



**FROM ACTUALLY** starting out in this fabulous sport, through improving and eventually performing at the highest level, an instructor or coach's input will be invaluable.

**THE BASICS**

Initially, it is well worthwhile employing a qualified instructor to get the fundamentals learnt, i.e. how to stand, how to mount the gun to your shoulder socket correctly, where to place your head and your hands in order to have a clear view of the target. Providing the gun fits, this will then present the shot where it should, which is 2/3rds high and 1/3rd low of your aiming point. With this configuration, the target will be presented above the barrel and you will always be able to see it without lifting your head off of the stock, which can cause cheek bruising, missing the target above or, worse still, both!

**WHICH METHOD?**

Of prime importance is a method that will enable the novice to achieve success and safely shoot with consistency as early as possible. I've found the CPSA Method (image one) of shooting a moving target the best way to achieve early success and fast progression.

There are three basic techniques: maintained or sustained lead, swing-through or smoke trail, and the 'Method' or pull-away. The latter is the only one that gives you speed and line, and is intuitive because, having pointed at the target for a short time (roughly half a second), the target's speed and line are confirmed, matched with those

of the gun, and the lead required is assimilated automatically without calculation. The moment we start to calculate and involve the grey matter, the spontaneity of the shot is lost, as is the target!

You may think that having a lesson is expensive, but it's far cheaper than attempting to 'teach' yourself or getting your mates to try. You will use fewer cartridges in order to attain success with an instructor than you will trying to do it alone.

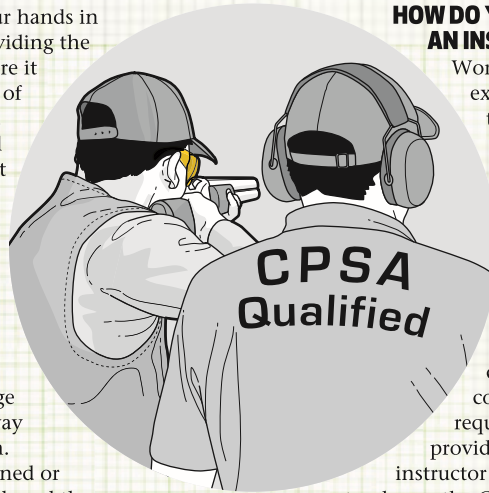
**HOW DO YOU CHOOSE AN INSTRUCTOR?**

Word of mouth is excellent, but you have to know someone that has had lessons.

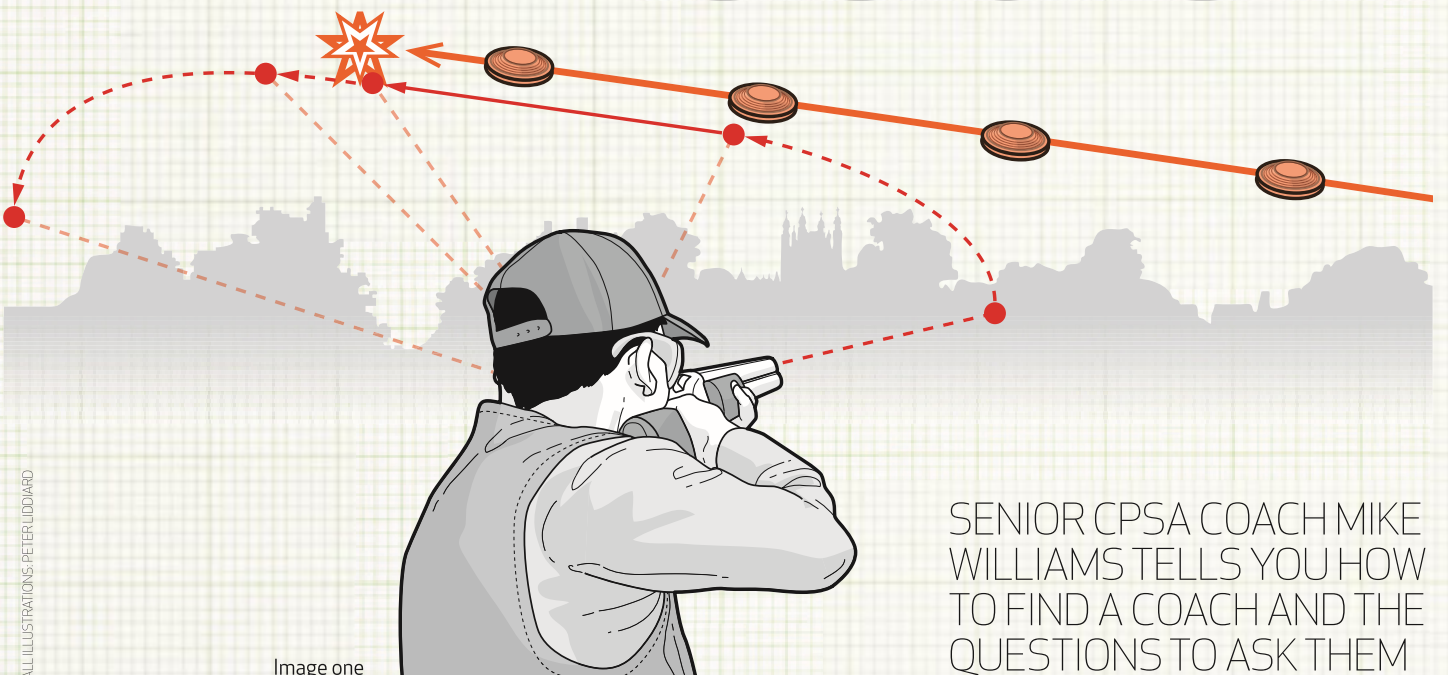
Another source of information is the CPSA website – select 'Find an Instructor' from the orange box on the left-hand side and choose your region, county and the coaching level you require. L1 Club will provide you with an

instructor who will be able to teach you the CPSA Method. An L2

Coach has been further trained to deliver all of the aspects of a particular discipline. A Senior Coach is qualified in all four of our domestic disciplines, i.e. Sporting, English Skeet, ABT and DTL. Any of those



