



Last month we looked at the basic types of Gallery Rifles that we use so here's a few ideas on how to shoot them more accurately. Starting at the top as it were with your scope and head alignment, because if this isn't right to start with then you won't get the rest of it right either! In the standing position keeping your head and body straight close your eyes and bring the rifle up into your shoulder into a position that feels comfortable (not where you think it should be), then move your head very slightly over until your cheek makes contact at some point with the stock. Then, holding this position open your eyes and check to see if you are looking straight down the middle of the scope. If not, repeat it again and get a friend to loosen off the rings and adjust the scope forwards or backwards until the eye relief is perfect, then nip up a couple of the screws so that it doesn't move whilst bringing the rifle back down again. Put a piece of masking tape on the body of the tube so that it's flush against one of the scope rings and then mount it onto a rifle rest or place it on a level bench. Keeping the tape flush with the edge of the ring, you can then adjust it if needed so that the cross hairs are lined up squarely in relation to action of the rifle and as long as the tape remains flush the correct eye relief distance will be maintained. Finally, double check everything again on the range by aiming at a target set at 25m or so to ensure everything is ok then finally tighten up the remainder of the screws.



The next thing to do is find a stable standing position. This area (minefield?) is basically divided up into two parts being stance and grip (or hold) and each will need to have quite a bit of time spending on it, both now and in the future to find the optimum combination. Looking up "standing shooting position" on the internet will provide you with a huge amount of "expert" guidance by both shooters and coaches but much of it is contradictive. A lot of it though seems to be because the advice is discipline specific and what works in one scenario, may certainly not be the best solution in another but you will always find that certain points that are generally considered to be the "best" way by many of the parties involved! You will

***Correct setup of your rifle is vital if you are to shoot to your potential!*** also quite clearly see in some photos of a line up of top class shooters, whatever discipline they are shooting at the time, who are doing their "own thing" and still producing the results so what is right? Whatever works for you of course!

You should always try and keep the head and body in an upright position as this will help you obtain a quick and consistent head/eye/scope alignment on the target. It will also ensure that the point of impact on the target always remains constant which will help you reach your potential! Always keep your shoulders as relaxed as possible, place your feet roughly about shoulder width apart and keep your legs straight, but do not brace them as this will cause excess muscle tension which can lead to instability. Knees are neither bent, or locked straight but simply remain comfortable. Wearing sturdy flat soled boots will generally provide you with a large contact area and the most stable platform to shoot from whatever type of surface you have to stand on. Wearing something unsupportive like a pair of trainers generally has you wasting time moving your toes around and stuff trying to get comfortable, especially when you are shooting on uneven surfaces. Quite often you will find that placing more weight on either the heels or balls of your feet will cause you to have more vertical plain fluctuation when aiming on the target so bare this in mind. It could also cause you to either tighten or relax your grip on the stock which can lead to having a different point of impact on the target. There are times of course when you may need to put a little extra weight on the front to help counter recoil etc but not usually for most types of GR shooting. Finally, your feet should be placed at an angle that allows your body to naturally point the rifle at the target, without any twisting or over tensioning of the muscles to hold it in position. This is usually in the region of 45° to 60° in relation to the target although this may obviously change if shooting multiple or moving targets, and will vary from shooter to shooter!



Once you have achieved a reasonably stable stance, the next thing to achieve is a good hold or grip! There are many factors that will play a significant part in this from the size and profile of your stock to the overall weight and balance of the rifle, along with your physical size, strength and sometimes mobility too. Starting at the front, your grip on the fore end must allow you to do two things. It must enable you to both pull the rifle rearwards slightly, to hold it securely (not tightly) into the supporting shoulder whilst keeping the rifle as steady as possible at the same time. Too much rearward pressure will cause instability in the hold, and not enough will cause the shooter to grip tighter with their trigger hand which will probably result in a poor trigger release as the hand muscles are over tensioned and not relaxed as they should be. The best grip tension required would best be described as somewhere between supportive and firm, but not excessive as this too will cause problems. Using the same grip but at different points along the length of the fore end will have quite an effect on the stability produced and again will depend on a whole host of individual factors so don't just copy someone else. This is also true regarding the angle at which you position your wrist and elbow in relation to the line of sight. The taller shooters may well want to hold the fore end much further forward but this becomes a bit of an issue when shooting a Marlin as they are pretty slim by design and are relatively short in length also, forcing some shooters to hold the rifle further rearwards than they'd like to do. Most people will probably find the most stable hold is with the fore end sitting flat in the middle of the palm, with the fingers and thumb just lightly gripping on the sides, instead of trying to hold it tightly with just the fingers in some sort of weird alien hold. The fore end must fit you, not the other way round. If it doesn't, change it!

