



Shooting Cross-stick Matches

by Roger Fisher

*Advice for a user-
friendly, comfortable
position – especially
for elder shooters*

How many of us have noticed that the number of clubs that run cross-stick matches is shrinking? Most of us would agree that one reason for this is the *age* of the shooters. We welcome older shooters, who finally have retired and have at least some time to participate. We see fewer and fewer young shooters, since they have other things on their minds. I suspect that the clubs feel that many shooters would not enter a cross-sticks match due to poor physical conditioning, including creaky and painful joints. Could it be that with some thought they could shoot in the cross-sticks position without needing a gun bearer and a young blonde gal on each side to get them back up off the ground?

I would say first off that I love to shoot any kind of a match in which I may rest my rifle on anything, be it a bench, log, chunk, or cross-sticks. Having been around for seventy-plus years, I find myself shaking like a hound dog that has gone through a lightning storm, and the offhand match is a real struggle.

So let's see if we can pique your interest in this style of shooting. You will need your own cross-sticks. Use round or square hardwood that is heavy enough to avoid wiggle. I would suggest one inch or more. Stay away from two-by-fours since they are *ugly* (and technically illegal, according to NMLRA rules)! It would help if you drive heavy nails in the lower tips so you can shove them into the hard ground and so they don't topple after your shot. Some clubs used to frown on spikes in the sticks, but I feel it is a safer set up using the heavy nails. My sticks are three feet long with a bolt and wing nut as the 'axle' about five inches from the top.

Wrap the upper ends with a single layer of suede leather to protect your rifle and keep the rifle from slipping around too much. You can make your sticks as plain or as fancy as you like. Fancy helps your image, but doesn't do a thing for your score. Make a pad or canvas sheet to sit on standard equipment for obvious reasons.

Now the shooting position. Eyeball the firing line to find a spot that is level, and better yet, one that has a spot for your seat pad that is just a bit higher than is the firing line. Trust me on this. As you set up your shooting spot, try a *dry run* with your unloaded rifle. I mean get set behind the sticks in a position that is comfortable. Adjust your sticks to the right height, where you don't have to stretch your back up or down to be level on the target. You don't want to be straining any part of your body since that will bring on a case of snapping at the trigger. Have a good pair of heels on your boots and dig those heels in the ground. Sneakers, mocs, or (God forbid) sandals are out. Some folks like the crossed ankles position, but I feel that is shakier than pulling up your knees high as you can and use the three-point bone-to-ground system (meaning butt to ground and heels to ground). Assuming that you shoot right-handed, wrap your left (leading) arm around the front of your knees and back to the rifle butt. Practice this and find out how solid it is. Since my own body is of course *supple and well made*, the following problem is not one that I must struggle with. Upon getting into position you will feel as though your belt is kind of strangling your midsection and causing some consternation in breath control. So do the obvious: open your belt and maybe the top button (but no more).



On The Trail magazine

The Bi-monthly Journal for Historical Trekkers,
Re-enactors and Students of Living History
1600 - 1840

Get a 1 year subscription for \$20. (V, MC & AE accepted)
(\$25 Canada, and \$32 for other foreign countries.)

On The Trail magazine
113 Nancy Dr. - Macon, GA 31217
478-738-9669 - office@ottmagazine.com
http://www.ottmagazine.com

KOVAL KNIVES

The Finest in Knifemaking Equipment & Supplies For Over 25 Years!

Russell-Green River and many more blades available.

CAMP - American Carbon Steel
5" x 1-1/8" x 1/8" No. CAM-050 ... \$6.25 ea
GREEN RIVER BLADE - American Carbon Steel
5" x 1" x 3/32" No. RGR-050 ... \$7.25 ea
BUFFALO SKINNER -
5" x 1-1/4" x 1/8" No. BUF-050 ... \$9.25 ea



- Handle Material
- Bar & Sheet Stock
- Rods & Mosaic Pins
- Arbors, Spindles, Belts,
- Wheels & Abrasives
- Blade Steel
- Blades & Custom Hardware
- Equipment
- Too many items to list!

For a complete 84-page Catalog of
knifemaking supplies send \$4.00 to:

Koval Knives
P.O. Box 492
New Albany, OH 43054

Visit our Showroom at:
5819 Zarley St.,
New Albany, Ohio

ORDER TODAY! 1-800-556-4837
For technical advice, please call 614-855-0777

Or Visit us online at: www.kovalknives.com • email: Koval@kovalknives.com

CIVIL WAR REENACTMENT TO HUNTING



MUZZLELOADER SUPPLIES & ACCESSORIES
RIFLES * PISTOLS * SHOTGUNS * REVOLVERS



* KITS *



TRADITIONS Inc.

DEER CREEK PRODUCTS

P.O. Box 246, Waldron, Ind. 46182

PHONE 765 525 6181 * FAX 765 525 9595



CATALOG \$3.00

DEALER PROGRAM



Custom Canvas Design, Inc.

"We simply make the BEST Product for the BEST Price!"

WALL TENTS • LEAN-TOS • BAKER • MARQUEE
SPIKE & MODIFIED SPIKE TENTS TIPIS • AND MUCH MORE!

Manufacturing quality products for all your Rendezvous & Blackpowder needs.
Send \$2 for a catalogue or visit our web site: www.customcanvasdesign.net

CUSTOM CANVAS DESIGN, INC. • 8002 TIMBERLINE DRIVE #2 • BOZEMAN MT 59718

800-704-7362

Getting into position works like this for us older folks: get down on one knee and keep that rifle muzzle downrange. From the one knee drop neatly to a sitting position placing the rifle onto the sticks as you pull your knees up as described above.

Are you comfortable and are you level with your target? If not, wiggle around until you are and/or change the height of your sticks until you are set. Do NOT cap or prime till you are set. Try setting your rifle as far out on the sticks as you can safely to avoid the seesaw effect.

I will not get into the actual shooting here because you already know that. I would suggest the use of sight shaders if the club so allows, since this does away with the glare effect and surely makes those sights stand out in sharp contrast. Do pay attention to the wind and hold into it a tad at the longer ranges. After making your shot, kind of roll onto one knee with your free hand helping. Then using your rifle as a cane/staff raise your body to a standing position, and if your legs still work after all that, go back to the loading table (with your muzzle up of course) and get ready to do it all again. These methods work for me and hopefully will get more of you interested in this old-time style of shooting. Then please harass the clubs to put in this type of match. Some time we'll get into chunk shooting. Are we having fun or what?

[Ed. note: Consult the NMLRA Rules and Regulations Booklet (rules 5280-5350) for specific information on cross sticks dimensions, padding for the sticks, and the ground pad.] **MB**

American Single Shot Rifle Association

The ASSRA has been dedicated since 1948 to the use, study and preservation of old cartridge target and buffalo rifles and endorses schuetzen offhand, long range Creedmoor and benchrest matches. It publishes a bimonthly journal and maintains an archives of shooting history for arms researchers. Annual membership dues are: 1 yr.-\$35; 2 yr.-\$65; 3 yr.-\$95 (Foreign: 1 yr.-\$50; 2 yr.-\$95; 3 yr.-\$140)

For a sample copy of the
Single Shot Rifle Journal, write to:



Keith Foster
ASSRA
15770 Rd. 1037
Oakwood, OH 45873
Visit our
website at
www.assra.com