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I have been shooting Sporting Clays, Skeet and DTL for a couple of years now with very mixed results. I like experimenting with different things with my guns and ammunition. I was recently told that practicing with very tight chokes will help me improve my accuracy. I have a Beretta 686 76cm Trap gun which I have had screw in adjustable chokes fitted to the barrel. I have tried the extra full chokes on Skeet and Trap with poor scores as a result. Is this good advice?

Barry Kennedy, Penrith NSW

Barry many things that sound great in theory in Clay Target shooting often show poor results in practice. This is one of them. I am guessing you were told the extra tight chokes would improve your accuracy because it would mean that you would either centre the target with the full payload of shot or you will miss the clay completely because you wont have the benefit of the shot pattern helping you. Unfortunately shotgun shooting is not a game of perfect so centering the target at all times is not possible anyway. The real problem when you constantly start to miss targets is that it will have an effect on your mental game also and one of the first things we tend to do as shooters when we miss is that we start to change other physical factors such as changing how we mount the gun, maybe trying new hold points, altering the length of pull etc. etc... All of these technical factors may have indeed been right in the first place, but the fact that all of a sudden you are missing targets will eventually lead you to weakening and changing things for the wrong reason.

The other reason why your results may have fallen with the tighter chokes is simply because extra tight chokes don't always relate to extra good patterns especially when smaller shot is involved. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that smaller pellets, such as No. 9 Skeet shot, can easily distort when it is forced through the tight confines of an extra tight choke cylinder. This causes the shot to distort and "flyers" in the shot pattern result thus causing poor overall shot patterns. Extra full chokes are far better used for large shot such as Number 4's and larger and for distances beyond the 45 metre range. My advice is always to practice with the same tools and game plan that you will shoot in competition.

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