

# Moving from ATA Trap to the Bunker

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*Part two of three.*

In the last installment we talked about making the transition from ATA trap to Olympic trap. We discussed the squading, target presentations, and some special rules to make the games go faster and safer. Now we will look at the technical fundamentals necessary for success while shooting the bunker. We will discuss the guns used for the game including gun fit, balance, and point of impact. We will then talk about getting into the correct position with the proper stance on the shooting station.



**Figure 1** Having your coach check your gun fit will insure that it shoots where you look.

***Gun Selection and Fit*** – When you are just beginning to shoot the bunker a semi-automatic shotgun with a 30” barrel would be an acceptable entry level gun. This would allow new shooters to try the game without investing in a new gun. In Olympic trap the majority of shooters use over and under shotguns with barrel lengths of 30 inches. There are some U.S. shooters that prefer 32 inches, but overseas almost all are 30 inches. The important factor when choosing a shotgun of any barrel length is that the barrels feel light and responsive and are able to respond to the target quickly and smoothly. The balance point of the gun will determine its dynamic swing characteristics. In Olympic trap the balance of the gun should be more butt heavy/barrel light for quicker response to the targets. Even heavy guns can be made responsive during the swing by proper balance.

One way of doing this to any shotgun is to increase the weight of the butt stock by adding a heavy recoil reducer. By adding weight in the butt stock area you not only reduce recoil but you also make the barrels appear to be lighter.



**Figure 2** An adjustable comb will allow you to adjust the POI and insure a proper fit.

There are other added features seen on shotguns that are set-up for the bunker. Stocks with Monte Carlo or adjustable combs and adjustable recoil pads are used to obtain the correct gun fit for each shooter. These items control length of pull, cast on or off, pitch, cant, and alignment of the eye with the rib. They insure a proper fit so that the shooter can look down the rib in the same manner each time the gun is mounted, thereby insuring that the gun will shoot in the same place every time. Another important point is whether the muzzle of the shotgun jumps up when fired. Shooting a gun with excessive muzzle jump will impair the shooter's ability to fire at the target a second time. The elimination of muzzle jump is made predominately by the adjustment of the pitch of the shotgun at the recoil pad. When choosing the chokes for bunker, most shooters use modified choke (.020 -.026) in the first barrel and full choke (.028 -.036) in their second barrel. Optimizing your gun's choke/ammunition selection for 30 – 35 yards (first barrel) and 40 – 45 yards (second barrel) can further refine your choice of chokes.

**Point of Impact** – This refers to where the shot charge is delivered in relation to the line of the rib. It is usually expressed as percentages. A gun that shoots 50/50 would deliver 50% of the pellets above this line or aiming point and 50% below. A typical bunker gun would shoot between 50/50 and 60/40 while ATA traps guns are 70/30 or higher. In ATA trap most targets are shot on the rise, thereby requiring a higher POI. The POI required for the bunker is not as high as the other trap games because of the flatter targets. As the position of the head moves on the stock the POI will change. If the head is positioned to allow the shooter to see flat down the rib, most likely the gun will shoot close to 50/50. As the adjustable comb is raised, and the shooter sees more of the rib, the gun will shoot

higher – 60/40 or 70/30. The reason for this is that the shooter raises the muzzle to bring the front sight in line with the eye and the target.

**Foot Position** – In ATA trap the angle of the targets is only 17.5 degrees left and right of center. On stations one and five the hard angle only becomes 30-35 degrees and the shooter will usually adjust his foot position towards the more extreme angle. He can do this because he will not get an extreme angle in the opposite direction. When shooting the bunker the target presentation can be 45-degrees each side of center and the shooter does not know which extreme angle will be next. As a result, the shooter's foot position on each station must be set so that the shooter can swing either right or left along the flight line of the 45-degree targets without feeling tension in his/her lower body.



**Figure 3** A typical ATA foot position for a right-handed shooter that does not allow for a full and easy swing to the right.



**Figure 4** A typical bunker foot position for a right-handed shooter that allows for an easy swing to the left and the right.

**Gun Mount** – Making a good gun mount is critical for the success of the shooter. A poor gun mount will inhibit the shooter from obtaining a high score. A shooter's ability to succeed in this discipline is directly proportionally to the attainment of a consistent mount. While gun fit plays a critical role in this ability there are other factors. The grip with the trigger hand should be firmer than the forearm grip keeping the butt stock tucked into the shoulder and locking it into place against the face. The head must consistently be in the same position with relation to the rib and the beads. Shooting with the head rolled onto the stock causes the eyes to not be level and must be avoided. It is important for balance and vision that the eyes are level, (when we walk or drive our eyes are level, not tilted, right?) Gun mounts are not something that can just be learned out on the field - they must be developed via continuous practice off-the-field. They can best be done at home in front of a mirror.

**Stance** - On each station the shooter should assume a relaxed, balanced position while still being mentally aggressive. The knees should not be locked nor should you crouch. The shooter must be *slightly* bent forward from the waist. The stance should be aggressive but controlled. The center of the shooter's gravity must remain between his heels. The weight difference between each leg should *slightly* favor the front leg. The swing should rotate around the central vertical axis of the body rather than driving or jumping at the target. Balance must be maintained such that the shooter can change the direction of the swing with control when making small lead corrections.

The position of the body in the stance should allow for smooth, quick movement in any direction without undue tension in the legs, back, shoulders, or arm muscles. Muscle tension creates fatigue, impedes the quickness and smoothness of muscle movements, and impairs the ability to concentrate. The most likely places this tension occurs is in the shoulders, upper and lower back, and face of the shooter. Causes are poor stance, gun fit, over aggressive behavior, and performance anxiety. Relaxation and breathing exercises can be used to reduce performance anxiety tension during competition.



**Figure 5** Balance and the proper stance will allow for a quick and smooth swing to the target.

**To summarize this chapter** - Remember, before shooting the bunker, make sure that your gun fits correctly and is shooting between a 50/50 to 60/40 pattern. Next, make sure your position in relation to the extreme target angles allows you to swing both left and right equally without feeling tightening in the lower body or causing the rolling of the shoulders. And finally, the stance must be balanced and without tension that causes fatigue. In the next issue we will cover how to look for the target including where to place your eyes, what type of focus helps us see the target better, and how to swing through the target.