Chapter 02

Is Your Cup Empty?

Once we have emptied our cup, we can immediately set out on our trip.

Skeet shooting originated as a substitute for hunting. For the magazines, "National Sportsman" and "Hunting and Fishing", which are not only sponsors for the shotgun discipline but are also an important historical source of information, the main objective of skeet was "to occupy the hunters outside the hunting season".

From 1910 or 1915 – opinions differ on the discipline's year of conception – up to this very day, skeet developed tremendously. It originated as a hobby for hunters, developed into an Olympic discipline (1968 in Mexico) and has become increasingly complex in order to maintain its status as an Olympic discipline. The split character of this discipline, in view of its origin, has stuck with it in quite a remarkable way.

But where does this duality come from?

It comes from the fact that the discipline was developed for hunters and as such had a shooting technique for hunters which although it continued to develop as a sport discipline was still conceived for hunting.

Just think of D. Lee Braun, the renowned US "American Skeet" shooter, multiple national champion and author of several publications on skeet. In his manual, "Skeet Shooting with D. Lee Braun", he almost exclusively deals with the starting positions of both types of shooting.

It's no longer that way today...

Skeet has reached a technical complexity, where it can no longer be claimed that it has not developed any further and is still practiced as it was prior to 1993.

In 1993, it was decided to introduce double targets at the station, where none had been formerly planned in the semi-circle: at station four. The consequence of this very necessary and overdue decision was that all skeet records were broken several times. All out-dated skeet techniques were suddenly discarded, and the sport was forced to open new avenues and find solutions to overcome the unforeseeable problems that arose with the introduction of the new double targets. Several years earlier, the introduction of double targets at station three and five had caused problems for even the most experienced shooters. At that time, many of them could not adjust to the new rules and then they disappeared, but the double targets at station four were what created the greatest technical problems for the shooters.

The problem of control...

But what was the fundamental problem, which is still a problem today for many shooters, when shooting the doublets? It was largely the control of the second of the two targets - the one from the low house. This problem stemmed from the commonly used, at that time, shooting technique of leading farther than necessary on the first doublet with a consequential delay in taking aim at the second target and the resulting inability to control the shot. The situation was so that the shooter was able to control the shot at the second doublet from all other stations, since the target approached his shooting position. At station four, however, the shooter was faced with the problem that the second of the double targets appeared to rapidly move away from his position! This new scenario gave the shooter a permanent feeling of uneasiness and insecurity which everyone, who has ever practiced the shooting sport, knows is an extremely unfavorable starting situation for the shooter, which indeed makes it difficult and often quite impossible to fire a rationally controlled and effective shot.

Rationalization of the entire movement

The main concern was, therefore, to rationalize the shooting action within the entire shooting round of skeet (not only at station four), to break the shooting action down into all of its constituent parts, to analyze them and then put them back together in a rational pattern that had nothing to do with the out-dated pattern used prior to Barcelona in 1992. The goal, which was set very high, was to lay the cornerstone to make it really possible to hit all the competition targets.

Obviously to reach that goal, a very methodic and scientific approach had to be taken, from which the following logical steps emerged:

a. Recognition and description of the problem

b. Recognition of possible alternatives to solve the problem

c. Examination of applicability of the various alternative solutions

d. Examination of results achieved

e. Choice of the best problem-solving alternatives

With a broad consent and special motivation and interest shown here by several great Italian shooters who had dominated the international scene between 1994 and 1997 and had won some important finals in 1998 and 1999, we went through the entire shooting round in skeet again, filtering out the aforementioned logical steps with the aim to expand the shooter's ability to control all targets as simply, rationally and quickly as possible, including the "newly introduced doubles at station four.

The ideal and practical approach that we use will work for anyone who has decided to "empty his cup" and who wants to accompany us on our trip. We urge our shooters to try out new methods and to experience new sensations in order to develop their intuitive

abilities of understanding and conscious perception, going beyond, if possible, the indications that we will give them!

To execute a controlled action

We determined that the major problem at station four was the inability to execute even a minimally controlled movement for the second target as a result of leading too far and too late on the first target. That's why the following concepts must first be analyzed and visualized with the aim of shortening the execution time in order to improve the control time:

a. THE SHOOTING ACTION: We assume that the more simple and rational the movements of a competitive athlete are, the better his performance will be. So how can the shooting action be made more essential or how can it be maximally simplified and freed from all unnecessary components, so the main goal can be reached which is to shoot down the target! It should be noted here that, every unnecessary component of firing a shot, automatically has a negative effect on the outcome, quite contrary to other types of sport, in which unnecessary technicalities sometimes effect the style but nothing more.

b. LEADING: An exact explanation and visualization of this term at the respective stations and for the individual targets according to theoretical (scientific viewpoint) and practical opinions (shooter's viewpoint). The active shooters must develop their own concept of leading, that is their own personal concept of leading and the way they perceive it.

c. AUTOMATISM: Breaking the entire shooting action down into single pieces of the action picking up the ones that use to be repetitive with the objective of training them until they penetrate into the area of the extra-pyramidal nervous system. This procedure is comparable to the one which each of us experience when learning to drive a car or when practicing a musical instrument.

