better times, and a better score, than I did) but because there are lessons to be learned from them. Though in practice these days I have driven my score down into the high 89s on occasion, and perhaps it would be more impressive to use one of those more recent scores within this article, I think it will be much more interesting to use the scores posted when I actually “got the M”.

There are 14 strings of fire on the IDPA classifier, separated into three 30-round stages. We will begin with Stage 1 (logically enough), and treat Strings 1-3 all at once, since they are essentially identical, a series of three Mozambiques (sometimes called the “failure to stop” drill, consisting of two shots to the chest, then one to the head, from the draw).

STAGE ONE, 7 YARDS
STRING 1: Draw and fire 2 shots to the body & 1 to the head of T1.
(My time: 2.24 seconds.)
STRING 2: Draw and fire 2 shots to the body & 1 to the head of T2.
(My time: 2.14 seconds.)
STRING 3: Draw and fire 2 shots to the body & 1 to the head of T3.
(My time: 2.34 seconds.)

**Tip #1:** Learn to shoot with both eyes open. Also learn to shoot with your head erect. On this drill we have to fire three shots from the draw, per string, in a reasonably short time frame. The only way we’re going to be able to do that, and be accurate, is if we aim every shot. This means seeing the sights for every shot, and being able to track the sights between shots. Which will be impossible if we’ve lost our depth perception through closing one eye; similarly we will not be able to track the sights if shooting with the head leaned forward. In recoil the front sight will actually flip up out of our field of vision, because our eyesight is being blocked by our upper orbital ridge. By contrast, with practice, shooting with both eyes open and the head erect, tracking the sights and shooting accurately at speed becomes something we can do easily.

**Tip #2:** On the draw, prep the trigger before the gun gets to the target. Take up the slack in the trigger, hit the “link” resistance point, then apply almost enough pressure to the trigger to fire the gun but not quite. Do that on the draw, we can fire the gun as soon as it stops moving. This is much faster than getting the gun out there and THEN beginning to pull the trigger. Trigger prep on the draw is a technique that takes quite a bit of practice to do safely, and if you’re not already used to doing it you MUST put in significant dry fire practice before ever attempting it with live ammo in the gun.

**Tip #3:** Let recoil from the second body shot lift you up to the head box, rather than recovering from recoil THEN using your muscles to lift the gun. The first way is fast, the second is slow. You can tell the difference just by listening to people using either technique. Way #1 sounds like *BangBangBang*, one continuous string of shots. Way #2 sounds like *BangBang…Bang* with a significant and noticeable pause between the second and third shots.

**Tip #4:** You will note that my times here were not blazingly fast. This is one of the first and most important tips I can give you: YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE BLAZINGLY FAST TO POST A GOOD SCORE ON THE IDPA CLASSIFIER. You just need to be reasonably fast and very accurate. Lack of accuracy kills you on the classifier, and I have seen people, many, many times, pushing their speed on the classifier beyond the level at which they could get good hits. Just shoot at a comfortable pace for you. (Granted, of course, the faster is your “comfortable pace” the better you’ll do.)

We have now covered the first three strings for Stage 1, which has seven strings in total. Next month we will continue on with more tips for Stage 1 of the IDPA classifier.

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While the author switched to shooting with both eyes open years ago, his skill at shooting with the head erect is a work in progress. In this photo, his head is tilted forward enough that his glasses, hat brim and upper orbital ridge could all block his view of the sights in recoil.

This image, taken years later, just a few months ago, shows much better technique, though there is still room for improvement.

Shooting great Brian Enos shows excellent both-eyes-open/head erect technique. (Of course, what did you expect?) Photo by Nidaa A.