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I shoot small-bore rifle and I am finding there is a huge difference between my practice scores and my competition scores. I know it is a mental thing, but I am at a loss to get over it. Any advice would be great.

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I have spoken about this problem in an earlier edition of Australian Shooter, but my advice here is worth repeating I believe. What you are suffering from is what I call “little man in the head syndrome”. When you practice the little guy in your head remains silent allowing your brain to actually soak up the physical and mental things needed to shoot well. Through quality practice your brain actually learns and stores this information. As soon as you enter an event you want to do well in or are put under pressure in any way, maybe simply by having a friend start watching you, the little man in your head wakes up and starts telling you advice. You may think this voice is there to help you, but by the fact he was never there in practice when you were shooting perfect scores is evidence enough that he was sent into your head by Satan himself. The trick to performing well in competition is to silence that little man. The best way is through confidence. Accept what you have perfected in practice WILL work in competition. There has been a book written many years ago by an American author by the name of Tim Gallway called “The Inner Game of Golf” that explains this concept better than any other book that I have read on the subject. Get it and read the first half dozen chapters and then put it down as it starts to become very technical. Shooting is a great sport because you have complete control over your result. If you play tennis or cricket your result is determined by the quality of your opposition. In our sport the only opposition you have is the grey matter between your ears and any voices you may let interfere.

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