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I have been shooting Sporting Clays just for fun for a couple of years and I have never mastered the Springing Teal target which goes straight up in the air. Everybody tells me I shoot under it so I raised the adjustable comb of my gun a couple of millimeters, but it didn't seem to do anything. How much would I have to raise the comb before the gun will start to shoot noticeably higher?

Bob Dodd, Brunswick, Vic

As a general rule for every 1/16" you raise the comb, your gun will shoot 1" higher at 16 yards. Sorry to use imperial measurements once again this month, but those calculations were stated by an Englishman called Robert Churchill in his 1954 book titled "Game Shooting". Churchill was regarded as the leader of his time in the theories of shotgun shooting.

Theory is one thing and fact is another, but I have no doubt Churchill was right on the money as I have proven this time and time again on a pattern board.

Bob lets make three assumptions. Let's assume your Springing Teal target is being shot at 36 yards (33 metres) which would be a very typical distance for this type of shot. Let's also assume at this distance your shotgun has an effective shot pattern of approximately 30 inches in diameter. This obviously can vary greatly on chokes and shot shells, but for the purposes of this exercise let's use this shot pattern size. Finally I will assume your Sporting gun is shooting a 50/50 pattern (50% of your pellets hit above your aiming point and 50% hit below). This means you have 15 inches of pattern above the aiming point. By lifting your comb up 2 millimeters (3/32") you will, under Churchill's calculations, raise the point of impact 76mm (3") at 36 yards. You have now in effect raised your point of impact 10% and now have a gun that can be described as shooting as 60/40. (18" of effective shot pattern above the aiming point and 12" below)

Whether changing the pattern by only 10 % or 3" is actually noticeable when shooting at clay targets is completely a subjective topic. In my experience most shot gunners don't actually notice 10% changes in their shot patterns, but mentally it can give the shooter a new positive approach to breaking the target and often this is all that is needed. If you are still missing the "Springing Teal" then go and lift the comb up another 3mm and see what happens. This should raise your shot pattern by another 15% and you should start to see some changes. When I am coaching I never ask my students to make less than 3mm changes initially so I can see immediate results. Sometimes for better and sometimes for worse, but if you don't experiment you will die wondering!

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