

# Ed's Tips for Better Skeet Scores

*By Ed Scherer*

*Ed Scherer was a popular columnist on instruction for Skeet Shooting Review during the 1980s and 1990s. He passed away in 1995. The following is a print from September 1992.*

## **1. Proper Foot Position**

Right-handed shooters should have their navel facing the low house opening on both the high and low house shots. The left-handed shooters should have their navel face the high house opening on both the high and low houses. Most beginners make the mistake of facing where target first appears instead of facing where target is broken. On doubles at 3, 4 and 5, bear in mind the second shot on these doubles is shot later than on the single. Remember to face further around than on the single. Feet should never be further apart than your shoulders are wide and 60 percent of your weight should rest on the bent forward leg.

## **2. Maintain the Lead**

Skeet targets, unlike sporting clays targets, always follow the same path. Therefore, the actual leads can be memorized through practice. Leads are hard to memorize with the swing through method because the lead is always changing. To learn the maintained lead method, move your muzzle out from the skeet house opening and start muzzle moving immediately as target appears. Never allow the target to pass the muzzle. Practice on the slow incomers at high 7, 6, 1 and 2 until you've learned those leads. Then, gradually move on to the more difficult shots. The top All-Americans who shoot the tubed over-under use the maintained lead method in most cases. Occasionally a fast outgoer will get ahead of your barrel. Then, a swing through shot is in order.

## **3. Memorize Your Leads**

Novices have not learned the leads, thus their scores vary. Once the leads are learned through constant practice, skeet will become an easier game. In 1945 on Okinawa I had plenty of free shells with which to practice. I taught myself the leads by staying on a particular skeet station and shooting many shells until the proper sight picture was firmly implanted in my brain. You can do likewise on a skeet field separate from other shooters. Crank up your reloader as it will take plenty of shells. Try to enlist the help of a friend if they are a skilled spotter, (one who can spot your misses and suggest corrections).

## **4. Shoot a Low Recoil Gun**

Since it takes hundreds of shots to learn the leads, a lower recoiling gun is a necessity. This writer prefers the softer recoiling gas operated autoloaders in the smaller gauges. If a 12 gauge autoloader is used, shoot only a one ounce load. Make certain a soft recoil pad is installed on your skeet gun in all gauges. The tubed 28 gauge is an ideal low recoil gun as is a tubed 20 gauge providing your reloads in the 20 gauge have less shot and powder than the standard 7/8 ounce 20 gauge load. If you can find a 3/4 ounce 20 gauge reloads recipe that is perfect for the learning novice.

## **5. Want Better .410 Scores?**

The novice is best advised to shy away from the .410 until more experience is gained with the larger gauges. Better .410 scores are possible by shooting a tubed .410. In this case, a full length set of .410 skeet tubes are inserted in your 12 gauge over-under. Better scores are possible with this combination as the sighting plane is the same for the .410 as it is for the 12 gauge.

## **6. Know your Eyes**

Have a qualified coach check your dominant eye and as a rank beginner, shoot from the shoulder that favors the dominant eye. Two eyes are better than one in skeet, but making the transition from one to two eyes can be very traumatic. Under certain circumstances a patch can be placed on your shooting glasses.

## **7. Become a Student of Skeet**

Fortunately there are many helpful aids available to learn skeet today in the form of books, audio and video tapes. Study them and apply what you study when shooting.

## **8. Know Your Chokes**

Have a competent gunsmith check the inside diameter of your barrel. Once this dimension is known, the proper construction can be built into your chokes which are located in the last two inches of your muzzle. A constriction of .007 seems reasonable for the .410, 28 and 20 gauges. If one decides to shoot the 20 gauge in the 12 gauge event with the new one ounce 20 gauge loads, .005 constriction will suffice. Too much choke will result in an overkill, which is unnecessary at the short skeet ranges.

## **9. How to Practice**

It's best to practice 100 shots at a time to simulate the typical tournament which invariably is a 100 target event. Be sure to take a short break after the 100 target practice session. Also include doubles at Station 5 in your practice. If a particular target is causing you concern, obtain a separate skeet field and with the help of your shooting partner, shoot enough shells until the problem target is solved.

## **10. Shoot Two-Man Teams**

A good partner can pick up the errors of your ways. Watch each other to catch bad habits in the making. Video your partners as they shoot, and have them do likewise for you. The video camera is a great training aide. Two-person team events are not always won with perfect scores so if a miss occurs early in the event, keep trying so as to not let your partner down.

## **11. Think Positive**

Visualize a "smoked" target just before calling. If you fear a miss, it is best to back off the station and start over being sure to rid your mind of the fearful thought. Practicing shots you fear until you hit them with confidence will help.

## **12. Watch Targets**

Instead of watching the shooter in front of you, watch his targets. On that person's high house targets, look in a space halfway between the muzzle and the trap opening. As the target emerges, watch it carefully to see if any trees in the background any interfere with watching it. High 2 seems to appear very fast, but the more that you watch it come zipping out of the house, the easier it will be to see. Low 5 and low 6 need to be watched as much as possible too, as they seem to appear very fast. If someone misses, do not get disturbed. It's your job to watch the target, regardless if it is hit or missed.