

## Conducting Competition Firing With the New Three-Position Air Rifle Rules

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The new 9th Edition 2012-2014 National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules that were just released in September contain a major change in how competition firing is conducted. Previous rules called for sighting shots to be fired during the competition time and allowed shooters to take as much or as little time as they wished to fire sighting shots. The new rules provide for separate, timed sighting stages before record fire stages. This article examines the background for this change and provides detailed instructions on how to conduct competition firing according to the new rules.

When competitions are conducted on electronic targets where spectators can see shooters' scores, one reason for this change becomes obvious. If you have had to explain to someone new to shooting why the shooters are shooting and their scores are not counting or why some shots count and some don't, you can understand why the old system of shooting unlimited sighters within the match time was confusing and difficult to explain. Sighters are pre-competition warm-up shots. In other sports, they don't have some athletes still warming up while others are already competing. Why do we need to do this in shooting?

The rule-making decision that is motivating similar decisions in national programs like USA's 3-position air rifle shooting was an ISSF decision to separate sighting and record firing by having a 15 minute sighting stage in all 10 meter and 50 meter rifle and pistol events before the start of record firing. Time limits for the events were also shortened since sighters will now be fired before and not during the competition time.

This change will go into effect in 2013 and national federations like USA Shooting are expected to adopt this change so it is clear that having separate sighting periods before, not during, record firing will quickly become the international standard. Since the National Three-Position Air Rifle Council tries to conform its 3-position air rifle rules as closely as possible with international standards, the Council decided to also provide for separate sighting stages in its 2012-2014 Rules.

**Editor's Note:** See related story on 3P Air Rifle rules changes on page 26.

Detailed rules and firing procedures for conducting 3-position air rifle competitions according to the new rules are provided in the 2012-2014 National Standard Rules. A wise first step in preparing to conduct competition firing with the new rules is to read Rules 5.3 and 7.4 – 7.8. The rules provide full details and a course of fire chart.

Anyone who compares the new ISSF rules with Rule 5.3 will quickly note one major difference. In ISSF rules, the 15-minute sighting stage precedes all single position events and the first position in 50m 3-position events. Those events now use block time for both the 50m 3x20 and 3x40 events where shooters can change to sighters and back to record firing for the second and third positions at their own pace.

This brings us back to the old question regarding why the Council does not also use block time for 3-position events. Several years ago, the Council

mandated that each position must be timed separately in 3-position air rifle events. The first reason was safety. With so many new and inexperienced youth in 3-position air rifle, the Council felt it was critically important to safely complete position changes during separate changeover times when all rifles were cleared. A second reason was courtesy. With smaller firing points on 10 meter ranges and wide variations in shooting speeds, shooters who finished all three positions early often disturbed other



*Starting in 2013, ISSF rules for 10m and 50m Rifle and Pistol events will provide for a separate preparation and sighting time before competition shooting. In this photo, Jin Jong Oh, double Olympic gold medalist, fires in the 10m Air Pistol event during the London Olympics.*

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shooters when they came off the line. In deciding its new Rules, the Council decided to retain its policy of timing each position separately.

One of the key changes in both the new ISSF Rules and the National Standard Rules is the introduction of a combined Preparation and Sighting time. There no longer is a separate preparation period. Now, preparation and sighting are done together in one 10-minute preparation and sighting stage. The following paragraphs walk you through how to conduct firing according to the new rules. The charts give the precise order and times for conducting either a 3x10 or 3x20 course of fire.

**CALL TO THE FIRING LINE.** The first step in conducting firing is to call the shooters to the firing line with the command **RELAY NUMBER (relay no.), YOU MAY MOVE YOUR RIFLES AND EQUIPMENT TO THE FIRING LINE.** The rules state that the call to the line should be “approximately five minutes” before the Preparation and Sighting Stage starts. This means the call to the line should be given at least 15 minutes (5 min. plus 10 min. for preparation and sighting) before the scheduled start of record firing. Five minutes should be the minimum time given to move gear to the line and prepare for the first firing position; this period can be longer. If there is more than one relay,



*Starting in the fall of 2012, the National Standard Three Position Air Rifle Rules provide for separate preparation and sighting or changeover and sighting stages before each position in 3-position air rifle competitions. Now all shooters will complete sighting shots before record firing begins.*

it is also important to give each relay the same amount of set-up time. If it is necessary to send shooters or other personnel downrange to hang targets, then rifles must immediately be grounded after they are brought to the line and targets must be hung before the five-minute set-up time begins. During this time athletes may handle their rifles, get into position and dry fire.

