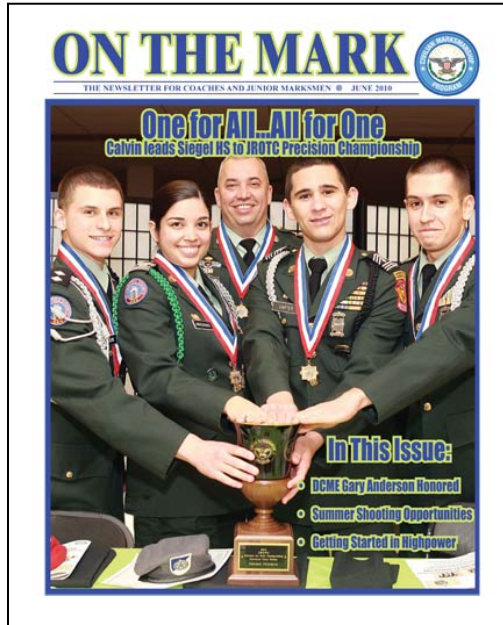




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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR YOUTH SHOOTING SPORTS LEADERS



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CORRECTING ERRORS—SOLVING CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW SHOOTER

By Gary Anderson, DCME

Shooting coaches and instructors are responsible for quickly recognizing and correcting beginners' errors. If the coach or instructor does this well, new shooters will almost certainly have good experiences and want to continue shooting. This article discusses how coaches should evaluate the first shots that new shooters fire and how to correct any errors or serious problems that occur during those initial live firing experiences.

This discussion is applicable to a wide variety of new shooter experiences. Most coaches now have their prospective marksmen do their first live firing from a supported position, especially when working with juniors. Highly skilled instructors may start older juniors in the standing position. For outdoor highpower rifle shooting over popular Ao-Issued Military Rifle courses, the first firing position is most often prone. Whether the firing position is a supported position, standing or prone one thing is certain, however. Some shooters are going to present challenges that need to be identified and solved.

TYPES OF ERRORS AND CHALLENGES. There are three types of beginners' errors or challenges that coaches must be alert to detect and fix. They are 1) gun handling or safety errors, 2) catastrophic errors where shots strike completely off the target and 3) wild shots or large shot groups where shots are fired inaccurately. Proper error correction also depends upon having the right number of qualified coaches in the right position to provide timely assistance.

COACH-SHOOTER RATIO. When beginners first advance to the firing line, it is especially important that the coach-shooter ratio be small enough to ensure that they receive the supervision and instruction they need. In the Small Arms Firing Schools each summer at Camp Perry, a one coach to two shooters ratio is maintained. Some programs try to have a one-on-one ratio. In no case should the ratio be larger than



one-to-four or one-to-five. The second consideration here is that coaches of new shooters must know what they are doing. They are not there just to monitor gun safety. They need to be individuals who understand shooting and who are trained to apply the procedures and instructions discussed here.

COACH POSITION. When working with shooters who are firing their first shots, the coach should take a position immediately to the rear of the shooters. The coach should remain standing so that he can act quickly if intervention is required. Under most circumstances, the shooter should be approached on the right (right-handed shooter). Get close enough to the shooter so that instructions can be given in a clear, calm voice. A second reason for approaching on the right is so that the coach can quickly take control of the rifle if the shooter should unexpectedly attempt to swing the rifle muzzle around. An important safety admission for coaches to remember is to never interrupt a shooter while they are attempting to fire a shot unless there is an immediate safety hazard. A shooter with a loaded rifle and a finger on the trigger could become a safety hazard if distracted.

KEEP ERROR CORRECTION POSITIVE. A starting point concerns how coaches should communicate with shooters. A fundamental rule is that responses to new shooter errors should never be "don't do that (the error) again." Appropriate responses should always be a version of "no this (the correct action) on the next shot." Telling a new shooter not to do something does not help them because while it suggests they did something bad, it does not tell them what they should do. Remember that new shooters are people who have very little knowledge of correct shooting fundamentals. A vital part of successfully coaching them through their mistakes is to display an underlying conviction that everyone who tries shooting is not only capable



There should be one coach for every two to five new shooters. When new shooters begin firing, coaches should position themselves immediately to the rear of their shooters so that they can observe all aspects of their performance.

ON THE MARK: **ON THE MARK** is a quarterly newsletter dedicated to assisting junior shooting leaders and coaches in the continued success and improvement of their young shooters, regardless of skill level. A typical issue of **ON THE MARK** includes 16-24 pages of new junior shooting program information as well as news about junior events, instructional tips and coaching information. Bonus inserts and brochures are regularly included which detail programs for junior competition and training programs or provide equipment and training material purchase opportunities. **ON THE MARK** also is an up-to-date resource for news from many organizations that support junior shooting such as USA Shooting, National 4-H Shooting Sports, the NRA Education and Training Division and the Army, Navy and Marine Corps JROTC commands.

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