



You've been shooting trap for a while now. You feel comfortable that your setup and approach to the targets is repeatable shot after shot. So now you ask yourself, "what's next?" The answer is perhaps simpler than you think.

The easiest things you can do to maximize your scores are to relax and to focus. Tension and lack of concentration are enemies of clay shooters everywhere. If you watch good shooters closely you'll see that they are in a relaxed, but balanced, posture and make no large or rushed movements as they swing to the target. Their shoulders are not hunched up, their cheek falls naturally on to the stock and they swing the gun smoothly.

In the example at right, look how level the shoulders are. The head is vertical and the cheek is resting comfortably, but firmly, on the stock. That bird is going to break, no two ways about it.



At the same time good shooters are almost always focused downrange as they go through their routine between shots. Recently I lost a chance at 50 straight on the 44th bird because I let myself get distracted for a moment by what the shooter next to me was doing. That quick loss of focus, of getting out of my routine, cost me. To that end a great tip I learned when I was first starting out is when another shooter breaks a target, you focus on one the small pieces and track it with your eyes all the way to the ground. This will help train your eyes to stay on target all the way through the shot.

A great example of both comfort and focus is one of our members, Ole Borgesen. You may have seen him in a recent newsletter collecting a 100 straight pin for the first time. Ole has been coming out for just a couple of years but has already won several buckles in competition. His approach is very mechanical, yet very consistent shot after shot and this focus downrange is like a laser when he is on the firing line. But if Ole has tension in him I have never seen it. He is relaxed and in balance from the time he mounts the gun until after the shot is made, and his rapid rise through the scoring ranks demonstrates clearly the upside of staying relaxed but staying focused.

So then what are some of the pitfalls you can avoid? Week in and week out I see folks who shoot only single targets, always at 16 yards, grinding away in pursuit of a higher score. Now while we all want to post a good score, it's easy as pie to fall into the "scoring trap" and get your progress bogged down. Don't be afraid to step back to 18 or even 20 yards to challenge yourself. While it becomes a more difficult exercise as you move back you'll be amazed how it will improve your 16 yard score simply because the target will look so much bigger to you closer in.

You may also want to shoot Wobble on Trap 5; where the target aspect changes not only from side to side, but vertically as well. Wobble will help you learn to first identify and then react to the flight of the bird, and not anticipate where it will go. This is a good thing to

understand because when you anticipate, knowing that the machine throws completely at random, you are most often going to miss.

As you become more confident at greater distance the next best thing you can do is to start shooting in competition at one of our club shoots, or at a meat shoot in the winter. Whether you shoot a good score or a poor one, and we've all done both, never tell yourself that you don't want to do it because you are afraid you'll shoot a poor score. We were all beginners once and remember how it was. Firing for a recorded score is both a challenge and a confidence builder, so don't be afraid of it. And don't be surprised when you win something.

Remember, that there are NRA Certified Instructors at trap six and seven on every public day who can help you improve your skills and help you discover your personal solution.



See you again soon with another shooting tip, but in the meantime, remember to keep those muzzles pointed to the ground when not on the firing line, and keep those actions open whenever you are not actually shooting.

Safety first, foremost and always! -- Frank

