

FEAR NOT, THE DOUBLE ACTION SHOT!

By Ernest Langdon

The traditional double action pistol, long feared by the competitive shooter, is quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with in some types of competitive pistol shooting. With the growing popularity of IDPA and the new Production Class in IPSC, the double action pistol is becoming a popular option for competitive shooters around the globe.

But, there has long been a stigma associated with the double action pistol. It has seen very little action in mainstream competition. When you ask shooters why they don't shoot a double action in competition there are two main reasons that come up. First, it is too hard or too slow to shoot a double action first shot. Second, they don't like having two different trigger pulls. Lets focus on the first reason for now, the dreaded double action first shot.

To develop speed and accuracy with the double action trigger we need to start with accuracy. The speed will mean nothing if you don't hit the target. Start by shooting groups in double action only. Your group size and the location of the groups should be the same

as your single action groups; that's the goal anyway. Some shooters will find that with proper technique they can shoot a tighter group in double action than in single action.

The key to double action accuracy is keeping the trigger moving. Don't try and stage the trigger to the point right before the hammer drops. This is a bad habit and will cause what is often called "Now Syndrome"!! This is when the shooter stages or preps the trigger to the point right before it is going to break, then cleans up the sight picture so it is perfect and tries to make the shot break "NOW". The "Now Syndrome" almost always causes the sights and the shot to move off the intended target. Keep the sights in your "aiming area" and keep the trigger moving. (Obviously, if the sights move way off or out of your aiming area, stop pulling the trigger.) Try and think of the trigger pull as a "trigger stroke", and pull through with one smooth stroke of the trigger.

At first, shoot at a close target that is fairly large, maybe seven or ten yards and try for a group. As your groups get smaller, move the target back. Don't be afraid to shoot groups at fifty yards or more. It can't hurt.

Once you're confident with your ability to make an accurate double action shot, pick up the pace. Start working on the time it takes to "pull through" the double action trigger stroke. Remember, speed means nothing if you miss the target.

The next step is to start working back to the holster. That's right, work back to the holster, not from the holster. The next thing to work on is the presentation of the pistol to the target. Start from what is normally called the ready position. This is the point in the draw where the hands come together, just off center to the strong side at the upper part of your abdomen. At this point the pistol should be pointed at the target and the trigger finger is still off the trigger. From this point forward is where you start to gain speed with the double action first shot. From this ready position, every effort should be made to drive the pistol directly to the target. Imagine there is a laser coming out of the barrel and try and put that laser on the target and keep it there until that first shot breaks. (If you have a laser available it can be a great training tool).

As the pistol starts to move forward you should be able to pick up the position of the muzzle in your peripheral vision. As soon as you can see that the muzzle is on target, start pulling the trigger. This is where the speed of the first shot comes from. As the pistol goes out, the trigger comes back. Now it becomes a timing issue. As the pistol goes forward and comes up to your line of sight, you are trying to pull the trigger so that the hammer falls just as you clean up the sight picture. The last one to two inches of the presentation the sights should be almost perfect so if the shot breaks a little early you're still going to hit the target. This is really

no different than what most top shooters do with a single action pistol. They prep the trigger on the way out to the target and try and break the shot just as they clean up the sight picture.

With practice you will find that you can be very aggressive on close targets. Because you can have a lot of deviation in your sight alignment on close targets, you can break the shot very early in the draw stroke with all the accuracy that you need.

Once you feel comfortable with working from the ready position you can start working from the holster. Just like the double action trigger pull, think of the draw as a smooth stroke. Now all you have to do is combine the “draw stroke” with the “trigger stroke” and you will be nailing sub one-second draws in no time.

Once you master the double action first shot you will find you can shoot the traditional double action pistol with a great deal of speed and accuracy. It’s up to you, so get out there and start shooting.

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