



A Coaches view from behind the line.....

I often get asked by shooters, "Have a look at my target, what am I doing wrong"? Generally my answer is straight to the point, "You're spraying them all over the target"!

With that, the shooter either packs up and goes home with head bowed, or they ask me to watch them shoot some shots.

This is usually the answer I'd preferably want to hear. So let's see what you do on the firing line? "Do you want to borrow my scope"? They generally ask. No thanks comes the reply. With that statement, I hope that something triggers the shooters mind a little and maybe they wonder how I'll get to help them if I cannot see the shot holes on the target.

Well, many years ago a friend told me to treat the front sight as a 'Yellow Pages' directory. What this means is, get information from the sights and in particular, the front sight. What is the front sight doing as the pistol breaks (fires shot)?

When analysing shooters on the line, I stand behind them and slightly to the side. As I watch the pistol, I firstly see that the recoil of the pistol is consistent from shot to shot. If not, I endeavour to find out why? I then position myself to the side of the shooter to get clear view of the trigger finger movement. Is the trigger being smoothly pressed and is it being continually pressed after the shot breaks? (follow through).

Several more shots have been fired to ascertain the trigger smoothness, recoil consistency and holding ability.

The next step is to watch the eyes of the shooter. As the pistol fires and is returned to the bench, where do the eyes 'look'. Do the eyes follow the sights to the bench or do they still look somewhere at the target after the shot has gone off? Sometimes shooters eyes remain fixed where the sights where, which may indicate they have been looking through the sights at the target. Maybe attempting to 'see' the shot hole on the target. Shooters spend a lot of cash on a scope, why not use it? Using a scope can be another topic next time.

With all these points to watch out for, we see three main aspects to look for.....pistol recoil, smooth trigger press and watching the eyes which means follow through. Holding ability is perhaps the least of our problems as we are only concerned with the application of the shot regardless of the holding area. Sure a steady hold will certainly help but with a steady hold there is the need to have all the other components working properly.

One major problem with the holding ability is the shooter 'tries' to hold still for that second or two and then makes the conscious effort to 'fire' the shot before the wobble gets bad. This conscious firing at this stage, causes trigger shots which result in shots all over the target.

Once we establish what the main error or errors are, we generally discuss what to do for improving such errors and be sure the shooter understands it is up to them to learn the correct technique required to fire a good, controlled shot.

The main point to get across is to get the shooter confident enough to accept their 'wobble' area and get the sights aligned as best they can. Whilst this is all happening, press the trigger smoothly at the same time.

This does several things:-

Firstly, it allows the shooter to accept the holding area somewhere under the black.

Secondly makes them 'see' the sights and attempt a smooth press whilst getting the sights in alignment.

After all this, I guess the only thing left to do is follow through.....

So if you want to shoot better or help someone shoot better, look at the pistol!