

Rimfire Sporter – Part II

Rimfire Sporter Shooting – Part II

Shot Technique – Positions – Starting a Program – Conducting Competitions

By Gary Anderson, DCM Emeritus



Rimfire Sporter shooting is become more and more popular with junior shooters because it's fun, easy to learn and does not require a lot of expensive, complicated equipment.

In Part I of this two-part article (**On the Mark**, Spring 2014), we answered questions about what Rimfire Sporter is, what equipment can be used, safe range procedures and the course of fire. Rimfire Sporter is a relatively new shooting sports discipline that has become one of America's fastest growing shooting games because it is accessible, affordable and offers a uniquely challenging course of fire. Rimfire Sporter is especially suited for getting junior shooters into target shooting because its rifles are readily available in every community in the country, no other special equipment is necessary or even allowed and almost any safe outdoor range can be used for Rimfire Sporter matches without requiring special target equipment.

This "Rimfire Sporter Shooting - Part II" article examines the skills new shooters must learn and master to become active Rimfire Sporter competitors. It concludes with explanations about how club leaders can get Rimfire Sporter programs activated for junior shooters in their areas. Our discussion

starts with three preliminary topics that must be decided or taught before teaching the shooting positions and practicing them.

Right- or Left-Handed Shooting?

Every new shooter must decide whether to shoot right or left handed. Many will have already decided that they are right or left handed, but a few will be unsure. The best way to decide this is to do an eye dominance check. If someone is right-handed and turns out to be right-eye dominant, they should shoot from the right shoulder. If they are left-handed and left eye dominant, they must shoot from the left shoulder. However, if someone is normally right-handed, but left eye dominant, or vice versa, they are "cross-dominant." Cross dominant shooters have two good options. They can shoot from the same shoulder as their dominant eye or they can shoot from the other shoulder and use some means of covering their dominant eye. A short strip of translucent tape on the shooting glasses lens will usually suffice.

How to Use a Sling

The next step in preparing to go to the range is to learn the proper method of using the sling. Coaches must treat the sling as a vital necessity for good prone and sitting shooting, never as an option. Every Rimfire Sporter rifle should have a sling swivel attached to the fore-end and a simple loop sling (1 ¼" max. width) to go with it. The illustrations show how to set up the sling and put it on correctly. Teach this in a classroom before taking new shooters to the range. If a sling is being set up for the first time, be sure to extend the sling length so it will be too loose when the shooter gets into position for the first time. Tightening the sling must not be done until after setting up the position. After determining and marking how long the sling length should be for the prone and sitting positions, the sling can be preadjusted for that length before putting it on.

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How to put the sling on correctly. 1) With the sling attached to the rifle, extend it and open the arm loop. Turn the open loop ¼ turn to the left so the loop faces the shooter. 2) Insert the left arm in the loop and place the sling high on the arm. Tighten the sling loop on the arm. 3) Extend the left arm and bring it over the sling and under the rifle. When building a new position, always start with the sling loose and tighten it only after establishing the body position.

Shot Technique

The third preliminary step is to acquire an understanding of the proper method of firing a shot before they go to the range. The chart lists the five steps in firing accurate shots. New shooters must understand them before they start shooting.

1. Shoulder the Rifle. Firing a shot starts with placing the loaded or cocked rifle in the shoulder and bringing it into a firing position. The key to proper placement of the butt-plate is consistency. Put it in the same place for every shot.

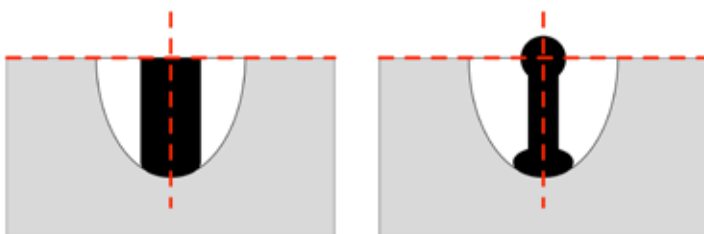
2. Align the Sights. The next step is to lower the head onto the cheek-piece to see and align the sights. With a telescope sight, all that is necessary is to look through the center of the scope; the optical design of the scope will handle the aligning. Aligning open sights means holding the front sight in the proper relationship with the rear sight "U" or "V" notch (see sight alignment illustration). Shooters must learn to do this by focusing on the front sight and letting the rear sight and bullseye be slightly fuzzy.

