

Dealing With Eye Dominance In Shotgun Shooting

By Don Sipes
Instructor Programs Coordinator

Most of you know that a shotgun should be "pointed" rather than "aimed" in shooting moving targets. You probably also know that the eye on the side the shooter shoulders the shotgun should be used to determine the direction the gun is pointing.

Instructors conduct one or more exercises to determine their student's dominant eye. The dominant eye is the one that controls the direction the shooter is looking. Ideally, the shotgun is mounted on the same side as the dominant eye so that the properly fitting shotgun will naturally point where the shooter is looking. The watchful instructor spots eye dominance problems by observing shots that are wide of the target to the dominant eye side.

It has been popular to think of eye dominance as a fixed physical attribute for each person. They were either "right-eye dominant" or "left-eye dominant" and dominance was not expected to change. But,



Resting the gun on the instructor's shoulder solves two problems. It helps the shooter hold the gun steady while the instructor locates the spot for a blinder. And, it keeps the instructor safely behind the shotgun's muzzle.

now we know that eye dominance is not necessarily unchanging! Studies have shown that eye dominance can change and the change can be for a rather long time or only momentarily. It seems that young boys and women of any age may have frequent shifts in eye dominance. And, anyone can

experience a change in eye dominance caused by fatigue, illness, stress (mental or physical), or aging. Of course, it's those momentary dominance shifts that cause the most frustration when they result in otherwise unexplainable wide misses.

So what can the instructor do for the shotgunner who is plagued by occasional eye dominance changes? Some shooters close one eye, but that reduces peripheral vision and can cause some added physical strain. A better answer is to "patch" the off-gun lens of the shooting glasses with a piece of translucent tape positioned to obscure the view of the gun's muzzle by the "wrong" eye. Using a patch small enough to block the view of about 12 inches around the muzzle will allow for considerable peripheral vision while preventing the off-eye from controlling the gun pointing.

— Here's how to find the right position for your student's vision patch. Have the stu-



Once the spot for a blinder is located, mark it with lip balm as a check. Frosted tape, on the inside of the lens, makes a permanent blinder that will minimize loss of peripheral vision and allow light to pass to the eye as well.

dent properly mount an unloaded shotgun and safely rest the barrel over your shoulder as you face them. Then have them close only their gun-side eye. Move your thumb slowly down the off-gun lens of their glasses until they cannot see the area sur-

(Continued on page 3)

Dealing With Eye Dominance

(Continued from page 2)

rounding the muzzle. Apply a small smear of lip balm on that lens and retest to be sure the location is correct. Finally, cut and apply a piece of translucent tape to the inside of the lens behind the smear. The lip balm is water soluble and easily washed away. Now, the student will be able to shoot with both eyes open and without the off-eye

assuming any gun pointing duty. Placing the translucent tape on the outside of the lens may cause objectionable glare and should be avoided.

Give this technique a try with your students who exhibit signs of shifting eye dominance. It might help your own shotgun shooting, too!