

## It Ain't Over...

***Follow through in shooting has long been considered a physical part of the game. I'd like to contend that there is no other part of the shot process that is more important to attaining a positive mental attitude towards shooting performance.***

Throughout our lives we are slaves to numerical tyranny. More is better. To earn more money is to succeed, to have a home and car costing more dollars is part of the capitalist dream. All throughout our schooling our intelligence is measured by percentages. We strive to achieve these higher numbers. It becomes instinctive. It is hardly surprising that every time we line our sights up on the target we are satisfied with nothing less than the highest number up for grabs – a ten.

This is not a bad thing in itself.

But there is a danger that this overpowering urge to shoot a “possible” with every bullet may in fact interfere with the proper execution of the shot.

How often have you seen a shooter take a shot and immediately bend down to scope it before the pistol has even reached the bench? How often have you been guilty of this yourself?

Our natural inclination is to want to shoot a ten. Therefore the one thing we want to see, the one thing we can barely wait to confirm, is that beautiful sight of a bullet hole through the x-ring.

Small wonder that we have barely let the bullet get out the end of the barrel before we check out to see what score we have just shot. It's what is bred into us from an early age.

But shooting is known as a discipline for many reasons. Not the least that we have to overcome our natural inclinations in order to become good at it. We have to fight our desire to watch the target, since it's only natural that we want to see what we're hitting. We have to fight our desire to MAKE the shot break when it looks good. But we also have to fight our impatience for instant gratification towards the end of the shot sequence, or all of our hard work will have been for naught.

Without an honest follow through our mind has already left the station before the shot has broken. We're looking forward to the “good bit”, where we reap the reward of seeing a shot hole in the paper. What could be more boring or pointless than holding up the pistol for another second or two? In fact I've known quite a number of shooters who did this just to keep their coach off their backs. They would hold for a good few seconds after the shot had broken, but their minds had switched off. Sad fact is they might as well have banged it down and taken a quick peep.

Follow through without full concentration is like cheating in solitaire. You're not being honest to yourself so you probably won't even keep up the pretense for very long. But once you know WHY follow through is so important I guarantee you'll want to rethink the whole concept.

Okay, the first plus is a physical benefit. You will ensure that you don't end the shot too early and pull it way out of the aiming area. Duh. I guess I shouldn't have to even mention that one.

The second is a matter of concentration. If you make yourself believe that the shot is not complete until AFTER a period of follow through (it may be half a second, it may be three seconds, it really doesn't matter), you will be THERE on the sights and trigger all the way to, through and beyond the breaking of the shot. There will be no chance of waning attention leading to a stray shot that you didn't call.

This will build more of that magic ingredient, discipline.

Use the time after the completion of the shot (ie AFTER your follow through) to analyze your performance. Use a counter on a disk to call your shot physically. Turn it into a game, see if you can become good at predicting where the shot fell on the card. By doing this you will take away the temptation to check the target so quickly. If you know you have to make a prediction ON PAPER you will be taking more notice of your sight picture as you shoot. Oddly enough this has been known to help increase scores!

But the overwhelming benefit of a good physical and mental follow through is that it will have a positive effect on your attitude. When you succeed in performing a complete and controlled follow through you will have changed the entire focus of your shooting mindset.

Instead of having a 10% focus on technique and 90% focus on score, you will have turned it around completely. No longer is the prime objective to shoot a ten and confirm it in the scope. Now the objective is to shoot as good a technical shot as possible, call the shot, and THEN check the accuracy of your prediction.

Fact is, a good shot may not always be a ten. And a ten that had no right to be there is nothing to be proud of. Your heightened awareness of your shooting technique will allow you to more honest with yourself and help reinforce those factors which go into making a good shot.

By holding your attention with the sights and trigger through and beyond the shot you will ensure your mental presence HERE rather than THERE (at the target) at the most crucial time.