



Taking Care Of The **BASICS**

Which targets will make or break your weekend?

BY PAUL GIAMBRONE, III

I hear it all the time.
“I can see my first 100 straight now that I’m off station 6! I only have a few more targets to go but, man, I’m past all of the difficult ones. This one is in the bag.”

And the inevitable happens: I watch a shooter miss on station 7 or 8 in the last round because they don’t treat those next seven shots like the 93 before. Or, on the flip side, going into the last round with 75 straight, I see them miss the first high one out. Why? Because of thoughts like “This could be it! I can finally get that 100 I’ve always wanted. Just have to get past station 2 and I’ll be on a roll.” It happens to all of us, and these are some of the targets that really get us — the “easy” ones.



Go to Richmond, Virginia, in the early 2000s where several other shooters and I were relaxing after we shot the .410 and were awaiting the shoot-offs. Mr. Skeet, Al Magyar, walked up to the group and said, "Well, I guess Wayne (Mayes) is going to do it. He just cleared six in the last round for his 500x500." My father replied, "Al, don't jinx Wayne like that! He still has seven more targets to shoot." Al, of course, walked off without saying anything and he came back a little while later and said, "Hey, Paul, he's off 7, can we count it now?" My father didn't have a reply, and minutes later, Al walked back stating that Wayne had missed a high 8. Hey, this story isn't to take anything from the late Wayne Mayes, arguably the best shooter to ever shoot our game. The moral is that all of the targets count, and they all count equally, and they should never be taken for granted.

At the end of each shoot-year, I like to take a look

back at my performances at the tournaments I competed in and see how I did for the year. I can't help but stay hungry in continuing to

us. There is usually one target that will make or break my weekend, and I have no idea which target that will be. So I make sure I pay attention

targets on stations 1, 7 and 8. These targets are usually inexcusable misses, therefore they should never be taken lightly. All too often



perfect and learn from each tournament I compete in. The goal I have going into each year is simple: execute each shot to the best of my ability. This is a very high goal I set, and I do it for multiple reasons. When I compete, it is usually a one-target game for me, and the same can be said for most of

to each and every target. Sounds simple, but it's hard to execute.

The biggest reason I set this goal is to help me remember that every single shot counts, and they all count equally. A high 2 is just as important as a high 7. A low 8 means just as much to me as a low 6. Why? Because they all count the same on the scorecard. And, as I stated, there is usually one target for the event that will make or break my weekend. I have no idea which target it will be, so I better give all of my attention to every single shot — otherwise one of those basic shots will jump up and bite me. Unfortunately, that can be a very expensive target!

Let's dive in and define what I consider "basic shots." First off, Todd Bender has pointed out the importance of baseline targets in the past, and I couldn't agree more. The baseline is all

▲ There's no such thing as a "gimme" shot, but some are basic enough that you should have no excuse for missing them.

I see a shooter let up after they clear station 6 and miss one on station 7, or I watch them miss the first or second low 8 because they just had a total lapse in concentration (like I mentioned in the opening paragraph). This is 100 percent inexcusable! These targets are gimme targets only if you have the right technique and you are all-in on focus! We will sometimes get that nasty diving or hanging high 1, which there is nothing you can do about, but under normal circumstances, we should be able to get all of these targets and do it with ease and confidence.

These targets make up 10-11 shots during your round depending on where you take your option shot (hopefully that is at low 8). Other

TIP OF THE MONTH:

Challenge you to change your mentality going into the next tournament season. Instead of spending so much time working on high 2 or low 6, spend some extra time taking care of your technique on the "basic" targets and try to get through as many tournaments as you can without missing *any* of the basic targets. What you will also realize is the better you make your technique on these shots, the better your technique will be overall. If there is any blemish in your technique on these shots but you "get away" with it, the more difficult shots will be inconsistent. If you clean up your technique on these shots, you'll be surprised how much it helps you on the more "difficult" shots. Also, take a look at your average card for 2015 and add in all of these targets. You'll not only see an improvement in your average, but you'll also see where you would have won your class championship in a particular event or maybe even HOA had you taken care of these basic shots.

targets that I like to include in this “basic shots category” on top of the baseline targets are incomers on stations 2, 3, 5 and 6. So if we add in the two low 2s (single and on the double), the two high 6s, and low 3 and high 5, we can add in another six shots, bringing the grand total of “should be gimmes” to 16 or 17 shots of your round of 25. I’m no mathematician, but that makes up two-thirds of your round of 25 with basic shots. Granted, I consider some of these targets as some of the most dangerous shots on the field, so they should never be taken lightly. Shooters getting complacent after nailing a high 2 or high 3 can lead to falling asleep at the wheel on the incomer

shooter is getting so caught up in the more “difficult” shots while forgetting to take care of the basics.

On a side note, I have asked several shoot chairmen at large shoots which are the most commonly missed targets. Their response? High 5 and low 3. These two are hybrids, as they are incomers but turn into crossing shots at the point of attack (center stake). They appear to be slower than a high or low 4 but require just as much lead, so it is very easy to miss the birds when you have improper form or a lack of focus. Moral of the story: all of the shots count, and they count equally. I keep repeating that because it is that important.



▲ You’ve got to approach every shot with the same determination. Don’t be so worried about the upcoming tough target that you miss a simple shot.

to follow. Thinking so much about low 5 or low 6 can cause a shooter to not pay attention to detail on the high 5 or the high 6. Heck, I’ve seen some guys line up for a low 5 or low 6 before they even shoot the high house! This is exactly why these targets are so dangerous. The

So just how important are these shots to me? As stated before, they usually make or break my weekend, and that is no exaggeration. Looking at the best statistical year I ever had in 2012, I missed a grand total of four of these basic shots. Had I taken care of them, I would have broken the HOA high average record, had a chance to win a couple more HOAs, and would have posted four more 100 straights. Do not take that as complaining—



▲ Every target counts, and they all count equally. To elevate your game, you have to avoid mistakes and don’t take any target lightly.

I was very happy with my performances that year; I’m just making the point that it could have been even better had I taken care of business on all of the basic shots. Doing the same analysis for my 2015 season, I missed a total of five, costing me three additional 100 straights and a chance to shoot-off for the HOA championship at the Blaser, Southwest Classic and the World Shoot. All but one of those targets were very hittable. There was absolutely no excuse for any of those misses besides my totally dropping the ball at the worst possible time.

You should have the same feelings when you miss these targets. We hear the clubhouse talk about how difficult high 2 and low 6 are, or shooters are worried about their doubles game instead of talking about these basic shots. These are the shots that make or break your weekend, not the high 2s or low 6s. I often chuckle at shooters that say “Oh, well,

that was just a silly mistake. I don’t have a problem with low 2.” Hey, you might not have a “problem” with that low 2, but it still counted as a miss on the scorecard — a miss that shouldn’t have happened. The point is that every single target counts, and they all count equally, so get the job done on these basic shots and enjoy adding several targets to your scores by avoiding these “silly” misses. You will enjoy the results! **CTN**

► Got questions or comments? Email Paul directly at info@gsclinics.com and visit www.breakmoretargets.com for more information. Check the website for upcoming tournaments and clinics in your area. Paul is available to teach in the New Orleans area all year and is offering all-inclusive lesson packages for shooters who would like to travel to his location for lessons. Email him for lesson availability.