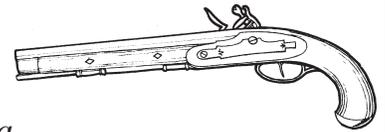


# Pistol Shots II



by Michael Luma

A competitive shooter will eventually reach a point where the issues to improve scores become smaller, but more difficult to master. You can find yourself spending considerable time thinking about what changes you could make to improve your scores. For example after you believe you have fully mastered trigger control you may, at a later time (sometimes years later), feel that there is more to learn; maybe not a lot more, but enough to improve your overall performance, and such a result will be quite gratifying. For example, you may ask yourself, "If I'm shooting well now, what if I had enough control to break the trigger the first time I touch the center of the target?"

If our trigger squeeze develops on its own when we begin shooting it will probably be a long, slightly bumpy squeeze interrupted by short delays while we hope that the sights will move back under the target before the shot breaks.

However, thinking about the trigger may draw your attention away from that critical sight alignment and that can cause errors that you just can't believe. As we have discussed before, the sights will seldom stop just where you want them long enough to squeeze the trigger. Try not to think about such problems. All of us have normal body movement that prevents such an occurrence. But, if those two sights are perfectly aligned with each other you lessen the errant shots.

Watch your sights on the target and see how they normally move. Sure you go into the white, but not terribly, but if the sights are aligned with each other you will get the best shot you can hold. Here's how the process goes awry; as we hold the pistol to the target we want to see the front sight under the black, but as we attempt this we lose that all important alignment of the front sight with the rear sight. After firing you check the scope and see a five. You feel like you will never be a good pistol shooter. But that is not the case. Hold your pistol to the target, align the sights and then move that alignment to where you would need to hold in order to shoot that five. Your hold was not that



wide and now you know that the wobble area does not include the five ring. Your next shot, as you are bringing the sights onto the target, align them with one another carefully. Keep your focus on the sights, and as you bring the pistol to the 6 o'clock position squeeze the trigger fully. You must maintain that sight picture with your focus on the top edge of the front sight. Your scores will improve. You'll get rid of those fives.

If you think about this you will realize that it is easier to align two sights 8" or 10" apart than the alignment on the target which is 25 yards or 50 yards away. Easier doesn't really belong in pistol text, but neither does can't!

But you say they are too far apart to see both the target and the sights clearly. You're right, opt to keep the sights clear and you will like the results. The target can be a fuzzy blur, as it has always been for me, but those sights have to be in focus.

That is the goal, to keep the sights aligned and in focus while processing the trigger squeeze. Eventually, you may desire to be more deliberate and shorten the trigger squeeze and eliminate the delays. Let's work on this allowing that the following

statement may be true. "We should not hold any longer than it takes to settle the sights into our wobble zone." You may remember from an earlier article that the wobble zone is that area of the target in which your sights settle into during your hold.

If you consider that statement several thoughts soon come to mind. Your best hold will be the first 5-8 seconds after acquiring the target. It makes sense to break the shot as soon as possible. If you are in your wobble zone you want the shot to break immediately. Steadiness decreases the longer you hold which means you spend less time in your wobble zone. Acquiring the target as mentioned above is when both the front and rear sights are on the target but not necessarily aligned yet. Recognizing this brings the opinion that, if you have a steady period early in your hold, that is when the shot should break.

Let's add another new statement. "When I raise the pistol to the target I will squeeze the trigger fully and break a perfect shot." All of you experienced shooters smiled with that statement, and said to yourself, "Yea, sure you are." Herein is the real challenge in

improving your trigger squeeze, it seems impossible to make that trigger move faster than what you normally do while still maintaining control. To describe "faster" in better detail: you can still move the trigger at the same rate; just do so in one move.

You can combine what you are seeing at the target with more efficiency at the trigger. Begin at home in the evenings while watching TV. Take a pistol that has a good trigger, that is easy to cock and dry fire in your lap. Use a percussion gun that you can easily block the nipple, or a center fire match pistol. **Make sure the gun is unloaded.** In the evenings, dry fire just to get to know your trigger a little better and do so regularly.

The next step is to dry fire, and when you feel ready, then change the method of trigger release. At first, you will find it difficult to squeeze the trigger in less time than your standard pace. I don't want you to think this is easy; it is very difficult to get out of your comfort zone while squeezing the trigger. To emphasize that point let me say that when I first began this, dry firing at a target, and squeezing the trigger completely until release, I actually got some kind of mental interruption, like

my brain quivered or some such event. When I brought the gun up for the next attempt, it was the same as before. I had to laugh that my mind was so set in its ways that I was unable to make this change readily. That was some time ago, but it took me a month to get my brain to understand that we were making some changes.

This is a complex and difficult task, and many shooters work endlessly to find a way to speed up their trigger squeeze. Give some thought to committing to release the trigger the first time the sights settle where you like, doing so by trusting what you see. This too will force you to start the trigger process sooner.

Some modern pistol shooters are trying rolling triggers so that they know the trigger is moving. After all those years of building triggers that eliminated all felt movement, the rolling triggers are moderately popular on semi-auto match guns.

Let's talk about anxiety, again. We must reach a point where we can squeeze the trigger and break the shot calmly. It seems a contradiction, on one hand to want to break the trigger as soon as possible, and on the other to stay relaxed, or calm, while doing so.

Tell yourself that you are in control and focus on a smooth, constant release.

Often shooters could shoot higher scores if they could break their shot a fraction of a second earlier. We see this as we are squeezing the trigger and just as the trigger breaks the gun moves. I'm convinced such shooters lose their discipline just as the trigger is breaking. Instead of a 10 they shoot a 7 and never come to grips with the real problem; one more shooter who thinks he can't shoot well. Again, make your trigger squeeze start and finish in one smooth motion.

