Shot Rhythm

The term, shot rhythm, is understood to be the motion of a shot, that is the sequence of individual actions, their precision and the time needed for the whole procedure. It need not be explained that a consistent shooting performance is based on an unchanging rhythm. The more precisely you can reproduce the motions of a shot with each repetition, the more favorable the conditions will be for an optimal shot pattern and high score.

By the same token, variations inevitably lead to greater dispersion and lower scores. If you vary the way you develop your aiming position, change the way you balance yourself or even change the tension of your muscles, the result will be bad shots. Prolonged aiming leads to off-shots, just as an irregular release does or neglecting your subsequent hold.

The words for rhythm are precision and a sense of timing. All motions should follow precisely the same pattern. And they should comply with a tact that rhythmically keeps its tempo.

Whether you are stimulated or tired, the rhythm must stay the same, not only for each separate element but for the whole procedure. Before you approach the clockwork as a whole, the individual cogs in the machine must first be primed. In training, you develop your position, balance, tension, etc. one after the other. You closely examine each phase, improve it and then reinsert it in the machine. In this way, each element is optimized and integrated in sequence, only to submerge again in the whole rhythm.

Your approach is similar for critical situations in a competition. When one element, such as the release, is out of tact, it shifts to the center of your attention and is executed with special concentration. As soon as the release is working again, it recedes into the background and becomes one of several processes in the whole procedure.

Contrary to beginners, elite shooters place great value on preparing for a shot. Position, balance and zero point are very carefully executed. Aiming and releasing happen quickly, almost as a reflex.

Inexperienced shooters develop their aiming position hastily and often do not pay attention to their insert position or alignment. They invest their entire energy in aiming and releasing, which usually takes a very long time, so that even slow fluctuations do not make this an easy task.

Learn to carefully develop your position, so that you have a steady stance and can easily disengage the shot but still have enough reserves left for the correct holding and aiming afterwards.

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Four different rhythms with breathing tension and release graph:

The first two rhythms are ideal. The second rhythm is slightly shorter, and the release happens more aggressively and earlier. Both variations are in the "green" range. The change is critical in the third example. The release phase is clearly prolonged here, and the pressure curve on the trigger has a bizarre form. Such developments appear with "major shots", whenever a crisis is brewing. It would be better to put the rifle down and start again than to fire a risky shot.

When a shot is fired at the right time, many shooters remain in their aiming position and start a second sighting phase, which is basically unsteadier and more risky than the first one. You should avoid such a risk and put the gun down instead.

Whoever has problems on a regular basis with releasing on time in a competition must examine the various reasons for this:

An inadequately developed position leads to excessive fluctuations. The solution to this is to prepare with great precision.

A front sight that is too small increases fluctuations. Enlarge the diameater. A trigger that is very hard to pull requires too much pressure. Lower the trigger resistance and check the pressure point.

If your concentration has slackened off, then take a break and concentrate again.

If the shot is especially difficult, perhaps the first or last shot of a program, then put your gun down. Let a perfect rhythm unfold before your inner eye and then attack!

If you always have problems with releasing on time, then train your timing during practice shooting by counting backwards once you have acquired your sighting picture: "5...4...3...2...1...fire!". After several attempts, the "countdown" will automatically release your shots.

You can also use this method in competition after rehearsing it in training.

Ideal example

The course of a shot in surgery.

Although the shoulder is obviously less active during a shot, an experienced eye is able to recognize several actions. They form a set, rehearsed course and - hopefully - a steady working tact. The course and sequence are described as the shot rhythm.

The elements of the shot are thoroughly explained elsewhere. Only the development and characteritics of its course are dealt with here. Especially the division of time and the regularity of time required for each element. The above view maintains an ideal and typical rhythm which is often observed among good shooters and may serve as a good model for you.

In preparing for the shot, a considerable amount of time is invested in developing the position, the inner sighting position and the zero point control. This phase consumes most of the total time with about 15 seconds.

The critical phase of the shot with sighting and release is basically determined by the quality of the preparation phase. Whoever has precisely developed his position and alignment can release in 6 to 8 seconds. The bend of the finger is merely a reflex upon recognizing the correct sighting picture.

A faulty development gives rise to excessive fluctuations and/or a non-centric sighting picture. Inexperienced shooters break off under these circumstances. Inexperienced shooters try to save the shot by "forcing" their position longer and risking a "turn shot". This is usually a vain strategy which is doomed to fail especially during competition.

The subsequent preparation phase comes after the release. The gun is held steady for one second after the shot is released. The shooter observes and registers the reaction in the sighting picture and the point where the front sight lands. Based on this observation, he estimates the point of impact. Beginners often fail to notice this subsequent preparation phase, because they do not see the sense of it, are almost out of breath or have lost their balance through an extreme release.

Breathing is what basically sets the bar for the shot rhythm. Filling the lungs controls the position of the rifle, the pulse rate and the energy supply. In the blood. Steady and exact breathing supports the rhythm. Variations in breathing in- evitably lead to changes of the individual elements and thus to a disturbance of the total process.

Since psychic stimulation usually goes hand in hand with changes of breathing, both nervousness and fatigue have a direct impact on the shot rhythm.

Fig. 3: Position

Position
Breathing
Preparation
Sighting and release

The classic disturbance of rhythm is caused by a delayed release. The recommended 6 to 8 seconds are prolonged to 15 seconds, and the shot is released rigidly, often with a jerk. Learn to overcome such blockades, so you have a strategy to fall back on in serious situations.

Fig. 4: Subsequent preparation

Release Preparation

Experienced shooters carefully develop their position and allow themselves adequate time to find their outward and inward sighting position. The shot is fired quickly. There is enough time and concentration reserved for the subsequent hold. Beginners force their rifle at the target without making much of an effort. As a result, aiming and triggering take forever. There is little time left for subsequent preparation, and due to its shortness of breath, they are forced to breathe.