ANALYSIS OF THE SHOOTING ACTION

A normal shot movement consists of the following logical phases:

1. Perception of the target
2. Stock mounting
3. Achieving the correct lead
4. Controlling the lead
5. Commanding the trigger of the gun (fire)
6. Follow-through after the shot

Graphically, this can be depicted as follows:

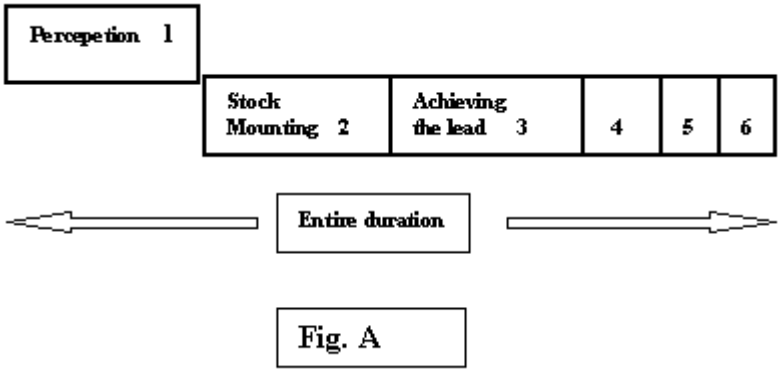

Fig. A

According to this diagram, however, the time required to fire the shot at the first target is too long which is hard to reconcile with the control needed for the second target of a doublet, especially at station four. Moreover, this diagram also points out a troubling deficit for the user. He executes a shooting action in sequence, missing to utilize one of the greatest abilities of the human brain, if it is optimally developed, namely the ability to execute several activities at the same time.

But how can we organize the brain? And in order to achieve what?

In order to answer this question and to better understand what we can do and how far can go to find a solution, that can save us valuable time, with the aim of establishing both a better and coordinated control over the target, it is important to understand the logic of the multi-programming technology of computers with high-performance capacity. This technology is comparable to the function of the human brain, when it is required to execute a complex activity.

With the discovery of the silicon semi-conductor, doors were opened for the construction of computers with nearly unlimited storage capacity and an astounding computing performance. The problem then was to organize the computer in such a way that this enormous feature could be optimally utilized.

The profession of software specialists emerged along with the so-called multi-task computers that allowed several programs to run simultaneously and that could transfer the results to several terminals simultaneously. In order to do this, however, it was necessary to install a "controller" in the computer with the function of 'overall control' which is a logical part that oversees the correct execution of all running programs.

The human brain is by far the most complex computer, although its complexity and potential are not yet fully understood. The computer manufacturers admit that they have been inspired by the human brain and have assumed its logical functions, even if only in a very rigid and limited way. However, what we know with certainty today is that man only uses a very small part of his brain potential.

Jugglers and musicians

Just think of the ability of jugglers or musicians, who use their brain potential just a little more and differently than other people in order to acquire total and simultaneous control over their bodies, hands and fingers. But what makes these people different is the multiple programming of their brains in order to control their arms, hands, fingers, words, or songs, all individually controlled, while the "overall" or logical part of their brain can joke around, entertain people or interact with them, but still maintain control over the activity being practiced at the same time.

We want to see if this ability, to control several activities at the same time, is also of advantage for a shooter. It can be the shooting action combined with mental organization and the simultaneous and synchronized control of individual parts of the body in combination with the extra-pyramidal nervous system responsible for automatism.

Figure A would look like the following:

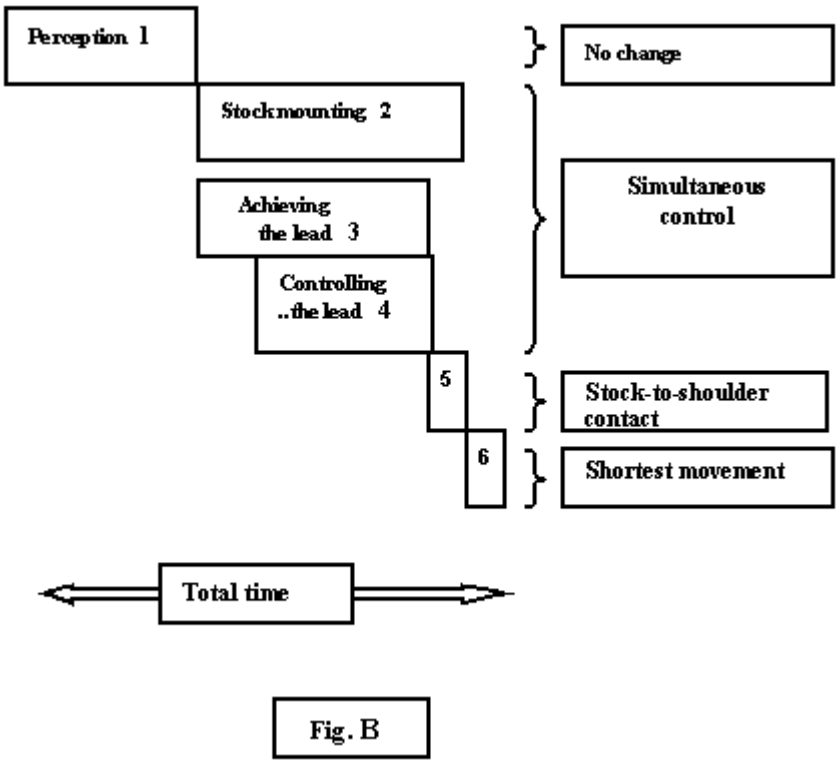

Fig. B

But how can we change a shooting action of type A into one of type B?