

## A Plea for Improved Scoring

By Gary Anderson, DCM

Ten-meter air rifle targets and 50-foot smallbore targets are very difficult to score accurately because the scoring rings and 10-dots are small and easy to misjudge. It is not surprising then that many match sponsors and coaches score these targets inaccurately, with a result that scores given are usually higher than scores fired. This article seeks to challenge everyone who scores targets to place greater emphasis on learning how to score accurately to assure that paper target scoring becomes significantly better than it is now.

As a result of administering postal competitions with thousands of participants every year and of providing results services for several major air gun competitions, the CMP staff has accumulated considerable experience in scoring targets and in evaluating the scoring done by match sponsors. We know that many air rifle targets are not being scored accurately and that most of these errors can be eliminated by better knowledge of how to

score and by better training of scorers. A few examples should illustrate our concern and conclusions.

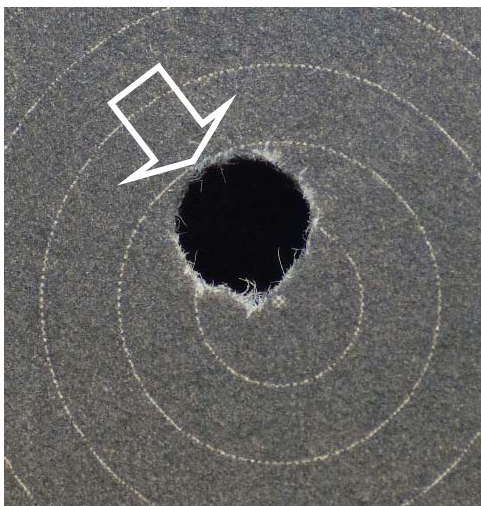
The CMP acts as the clearinghouse for Three-Position Air Rifle National Records that are fired under National Three-Position Air Rifle Council rules. The process of submitting National Records for approval also requires match sponsors to submit the targets. Two recent four-person team records were scored too high, by a minimum of six and 13 points respectively. A couple of recent individual record scores are also in danger of being rejected because they were scored too high. In evaluating these potential record targets, no shots that were marked as having been gauged and judged by at least two scorers were determined to be incorrect even if there were concerns that the scorers' decisions were correct. The shots that were scored down were in almost every case, shots that should have been gauged, but were not.

Accurate scoring begins with using the correct scoring gauge and knowing how to read that gauge. All air rifle shots except shots in the 1 and

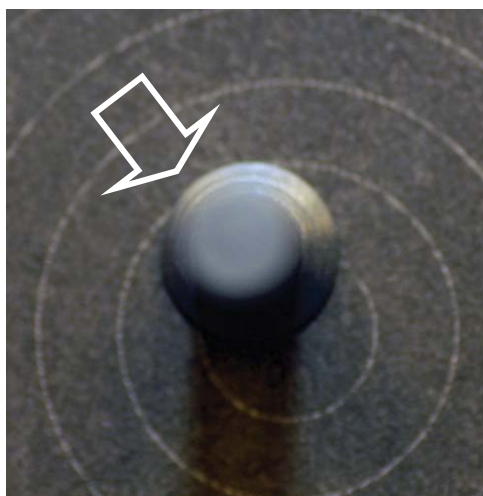
2-rings must be scored with a 5.5mm "outward gauge." New scorers must be taught to begin by studying the scoring rules. Rule 8.0 in the *National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules* governs air rifle scoring. Pay particular attention to the diagram on how to read an outward gauge. To score a higher value, the outer edge of the gauge must be tangent to or inside

*Continued on Page 6*

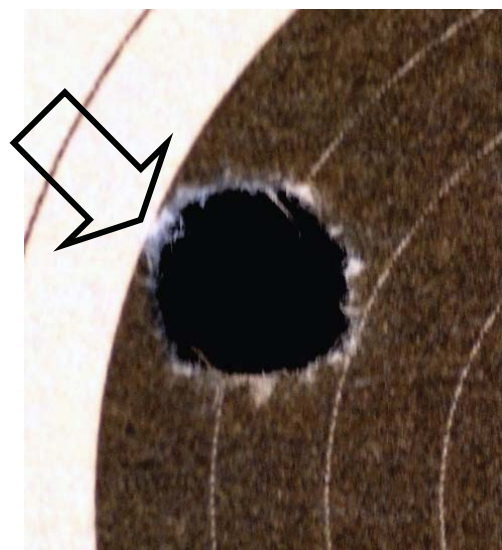
### #1: Is this shot a 10 or 9?



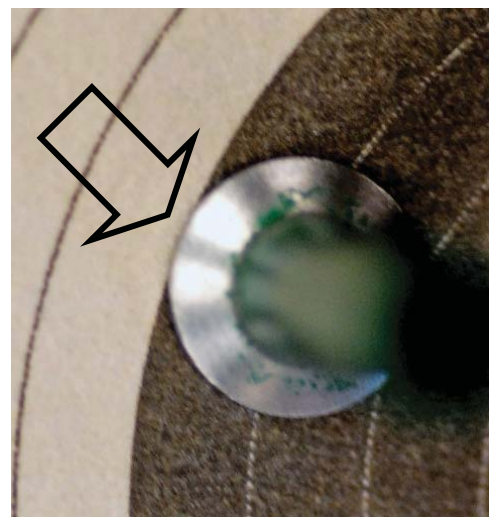
#1: Look at the outside of the shot hole, not whether it might touch the 10-dot. If there is not a distinct black space between the outside of the shot hole and the inside of the 8 ring, the shot will almost always score a 9 regardless of whether it looks like the shot hole is close to the 10-dot.



