

As selling propositions go, it is not the most immediately appealing. Imagine a game that only allows you to shoot a quarter of the number of targets as a Sporting Clays competition and costs around ten times as much per target! Putting a positive spin on that might prove taxing to even the most enthusiastic life insurance salesman. Yet for many, Hélice is addictive to the point of obsession. It could be heading your way soon as interest continues to grow in this the most esoteric shooting discipline of all.

BACKGROUND

Hélice (the word is French for helicopter) was formerly known as ZZ and is an international shooting discipline controlled by the Paris-based Federation Internationale de Tir aux Armes Sportives de Chasse (FITASC) that administers International Sporting Clays. The Federation organizes world and regional championships and World Cup series just as it does for its Sporting discipline. US competitions are sanctioned by the newly formed non-profit United States Hélice Association (USHA). USHA goals include promoting the growth of Hélice through the establishment of uniformed events and sponsorship of a US Hélice Team which will compete in annual World Cup international events.



KNOW THE
GAME
HÉLICE

RICHARD RAWLINGS ON GIVES YOU THE LOW DOWN ON A TARGET SHOOTING GAME THAT IS ATTRACTING A GROWING INTEREST FROM MANY SPORTING CLAYS ENTHUSIASTS

For the origins of Hélice we must look to the sport of live pigeon shooting. Although still popular in many parts of the world, competitions using live birds have been banned in much of Europe, including Monte Carlo which was a major center of the sport. The search for an alternative led to the invention of winged targets that simulate the fast and erratic flight of a pigeon leaving the trap box. It soon developed into an important competitive sport in its own right.

THE FORMAT

Hélice follows the traditional pigeon shooting format using a ring surrounded by a 60 cm (2ft) high fence. The target is an orange brittle plastic propeller 11 inches across which flies irregularly much like a dove or pigeon – with its flight affected by the wind. Attached in the center is a 4 inch white plastic dome.

When the target is hit, the white dome separates from the 'prop' and to record a kill must fall within the designated ring – just as in live bird shooting. Both barrels may be used, with all successful hits to count. The white dome must separate from the orange propeller in its entirety – a dome with any orange plastic still attached is scored as a lost or missed target.

There are seven oscillating traps in a field, but only five release targets (at 4,000 rpm) to shoot at. You never know which trap will release or in which direction the bird will take off – it could skim right above the ground much like a rabbit target or pop straight up like a teal. It's more difficult than you think!

The shooter stands on a walkway, set back 27 meters from the trench at its nearest point. This is the standard firing point, with the option of moving back for



handicap events. The shooter walks to the mark and calls 'ready' which is the signal to start the trap motors. He then calls 'pull' and at random one of the doors will drop and the target will be released.

With only one shooter in action at any time, competitions can be protracted affairs and even at Championship level will consist of only 25 to 30 targets – this can often lead to lengthy shoot-offs to decide the medal places. It also accounts for the high per target cost to shoot Hélice. Enthusiasts say however that nothing can replace the thrill of these totally unpredictable targets and that the sacrifices are worth it.

Equipment for Hélice is a matter of personal choice, with everything from traditional side-by-side live pigeon guns to modern Trap and Sporter models being seen. The maximum shot load permitted under FITASC rules is 36 gram (1 1/4 oz) and larger shot



sizes are favored for the high energy needed to dislodge the white center.

There is no doubt that the game favors shooters with a fast, instinctive style of shooting. The erratic flight and short distance to the fence demands lightning reactions. When you see top names like Jon Kruger, Ceasar Bornaghi and Scott Robertson in

the line-up you know the game is hot – and offers a challenging competition for all. An added attraction is that this discipline offers some of the highest prize funds in 'Sporting' and is becoming more popular each year. If you'd like additional information on US competitions contact the United States Hélice Association at www.ushelice.com