

## FINE TUNING YOUR SHOT SEQUENCE MODEL

If you have read the first two articles on Shot Sequence, you should by now have created a document which is made up of 3 columns.

Column 1 lists the physical actions which, in their specific order, make up the whole sequence.

Column 2 lists the feed-back you receive which confirms that the physical action is being performed correctly and/or has been successfully completed.

The number of times you have worked through your shot sequence in focused practice to create columns 1 & 2 should now mean that you are more aware of what you are trying to achieve by following this process, even if you are not able to fully achieve it yet!

The speed at which you are achieving each step in the process is the right speed for *you*. You are building neural pathways here and the more times you accurately perform an element, the more developed the neural pathway becomes and so the performance becomes easier and more reliable. Rushing at this stage might send inconsistent signals to your brain. This will establish a variety of pathways for your brain to use when performing a shot, which in turn might cause your brain to question which of the pathways you want to follow for that particular shot. This is most likely to happen when you put yourself under pressure and just when you most want a consistent and reliable outcome. So, take your time to fully understand the action, cause and effect that your shot sequence has within your body.

So, what is column 3 for?

This column is for noting down emotional feedback.

“What?” you say.

Well, do you honestly feel as ‘comfortable with’ or ‘confident of’ your performance at every stage of your shot sequence? The awareness of different levels of ‘comfort’ or ‘satisfaction’ with specific sections within the sequence means that either your brain and body are still not working in unison at this point, or maybe you have misinterpreted something about your sequence – what you are doing, the way you are doing it, the feedback received (or not) or the order you are doing it in. It highlights the places where, over time, you have built multiple neural pathways and identifies areas that need further investigation in order to make clear to your brain which neural pathway is the one you wish to adopt and consistently use.

So, use column 3 to note down the areas which you are comfortable with and the areas you are unhappy about. This can take the form of ticks and crosses, colour coding, whatever suits you. This is *your* shot sequence and *your* personal review.

Once you have identified a specific element which is not so satisfactory, loop back to the considerations in column 1. Review in detail what it is that you are actually trying to do. If

you are achieving this okay: it may be that it is in slightly the wrong place in the shot. Look at what actions it sits between. Make sure you have a thorough understanding of the physical action you wish to perform so that the neural pathway you are establishing and promoting is the one you really want to use.

We all know that changing bad habits is difficult – this is because we need to spend time convincing our brains that the ‘easy’ route of following what we have always done is not the way we wish to progress. It takes time to establish and build up a new neural pathway to be more substantial than the existing one, hence the time and effort involved in changing old habits.

Research has shown that this is possible.

People often refer to the 10,000-hour concept. However, current scientific research shows us that establishment and meaningful development of new neural pathways can be achieved by *focused practice* for numerous short periods of time totalling far less than 10,000 hours. Focused practice is where a relatively small number of repetitions of a process are performed with total concentration on consistent repetition. It relies on a deep understanding of the process before it is practiced; hence the conversations, reading and thinking time involved.

It is at this point that it might be helpful to work with a camera which will allow you to review the footage, or ask a coach or trusted shooting companion to look at the specific element you are trying to review. Talk through the glitches and read round the area of interest. Make sure you have a complete and logical understanding of the detail of the small element within the action you are trying to perform before you try to perform it. Once you have acquired this knowledge, work from the beginning with a stretchy band to put the action into practise. Maybe start with one repetition using total focus and camera or human feedback to ensure that you have achieved what you were trying to achieve. Remember, we are working on one element of one bit of the whole sequence here. Get that element right and then integrate it slowly into the wider sequence, one step at a time.

Gradually build the whole sequence up using the stretchy band remembering that 5 repetitions of focused practise are better than any number of variable repetitions: don't confuse the neural pathways!

Then, either when you feel happier with more elements of the whole shot process or, if you have the facilities and you have progressed through to performing with a bow, look at and adjust the information in column 2. Any alteration to your physical performance will have altered the feedback experienced, so make sure that column 2 is kept up to date and that you have ‘linked’ in your mind the new feedback expectations with the physical action.

Shot sequences always develop, so they will need constant updating, but this is where column 3 can either give you affirmation that you're okay for time being OR that you need to re do the loop. It provides the notification if a shot MOT is required and even lists the advisories, so, when you are able to actually shoot again, make sure that you fast forward through this shot sequence review process with the bow and check that your perception of

what you are doing with a stretchy band actually reflects what you do when you shoot the bow. Your time in lockdown will have paved the way to a greater understanding of your shot and laid the foundations for a more consistent outcome.

Good shooting!

Next time: Virtual shooting.