3. Exhale and Aim. You cannot hold a rifle still if you don't stop breathing. After aligning the sights, the shooter should take two or three more normal breaths while bringing

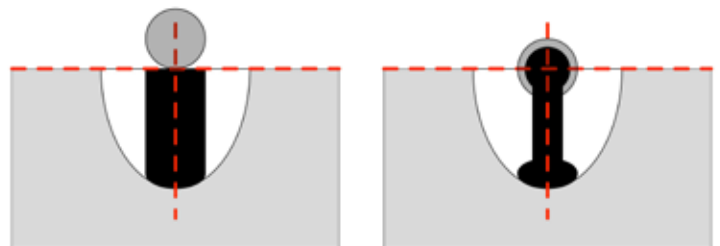
5 Steps in Firing a Shot

1. **Shoulder** the Rifle.
2. **Align** the Sights
3. **Exhale** and **Aim**
4. **Trigger Contact** and **Center**
5. **Press Trigger** and **Call**

the aligned sights onto the target. When the sights are on the target, exhale, stop breathing and start aiming at the target. Proper sight picture with a telescope is simple; hold the cross-hairs on the white dot (10 ring) in the center of the target. In a proper sight picture with open sights, the shooter must point the aligned sights at the correct aiming point. The best aiming point with a post front sight is to hold it at the 6 o'clock position on the target. With a bead front sight, center the bead over target (see sight picture illustration).

