

Success!

[my shooting keys]

David Tubb, 9-Time NRA High Power Rifle Champion



Coming to the line prepared is key to high scores. The reason is simple: the more done beforehand, the more time can be spent on the line preparing oneself to shoot the event. I have my coat on and adjusted, my sling is on, and my glove, hat, and glasses are all in place. The rifle has been prepared as well. I have made a few modifications to my equipment to speed set up, such as cutting annular rings on my scope stand rod to indicate spotting scope height. Preparation beforehand

Over the years I have been competing, there have been a few tenets I have established and adhered to. I'd like to pass some of those along in hopes they might help attain the goals of maximizing performance. These I mapped out and detailed fall under two headings, three each: before an event and during an event. In other words, preparation and execution. The following will be directed to NRA High Power Rifle competition, but all these tenets apply also to other forms of rifle competition, as well as any hunting trip I plan. Necessarily different specifics are introduced, of course, but the basics stay the same.

1. Preparation is a key to accomplishment

I shoot in the NRA High Power Rifle Championship at Camp Perry, Ohio once each year. My preparation for the 2002 event began immediately upon leaving the firing line after my last shot there in 2001. Win or lose, it's always a learning experience. I don't train actively (at the range) daily, weekly, or even monthly over the next year, but that event is on my mind continually. During those twelve months I will make equipment changes and modifications, shooting position changes, sight changes, and so on, and all are geared toward attaining success at Camp Perry. Focus on what matters; that will direct your efforts in the right directions.

All my training is conducted almost exclusively at home. I have my own range and have constructed it around my desire to gain easy access to test ideas. I have never felt the need to exercise competitive skills. I do attend a few warm-up events prior to the nationals, but these are strictly test beds or proving grounds. I have found, as have all shooters, that the competitive environment is the ultimate test of the worth or value of ideas. It's true: if there is going to be a problem it's going to happen at a match.

The active aspect of preparation is this: Come to the firing line prepared! Have all shooting gear on and adjusted, have the rifle ready, magazines loaded, score card filled out, and everything on the list checked off. When the three-minute preparation period comes up, spend that time dry firing and perfecting your position.

2. Rifle fit is crucial to position success

The vast majority of experiments I have run, and continue to run, revolve around attaining a better and better shooting position. These experiments almost all, in some way, involve rifle changes. In the past I was limited by rifle design. I had (in conjunction with Rock McMillan) the opportunity to participate in designing a new rifle, the TUBB 2000, and my overriding motivation was overcoming all the old limitations imposed on me by conventional designs. From the bolt manipulation ease and ergonomics to the fully adjustable stock and weight system, I sought to produce something that did not get in the way of how I wanted to operate.

also provides better opportunity not to overlook



something important, such as taking the sight to event (distance) zero. No mistakes!

Poor natural point of aim is one reason for shots stringing around on the target rather than grouping in its center. Reasons for that have to do with recoil pulse, among other things, but the idea is see an X-ring sight picture for the full duration of the shot. When NPA and target coincide, consistency results. Watch for the sight to fade

The idea is to fit the rifle to the shooter rather than having the shooter be forced to fit into a mold that accommodates only what the rifle allows. I want to attain a shooting position that I believe is the most natural and effective and then have the rifle molded in to suit it. No compromises. When a rifle is completely suited to the shooter in this way, the gun disappears. If I had to say, I would say that head position is the most critical element of a good shooting position.

Make every effort to set up your gun to accommodate the positions you desire, and that requires patience and creativity. It also takes money to obtain the adjustment features, but that expense is easily worth as much as what many spend on technical improvements.

3. Do not accept a poor sight picture (part one)

That is outstanding advice when one is behind the trigger, but I am referring to literally seeing the sight picture.

One key to shooting a small group is having, and keeping, a sharp focus on the front sight. I have proven (and reproven) to myself that seeing the target clearly is just not important. If you can see the front sight clearly it honestly doesn't matter what the target looks like to you. Too many shooters think that every element in the sight picture should be clear, and this is attainable by various means. However, I shoot my best groups not when the target and front sight are equally clear, but when the front sight is more clear than the target. In other words, I actually make an effort to tune my sighting system so the target does not appear in focus.

There are two proven methods to get a clear front sight image. The first and most effective is to extend the distance the front sight is from the eye. An "extension tube" does this. I currently manufacture my own tube to overcome the rifle accuracy problems I encountered with others, and have it installed to provide a net gain of about six inches (on a 26-inch barrel). The other solution comes from rear sight corrective lenses or one of the variable diopters such as produced by Anschütz. These allow the shooter to correct his vision by altering the point of relaxed visual focus. The idea is to have this point be at the front sight location. I use a lens and a tube in combination, but, again, the main benefit comes from the tube. This is especially true for the nearsighted shooter, who I don't believe benefits from a rear-mounted lens.

Now, onto "shooting" tenets. These are general in statement but can, and will, be very specific in content. Details addressed, techniques employed, and changes made, in other words, are up to each shooter.

away from the center and also discordance between known zeros and results on target. These are the tell-tale signs of poor NPA.