### 3x10 COURSE OF FIRE

STAGE	POSITION	TIME LIMIT
PREPARATION AND SIGHTING	PRONE Unlimited sighting shots	10 minutes
RECORD FIRE	PRONE, 10 record shots	10 minutes
CHANGEOVER	PRONE to STANDING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	STANDING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	STANDING, 10 record shots	15 minutes
CHANGEOVER	STANDING to KNEELING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	KNEELING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	KNEELING, 10 record shots	10 minutes

### PREPARATION AND SIGHTING STAGE.

At the end of the set-up time, the command **PREPARATION AND SIGHTING STAGE...TIME LIMIT 10 MINUTES...START** is given. After this command, shooters may continue to set up their positions and prepare and they can load and start firing sighting shots without further commands. During this time, shooters may fire unlimited sighting shots, but they must complete their sighting shots within 10 minutes. At the end of the period, a **THIRTY SECONDS** warning must be given before the **STOP** command. It is a good idea for the Range Officer to have a



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spotting scope to check the targets and make sure no shots during the sighting stage hit outside of the sighter guard ring. The Range Officer must mark these shots before targets are turned in for scoring.

**PRONE RECORD FIRE.** Immediately after the **STOP** command, the Range Officer must start the Record Fire stage with the command **PRONE RECORD FIRE...20 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 20 MINUTES...START.** If electronic targets are used, a short pause is necessary to reset targets with the computer. During any record fire stage, all shots must be fired at record bulls. Any shots fired at a sighting bull during a record fire stage must be scored as misses.

**CHANGEOVER.** After the prone record fire stage is complete, the changeover to the standing position must begin. If paper targets are used, it will probably be

ing and get into position and they may load and fire sighting shots without further command.

**10-MINUTE SIGHTING STAGE OPTION.** The normal sighting stage time limit for standing and kneeling is five minutes. The rules do, however, give match sponsors the option of using a 10-minute sighting stage. Five minutes is normally sufficient for Sporter Class shooters, but in matches with lots of Precision shooters, the longer sighting stage is usually preferred. If a match sponsor intends to use this option, it should be clearly stated in the match program. If a competition has mixed relays with Sporter and Precision rifles on the same relay, all shooters must be given the same sighting time.

**STANDING RECORD FIRE.** Immediately after the **STOP** command, the Range Officer must start the Record Fire stage with the command **STANDING RECORD FIRE...20 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 25 MINUTES...START.** In the old rules, the time limit for standing was 40 minutes, but with a separate sighting stage and a general trend toward somewhat shorter time limits, this has now been shortened to 25 minutes.

**CHANGEOVER AND SIGHTING FOR KNEELING.** The same procedure that was followed for changing from prone to standing is used to change from standing to kneeling. There is a five-minute changeover followed by a five-minute sighting stage. This sighting stage can also be extended to 10 minutes if the 10-minute option is used.

**KNEELING RECORD FIRE.** After the **STOP** command for the kneeling sighting

stage, the commands for kneeling record fire, **KNEELING RECORD FIRE...20 SHOTS IN A TIME LIMIT OF 20 MINUTES...START,** are given. The old kneeling time limit was 30 minutes for 20 shots, but with the adoption of a separate sighting stage, this time limit was shortened to 20 minutes.

3x20 COURSE OF FIRE		
STAGE	POSITION	TIME LIMIT
PREPARATION AND SIGHTING	PRONE Unlimited sighting shots	10 minutes
RECORD FIRE	PRONE, 20 record shots	20 minutes
CHANGEOVER	PRONE to STANDING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	STANDING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	STANDING, 20 record shots	25 minutes
CHANGEOVER	STANDING to KNEELING	5 minutes
SIGHTING	KNEELING Unlimited sighting shots	5 minutes (or 10 minutes, see Rule 5.3.1)
RECORD FIRE	KNEELING, 20 record shots	20 minutes

necessary to clear the line to go downrange and change targets. Then a five-minute changeover stage must begin. The changeover may not begin until everyone is back from downrange. During the changeover, shooters can handle their rifles, get into position, remove CBIs and dry fire.