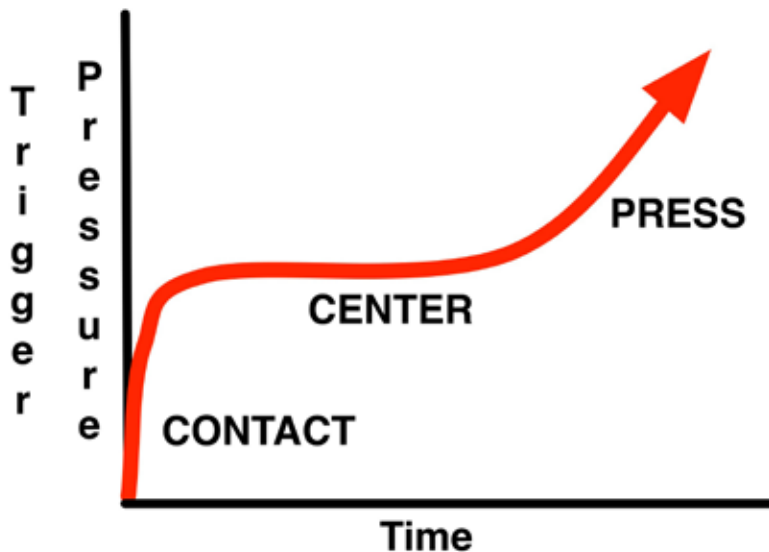


Sight alignment - post & bead front sights

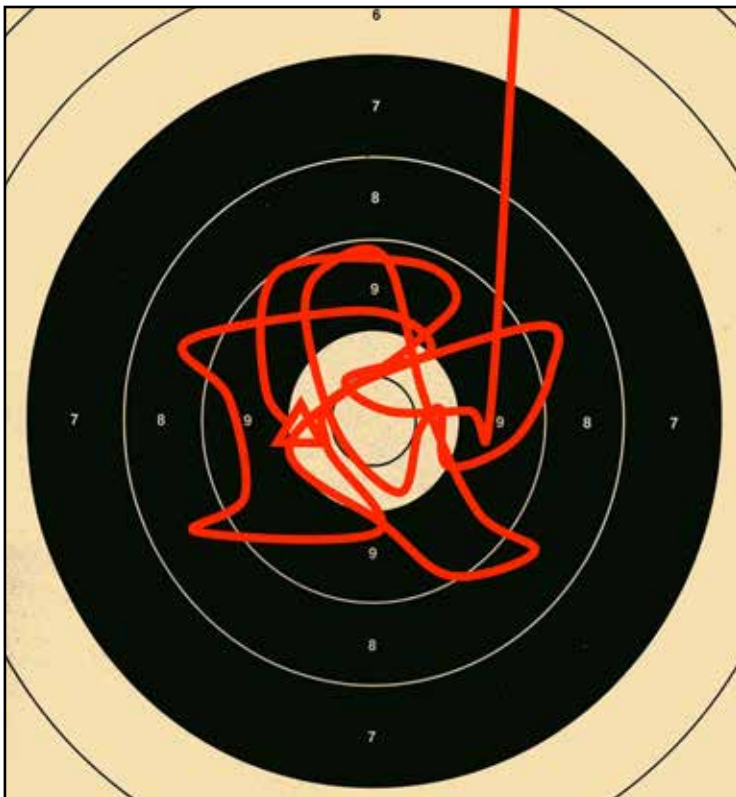


Sight picture - post & bead front sights

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4. Trigger Contact and Center. As soon as aiming at the target begins, the index finger must move from the trigger-guard to contact the trigger. It is important to get initial pressure on the trigger as soon as aiming begins. Then the shooter must focus on the sight picture and centering the sight picture move-



An imaginary "laser trace" of a shooter's point of impact movements when sight picture movements are centered over the aiming point.

ments over the aiming point. No one, not even champion shooters, can hold the aligned sights perfectly still. The sights are going to move a little bit or a lot, depending upon the shooter's skill level. The secret is to center those sight picture movements over the aiming point on the target (see "laser trace" illustration) before pulling the trigger.

5. Press the Trigger and Call the Shot.

When the sight picture movements on the target are centered, the last step in firing the shot is to add additional, smooth pressure on the trigger until the shot breaks. At the instant the shot is fired, the shooter must learn to make a mental "snapshot" of what the sight picture looked like. This is calling the shot. With practice, shot calls will become valuable tools to ensure follow-through and to analyze sight settings and shot technique.

After the new shooter has decided which shoulder and eye is best to use for shooting, has learned how to put on a sling correctly and understands the steps in firing a shot, he/she is ready to learn the three firing positions.

The Prone Position

The keys to building a stable prone position are getting the left elbow in the correct location, using the sling to support the rifle and orienting the position so the rifle and sights point naturally at the target. Before teaching a new shooter the prone position, study the prone illustration or review the prone position instruction in the CMP Rimfire Sporter Master Instructor Clinic.

The Sitting Position

Shooters can choose to shoot the third and fourth stages of the Rimfire Sporter course of fire in either sitting or kneeling. Sitting is best choice for almost all Rimfire Sporter shooters because its lower center of gravity and support from both arms makes it steadier. The only exceptions might be juniors who shoot lots of 3-position air rifle or smallbore and who have already developed excellent kneeling positions. There are two equally good sitting position variations and the choice depends upon the shooter's body proportions, not on what someone else uses. Someone with a relatively short torso or longer arms is ideally suited for the cross-legged position where the crossed legs are pulled back close to the body. Someone with a relatively long torso or shorter arms is best suited for the cross-ankled position where the crossed legs are extended out in front of the body. This allows the shooter to lean further forward and lower the head and shoulders as they find full support from the elbows. New shooters should try cross-legged first, but if they have difficulty getting the rifle high enough for a comfortable head position, they should switch to the cross-ankled position. The sitting position illustrations here identify the key teaching points for this position.

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Features of a good prone position are: 1) the body lies on the mat at an angle of 20-30 degrees to the target; 2) the left elbow (right handed shooter) lies directly under an imaginary straight line drawn along the left side of the body; 3) the butt-plate is well up in the shoulder so aiming is easy; 4) rifle height is determined by the placement of the hand that supports the rifle; 5) the sling is adjusted so it supports the rifle and upper body and 6) the position is fine-tuned so that the rifle points naturally at the target (left-right, up-down).