One of the keys to “connecting” on the centered sight picture is not to over-hold. This is especially true when shooting offhand, but also applies to other shooting positions. I have more or less predetermined a time frame in which I’ll fire a round. A dead still (centered) hold can only get worse -- fire the shot at the first opportunity the sight is clearly on target center to guarantee a maximum value hit. Fatigue increases sight movement and deteriorates visual acuity.

1. Idealize natural alignment

Never accept anything less than perfect (natural) alignment before firing any shot.

“Natural point of aim” (NPA) is a key to good hits from any shooting position -- under any circumstance. Natural point of aim is where the sights want to sit within the target area. Since we’re shooting outdoors and may be holding the rifle with some tension and also fighting wind, it can be more difficult to ascertain NPA than it might be for a target shooter firing indoors. It just takes practice.

Initially check and adjust NPA through dry firing: don’t just prop up the rifle and see where it’s sitting. Make sure you’re holding the rifle and pulling the trigger as you will when you fire.

Adjust alignment by repositioning the “base.” In offhand, move the feet: target-side foot for big changes, other foot for smaller changes. In prone or sitting, correcting movement is akin to being atop a record turntable: everything moves in unison. If so equipped, rifle stock adjustments may also be tuned in to augment natural alignment. Also keep in mind that there is a vertical component in natural alignment: move the hand back or forth along the rifle forend or move the buttplate up or down on the shoulder, or both.

The best indicator for NPA, though, comes by watching for sight movement off the target, often seen only at the moment of firing. Know that NPA can change during a string: always pay attention to sight movement and adjust as needed, and always do so before the next shot!

2. Do not accept a poor sight picture (part two)

Trigger control and other shooting fundamentals all roll together so the trigger break occurs on a centered sight picture. First, then, is not to accept anything less than a maximum value shot. This may not always [have to] be a perfectly centered shot, but wait out the wobble until the “10” presents itself. It is possible to write an entire book on all the intricacies of attaining and keeping a centered shot. However, it starts with the thought process and extends to the will, and from there transitions to learning -- permanent improvement can then take place. The pledge, though, is where it starts.

Call each and every shot. Calling a shot means knowing exactly what the sight picture (position on the target) was when the rifle fired. I think we’ve all known to do this, but the question is whether we’re really doing it, and whether we are doing it on each and every shot. The positive effects of calling all shots extend farther than knowing where a bullet hole is supposed to be on the target face. Part of the benefit is that followthrough improves, and that means everything that leads up to a shot improves. Followthrough is “staying with the shot” long enough to call it.

Don’t accept a bad shot, and that means “don’t take one.” To attain higher and higher goals, the shooter must first set them. Elevate your expectations and you’ll see results improve along with. From the standing position, for instance, start with the goal of never releasing a shot that’s not holding “in the black” on a decimal-type bullseye target. This is a certain passport to a 90-percent plus score.

Make the rifle fit you! I let a rifle lean over to make it fit my body, and I find that the vast majority of people prefer to shoot with some cant in this manner -- after they try it. Primarily, rifle cant keeps the head upright: rather than bring-

3. Visualize each shot

Visualization is a powerful tool because when we visualize an action the mind is also sending signals to the body to help prepare it to deliver those results -- it is learning to do what you want it to, to react in the manner rehearsed. I might fire one hundred rounds offhand each day without handling a rifle. I visualize my sight picture and firing response continually. I know what I want to see, I see it, and that gets translated to my performance on the firing line.

I also visualize each offhand shot I fire when I am in competition: visualize the shot, take the shot, visualize the shot, take the shot, over and over for each round.



ing the face over to the stock, bring the stock over to the face. This simple technique offers many benefits to the standing and prone positions, and no real disadvantages, yet most shooters are afraid to try it. The only complication is that the sight may need to be readjusted to obtain a zero, but it's not much of a change. I also cant the rifle sitting, but in the opposite direction. The TUBB 2000 sight mounting system is cant-adjustable so the sights can be levelled.

Finally, be aggressive and decisive

Patience is a virtue, but indecision is not. I would always rather over-correct than under-correct. Whether it's working on an idea in the shop or settling on a windage adjustment at 1000 yards, I don't sit on an idea for very long. Experience, of course, lends more assurance to the weight of the decision, but one of the hallmarks of the less experienced shooter is fear or failure to make a change. Letting oneself make the same mistake again frequently means the necessary decision and action on the next shot are that much more influential.

For example, let's say I'm shooting a 600-yard string and have a wind from 9-o'clock. This wind is changing its value or effect on the bullet throughout the string. My goal here is not to have a round land very far beyond the right hand or 3-o'clock side of the X-ring. If I think the wind has picked up a little I'll add left windage, and if it's died a little I'll take some off, but I probably will make no effort to center this group. I instead want to stay ahead of these changing conditions, while running as little risk as possible of falling victim to a missed cue. I will gladly and patiently wait until it's time to go [shoot], but then I'm gone and rarely ever am I looking back.