

Training Plans

The will to win is important.
The will to prepare is everything!

By Tom Redhead
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Training Plans are the key to success. Coaches quickly learn, to their sorrow, that whilst most shooters have the wish and sometimes the will to win, few have the will to prepare to win. Raw talent alone is not enough if you want to mix it with the top shooters and win. Preparation is *the* key to success. Many shooter would rather continue their unstructured, amateurish "lots of shooting and nothing much else" style of practicing, not realizing that by failing to plan they are planning to fail. Fail they will, especially when they come up against any equally talented shooter who has trained in a structured and systematic manner.

Practise does not make perfect Perfect training make perfect.

Training Plans are a balance between volume, intensity and rest. They are the bed-rock of every elite sportspersons effort to succeed. To be successful training plans must be structured to suit the shooter ability, training facilities, degree of personal commitment and make the most of what time the shooter can dedicate towards future success. They must also be kept under constant review in order to correct any problems which may occur.

The training year can be broken down into many sections according to the sport. In shooting there are four primary phases:

- 1.) **Recovery;** Between seasons there must be a period of rest.
- 2.) **Preparation;** Every season starts with a re-learning of the basics
- 3.) **Early Competition;** Training and matches combine, with early matches being regarded as part of the training process.
- 4.) **Competition** The training load is tailored to "peak" around a maximum of two major competitions with appropriate short rest breaks.

RECOVERY PHASE

A period of rest is a vital but often neglected part of every top shooters year. It is often easier to get someone to increase their training output and work harder than it is to persuade them to have that essential break. Most of us shoot because we love the sport and do not want to put our firearms away for longer than a fortnight when we are on holiday. That's fine and does no harm if we are merely hobby shooters who shoot 50 rounds a week on their clubs match cards. They aren't going to amount to very much and are certainly in no danger of over-training. The situation changes however once a shooter begins to take things seriously and substantially increases the amount of time spent training. Then some sort of break becomes essential if you want to improve. The harder you train the longer the rest you need during the off-season.

Why is that? Whether we like it, or not, we are trapped by our physiological heritage. Traces of modern man "Homo Sapiens" (Thinking Man) date back at least 50,000 years (probably a

lot more). This would seem to be a long time until you divide it by the average life span of a human being. Lets us say, for convenience sake, that you will live for 63 years, this gives us at total of only 800 of your lifetimes for mans entire history. Furthermore of those 800 precious lifetimes, 650 were spent sheltering in the caves. We were cavemen scratching a precarious living as hunter-gatherers for almost 82% of our entire history. We only emerged out of the caves onto the plains, to begin a very rudimentary agricultural lifestyle, 150 lifetimes ago.

How does that relate to the subject of training plans?

Put simply those 650 lifetimes spent in the caves established our physiological make-up; our Genetic Programming. We were designed to react to the seasons, with a constantly changing and irregular lifestyle, not to do repetitive work. As the very opposite of machines, constant, repetitive physical action damages us, it also places severe stress upon our Central Nervous Vegetative State and causes us to become stale. Our entire physiological state needs periods of rest after being exposed to prolonged continuous effort. Remember most of us are only two hundred years away from being, and living, the lives of peasants.

PREPARATION PHASE

This phase is accurately described as the Foundation of the entire season. It combines both physical preparation and " Back to Basics " technical training. During the initial part of this phase Muscular and Aerobic Conditioning plays a significant role but then fades as the technical skill training effort is increased.

The shooting technique is broken down into its component parts, which are then trained-in separately. Once a sufficiently high degree of expertise has been achieved the "separates" are blended together to create a technically excellent shooting technique.

EARLY COMPETITION PHASE

Having progressed some way towards achieving a high degree of technical skill, match training is added to the training schedule. During the early stage of this phase training in the "separates" is partially replaced by full-course sessions and as the main competition season draws nearer full-course training sessions must predominate. Should any faults in basic technique manifest themselves during this phase the shooter must immediately revert to training in the particular "separate" to eradicate the problem. Ideally the shooter should be able to regard the first few competitions in a season as performance checks to establish that there are no fundamental problems with technique, equipment and mental preparation. Rest periods are not usually required during this phase of training.

COMPETITION PHASE

Sports doctors throughout the world have long established the fact that a person can only achieve periods of peak performance twice in a season. With this fact in mind two major competitions must be clearly identified and are the first items to be entered on a training plan. From thence onwards the training effort is progressively increased in direct relationship to them. As the examples I will be showing clearly demonstrate, the training effort resembles the shape of two waves on the ocean. The first wave climbs upwards towards the first major competition and then falls back, for a short rest, before beginning the even higher climb towards the ultimate objective; the major competition of the year. This does not mean that the

shooter is only expected to compete in two competitions a year. It does mean that any other competitions are taken in their stride and must not be allowed to interfere with the progressively increasing training effort, which is building towards the major objective.

GOAL SETTING

Goal Setting is a very important part of any training plan, used carefully it is one of the most influential and effective training aids available to any coach. It is the best possible motivation for any shooter provided that the goals set are realistic. Achieving, or failing to achieve, a set objective always gives positive feedback and allows the coach to adjust the training accordingly.

Set your shooters three levels of realistic goals:-

Short term	=	One Month ahead
Mid term	=	Two / three months head
Long term	=	Season's objective

Remember always set goals which stretch the shooters performance but they *must* be obtainable.

Enjoy your shooting,
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