Features of a good sitting position are: 1) the body is turned 30-60 degrees from the target; 2) the left leg is crossed over the right leg and pulled back to the body (left) or extended in front of the body (right); 3) the elbows rest in the Vs formed by the bent legs (left) or on the legs below the knees (right); 4) rifle height is controlled by the placement of the left hand on the fore-end; 5) the sling is tightened to support the rifle and bond it to the body and 6) the position is rotated on the buttocks to orient the rifle and sights on the shooter's target.

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Features of a good standing position are: 1) the feet, hips and body are turned 90 degrees away from the target; 2) the support elbow is directly under the rifle, 3) the butt-plate is high in the shoulder to keep the head reasonably erect and 4) the support arm is configured to hold the rifle up at target level. Different hand positions are used to determine rifle height. Note how both shooters shown here keep their wrists straight.

The Standing Position

In Rimfire Sporter, the standing position is fired at a shorter distance, 25 yards instead of 50 yards, so standing scores are similar to prone and sitting scores, but the importance of practicing to develop a stable standing position is not reduced. The beauty of standing is that building a good position is simple; there are only four essential teaching points. From there on, getting good standing scores is a matter of practice and repetition. Study the standing position illustrations to gain a clear understanding of what must be taught to get a new shooter in a good standing position.

Shooting the Course of Fire

After working out prone, sitting and standing positions and practicing proper shot technique in each position, new shooters will be ready to fire the Rimfire Sporter course of fire in

practice and soon in matches. Here are some things to keep in mind while shooting the regulation course of fire.

Preparation Periods. The sighting stage has a 3-minute preparation period; all six competition stages have 1-minute preparation periods. It is important to use these periods not just to set up the firing position, but to orient the position on the target and to dry fire two or three repetitions.

Sighting Stage. Shooting the Rimfire Sporter course begins with a 10-minute sighting stage. Almost all competitors fire this stage in prone because the primary purpose is to be sure the rifle is sighted in. New shooters should fire 3-shot groups to determine if the rifle is zeroed. Especially if they are shooting with a telescope, they must make sight adjustments if their groups are not well-centered. O-Class shooters may have to modify their aiming points if their sighting shots are not centered.

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Slow-Fire Stages. Each of the three positions start with a 10-minute slow-fire or precision stage. Competitors must load a magazine with five rounds, fire those shots, reload a second magazine with five rounds and fire those shots. In slow-fire stages, there is plenty of time to take the rifle down from the shoulder to rest after each shot. Many experienced shooters, however, prefer to reload with the rifle in the shoulder and to continue firing all five shots before reloading, albeit at a somewhat slower pace than in rapid-fire. Shooters with telescopic sights should not be afraid to make sight adjustments, if shot groups are forming off-center.

Rapid-Fire Stages. Rimfire Sporter shooters soon learn there is nothing to fear from the rapid-fire stages and that their rapid-fire scores will average almost as high as their slow-fire scores. The 10-shot rapid-fire stages are fired in two series of five shots, with each beginning from a standing ready position. Staggered starts where shooters with manually-operated rifles get the **START** command 5 seconds before shooters with semi-auto rifles are used. During the 30 and 25 second time limits, shooters must get into position, cycle actions to chamber their first rounds and fire five shots. That gives shooters with bolt action or manually-operated rifles a little extra time to cycle their rifle actions after each shot. A decisive skill in rapid-fire is being able to quickly assume a good position and make slight body adjustments to get the sights and rifle oriented on the target. Shooters should practice this to make sure they can do this in 10 to no more than 15 seconds. That leaves somewhere between 10 and 20 seconds or two to four seconds to fire each of the five shots. Good rapid-fire technique requires quickly centering sight picture movements and applying absolutely smooth pressure to the trigger.

Changing Stages and Positions. In the Rimfire Sporter course, shooters must change from slow-fire to rapid-fire three times and from one position to the next two times without being able to take additional sighting shots. To do this effectively and efficiently, shooters must know the exact sling adjustments for their prone and sitting positions. They must also know if any sight adjustments from slow-fire to rapid-fire or from one position to the next are needed. It is normal for different positions and different shooting tempos to have different zeros. Keeping a shooter's journal where this information is recorded can help determine any necessary sight changes.

