

Prone Shooting Position.

By Jim See

Prone shooting from the bipod should be our most accurate and precise position, yet some of us suffer in this area. I still see the biggest mistakes in this position at rifle matches from some well-rounded and experienced shooters. Most of these issues can be easily fixed by the individual with a little forethought and awareness in their practice.

First I'm going to start with the conventional prone position that encompasses much of the very precision work we are required to perform at matches. Too many guys still do not line up straight behind their rifles. Well if you're one of those guys you might defensively say "well I can shoot groups that are .xyz small". Yes and that may be true, but from day to day and week to week do those groups go to the exact same point of aim? When you fire your rifle do you lose the target to the right or left under recoil? Did you buy a set of pod claws to anchor your rifle to the ground to prevent this?

What we are looking for when we line up behind the rifle is a torso that is parallel with the line of the rifle. If you consistently do this and zero your rifle that way your precision and accuracy will improve. If you line up at an angle to the rifle, typical for right handed shooters is for their body to angle to the left, your bullets will typically impact slightly right. But that may be different for some shooters based on the level of grip and shoulder pressure on the rifle.

I tend to have a light grip on the rifle with my right hand, and what I consider light to no shoulder pressure. I use medium to heavy downward cheek pressure into an adjustable cheek piece with a solid filled rear bag. By "pinning" the rear of my rifle into a stiff bag I can roll my shoulder off the butt pad slightly and remove and influence my heartbeat has on the reticle.

When I position my body properly, which I do very deliberately and consciously in practice and in match environments, the recoil impulse is controlled and the rifle is on target after every shot, without the need for any manipulation other than to squeeze or relax my rear bag for fine-tuned aim on the next shot.

For a test; practice your prone position form, as you normally shoot on a 100 yard target, then manipulate your body to the right or left to the point it no longer feels comfortable. Repeat the group and see where the zero shifts. Once you realize the change learn to find that inline position that gives you the shot placement consistency and repeated target acquisition after each shot.

You might ask yourself why you see f-class shooters line up at an angle, and how well they perform is contradictory to some of my statements. Well that answer lies in some of the supporting equipment they use. Rear bags with ears filled with heavy sand rather than foam or plastic pellets guide their rifles down a consistent recoil path, along with their adjustable front rests or 20" wide bipods. The ability to free recoil the heavy f-class rifle also adds to repeatability because the human contact has been reduced or eliminated. Even with shoulder pressure, they can maintain a straight path of gun movement because their guns are "bagged up tight". Normally when we shoot off a bipod and soft rear bag our guns can move more readily, thus the need for more control of our rifle via our body positioning.

The Trigger control you see at some matches can get very interesting; I think most of us have seen a trigger get slapped. Have you ever done it? I have on occasion caught myself and it usually involves time stress and a wobbly position, that is usually enough to drive many inexperienced shooters into this bad habit, and goat the experienced guys into a few errant shots. Concentrate on finger

placement on the trigger shoe, feel it first, then apply light pressure, increasing it slowly until the shot breaks. Sounds like a time consuming endeavor, well actually it happens very quickly. Practice slow and deliberately and as you get into the feel you can speed up the process. I also see some people release the trigger the instant it breaks, what I mean is they fail to hold the trigger rearward as part of the follow through process. When the trigger breaks hold it back, stay in the gun and try to follow your bullet trace and see your impact.

For better trigger control, start your routine with a solid prone position that easily allows your reticle to stay and remain on target. Part of what drives new shooters to slap the trigger is the inability to maintain the reticle on the targets center, rather what they see is a drifting aiming point, to compensate for this they teach themselves to quickly engage the trigger as the reticle crosses the target. Obviously we can correct this habit with good prone shooting practice, When we get to a stage with a barricade or less stable shooting platform, once again we see the drifting reticle and our mental recognition instinctively tells us to slap the trigger. You must overcome that urge and follow the fundamentals of; feel the trigger shoe, apply pressure, and break a clean shot as your image aligns with the target. Practice these tips deliberately as an ingrained part of your practice routine, your ability to recognize your weakness in this area will pay off in more hits on the range.

Keep it on the steel, [Jim See](#)