



# Talbot on target! Target Pistol

Communications Officer Sam Talbot continues his mission to shoot the SSAA disciplines, turning his attention this month to Target Pistol



It has been a varied start to 2019 for me, heading to the Wild West to shoot Single Action then spending time at the Australian Scout Jamboree. This month I returned to more familiar surroundings at a typical shooting range to try Target Pistol, my first time using a self-loading firearm which quickly proved a lot of fun and a great challenge overall.

### How it works

Target Pistol employs a wide range of revolvers and self-loading pistols over six main classes and several side matches, each of these based around the class of the handgun and ammunition used with many having their roots in different eras and types of service pistol shooting. The discipline includes four main matches:

National Match Course, 900 Match Course, International Mayleigh Match and Short Course Match. Competitors have varying time restrictions to shoot single-handed in the standing position at paper targets placed at 25m and 50m.

National Championships and other serious competitions generally use the 900 Match Course, while National Match Course is more popular for club matches and was the selected course of fire for the event I shot in.

The National Match Course comprises one string of 10 shots slow-fire at 50m/ yds in 10 minutes, two strings of five shots timed-fire at 25m/yds with 20 seconds per string, and two strings of five shots rapid-fire at 25m/yds with 10 seconds per string. The scoring of targets is done after each 10-shot stage and as usual if a bullet hole touches the scoring ring of a higher value the superior mark is awarded.



John Walsh goes over the basics of using the Ruger Mark III and loading the magazines.

### Getting started

Before I began I enlisted the help of Target >

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Pistol National Chairman Greg Riemer who told me if I wanted to shoot the discipline seriously I'd need at least three different guns and to be a genuine competitor I may need as many as six.

"You should start with the standard and Any .22 matches. They can both be shot with an iron sighted .22 handgun but to be competitive you'll want a dot sight for the Any .22 match. A Ruger is an example of a good starting gun," said Greg.

He also suggested beginners engage a coach to discover the basics of pistol shooting. "Learn to use the iron sights first. Practise on a reduced target up close at 7-10m until you're shooting one-hole groups of 10 shots then step it back to the full distances. And don't be intimidated by the 50m slow-fire distance, it's all in your head, just pretend you're shooting at that 10m reduced target," he said.

"There are plenty of good primer articles and books available about bullseye shooting and shooting mindset. If you want to really

Beginners should engage a coach to discover the basics of pistol shooting

improve you must read and put into practice what you've read but also make sure you enjoy it, embrace the game and if you like it you'll have impetus to improve."

Sadly, due to my habit of throwing myself in at the deep end and the fact my competition was only days away I didn't have time to put all Greg's excellent recommendations into practice. I knew I'd be using iron sights but beyond would

be borrowing a handgun, though as I went through the schedule I realised that what Greg was saying would be a better way of improving in the discipline and it's certainly worthwhile advice.

### Getting involved

Like many other competitions, finding a Target Pistol outlet was as simple as calling my local SSAA club and asking. Luckily for me when I contacted SSAA Para the man who answered the phone, John Walsh, also ran the Target Pistol sector.



All clear for the Range Officer to see.

The range only being 25m didn't stop Sam missing the target occasionally.



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On the day of competition the only equipment I took were my trusty earmuffs which I much prefer to disposable earplugs, especially during phases where I have to take them in and out. On arriving at the range I bought two boxes of CCI Standard Velocity .22LR for \$7 each then met John who showed me the basics of the Ruger Mark III pistol I'd be using.

### The competition

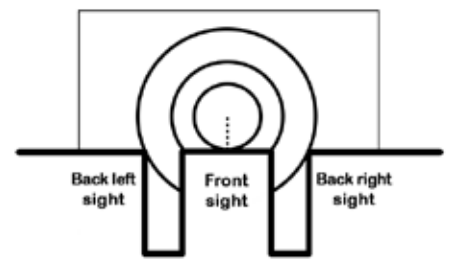
For the contest we shot a modified version of the National Match Course and given the event was on a Tuesday morning we weren't shooting for sheep stations and a few tweaks were made to the format - instead of 50m we shot the entire match

at 25m in the interest of convenience and range availability. While there are many classes of firearms for Target Pistol, my competition essentially fell into the 'Any .22-calibre Pistol or Revolver' firearm bracket.

