



# CLASS DIVIDE

ARE YOU STRUGGLING TO GET YOUR SCORES OVER 65%? ROGER HILL KNOWS WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK FROM BEING AN A CLASS SHOT

One of the things I am asked most often by clients is how to get out of B Class. A lot of shooters hit a wall at the top end of B, knocking on the door of A Class but never getting in. The majority of B Class shooters miss two or three targets then sort themselves out and hit the rest of the stand, or get the first six or seven targets and drop the last two or three. Is this you?

All of this happens for two reasons; firstly, the B shot does not read the target correctly before getting into the stand. He has to sort out his break zone, visual and muzzle pick-up points and lead all on the stand. Alternatively, he gets the first six or seven then takes his eye off the ball thinking he has them all in the bag – this is a lack of concentration. Miss three or four targets on every stand at a 100-bird shoot, over 10 stands and you are down in the 60% and that's without your bogey targets. Do the same on a championship layout over 12 to 14 stands and you will be down around the 50% mark.

Likewise, losing it halfway through or at the end of a stand will get you the same result. Most B Class shooters are only stuck in B due to an inability to read a target before getting into the stand, or because their mind isn't staying on the job. If a B Class

shooter could not cope with a particular target presentation he would only hit one or two by luck, or none at all; but if he is breaking seven or eight out of the ten then he can shoot. The majority of shooters that get to the top end of B can get into A and beyond, but everything has to be right at this stage: gun fit, style, stance, balance and reading of targets.

So let's go through what makes a B Class shot into an A Class shot.

The A Class shot has learnt how to read targets before he gets into the stand. He knows his break point, the point along the target's flight

line where he will be most comfortable breaking it. This then determines where he will stand and gets him balanced at the break point. How many times have you watched someone shoot and miss the first target, then move their stance for the next pair and break them now they are balanced at the break point? That's our B Class shot.

You won't see our A Class shot do this as he is right from the start. He knows exactly how the target is flying, has made a note of the background, picked a spot to mark his visual pick-up point, and he knows his reaction

time so he can put his muzzles the right distance from his pick-up point. The target cannot beat him; he is always in control.

Why do good shots always make it look like they have all the time in the world? Because they have done all of the above.

How you stand and hold the gun affects how far and freely you can move. You must get it right every time at this stage of your game – there is no room for nearly right.

Stance and how the gun is held are the two things that keep our shot in B Class. These are the most common areas I have to work on as a coach to get a shooter to the next level. I watch a lot of people shoot and miss, knowing all they had to do was change their stance slightly and the target would have been broken. Changing your stance can also slightly change the fit of the gun. If you started shooting with a coach they would have taken the time to get you standing correctly and getting the gun to fit as close to correctly as possible. Get into the stand with your stance not quite right and all that work has gone out of the window.

What is perfect stance? Being balanced at the break point. For a right-handed shot this means that, if we call our break point 12 o'clock, our toes need to point at around

GETTING THE STANCE RIGHT EVERY TIME IS KEY TO IMPROVING YOUR SHOOTING





## A LEVEL UP

By Roger Hill

one and two, with our weight slightly forward. This gives you about 180° of free movement, before your shoulders start to roll and we lose the line of the target, or you run out of movement and miss behind.

Now, gun hold: get this wrong and we severely restrict our movement. To get it right your body needs to be relaxed as possible (when standing relaxed the palms of your hands face your thighs); relaxed muscles are easier to move than tense muscles. We now need to hold the gun with our hands and arms as close to in line as possible, so pick up your gun with your left hand (for right-handed shots). Now bring your right hand up to the pistol grip and notice your palm is still facing inwards, its natural position. Hold the pistol grip so that your little finger is in line with the bottom of the pistol grip. This keeps your hand in line with your arm. If you bring your hand too high on the pistol grip your wrist will be cricked, the hand and arm not in line, and this position will severely restrict

