STANDING SHOOTING POSITION: LEG WORK

Our legs are made for movement. Their actual task is walking or running, while longer periods of standing are still more or less the exception. But this is the very function required of them in the standing shooting position. The legs are practically used here as supportive columns.

The human body is a wonderful construction that offers us a nearly inexhaustible range of possibilities. In sports and acrobatics, top-class performers have clearly shown us how strength, endurance and mobility can be reached through systematic training. In comparison, the performances achieved by the legs of a standing shooter during a competition are rather unspectacular. Simply standing still can't possibly be so difficult, can it?

But it is! Because what is built for movement soon runs into difficulties when at rest. Strong muscles become weak, when they have to carry out actions requiring precision balance but are inadequately supported while doing so. And under psychological stress, even fully trained calves and thighs sometimes become as soft as butter...

THE BONES SUPPORT

The legs carry the pelvis and also determine the posture of the upper body by means of their standing position. When the hip is in the correct position, that is directly aligned with the target and raised towards the mark, an appropriate placement of the body's substructure is required. Depending on the body's weight and size, various standing positions are possible that correlate to the proportions in the illustration. The bones within the legs therefore have a static function. They carry the upper body without the help of muscular strength through the stability of the skeleton alone. By slightly bending your knees, which causes the statics of your bones to give way, you can acquire a rough idea of what the bone structure means for the shooting position.

MUSCLES STABILIZE AND BALANCE

The muscles and tendons within the legs envelop the framework of bones. With their help, the "calcium pipes" are connected with one another and stabilized. In addition to that, the strength fibers of the muscles are also responsible for coarse movements, such as bringing the legs into a favorable position. The standing position of the legs is ideal when the muscles are largely relieved of strain and the gun is pointing directly at the target in this position (alignment of the shooting position).

Since the body is a moving system - breathing and metabolism give rise to incessant inner activities - the shooting position is never absolutely still. The body loses its balance but then ceases swinging again almost automatically. These corrections are made by the leg muscles. The more a shooter practices a steady stance in the shooting position, the better his precision balance will be. All in all, he will come closer to his ideal of standing absolutely still but will never succeed in reaching it.

RECOMMENDATION FOR YOUR SHOOTING POSITION

In general practice, leg positions have been observed with intervals ranging from the size of about a foot to nearly the doubled width of the shoulders. The exact span can even be found between the tip of the feet. It is therefore difficult to speak of a generally valid measurement. I suppose, a 'medium-width stance' is advisable. However, smaller and lighter shooters should have a consider-

ably wider span. More important than the interval is the symmetry. Many shooters measure the distance between their feet in training with a measuring tape and then check the measurement with a measuring stick before a competition.

TENSION

Many of the better shooters report that they perform with light tension in their legs during competition. In this way, the stability of the 'carriage unit' can be better maintained especially in the heat of competition. After several shots, however, the legs should be consciously moved and relaxed to maintain the reactivity of the muscles. To keep up the necessary leg work during a match, adequate endurance is required. Regular running and stretching before and after shooting enhances fitness. A balanced position depends on the stability of the substructure. The legs carry and balance the shooting position. They must stand correctly and be fit. Standing steady is achieved by training a lot in always the same, correct position.

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