Perhaps the trickiest part of Target Pistol is you must shoot from the standing position and only use one hand, John suggesting I put my other hand in my pocket. If nothing else, having my left hand in my pocket at least allowed me to stop thinking about it, enabling me to focus all my attention on the important hand, aiming and holding the pistol correctly.

The iron sights consist of a front and back-sight at opposite ends of the barrel.

### 6 o'clock aim



When aiming, the top flat edge of the front-sight needs to be level with the top flat edge of the rear-sight, in addition to the front-sight centred between the two rear-sight posts. With everything lined up properly you should see your front-sight as a black rectangle with slits of light either side, all perfectly flat, and the sights lined up in this way ensure you're both vertically and horizontally straight.

For the first 10-minute string no-one, including me, came close to using all the allotted time, only taking about a minute or so to complete five shots. I managed to shoot a 41 for my first string followed by 37 and 36 for my 20-second and 10-second strings.

John explained I should be aiming at 6 o'clock which meant placing my sights on the bottom of the target's black circle, common for many handguns so you can still see the target when shooting or if the firearm is zeroed in for a different distance.

As you can imagine it doesn't take long to progress through the National Match



Sam and Geoff Smith count their scores and place stickers over the holes.



Sam is happy to score a nine on the rapid fire.



The 9mm makes noticeably larger holes than the .22.

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Course, leaving plenty of time to do it again. While my competitors moved on to 9mm for their second match I stuck with the .22 ammo, on this occasion managing a 51 on the first string, followed by a 32 before closing with a 56. Even though theoretically it should be the hardest of the three strings, the 10-second string proved my best, showing what can be accomplished when you don't have time to over-think things.

Other shooters reckoned this wasn't particularly uncommon and surprisingly I never felt rushed on either the 10 or 20-second strings. For me, going through five shots in 10 seconds with a self-loader is much easier than negotiating the rapid fire three shots in 15 seconds of Field Rifle which requires cycling the action, and using a self-loader felt just like any other firearm I have shot.

### Licensing for handguns

One of the major challenges with handgun disciplines compared to rifle or shotgun options is the matter of licensing. There are quite a few extra steps involved in obtaining an H licence over the typical A and B, including a six-month probation period where a handgun cannot be purchased. Clubs are far more heavily involved in this category and must give permission to the H licence applicant with some differences between states and territories.

At the end of competition every participant carefully recorded their club attendance, noting the category and type of match we'd shot. Attending a certain number of competitions is a crucial part of maintaining your status and is another hoop for H licence holders to jump through. Generally, a member must attend at least

four to six club events per year to retain their membership and endorsement of the handgun category of their firearm licence, while clubs are bound to advise the registry if a member has not fulfilled those quotas. While these rules may be extra barriers, they can easily be overcome if Target Pistol is something you're interested in and shouldn't discourage anyone from trying the discipline.

### Conclusion

After my recent venture into the Wild West for Single Action and this month's Target Pistol competition, I've grown quite fond of handgun shooting. While I'm unlikely to go through the system to obtain my H licence any time soon, it may be something I'll consider down the line. In the meantime Target Pistol is a fun and relatively simple discipline that welcomes newcomers, and I highly recommend it to anyone looking to try handguns or as a general test of their shooting prowess. ●

DATE: / /  
NAME:-

SSAA National Target Pistol

|         | TGT No |   |   |   |   | GRADE |   |   |   |    |       |
|---------|--------|---|---|---|---|-------|---|---|---|----|-------|
|         | 1      | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6     | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Total |
| 50 SF   | 10     | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5     | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0  | 51    |
| 25 TF   | 9      | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 0     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 32    |
| 25 RF   | 0      | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6     | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0  | 56    |
| TOTAL:- |        |   |   |   |   |       |   |   |   |    |       |

The final figures for Sam's second match.



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