Starting a Rimfire Sporter Junior Program

Rimfire Sporter is becoming more and more popular with shooting clubs, junior clubs and 4-H clubs that want to start junior rifle programs, but don't have the resources to support a traditional smallbore rifle competition program. Rifles needed for Rimfire Sporter are rifles that are already owned by most gun club members and parents who want to get their sons and daughters started in rifle shooting. Clubs don't have to raise a lot

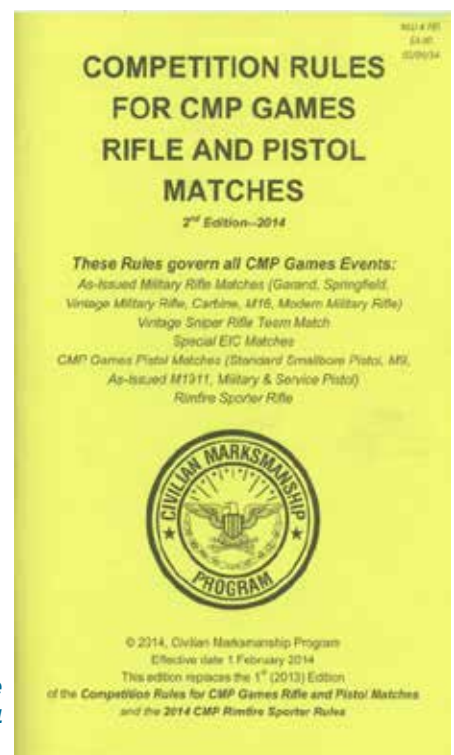


Rimfire Sporter shooters who use manually operated rifles must learn to operate actions while keeping their rifles in the shoulder during rapid-fire series. The best method is to lift the whole arm to grasp and cycle the bolt. This minimizes rifle movements.

of money to buy special equipment. Rimfire Sporter is, in fact, the best, cheapest and most practical way to get large numbers of youth involved in target rifle shooting. Here are some things to consider in getting started.

Rimfire Sporter Rules. A starting point for Junior clubs that want to start Rimfire Sporter Programs is to obtain a copy of the official rules. These rules are now contained in the **Competition Rules for CMP Games Rifle and Pistol Matches** (see especially Rule 8.0). The 2014 version of this rulebook can be downloaded at (<http://www.thecmp.org/Competitions/CMPGamesRules.pdf>).

Rimfire Sporter rules are now found in the 2014 **CMP Games Rules**.



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For most matches, the most convenient method of scoring is to have competitors score each other's targets. Shooters on odd and even numbered firing points exchange scorecards.

Rimfire Sporter Information. An excellent source for additional information is the CMP Rimfire Sporter webpage at <http://www.thecmp.org/Competitions/Rimfire.htm>. Clubs with new Rimfire Sporter programs should also obtain and study a copy of the CMP Guide to Rimfire Sporter Shooting that can be downloaded at <http://www.thecmp.org/Competitions/Rimfire.htm>). This 48 page booklet provides many additional details about how to conduct RS events and prepare shooters to participate in them.

Instructor Training. Each year, the CMP offers several comprehensive one or two-day courses to train shooting club Master Instructors how to teach rifle new shooter clinics and conduct Rimfire Sporter Matches. These courses cover safety, range operations and "best practice" methods for teaching fundamental marksmanship skills. Detailed information on the Master Instructor program and the next available courses are posted at <http://www.thecmp.org/Training/GSM.htm>.

Rimfire Sporter Competition Opportunities

One of the most appealing features of Rimfire Sporter shooting is that the competitions are non-intimidating, relaxed, friendly and welcoming. New shooters at matches typically are offered help and support. Experienced shooters who try this game often come away saying, "this is the most fun I have ever had in shooting."