***Relax your shoulders as much as possible!***



***Pistol grip stocks give good wrist/trigger finger alignment.....*** 2<sup>nd</sup> joint of my trigger finger. This is obviously not contusive to good trigger control so I always slide my hand downwards, so that when I shoot, just the side of my thumb contacts the side

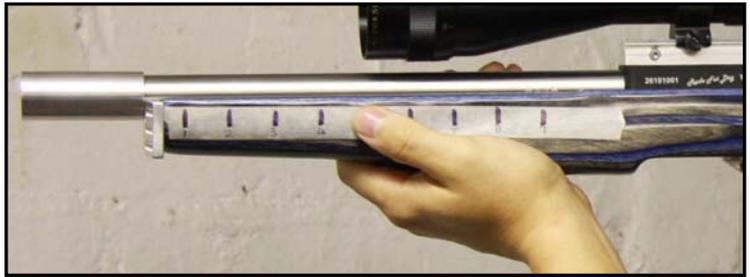
At the butt end, grip pressure should generally be applied by the middle two fingers leaving the little finger and thumb to remain relaxed which will enable the trigger finger to move much more smoothly! The angle of the wrist in relation to the trigger should ideally be as square as possible so that the trigger is pulled straight back, which will obviously help produce a much better trigger release. I personally find that trying to hold a Marlin, due to their design (hunting rifle) forces my wrist into an uncomfortable forward cant, and places my trigger finger in such a position that I find myself pulling the top of the trigger blade and frame at the same time with the 2<sup>nd</sup> joint of my trigger finger. This is obviously not contusive to good trigger control so I always slide my hand downwards, so that when I shoot, just the side of my thumb contacts the side



***where as Marlins usually don't!***

into the aim again before opening your eyes will show you whether you are close or not. Remember, you are trying to get simple alignment towards the target, not bring it up exactly in the middle of it! Once the correct body / feet alignment is achieved, have someone draw around your feet with some chalk or tape so that this position can be quickly be re-adopted each time so you don't have to start from scratch again.

2. Place some tape along the full length on the side of your stock and number it every inch or so starting from the front. Start by gripping the stock as near to the front as you can and bring the rifle up on aim for about 10 seconds then rest it down for a short while. This is simply a stability test and all you are trying to do is consistently keep the crosshairs within a pre-determined area such as the 10, 9 or 8 ring, and nothing else. Carry on repeating this practice by sliding your grip back very slightly each time, and make sure you note any numbered positions where you find your hold to be more stable on the target. Make sure though that you have a rest in between otherwise fatigue may produce inaccurate results for you. You may well find that a more stable hold is achieved if you elbow is in a low position when supporting the rifle as opposed to sticking out to the side, but again experiment using both positions and see what produces the best results for you. It will probably take quite a while to find a good stable position but it's well worth it in the end as it will allow you to concentrate on other important aspects of your shooting. Once you have found the "sweet spot" on the fore end, simply leave a small piece of tape or something close to where your thumb lines up on the stock so that it can be quickly adopted next time, until your hold becomes second nature.



***Experiment to find a point on the fore-end that gives you the most stable hold then adopt it every time for consistency!***

In part 3 we will look at what needs to be done to achieve a good trigger control and shot release, along with some simple accuracy practices which will hopefully make it easier for you to group your shots better and gain a few extra points also!

of the grip which gives me a much better trigger alignment! Tucking the elbow inwards, holding it out to the side or somewhere in between will also have an effect on stability and this is where the trial and error part starts. It's always a good idea to use a note book to record changes, variations and results that you find out when experimenting with various shooting positions and a lot of this position work can be carried out without shooting at all to start with. Here's a few suggestions to get the basic set up:

1. Place a target at 25m and placing your feet parallel and roughly shoulder width apart, simply aim your rifle at the target and adjust the angle of your feet and body until the scope lines up naturally with the target. When you think you have found it, a simple test of bringing the rifle down from the aim, closing your eyes and then bringing the rifle back up