By Duane Thomas

The term Natural Point of Aim (NPA) refers to where the gun points when there is no tension in our body. With practice this should be directly in front of us. We should be able to close our eyes, put the gun out in front of our face, and when we open our eyes find the sights perfectly aligned – or very, very close to it. Understanding NPA, and how it affects our shooting, is critical on any shooting task involving transitions, and becomes more important the larger the transition and the greater the requirement for speed.

If our body is in its NPA, not only will be able to draw to a single target more quickly, because the gun will swiftly and naturally move straight out in front of us, it will also naturally return to that point after we trigger a shot. This tendency considerably ups our accuracy when firing multiple fast shots, as for example when trying to keep both shots of a double tap together.

To develop NPA, we stand in front of a target with a specific aiming point highlighted, say a red dot in the center of a bull’s-eye, close our eyes, put the gun out in our shooting stance, then open our eyes. Are our sights perfectly aligned in the red dot? If not, we adjust our grip, adjust our arm position, adjust our foot position, whatever it takes, until we can repeatedly, reliably, close our eyes, put the gun out in front of our face, and then see the sights perfectly aligned when we open our eyes.

A master of NPA is Greg Hamilton, headman at InSights Training Center. I have watched Greg stand in front of a 6” circle at seven yards, put the gun out in front of his face, close his eyes, fire a double tap, and have both shots hit well within the circle. This was not a one-off trick. He could, and did, do it repeatedly. I have also watched him close his eyes and draw to the same target, fire and hit the target. The fact that he was willing to do this in front of the entire class I was attending at the time indicates the level of confidence he has in his rock solid NPA. I’m not saying we should rely only on our NPA and shoot with our eyes closed; but if we have built an excellent NPA and then we add our eyesight to the equation, we can do some really impressive things.

To illustrate the importance of NPA, and how to use it, let’s take a common shooting problem: three targets, separated by one or two yards, all of which need to be double tapped. A good example would be the classic El Presidente or Stage 2, String 3 on the IDPA classifier. On which of those targets should we set up our NPA? In my experience, the further out of my NPA I have to come to engage a target, the worse will be my groupability. The temptation is to set up our NPA on Target 1, the far left target, so we can have the fastest, easiest draw. The problem is, if I do that, my hits on T1 are great, my hits on T2 in the middle where I’m only slightly out of my NPA are pretty good, and my hits on T3...