THE INTERNATIONAL SKEET GUN MOUNT

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One of the rules in International Skeet to make the game more challenging is the requirement to start the shot with the gun in the ready or "low gun" position. To the beginner this is the most difficult skill to master and must be emphasized early in training. A perfect gun mount will be smooth and quick and will keep the muzzle of the gun on the flight line of the target. The muzzle of the beginners will bobble or bounce above and below the target flight line. They will be slower and allow the target to move past the optimal target breaking point. The main cause of a poor gum mount is that the muscles of each arm are not working in balance. Gun mount practice will help you learn that balance and help commit it into your muscle memory. The best part about practicing the gun mount is that it can be done at home in all types of weather. All you need is your unloaded shotgun, your shooting vest and a wall.

THE READY POSITION

Let's examine the ready position. Starting in January of 2005, the rulebook requires that the shooting vest must have an ISSF Official Marker Tape permanently attached, horizontally below the tip of the elbow. The stock of the gun must be in contact with the body and the toe of the gun must be at or below this marker tape during the ready position. There are really two factors to locating the toe of the shotgun in the ready position...vertical and horizontal.

In the vertical direction you will see many shooters crowd this line so the toe is at the exact level of the marker tape. When you are beginning to learn the correct ready position, make sure you give yourself some margin. If you learn from the beginning with the toe fully into or slightly below the marker tape, it won't make much difference in the speed of the mount. It will stop you from getting called for gun position during a match, which may break your concentration. If you are going the push the limit of the gun position, prepare yourself to accept the interruptions when the referee gives you a warning.

To determine the correct horizontal position of the toe, first place the gun to your face in the firing position and note where the gun is aiming. Now, slowly lower the butt stock straight down while keeping the muzzle aligned on the spot you selected. This will determine how far forward or back the gun needs to be to allow a smooth mount. Combine this position with the vertical position and you will have a straight, clear path

from the ready position to the firing position.

Begin by standing about four feet from a wall on which a spot has been marked. This spot should be located about a foot above your head. Align yourself so your Natural Point of Alignment is at the spot. The exercise begins by assuming a stance with your weight evenly distributed on both legs. Both feet are turned out from the body at the same comfortable angle and placed equal to or slightly wider than the shoulders. The legs are slightly bent, not in a deep crouch but not stiff or locked. The hips are level and balanced over both legs. The shoulders are level to the ground. The upper body has a slight forward lean to it. If you were to swing on a target a slight nudge from behind would not throw you off balance. Assume this position with the muzzle of the gun pointing at the spot on the wall and the toe of the gun in the position determined above. There should be a straight line from the eye through the tip of the muzzle to the spot on the wall. You are now in position to start your gun mounts.

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THE GUN MOUNT

The arm that is on the forestock of the gun controls the gun mount. The thumb and index finger are parallel to the barrel of while the other fingers are curled around the forestock. The gun must be gripped firmly with this hand. It may feel uncomfortable at first, but later it will develop into a strong grip, which will enable you to move the gun in any direction. This is the hand that pushes or pulls the gun towards the target. It is the hand that points the gun. This is why the index finger is pointing the same direction as the barrel. When doing the gun mounts at the spot on the wall this hand pushes the gun forward toward the spot as the trigger hand guides the gun to the face and later, activates the trigger. With the trigger hand the grip is more relaxed. As the gun mount starts the barrel may dip below the spot. This means that the trigger hand is overpowering the forestock hand and causing the barrel to dip. This is corrected by relaxing the trigger hand and having the forestock hand move towards the spot much like a boxers jab. Control the mount with the forestock hand.

PRACTICING THE GUN MOUNT ON BASELINE TARGETS

The object of this exercise is to learn the precise movements of the gun mount and commit them into your muscle memory. To achieve this we mount the gun to the face while steadily keeping the muzzle aligned on the spot you selected. At first this is done very slowly, taking 6 - 8 seconds for each mount. By doing it slowly you will feel the interaction between the muscles of each arm. It will also help you build strength in those muscles. When bringing the gun up to your face avoid moving the head to meet the gun and avoid pulling the gun back into the shoulder. The mount must be just one vertical movement of the butt stock, not a vertical and then horizontal movement. If the stock is not firmly into your shoulder don't worry, it will be as soon as the gun goes off. Once the gun is to the face and pointed at the spot on the wall you may wish to dry fire the gun. This is fine, just be sure to use snap caps.

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After awhile, you will be able to balance the action of each arm so that the muzzle will stay in the spot from beginning to end. At this time you should increase the speed of the mount. The idea is to become as fast as possible while still keeping the muzzle on the spot. This gun mount at a spot located at the NPA simulates the basic mount used for baseline targets, (stations 1, 7 and 8). Many targets lost on the baseline can be attributed to faulty gun mount techniques.

MOUNTS FOR LEFT AND RIGHT HAND SWINGS

After you become comfortable with gun mounts on the stationary spot move onto other mounts, which simulate targets from the stations on the ring, (stations 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). For this exercise a horizontal line on the wall is needed. This could be the line between bricks, a drawn line, a roof or the line where the wall meets the ceiling. Align your NPA at one end of the line. The starting position will be different for the high and low house. See the chart below for details.

Right-handed shooter

HIGH HOUSE LOW HOUSE
NPA on right end of line NPA on right end of line
Start swing from left of line Start swing from right of line
Swing clockwise towards NPA Swing counterclockwise away from NPA

Left-handed shooter

HIGH HOUSE LOW HOUSE
NPA on left end of line NPA on left end of line
Start swing from left of line Start swing from right of line
Swing clockwise away from NPA Swing counterclockwise towards NPA

The object of the exercise is to mount the gun to the face while keeping the muzzle on the line. This simulates the flight line of the target. At first this is done very slowly, taking 6 - 8 seconds for each mount. By doing it slowly you will again feel the interaction between the muscles of each arm. Dry firing is encouraged.

Remember, the arm that is on the forestock of the gun controls the gun mount. You grip the gun firmly with this hand. This is the hand that pushes or pulls the barrel across the target line. The trigger hand and grip is relaxed. As the gun mount starts the barrel may dip below the line and then come back to the line. The muzzle forms a check mark. This means that the trigger hand is overpowering the forestock hand and causing the barrel to dip. This is corrected by relaxing the trigger hand and having the hand on the forestock push or pull the barrel across the target line. Again it is like a boxers jab. Control the mount with the forestock hand.

After awhile, you will be able to balance the action of each arm so that the muzzle will stay smoothly on the flight line from beginning to end. At this time increase the speed of the mount. The idea is to become as fast as possible while still keeping the muzzle on the flight line.

HOME PRACTICE

The gun mounts described above should be practiced daily until mastered and then two or three times a week during the shooting season. This will keep the movements in your muscle memory and enable the gun mount to become a subconscious action. A recommended practice plan includes 25 baseline mounts, 25 high house mounts, and 25 low house mounts for each practice session. When doing high and low house mounts every third mount should simulate a double. While you are practicing these mounts

pretend or visualize that you are seeing and breaking the target each time. Use this time for mental practice as well as physical practice.