### TO RECAP:

1. Learn and practise reading targets
2. Work on your stance and get it right every time
3. Get your gun hold correct
4. To get to the next stage you have to train more, not just shoot competitions and hope you get better
5. Train at home as well as at the shooting ground (dry drills)
6. When you train, keep it structured and set achievable goals
7. Keep a journal of all training and competitions
8. Re-read *Clay Shooting* articles: *how to train*, *how to achieve a perfect gun mount*, *how to read a target*, and *know your reaction time*
9. When you hit the wall at around 65%, get help to get through it
10. If you are at the top of B Class you can shoot, you just need a bit of fine-tuning

your movement left and right. Now bring your left hand onto the forend keeping your palm facing inwards. Rest your thumb along the top of the forend wood beside the barrels, with your index finger pointing along the side towards the muzzles. Now just curl the remaining three fingers under the forend.

With your hands in this position swing as far as you can left and right, without rolling your shoulders, and make a note of how far you have moved. Now move your

right hand high up on the pistol grip and wrap your left hand under and around the forend. Repeat the exercise; you will be amazed at how restricted your movement is. Not paying attention to these factors – not getting it right at the beginning, along with not reading the targets – will keep you in B.

What do we need to do to get all this right? Train. This is not just shooting: dry drills and gun mount practice are all done at home with an empty gun. Always do this drill in

your shooting clothes, not in a tee shirt, as this will affect your gun fit. If you get it right in the mirror wearing a tee shirt but go to the shoot in your normal shooting clothes the gun will be longer and your gun fit all wrong. If you are lucky, after a few stands you might work out what is wrong, but you will still be in B. By doing the dry drills in your shooting clothes you can take time to learn how to change your grip or stance slightly when you change from summer to winter clothes, so that your eye-rib alignment is always right.

When you train at the shooting ground don't just shoot every stand, set achievable goals and stick to them. Work on your bogey targets. Most grounds change their layout quite regularly. Use this to practise target reading. Take time to watch someone else shoot the stand, pick your break point, know what the target is doing (speed, height and direction), select your visual pick-up point and mark it with something. When you get into the stand you should know where you



SHOOTING COMPETITION AFTER COMPETITION WILL NOT MAKE YOU AN A CLASS SHOT – PROPER TRAINING WILL



are going to stand and where to look for the target. By this stage you should know your reaction time so that your muzzle pick-up point is correct. When you come across a change of targets don't just leap in and start shooting, read the targets first. Get it right from the start; do your homework before you get into the stand and don't leave it to guesswork.

To get into A Class and beyond you have to put in the training hours, not just shoot competitions and hope. You must identify your weaknesses and get them sorted. This may have to be with a professional coach. Keep a journal – every time you train or shoot a

competition write it down. If you have a bad stand, describe what the target was doing. Over three or four shoots there will be a connection between the type of targets you are missing. Identify them and work on them.

Shooters seem to have a different outlook towards training and coaching than those in other sports. In all sports, the better you get the more coaching you need. But with shooters, many get to the top of B or just into A and stop having coaching, which is wrong. When you first started shooting you were looking for 100%. With a good coach from the start it is not hard to find 50%-60% in

the first year. It is at this point that you need more coaching as you are now only looking for 20-25%, which is a lot harder to find on your own. You cannot shoot yourself through the wall; all you will do is perfect any minor faults you may have in your style and technique. The wall then becomes higher and harder to climb.

Don't give up when you hit the wall at the top end of B. There are a lot of very good professional coaches

out there. Try a few and find one that you click with or go to one that has been recommended or that you know gets results. The pupil and coach relationship has to be one where you understand what the coach wants and the coach must know what you want and be able to support you to achieve your goals.

If you are shooting at the top end of B Class you can shoot – all you need is fine-tuning to get to the next level.

Shoot safe, shoot straight.

ProCoach Shooting School is based at Essex SG and Stilehollow SG, Notts. For details of Skeet, Sporting and Trap master classes, contact Roger at [roger@procoachshootingschool.com](mailto:roger@procoachshootingschool.com), or visit [www.ProCoachShootingSchool.com](http://www.ProCoachShootingSchool.com) for details.



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