# Make the most of your coach



SENIOR CPSA COACH MIKE WILLIAMS TELLS YOU HOW TO FIND A COACH AND THE QUESTIONS TO ASK THEM

ALL ILLUSTRATIONS: PETER LIDDARD

Image one



## IT IS WELL WORTHWHILE EMPLOYING A QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR TO GET THE FUNDAMENTALS LEARNT

listed have gone through a rigorous assessment process and a Senior Coach has invested at least five years of time and effort to become qualified.

Given that the CPSA Method will get you the fastest progression, on your first lesson say that you want to learn that method and ask if your instructor is happy delivering it. You will need all three of them as you become more experienced as each provides specific benefits for particular targets, but the CPSA Method is undoubtedly the best one to start with.

### CHOOSING YOUR GUN

If you are a novice, chances are you probably haven't got a gun yet, so don't rush out and buy one as soon as you get your licence. Check if your instructor has a gun for you to use during the lesson – you can use one that's a reasonable fit. There are hundreds of guns to choose from and you should try as many as you can. I often get asked: "Which gun shall I buy?" and I answer that it's a personal choice. I advise spending £750-800 on a good, used gun and recommend either a Beretta, Browning or Miroku as these guns have resale value and shouldn't be too difficult to sell on should you want to upgrade. Given the chance, I prefer to accompany the novice to the shop/gunsmith so that I can advise them which gun is not only a good fit, but also good value.



### EYE DOMINANCE

As this sport relies on your visual acuity, it is essential that your vision is as good as it can be (including using glasses if necessary). It is important that you have regular eye tests and you know your eye dominance.

As we 'point' at a target (not aim) it is beneficial to have both eyes open. However, this is only possible if the eye over the rib is the dominant one. With both eyes open, we have the benefit of a three-dimensional picture and a perception of depth. However, we are not all correctly dominant in the 'shooting' eye and some people are dominant in the 'off' (or opposite) eye or may even have 'central vision', where neither eye is dominant. The instructor will check this early on in the lesson and will suggest remedial action if there is a problem, otherwise the gun will not point where the shooter believes it is. There are several possible solutions, such as blocking out the offending eye by either closing it or taping the lens, using a cross-over stock (but this increases felt recoil), using a vision-obscuring device (a very thin foil that disrupts the vision of the 'off' eye by placing a piece of tape over the coloured part of the 'off' eye while the head is on the stock) or shooting from the other shoulder (which may

only be attempted if the shooter is 100 per cent dominant in the other eye).

You may want to find the dominance of your eyes for yourself and you can do this very easily. If right handed, keep both eyes open, point to an object some distance away and close your left eye. If your finger stays on the object, then you are right-eye dominant. If the finger moves away from the object, then the 'off' eye is interfering with the messages that your brain is receiving from your eyes and you're going to have to resolve by using one of the methods described. If left handed, point to the object and then close your right eye. Should the object not move then you are left-eye dominant and can keep both eyes open.

### MAKING PROGRESS

If you're a shooter with more experience, you can refine what you get from your coach by being specific about what you want to achieve. Instead of: "I want to be better shot", why not: "I'm concerned with my gun mount" or "I'm having trouble with long crossers". With this sort of input, your instructor or coach can concentrate on your particular problem. Be definite with what you want to achieve in the lesson and be prepared to review your progress. Agree any remedial input that your instructor suggests and what you are going to work on in the intervening period before your next lesson. ●



## THINGS TO ASK...

### ... DURING YOUR FIRST CONVERSATION WITH AN INSTRUCTOR:

- What does the first lesson consist of? It will probably cover safety, introduction to the gun, eye dominance, stance, gun mount and fit, personal protective equipment (PPE) and, most importantly, the method you will adopt throughout the lesson.
- Can you bring your own cartridges or does the ground supply them? If you don't have a licence, you will have to rely on the instructor providing them. If you have a licence then ask what cartridges you can use. I would suggest that you don't use a 28 gram competition load when 21 gram is fine for a lesson where you may be shooting many cartridges in a short space of time. Check whether you can use plastic or fibre wad at the ground.
- Does the instructor have all of the PPE required or do you have to supply your own? You will require ear defenders/plugs (whichever you prefer) with an SNR number of 30 or higher (the greater the number, the better the protection); glasses to protect you from airborne debris; a hat or cap; and a Skeet vest to hold your cartridges and to provide a non-slip material so that the gun stays where you mount it. For this early lesson, you will probably pre-mount the gun, which will remove any errors that might be induced by attempting to shoot 'gun-down' with an inexperienced shooter.