CMP Sanctioned Matches. The CMP offers three levels of sanctioned Rimfire Sporter competitions. The first level is local and state competitions conducted by CMP affiliated clubs. These are almost always one-day affairs that are either open for adults and juniors or are juniors-only competitions. The second level is Regional CMP Games Matches that are conducted by CMP staff at Camp Butner, North Carolina (May) and Phoenix, Arizona (October). Both have major Rimfire Sporter matches on their schedules. At the third level is the biggest and most prestigious of these matches, the National Rimfire Sporter

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Championship. The National competitions take place each year at Camp Perry, Ohio during the National Matches. All levels of Rimfire Sporter competitions are open to all shooters regardless of previous experience.

Range Configuration. Clubs that decide to promote Rimfire Sporter will find it is easy to set up ranges and conduct competitions. Rimfire Sporter matches are conducted outdoors at 50 and 25 yards distances or indoors at 50 feet. Ranges need to have target or backer boards on which to mount targets, preferably large enough to hold at least two and as many as six or seven targets. Covered firing points are ideal, but not necessary.

Range Operation. There must be a Range Officer in charge of firing. If the range has more than 10 firing points there should be a Chief Range Officer and one Range Officer for each additional 10 firing points. The CMP Games Rulebook includes a detailed script for conducting firing at Annex F (“Rimfire Sporter Firing Procedures”). Anyone who will conduct firing must study this script carefully and follow it as closely as possible.

Scoring. Scoring targets at Rimfire Sporter matches can either be done by competitors or by a separate crew of volunteers. The easiest method of scoring is to have competitors score each other’s targets. Shooters on each pair of firing points (1-2, 3-4, 25-26, etc.) should exchange scorecards and score their partner’s targets. Basic scoring rules that match officials and competitors need to know are:

- **Scorecards for 60-shot Rimfire Sporter matches are available on request from the CMP.**
- **All shots are scored according to the highest value scoring ring that is hit or touched. A shothole that just touches a higher value scoring ring receives that value.**
- **A match official with a scoring gauge and template should be available to score doubtful shots and judge whether they touch a higher value scoring ring.**
- **Always score shots and record shot values from the highest value scoring ring (usually the X or 10 ring) and work out from there.**
- **If there are fewer than 10 hits on a target score only the shots that are there and record misses for missing shots.**
If there are more than 10 hits on a target, score the 10 highest value shots. Extra shots cannot be transferred to another target.

- **Enter the stage and 60-shot totals on the scorecard, have both the scorer and shooter sign the scorecard and turn it in to match officials.**

Special Rules. Rimfire Sporter rules are simple, but there are a few additional rules that new shooters and their coaches should know. Coaching of shooters on the line is generally allowed if it involves assisting them to get into position, adjust slings or make sight corrections. Refires for malfunctions are not allowed. This means that during slow-fire series, any malfunction or misfire must be cleared and the shooter can continue. If a malfunction occurs in a rapid-fire series, it can be cleared and the shooter can continue if time is available. Since there are no refires, malfunctions in rapid-fire must be avoided or minimized by making sure the rifle is clean and functioning reliably with the ammunition being used.

Start Your Rimfire Sporter Program! The information we’ve given you in this two-part article should give you a foundation for getting a Rimfire Sporter program started for youths in your area. If you have any additional questions or would like to sanction a Rimfire Match, contact the CMP at 419-635-2141 ext. 1106 or kfilipiak@thecmp.org.

About the Author

Gary Anderson, Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus, retired as the full-time CMP Director at the close of 2009. He continues to work with CMP as the senior marksmanship instructor. During his remarkable career, he won two Olympic gold medals, seven World Championships and 16 National Championships. He is a Vice President of the International Shooting Sports Federation, the President of USA Shooting, a former Nebraska State Senator and was one of the two Olympic Games Technical Delegates for Shooting during the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

In June, 2012, the International Olympic Committee awarded Gary Anderson the IOC’s highest honor, the Olympic Order, “for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement.”

In 2014, the CMP expanded their world-class air gun center at Camp Perry and renamed the facility the Gary Anderson CMP Competition Center, in honor of Anderson’s contribution to the organization and the marksmanship community.

