Dear Colleagues

**Teaching a shooter to first group within the V-bull or X-ring, then support the rifle dead still**

**The Problem**  **:**a shooter taught in the 19  th century used a sling to support the rifle dead still, at the same time learning to group within 2.0 MOA. Shooters who left for Gallipoli in 1915, some taking their military-issue range rifles, found that the sniper’s group between trenches only 150 m apart, needed to be about 1.0 MOA. The 2.0 MOA bullseye of training targets in Australia was too large. Shooters at Gallipoli needed to send a bullet into a 10-12cm porthole, opened for a few seconds by an enemy sniper to take a shot. In the 21  st century, the earlier trigger-release technique used to group at 1.0 MOA (TR) and 0.5 MOA (F Class), has been confirmed as well within the reach of fullbore shooters. Smallbore shooters used this group and the X-ring from the 1950s to the present day.

This article describes the strategy adopted in 2019 for teaching new and not-so-new shooters, where it has been agreed that every shooter should be first taught to group within the V-bull (TR) or the X-ring (F Class). For a shooter who was able to hold such a small group, learning to support a rifle dead still appeared to be much easier.

**Discussion**  **:**the most common difficulty throughout the past century has been to get a new shooter to learn to support a rifle dead still. This was needed in order to group within the bullseye. That is, the shooter spends most of his/her time holding a 2 MOA group, while managing several other key techniques:

* balancing the weight of the rifle and forward part of the body entirely upon the elbow
* keeping muscles from moving between shots
* avoiding absorption of recoil by the forward hand and the thumb of the loading hand
* ensuring the loading hand applies the same tension on the pistol grip for every shot
* using the trigger-release technique to release each shot without moving the rifle
* learning to read the flags.

The new shooter soon feels he/she has acquired the skill of fellow shooters who are able to group within the 2.0 MOA bullseye.

However, there has also been an awareness among both TR and F Class shooters, that they must release shots without the muzzle moving in response to a release of adrenaline in the bloodstream. It is muzzle movement which causes the projectile to group as wide as 2 MOA. Grouping smaller than this is achieved through the trigger-release technique. This enables the shooter to control projectile release, so that it only happens when muzzle movement ceases.

Overriding this, a new shooter is significantly affected by:

* the absence of any NRAA, state or club organisation for teaching and learning
* widespread lack of understanding of how teaching and learning happens
* very limited experience in the strategies for teaching
* the scarcity of club members who have thoroughly mastered all the required shooting techniques
* the widespread lack of community understanding of the need for experimental

evidence that supports principles, rather than beliefs founded upon speculation.

Of further concern is the lack or scarcity of the required skills for teaching rifle shooting. This results from the level of education of the majority of people in every community. This is self-evident when shooters unhesitatingly accept beliefs that are not supported by experimental evidence, such as:

* trying to support a rifle dead still when the forward elbow is positioned to one side, i.e. not directly under the rifle (TR)
* releasing the trigger while the adrenaline response of the body is still giving rise to a muscular tremor (TR, F Class)
* moving a foot or the pelvic girdle between shots, which changes the natural point of aim (TR)
* allowing the forward supporting hand to absorb recoil
* varying the tension of the hand on the pistol grip (TR, F Class)
* failing to ensure the butt is firmly in contact with the shoulder so as to absorb recoil (TR)
* resting the cheek on a carved cheekpiece set into the butt, instead of regarding it as a guide for positioning the head (TR, F Class)

For leading smallbore and fullbore shooters, with success at Olympic, Commonwealth Games and Queen’s Prize competitions, lack of understanding of the need to experimentally verify shooting techniques, has severely handicapped rifle shooting over the past century.

**Practical**  **:**the building of a shooter’s  self-esteem is the source of the personal ability and confidence needed for the development of enhanced skills. Likewise, enhancement of  internal locus of control has been described as absolutely necessary for the development of rifle shooters, enabling individuals to make important decisions during a shoot. A person who is unable to decide for him- or herself whether to make a decision, has difficulty recognising the advantage of each technique.

A professional approach to the enhancement of self-esteem and internal locus of control in a learner involves:

* teaching a set of new techniques, followed by the learner being asked to practise each, while the teacher monitors the success of learning, immediately correcting and re-instructing how to properly perform each
* maintaining a managed atmosphere of belonging and acceptance among learners
* ensuring a learner’s regular acknowledgement of his/her self-efficacy.

This approach for enhancing self-esteem and internal locus of control has been utilised with considerable success for various cohorts of learners in many technical fields, i.e. nursing, education subjects and in many fields of sport. Both new and mature shooters have been taught using this to group at 1.0 MOA (TR). F Class shooters even group as small as 0.5 MOA, the size of the X-ring.

Once having attained this important skill, a new shooter can then be quickly taught to support a rifle so that it is dead still. A new shooter who has mastered the 1.0 MOA group soon finds he/she is among the leading 5 percent of shooters at major competitions. F Class shooters can be just as successfully taught in this way.

**Conclusion**  **:** Teaching shooters to be among the top 5 percent of competitors involves strategic decisions by rifle clubs and coaches. This has happened where mature members found they were unable to advance further as a result of a club’s limited efforts to assist them. Shooters interested in mastering the necessary skills need only observe certain individuals at a Queen’s Prize meeting. They can be identified by their scores which are frequently 50.7, 50.8, 50.9 and 50.10.

On the other hand, shooters who have from the outset spent most of their time trying to learn to support their rifle dead still, appear never to attain 50.7 to 50.10 scores. That is, they have never mastered all the techniques needed to group like this from the outset.

Best regards

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