

# BASC



## BASC Shotgun Coaching

'Miss it in front' a well used expression heard at the clay shoot when a shooter is consistently unable to determine and execute the right forward allowance or lead. However is it psychology?

Let's paint a more detailed picture, a few friends together on a Sunday morning for 50 birds before lunch at the pub. The chap, we shall call him Crack-Shot Charles, who has opined 'Miss it in front' has a skeet vest festooned in badges probably sewn on sincerely by a significant other. Charles has seen it all before and carried the days and carried off the trophies.

Has the comment by Charles been a text book 'subtle tactical action or argument used to manipulate or influence?' Possibly but what it is not is part of 'a science that deals with mental processes and behaviour'. One could argue Charles psyched out our shooter and got him to, inadvertently, establish enough lead to successfully break the target. I say inadvertently because the shooter was no longer really conscious of his true barrel to target relationship. He was simply getting in front at all cost almost blindly. Nothing was learned by our shooter for the information bank to use another day.

I will also add that Charles probably did not take into account our hapless shooters' footwork, any aches or pains he may be suffering impeding his swing or indeed his mental state. By that I mean did our shooter have a clear mind? Was he worrying about his young child at home who was coughing all night? And to defend Charles a little, we learn that Charles is indeed a good snap shooter the type that will assimilate speed, trajectory and distance and pick his spot. No method as such or swing through, just straight to the break point. Charles doesn't much like shooting in windy conditions of course, his speedy calculations don't add up so well.

At game fairs where there is a BASC coaching line the coaches often discuss their clients and challenges they have been able to help their clients overcome. Mental application is top of the list.

Here are a few common problems that regularly occur where a degree of (not a degree in) psychology is put to good use.

In the field it could be a pheasant rising from a copse one hundred or more yards away, many shooters will mount the gun far too early to lock on to the target and move with it only to miss it behind.

When watching a good squash player, they look languid and casual. And a good game shot, like the squash player and the ball, will never take his eye off the target even if he is still loading his gun.

Our squash player moves his body and feet into position gracefully and then a swing of the racket sends the ball speeding into the niche. An explosion of controlled activity, timed to execute the appropriate shot. Our shooter could be encouraged to bring his barrels up under his master eye, using his feet to position his body for the shot and then move, mount, shoot for a clean one-piece execution, a style successfully developed by Mr John Bidwell.

What we have done for our shooter in explaining this analogy has been to provide a subtle tactical action and argument that influences his shot making. We have reasoned that the 'shot' is at the end not at the beginning. Indeed we have influenced his mental process and behaviour because a common fault is when a gun is mounted too early a shooter will literally, have no where to go and will end up in a funk which sounds a little bit better than nervous depression which is exactly and actually what it is.

This short period of time, the funk can be inhabited by all sorts of gremlins when shooting and a good coach will recognise it and ask subtle questions and be a patient and good listener.

Another simplified example could be a crossing target, our shooter is well balanced, feet well positioned, a good consistent mount and a smooth swing of the barrels when locking on to the bird and he creates just the right amount of lead, but keeps missing.

What would you suggest? How would a little psychology help our shooter (and here we will refrain from 'Miss it in front'.)

Physically our shooter has put together everything he needs so it must be in his head. How about rumination? Our shooter could well be sub consciously brooding or reflecting on something that happened that morning or last week and therefore does not want to pull the trigger when the time is right because he is still not sure about something else. Making a correct diagnosis is effectively utilising the science that deals with mental process and behaviour.

Every heard someone comment when observing a colleague making a very poor shot 'What on earth were you thinking about?' chances are they were ruminating about something or other that took them away from the shot.

But our shooter is not in that situation, he is totally clear headed, he is in engineering, a solicitor, a builder or a chap who works in IT. So what is stopping him from pulling the trigger when pointing perfectly into the break zone with a moving gun ahead of the moving target? Our shooters' type of work can offer a clue.

The four options above all require checks, rechecking, reconfirming to a lesser or larger degree. Our shooter is looking for a reaffirmation of sorts.

He needs to be absolutely sure in his professional life when making decisions whereas shotgun shooting requires an absolute commitment to the shot at one point only, the calculated break point for clays (or the kill point for live quarry) and our shooter was there every time but let the opportunity disappear.

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