**SIGHTING STAGE FOR STANDING.** At the end of the changeover, the commands to start the standing sighting stage, **STANDING POSITION SIGHTING STAGE...TIME LIMIT FIVE MINUTES...START,** must be given. Once again, shooters can continue to prepare for stand-

These new 3-position air rifle firing procedures may seem like they are quite different, but once Range Officers run one or two matches with them, the change should not seem dramatic at all. The new rules make shooting a little more like other sports where warm-

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### COMMANDS FOR CONDUCTING 3X10, 3X20 AND STANDING COURSES OF FIRE

COMMANDS AND INSTRUCTIONS	NOTES (Range Officer actions are in <b>bold</b> )
<i>Before the competition:</i>	<i>Before a competition, the Range Officer must prepare the range for firing. Athletes may not move their equipment to the firing line until the Range Officer calls them to the firing line.</i>
<b>WELCOME TO THE (Competition Name) THREE-POSITION AIR RIFLE MATCH</b>  <b>RELAY NUMBER (Relay Number) YOU MAY MOVE YOUR RIFLES AND EQUIPMENT TO THE FIRING LINE...GROUND YOUR RIFLES</b>	<i>The Range Officer begins each relay by welcoming the athletes and calling them to the firing line. When athletes bring their rifles to the firing line, they must ground them on their firing points with actions open and CBIs inserted.</i>  <i>If athletes will be asked to go downrange to hang their targets, all rifles must be grounded with CBIs inserted before anyone goes down range.</i>
<b>IS THE LINE CLEAR?</b>  <b>THE LINE IS CLEAR...GO FORWARD AND HANG YOUR TARGETS</b>	<b>Range Officers must signal YES or NO to indicate that all rifles are grounded with CBIs inserted.</b>  <i>Coaches, athletes or target handlers may go downrange to hang targets. No one may handle rifles while personnel are downrange.</i>
<i>After all targets are hung and all personnel are back from downrange:</i>	
<b>TAKE YOUR POSITIONS</b>	<i>After being instructed to take their positions, athletes may set up their equipment, take their prone positions and do holding and aiming exercises. CBIs may not be removed. The Range Officer should allow approximately five minutes for athletes to prepare.</i>
<i>After 5:00 minutes</i>	
<b>PREPARATION AND SIGHTING STAGE... TIME LIMIT 10 MINUTES...START</b>  <b>30 SECONDS</b>	<i>This is a combined Preparation and Sighting Stage. During this period, athletes may get into their firing positions, remove CBIs and dry fire. If athletes are new to this procedure, the Range Officer may explain that the command START authorizes them to load and begin firing when they are ready.</i>  <i>The Range Officer gives a 30 second warning after 9 minutes, 30 seconds.</i>
<i>After 10:00 minutes</i>	

ups are performed before, not during, the competition. A big advantage of the new rules for 3-position air rifle is that they greatly simplify when and how the coaching of Sporter Class shooters is done. The old rules allowed the coaching of Sporter shooters while they were shooting sighters, but Range Officers had difficulties knowing when shooters were shooting sighters and when they started record shots. Now the rule is simple, when the sighting stage ends, all coaches must step back.

The correct conduct of 3-position air rifle events according to the new rules is greatly simplified by using a Range Officer script. The new National Standard Rules, in fact, now provide a complete Range Officer script titled ***FIRING PROCEDURES AND RANGE OFFICER COMMANDS FOR THREE-POSITION COURSES OF FIRE.***

After studying the rules for the new procedures, every Range Officer should then turn to page 53 in the new rules to view this script. Download a \*.pdf version of the new rules (<http://www.TheCMP.org/3P/Rules.pdf>), copy the pages with the Range Officer script and place them in a notebook to use while conducting firing. Every Range Officer should work with a script even if the commands are ultimately memorized. These new rules involve some changes that will require additional attention to detail by Range Officers, but they will be quickly mastered.

*The first page of the four-page Range Officer script to be used in conducting competition firing in 3-position air rifle matches. The complete Range Officer script is published in the new National Standard Rules that can be downloaded from the CMP Website at <http://www.TheCMP.org/3P/Rules.pdf>. Range Officers should always start with a script when conducting any type of competition firing.*