

# Pistol Shooting: The Art (Part 9)

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Hello again! To give you an indication of the lag time, I'm writing this part across the New Year holiday. Hopefully everyone's holidays were pleasing, and perhaps you've gotten some new toys and are trying them out. I thought maybe I'd let you rest a small amount from my incessant preaching about the trigger. But mind you, only a small amount, since we all know how important it is. Anyway, this time I'm going to revisit lightly some areas from earlier parts and add some more to them. Hopefully this can help these be less monotonous. Besides, if I keep harping on just the trigger, I should rename this: "Trigger Activities: (Part..."

To start with, I was recently shooting in an air pistol match which included a junior air rifle shooter firing his targets as we shot ours. The relays were set up such that the pistol shooters' time expired a few minutes earlier than the rifle shooter's. As we watched the young athlete, the official mentioned that we might want to set our scopes up and watch him shoot the rest of his targets since he was vying for the state championship. As I politely acknowledged, I thought to myself, "Why would I want to watch the target when all the important activity is happening back here. I don't want to miss any of this part."

However, if you look up and down the line at a match or the league or such you will see people, who during slow fire, will slide their scope over to watch the "good shooter's" target as the last shots are fired, or some will watch the alibi shooter put five solid rounds in the X ring. These targets are interesting, but if you are trying to improve your own shooting, you just wasted an excellent opportunity with misdirected attention. These holes are the result of an enormous amount of activity at the line. The shooter is where all the action is. Paying attention to the targets will not show you how to duplicate them, watching the shooter can. In fact if you watch the shooter closely enough, you can pretty much tell how the target will look. Let's move back to the young man I spoke of earlier.

He was standing there with all the standard equipment. He wore a shooting jacket and pants set. He had a pedestal to rest the "heavy" rifle on between shots. It was just to the right and in front of him. The support included a tray with pellets and other essentials, all within inches of his reach. He had a scope on a tripod with an angled lens placed slightly to his left. He could use it with very little movement of his head. There was a blinder on the rifle which blocked his left eye during firing, but being on the rifle, was not fatiguing his non-shooting eye between shots. Incidentally, he used his right eye to shoot and left eye to scope. Overall as you observed him you could see how everything fit into place and lent to the ability of shooting the entire string with minimum need to shuffle around. What I've just described is the static picture of watching him shoot. Now let's see the action part.

Unfortunately I was shooting my own relay during his preparation, so I started observing during his strings, but here's how they went. He would pick the rifle up and shoulder it. Next he would rock back and forth slightly to obtain his optimum stance. Now he would seem to be settling in and you could see the rifle's movement at the muzzle diminish. He would place his finger on the trigger and you could see him reposition it several times before he chose the one for the shot. All this time the gun would be settling even more into a motionless state. As everything seemed locked in space and time, there would be the sound of a shot, with NO visual indication that anything had happened. His follow through was

superb. After a brief pause, he would bring the gun down and lean slightly to the scope, and using his left eye, take a very brief look and then place the rifle on the pedestal and rest. After a pause he would pump the rifle and set it back on the pedestal, place a pellet from the tray beneath the rifle into the chamber, close the lever and adjust the blinder slightly if necessary. From here he would start over. Everything was meticulously performed in an identical manner each time.

What I just described is a perfect example of what we refer to as a "routine." A set of steps so arranged that we can perform them the same way each time. Note also that in the above example, they were performed with a minimum of exertion. In the first part to this series, I mentioned that to have all the rounds impact the same spot on the target, everything having to do with the processing of the shots has to be the same. This is called consistency. The only way to get true consistency at the target is to perform true consistency at the line. How can we be more consistent? By developing and using a "routine." In this routine we must add all the things we do to perform a shot and leave out all the unnecessary things. Then we need to practice it to the point that it all "feels" perfectly natural. In fact the more natural, the more we'll "feel" comfortable using it. Let's look at an example for Bullseye Slow Fire.

"Shooters to the line." should start us into our focusing and we should take up our stance and prepare to shoot. When told to load do so and continue through the next part of "your" routine. Pick up the rhythm of the commands and go through the same steps you'll use for the sustained fire strings. If everything settled correctly go ahead and take your first shot when the time begins. If not, put the gun down, rest, regroup and begin again. When you break the shot, follow through ready for another one. If everything feels right, continue through another shot. Once you stop, evaluate how you felt about the shot before you look in the scope and then compare the shot with what you "called." Try to find the rhythm correct for you. It should be something like: Grasp gun, settle stance, lift gun, settle hold, initiate trigger, focus on sight, shot breaks, follow through, bring gun down and relax (if you're not taking another shot), call shot, check scope and compare. Once you have a routine keep with it and it will help you to be consistent. Come on out to the league and show us your routine. See you there