The Last 10 Seconds –

The last ten seconds determine the success of a shot. All aggregates have been set to give the best possible performance, and now the brain takes over control. All incoming information is processed, and the triggering impulse occurs at a favorable moment.

The eye and finger tip deliver the most important information when firing a shot. The shooter determines his position on the target and the extent of his fluctuations via the sighting picture. His finger registers the immediate pressure. When the fluctuations are minor and the position near the center, his finger bends. A great deal depends on the precision and speed of this coordination.

At a lower level in the decision-making hierarchy, physiological conditions also play a decisive role: oxygen supply, pulse rate, muscular tension, balance and visual acuity. The finger and eye on the one hand and the physiological aggregate on the other are in conflict with each other. In one respect, the athlete would like to aim as long as possible in order to await the perfect moment for release. This hope is understandable, since the fluctuations continually decrease once the sighting phase begins, which kindles the hope of increasingly better conditions. At the same time, the functions of the body are in a state of emergency: the breath is held, the oxygen drained and the supply of oxygen to the organs worsens with each passing second.

This causes the visual acuity to weaken, the muscles to tense and the pulse rate and irritability of the nervous system to increase. You see less clearly: the fluctuations increase, the heart beats more strongly, concentration weaknesses and the psyche is under stress. A compromise between waiting and acting becomes necessary for the success of the total action. This is basically a matter of dividing your time.

Hold long enough to capture an adequately steady moment, but not early enough to prevent defective reactions caused by an oxygen deficiency and weak concentration.

In competition, a span of 6 to 8 seconds after ceasing to breathe has proven to be a good compromise. This gun has come to rest during this time, and the physiological functions are still at a high level of performance. Over a longer series, a disengagement at this point guarantees less fatigue. There are enough reserves left for conscious holding and sighting afterwards. Even if the circulation is additionally strained by excitement, extreme temperatures or endurance stress, it is still fully functional for 6 to 8 seconds.

Beginners and shooters of the intermediate level are usually the ones who massively violate these time limits in a competition. Many of them shoot too late in general, and others tend to overestimate the holding times in critical phases.

The majority of elite shooters, however, go about their work with an amazing tempo and steady rhythm. To constantly achieve high scores in a match, the rhythm in the last ten seconds is extremely important. You should give your tactics the necessary attention and stabilize them through appropriate training.

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Fig. 4: Rhythm disturbances are especially tricky, since they usually don’t occur until you’re in the competition. During training or between matches, they remain unnoticed, and a delayed shot usually manages to still hit the center. This weakness doesn’t develop into a catastrophe until everything’s at stake, such as during a national championship when the qualification of the “German team” is in danger. Ten or more points are suddenly lacking for the desired score. Many shooters judge themselves too harshly after such disasters: “You fell at the decisive moment again, just like the last year.”

Measures that stabilize the rhythm:

- Training in reduced shooting situations automatically leads to higher fluctuations, because the muscles have to assume part of the supportive effect given by the jacket and trousers.
- Start each technical training by shooting one series without your usual outfit. In this way, you will learn to release with greater momentum.
- Direct triggering without a preliminary pull shortens the releasing time and the pulling rhythm and reduces the resistance to 60 grams.

- A larger front sight ring makes your fluctuations appear less harmless and builds up your courage on the trigger.
- As soon as you have held your breath, let your trainer count backwards out loud: “5, 4, 3, 2, 1...subsequent hold” is his term.
- If you count softly to yourself, you will achieve a similar effect.
- Shooting from a precarious balance requires a courageous release because each additional second is strenuous.
- If you have the opportunity to shoot on a LSFT facility, you will clearly recognize the time limitations of your holding ability in the replay.
- Finals shooting or competitive shooting with a time limit forces you to accelerate your tempo.
- Shoot your ten series with the intention of reducing the shot with the first steady step in the center.
- Picture the fast, successful shot in your mind.
- Make a pause, if your shots lose speed.
- Have the firm intention to become a courageous shooter!

Fig. 5: An adequately large front sight facilitates the release. Before you give up on yourself, you should closely examine your rhythm. If you suffer from delayed timing, you have some hard training ahead in order to overcome this. Once you have acquired control over the rhythm, you will endure even the most decisive battles.

Fig. 6: The protocol of the second program of the 3x4 match at the ’96 Olympic eliminations in Munich. The point of impact and shot value are noted. Furthermore, the aiming and releasing time is noted at the bottom right side of the target. Further observations are recorded above the target according to need.

Comment Impact point Score in decimals Time required perfect late