

GUN MOUNT AND LEAD METHODS

Dear Technoid:

I am really getting intrigued with trying to shoot some sporting targets and am somewhat confused by what is the proper way to accomplish the gun mount and swing. Can you describe for me in a step by step approach, a proper method for mounting the shotgun once visual contact is made with a target and accomplishing the establishment of forward allowance?

More specifically, what moves first once you visually identify the target? At what point in the mount process should the gun actually come to the cheek and shoulder? Should the gun be fully mounted before one initiates a pull-away or whatever method one uses to establish lead?

I have read some about the CPSA method which as I understand it has one point out the target and at some point (I don't know where) pull-away from the target. Is this the best method to begin with or are there others that have proven successful? I realize that seeking out a qualified instructor might be the best but at this time I do not feel I can afford that option. Any advice and good resources would be greatly appreciated.

Randy

Dear Randy:

Wow! Describe the proper mounting and shooting process in 25 words or less. Craddock, Churchill, Reynolds, Bowlen, Silcox, Davies, Bidwell and dozens of others have all tried to do that. I doubt that I can succeed where they have failed to pierce the shrouding veil of mystery. Of course, that should never stop the Technoid from trying. You cannot grow good roses with just one application of manure. Pull on your boots. Here goes.

Shooting is not like The Calculus. There is more than one way to do the job. There is room for personality and individual quirks. I will tell you the one way that I mount and swing and the four ways that I establish lead. Some other shooters may do it differently. They will most certainly describe it differently.

Unless I am shooting mounted gun (English and Connecticut Travelers rules permit this and I very occasionally take advantage of it for trap type shots), I always start with the gun butt under the armpit and back at least an inch or two. I want to be able to push the gun slightly forward as I mount it. I find this to be easier and more reliable than starting with the gun butt just in front of the armpit and bringing it straight up. Sometimes the shortest way is not always the best. I learned this from Bill Clemmons, World Champion at International Skeet in the '70s. It is still true.

So, with the gun butt back under the armpit, I call for the bird. When I first see the bird I IMMEDIATELY put my muzzle just behind, on or just in front of the target (depending on what lead method I will be using). The important thing to remember is that I put the muzzle in correct relationship to the bird while the butt is still under my armpit. The front of the gun has moved

first. The butt has not yet moved. (This is Bidwell's "Move, Mount, Shoot" approach, though with me it is often "Move, Mount, Miss".

If the bird has a bit of a longer window, I will move my muzzle with the bird for quite a while until the bird gets to where I want to kill it. The butt is still under my armpit.

When I am ready to take the bird my body and muzzle are already moving with the bird. The muzzle is pointing in exactly the right place. All I have to do is raise the stock to my cheek, accelerate the muzzle slightly, fire and follow through. The act of following through is the most important act that you can make in shooting. Every fine shooter has a good follow through. It may be so short a movement that the average spectator cannot notice it, but I absolutely guarantee you that the good guys do it every time.

I may keep the muzzle on the bird for a long time. I may keep the butt under my armpit for a long time. I never keep the gun on my cheek for long. Once the stock tucks properly into the cheek, I fire without hesitation.

As to methods of lead, I use four. Without getting overly long here, the methods are 1) spot shot, 2) swing through, 3) pull away and 4) sustained lead. You may have heard these methods called by many other names. I feel that mine are the most accurately descriptive, but you might prefer other names.

I use the spot shot where there is a very small window, one that does not permit any kind of swing. If the bird is coming from the right, fast and into a tiny window, I just hold on the left side of the opening with a dead gun and yank the trigger when the bird first appears on the right. It is an ugly, brutal way of shooting, but it is one of the tools that you absolutely must have in your box. You may have to use it on one station out of fifty, but use it you will. The dead gun is necessary because the course designer has made very sure that the window is so narrow that you cannot physically catch up to the bird if you start behind. This type of shot is currently out of fashion, but it will return and you will know how to hit it.

Swing through is simply the method of positioning the muzzle behind the bird and then accelerating the muzzle through the bird, pulling the trigger and continuing the swing. The advantage is that it virtually precludes stopping the gun. The disadvantage is that it gives the shooter a very short "dwell time" on the target.

Pull away is the Silcox, CPSCA method. There the barrel is inserted right onto the bird. This is very easy to do as there is no question about how on is on. On is on. The muzzle stays on the bird for a moment to synchronize speed and then accelerates ahead of the bird and the gun is fired.

This method is a compromise. It has most of the unstoppable gun swing attributed to the swing through method, but it has a slightly longer dwell time because the gun is not moving away from the target at too fast a rate.

Lastly, there is the sustained lead. Here the muzzle is inserted into the correct position in front of the target. It maintains that lead for a moment until the shooter is sure that it is correct and then the trigger is pulled while continuing to swing.

The advantage to the sustained lead is a very long dwell time. The disadvantage is that it is easier to stop the swing. You will also do best with sustained lead if you know which lead to sustain. That means that you should have seen that target before. This is a more difficult method to use on an unknown target. You will see the pros use this method more than any other.

There it is, the quick and dirty rocky road to success. Try all the methods. You should not use any one of them all of the time. Different birds call for different techniques. I use pull away and swing through the most, sustained lead a bit and spot shooting seldom. You may develop different preferences. There is no right or wrong and just about any bird can be broken with sustained lead, pull away or swing through. Save the spot shooting for special situations.

Regards,
Bruce Buck
Shotgun Report's Technoid