#1 with gauge inserted. It is clearly a 9—not even close. Remember—this is an outside gauge.



#2: It appears that the inside of the shot hole touches the 6-ring, but look at the outside. The outside breaks the 4-ring—there is no black gap.



#2 gauged: Even though the shot hole appears to touch, it must be gauged. And it gauges out—it's a 5. The outside of the shot hole was a better indicator of value.

## A Plea for Improved Scoring - Continued from Page 2

the outer edge of the second scoring ring away from the value being determined.

A primary reason why inaccurate air rifle scoring takes place is that scorers do not know how to look at a shot hole and properly determine whether it should be gauged. The examples provided with this article demonstrate how initial appearances can be deceiving. In each of these shots there is some visual indication that the shot might score the higher value. We have found that many scorers simply “eyeball” shots like this and decide they are “in” without even gauging them. In each case, the gauge shows that the shots are clearly “out.” A lot of extra points are being given to shooters because of this error.

One of the primary reasons why looking at air rifle shot holes is so deceptive is due to the poor quality target paper available in the U. S. Air rifle pellets typically cut shot holes that are larger than the 4.5mm pellet on virtually all U. S. targets. As it punches through the paper, the pellet tears small bits of target paper fibers

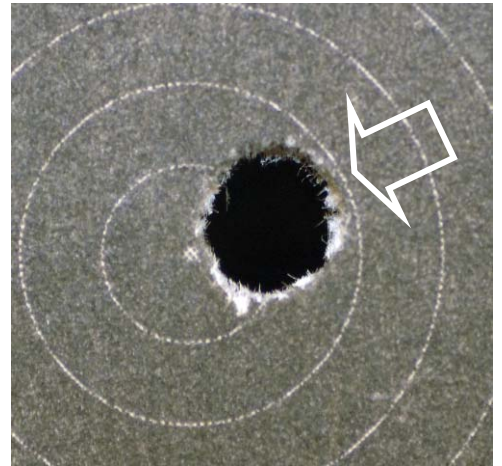
from outside of the pellet diameter to leave an enlarged shot hole. We have seen several shot holes so large that the 10-dot is obliterated; yet the shot still scores a nine when a gauge is inserted.

Accurate scores are determined by how far the center of the shot hole is from the center of the target, not by whether an enlarged shot hole touches a scoring ring. The scoring gauge can accurately find the true center of the shot hole, but because the outside of the shot hole may be larger, accurate scoring can only be done by using an outward scoring gauge that is 5.5mm in diameter, not 4.5mm, and by reading the gauge on the outside of a scoring ring that is not damaged by the pellet hole.

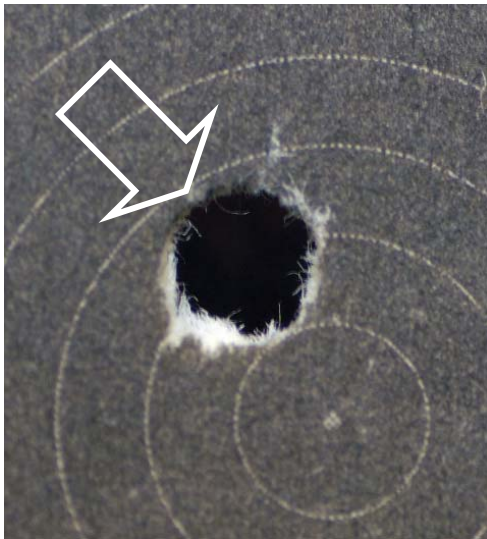
Good scorers understand that shot holes may be larger than 4.5mm and that they must gauge every shot that is doubtful. Do not determine whether a shot is doubtful by looking at the inside of the shot hole. The illustrations here show how deceptive that can be. Instead, look at the outside of the shot hole. If there is not a distinct black gap between the outside of the shot

hole and the inside of the outer scoring ring, the shot is doubtful and must be gauged.

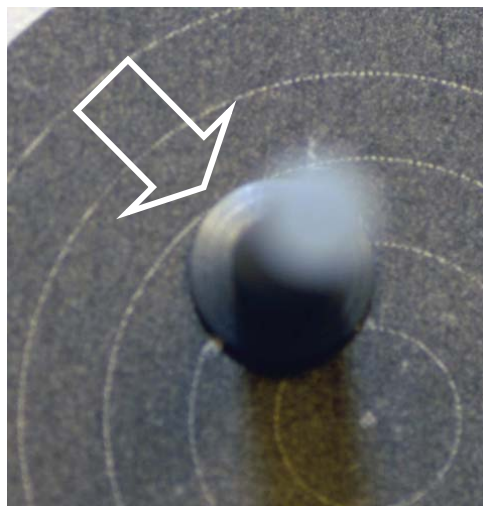
If scorers understand that air rifle shot holes are typically larger than 4.5mm and that looking at the outside of the shot hole is a surer way to determine whether a shot hole is doubtful and must be gauged, and if they do this with an outward gauge that is properly read, most of the errors in scoring we have seen would be eliminated. After all, the objective of target scoring is to give the shooter the score they actually fire, not an inflated, false score.



#4: Here's another shot that looks like it might touch the 10-dot, but in air rifle scoring, never assume that it does.



#3: It appears that this shot touches the 9-ring, but look at the outside of the hole—the outside edge is very close to the 7 ring—it must be gauged.



#3 gauged: The gauge shows that this shot is also out—it's an 8. A visual “touch” can be very misleading—always gauge these shots anyway.



#4 gauged: It's obviously a nine—again not even close! Just because it looks like it touches does not prove anything—only the gauge does.