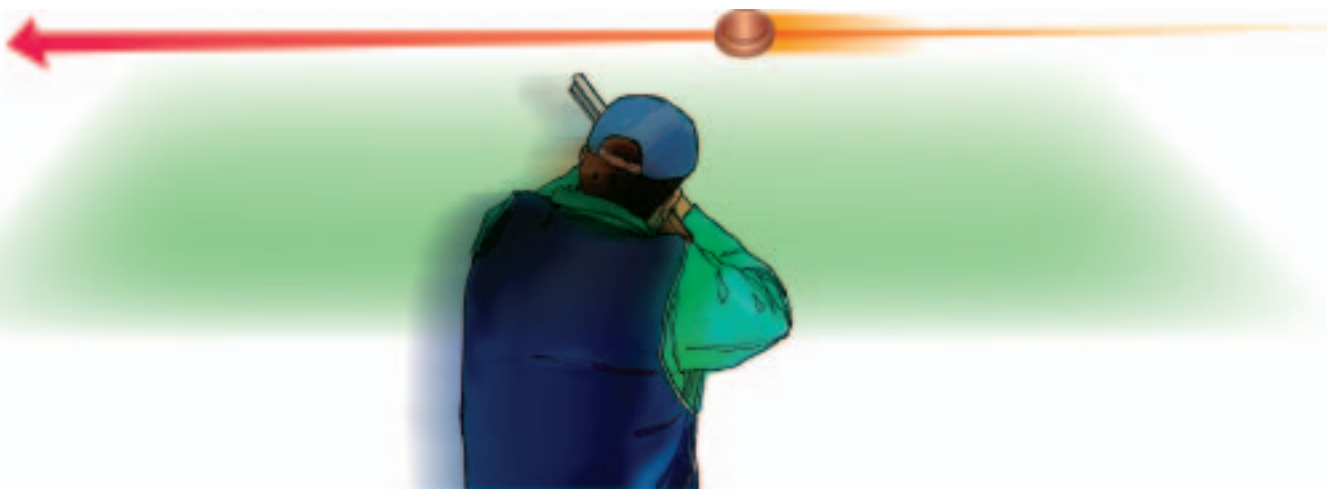
Ah yes, the crosser. Probably the most missed target presented in sporting clays and FITASC. Why does it hold that dubious distinction? Simple. We don't shoot enough of them and that's the long and short of it. You don't find too many crossers on the practice fields, especially if they cater to a steady crowd of recreational shooters who don't want to have to try too hard to put up a score within their comfort zone.

Crossing shots, especially long ones, eat targets like a hungry shark. The problem of course, is mostly related to lead. I would venture to say that most of the mid-class shooters out there cannot consistently break even a 30 yard crossing target. All hope is abandoned as they walk into the cage and see a pair of straight crossers. The brain fairly leaks confidence. Desperation takes over, allowing the dreaded 'measuring and tracking with the barrel' syndrome to take over, resulting in a miss behind.

Let's put some perspective on this shot, and approach it with proper mechanics, planning and confidence. For those who come from a skeet shooting background, you will know that the longest shot on the skeet field is a crosser from station four. It is about 21 yards away and takes all of 4 feet of lead to break it. With that in mind you can now extrapolate the extra lead required for a crosser as the distance from the cage increases. A faster target will obviously need even more forward allowance than a moderate speed target.

On fast crossers or those in the 35-40 yard region, I use sustained lead or insert the barrel in front and slightly under the targets flight path, increasing the speed of my barrel to be just slightly more than that of the target before I pull away and take the shot while continuing that pull away motion.

The exception is closer and slower crossers. In this case, I switch from sustained lead to either push through, or pull away from the target to ensure I am on



ON FAST CROSSERS I USE SUSTAINED LEAD OR INSERT THE BARREL IN FRONT AND SLIGHTLY UNDER THE TARGET FLIGHT PATH, INCREASING THE SPEED OF MY BARREL TO BE JUST SLIGHTLY MORE THAN THAT OF THE TARGET BEFORE I PULL AWAY AND TAKE THE SHOT WHILE CONTINUING THAT PULL AWAY MOTION.



WITH SLOWER CROSSERS I SWITCH FROM SUSTAINED LEAD TO EITHER PUSH THROUGH, OR PULL AWAY FROM THE TARGET TO ENSURE I AM ON THE CORRECT LINE OF THE TARGET AND PULL THE TRIGGER AS I COME OFF THE NOSE OF THE TARGET WITH A SMOOTH CONTROLLED SWING.

the correct line of the target and pull the trigger as I come off the nose of the target with a smooth controlled swing.

Unfortunately, consistency on crossers takes some work and practice. Sometimes a conversation with your local range operator can persuade him to set you a true crossing target that can be practiced from a variety of

distances. If he's able, one from each direction would be even more helpful.

CONSTRUCTIVE PRACTICE

The last bit of advice I can offer is to be clear on when you are going to actually work on your game or when you are just out for a fun afternoon of shooting. For

constructive practice, make a list of your weak shots that you intend to work on and skip playing for that day. Give your practice sessions all your effort. You may even want to keep notes from week to week as to your problems or progress on the shots you have worked on.

Never forget that the mind and your mental attitude toward the

game play a very large part in the success you achieve. After you can make most of the shots found on the sporting field, it then becomes a game of focus, concentration and planning. With success, you will then continue to build confidence in yourself and your ability to break targets. Remember, he who makes the fewest mistakes wins! ■