Some shooters describe their trigger difficulties like this. "I squeeze and squeeze and nothing happens." Most likely they are either not squeezing or squeezing the grip and not doing much on the trigger, but eventually the trigger will break, making them believe they were squeezing the trigger when they weren't. These shooters can benefit from verifying that the grip doesn't increase while shooting. Although it seems somewhat distracting, it is best done by checking their grip just before squeezing the trigger or wiggling the little finger just slightly during the same period. I would do this on a practice target, or better yet, work on it at your home range until you have controlled that tightening hand.

### An Interesting Target Pistol

Today I would like to introduce a serious competitive target pistol. It has none of the pleasures of a traditionally built muzzleloading pistol and falls into the unlimited category, as do all of the inline target guns. It is built on the Colt style .45 frame. I have included a picture of one with a barrel installed and another barrel above that is readily changed within a couple of minutes.

The barrel on the frame is a .40 built by Phil Quaglino. The barrel

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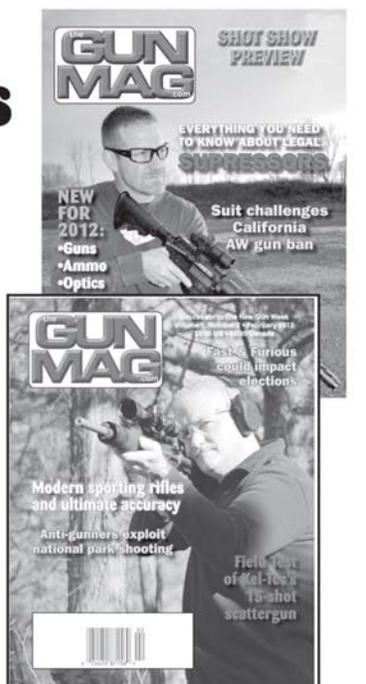


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above it is a .32 and was built by Terry Lapschynski. With both barrels, note that the link pin is used to secure the barrel along with a screw up through the grip which screws into a lug dove-tailed or welded at the correct location near the rear of the barrel.

The top barrel is interesting with the inclusion of a bolt which screws into a lug in front of the link. It screws against the link thus anchoring the barrel with that screw which protrudes from the front of the dust cover. That one anchor and the link pin are sufficient to hold the barrel securely.

This style pistol has been around since the 1960's in one form or another. The later designs as shown, however, are quite efficient and are a reasonable job to build. Additionally, you can have multiple barrels to cover various needs.

Two changes are involved in converting a .45 auto frame into a muzzle loader, the first being the need to remove the ejector from the frame, and the second being to weld a small cup on the hammer to deflect cap fragments. The frame can easily be returned to modern use by replacing the ejector, and then replacing the altered hammer with an original style hammer. The ejector is pinned to the frame and, after removing that one pin, it will pull upwards and off the frame. Note however that the ejector is a tight fit and the pin is only .062 and requires care in its removal.

Both barrels are built to use scope/optics or iron sights by use of a rib installed on the barrel with the top of the iron sights higher than the rib. On the .32 cal., the rib is integral. Such guns are ideal when you are switching from iron sights to optics, as it only involves attaching or removing the optics and the iron sights are then ready to go. If you like the Colt .45, these guns will rival anything on the line and are much easier to build as half the job is done before you start. We insert a small piece of .010 thick brass or plastic between the barrel and frame that rests against the front of the hammer when it is in the forward position, which eliminates cap fragments from dropping between the frame and hammer.

The pros and cons should be considered. On the plus side it is an easy build at home or by a gunsmith if needed. The build requires a flat on the bottom of the barrel which will set correctly on

the frame with a breech plug installed for the nipple and then situated on the frame so that the nipple will contact the hammer just after half cock. The final requirement is to install the lugs on the bottom of the barrel as mentioned above. This is a nicely balanced pistol that is lighter in weight than other inlines because the frame is so light. The trigger pull is reasonably adjusted and very consistent. It is readily disassembled for cleaning.

On the minus side since the nipple has no frame behind it, a shield needs to be in place to keep an errant piece of cap from the shooter. I use a small piece of light sheet metal that slides into the empty slide rails on the frame that is then bent up 90 degrees. I have shot this gun frequently in competition and believe it is as good as any.

#### MISCELLANY

Here are a few ideas for those who may be struggling to maintain a clear sight picture. A Merit eyepiece may help your vision by providing a smaller aperture to look through while aiming. The small aperture offers a longer depth of field which helps many. They are available at gun stores or in shooting catalogs. The iris is adjustable and can

be set for the individual. A diopter, which looks like a jewelers loupe can clear up the sights if you have a lens ground to your needs which will bring the front sight into focus. It can easily be flipped up when not needed.

For others, the sights start out clearly but soon fade, and then become fuzzy. Try a piece of frosted tape on your eye glasses positioned over your non-shooting eye to block it from seeing the sights. Now only the shooting eye can see the sights and the off eye cannot interfere. This is especially helpful when the eyes are of different prescription.

Dry balling is something that everyone has done, and it is a part of shooting, and also, it is annoying when you're in a match. It is easy to be drawn away from what we are doing, even if only for a moment. Try placing something out of order in your loading sequence when distracted. Set the short starter in the barrel, set a can on its side, lay the hammer in the wrong place, anything that will take just a moment to do yet will be an alert to you when you return to loading. That will be your signal to check what you have done before loading the ball. Now just don't forget to set something out of place! **MB**



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