The ability to fire a handgun with both eyes open is critical on many shooting skills, including Stage 1, String 4 of the IDPA classifier.

By Duane Thomas

An IDPA Master Tells You How to Do It, Too!

In Part 1 of this series on shooting the IDPA classifier we discussed Stage 1, Strings 1-3. Now we continue on with String 4.

STRING 4: Draw and fire two shots to the head each on T1-T3.

(My time: 4.74 seconds.)

Tip #1: Again we see (pun intended) the advantages of shooting with both eyes open versus closing the non-dominant eye and shooting only with the master eye. Both eyes open gives us a much wider field of view. This is important on any string in the classifier requiring transitions (movement between targets) like this one.

Tip #2: Relax your vision, begin seeing much more of what’s out there in front of your face instead of having a super-hard front sight focus. At the instant the last shot on a target fires, SNAP your eyes over to the next target and look right at where you want the gun to go. The gun will follow your eyes. This will be much easier to do if you have your eyesight relaxed and both eyes open.

Tip #3: Stage 1, String 4 is probably the single most accuracy intensive task in the IDPA classifier. (Some might say it’s the entirety of Stage 3 at 15 and 20 yards, but I would argue for Stage 1, String 4.) The head box on an IDPA target is, in the overall scheme of things, fairly small, a 6” square. Also, unlike the 8” chest circle, it’s not surrounded by a large area of lower scoring cardboard that will give us at least some points; over its top and to either side there’s only air – which gives no score. On String 4 even a shot that goes low, down into the target body, gives no points, it counts as a complete miss of the target. This is fair, since on this string your target is the head.

Every head shot is worth five points; at half a second per point each Miss adds 2.5 seconds. There are nine head shots in Stage 1: three (one per target) on Strings 1-3, six (two per target) on String 4. At half a second per point down, that’s 22.5 seconds we could possibly add to our score. Thank you, no. We CANNOT afford to miss the head shots on the first four strings. Take whatever time is needed to make those shots. Even if it takes us an extra second to nail a shot, we’ll still come out way ahead versus a 2.5 second miss. (Having said that, obviously the faster is our “taking our time” speed, the better we’ll score.)