

Pistol Shooting: The Art (Part 11)

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Am I back? Maybe... No, not to the area, back in print! It was me, not the club. They didn't fire me. I've just been doing other things for awhile. I won't recap the last article since there is such a gap in time between them. I'll just move on into this one and see how it flows. As a start to what may eventually become another ten parts (time will tell), let's focus on red dot scopes.

Although I love my hardball, full load, 45 caliber shooting, I do have scopes on my .22 and wad guns. For years I've been trying to figure out the "correct" way to use that red bit of light. I had been able to get some good scores, and sometimes it seemed as though whatever I was doing was working. The problem was that different things all seemed to work, but only for short periods. For instance, focusing on the relationship of the dot to the tube, while letting the target blur would work really well. However, after a short time, that wouldn't seem to be working well enough. Another time, paying close attention to the dot on the target would bring good results. Even still, focusing on the back glass, which left both the dot and the target quite fuzzy, worked sometimes.

What was the answer? The answer, of course, was that they all work. They all work for specific areas of interest. Am I starting to sound ambiguous? OK, I'll try to clear it up a bit. First, what's the most important part of a shot? Your response, "Proper trigger manipulation." Good! What else is important? Those hundreds of things that allow proper trigger action. So let's start with the single most important part; a smooth, steady, straight back movement of the trigger. Where does the scope fit in?

The scope will tell you when you have achieved the proper trigger. Here's how: In this instance, you want to focus on the dot and concentrate on its alignment inside the tube. It must stay centered through the shot. Parallax has no bearing here. We're not worried about whether a shot can be on target while the dot has moved to the edge of the tube. If the dot moves while the trigger is being pulled, the trigger is not proper. Let's digress a moment. The dot has a normal "jiggle" to it. This is not the movement I'm referring to. The movement I do mean is that area of jiggle moving toward another location in the tube. Once you can bring the trigger back correctly with the dot staying in the same location, you have attained proper trigger manipulation. In this case we used the scope to perfect the trigger, the most important portion of the shot. This is the way the beginning shooter should use the dot. This should also be revisited from time to time, especially if your scores seem to have slipped.

Let's move on to the next piece of the puzzle. Once you've achieved good trigger control, you can work on other aspects of using the dot. Why does it seem that looking at the target and placing the dot on it gives good results? Does this really work? Some of the top shooters believe so. From time to time it has worked for me, but only for a short while. It's also difficult to explain exactly what is meant by, "Looking at the target." If I look at the target, but focus on the dot, I get much better results than when I focus on the target and place the dot on it. Some top shooters advocate looking at the center of the target, watching the hole grow larger, and therefore concentrating on where you want the bullet to go. This is good positive use of the dot. It has a bonus effect of letting you turn loose of the jiggling of the dot. It is the positive version of following a shot with another because you were thinking about it. It is for those shooters who have attained good trigger use. For me, none of this works if I haven't first set up a proper

trigger.

How do I set up a proper trigger? By watching the relationship of the dot to the circle of the tube. Digressing again... We've mostly all heard that when the hammer falls during dry fire, the dot shouldn't move. I, of course, interpreted that as, "shouldn't move (except for that little jump caused by the inertia of the hammer)." But then one day while I was dry firing, I fired one that didn't have that little jump, just a click. I realized that I had been mistaken about the hammer causing the jump. When it goes click and the dot doesn't move at all, you're there. But, how do we get there?

By allowing the scope to let us, "see the light." First, if you can't do it dry firing, you won't do it with live ammo. Live ammo will cover up a variety of errors. Spend the time it takes dry firing to get it right first. Make sure you have no ammo and head for that blank wall you used way back when. Take your normal stance and grip and bring the gun up to align the dot within the scope tube. Start applying pressure to the trigger, but look for movement of the dot in relationship to the tube. If there is any, stop. Be very conscious here not to correct the movement with your wrist. This would cover up the misapplication of the trigger. If the dot stays still throughout, great! Practice it that way for awhile and head to the range.

What if it doesn't stay still? Move your finger in relation to the trigger. If this doesn't correct the trouble, move your grip slightly. If it still doesn't work, take the gun out of your hand and place your empty fingers in the same position as though they were still gripping your gun. Now, move your trigger finger without moving the others or the thumb. Once you can do this, regrasp the pistol concentrating on placing pressure squarely against the front and back of the grip. Now try locating your finger squarely on the trigger. Next work again on straight back pressure. Watch the dot. Once you have it remaining centered and still, you have something to work with. Then you can move to other ways to "see" the dot.

If you practice something over and over, but it is wrong, you will learn very well how to do it wrong. You must first learn to do it right, then practice it right. The dot is a fantastic tool in helping us learn to do it right. Learn to keep it centered in the scope by proper trigger control and then you can find out how to use it to improve your hold, concentration and a myriad of areas.

Looks like I hit my article length marker again. I haven't been able to make it to any more leagues, but we'll see about matches. Remember to keep the dot centered in the tube.