

Improving PIT SERVICE

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The quality of a shooter's pit service can conceivably dictate the outcome of a national championship. If it's windy and one shooter is getting fast service at 600 yards and another is getting slow service, there is a decided advantage to the one who has the fast service -- the shooter who's getting faster service then has more options in the shooting strategy he applies.

Following are a few ideas that might help you and your partners in the pits.

The key to performing good pit service is efficiency. Be ready, have a system, and go to work. Decide beforehand who's doing what. If you're pulling in tandem, I suggest dividing the target in halves. Then as the target comes down, you automatically know what your job function is. Stay on one side and work the target one side at a time. You won't trip over each other that way and will have less wasted motion. When you're working the pits, and especially if it's a new experience for you, pay attention to the other shooters, especially the service-rifle shooters. Military shooters practice a lot, and they pull a lot of targets in doing so. If you can keep up with them, you're doing extremely well.

Try not to stare at the target in slow-fire when you're waiting for a shot on your target. If a spotting disk gets shot out, it can fragment and cause injury. If it's possible (as it is here at Perry), put one hand on the target frame assembly so you can feel the bullet pass through the target. That way you won't have to keep your neck strained looking up. Wear glasses, preferably some with a tint to rest your eyes. And be careful around the number boards used to post rapid-fire scores. I've seen people get hurt when those things get blown off and land on someone's head.

Remember that the thing that helps more people with their score at 600 yards is fast pit service. And that's especially true if you shoot in the manner that I do. I'm not playing the meteorology game — I'm shooting each round just as quickly as I can. I am always waiting on pit service!

Good shooters get better pit service because most of their shots are in the X- and 10-rings. The pit crew doesn't have to look all over the target for bullet holes. If you can't give 5-second pit service to a High-Master, you're not doing your job. You may not be able to give 5-second service if your shooter's bullet holes are stringing from 5-ring to 5-ring, but you can still give 10-second pit service at worst.

And pay attention! It's really a shame for someone to have to call for a mark more than once. I can see it if the shot goes through the spotter, but if your guy is shooting that well, you ought to really be paying attention! (And when you get the chance, paste over the hole in the spotter.)

It's also helpful for you to study the different commands that can come your way while you're pulling targets. If the range-master sends an order in your direction, and if you don't know what he's asking you to do, that slows down the whole process and, again, a big delay could mean the difference between winning and losing. Everything you need to know is in the NRA Highpower Rifle Rule Book (which should be part of your gear).

Finally, keep in mind the "golden rule." Work on your shooter's target just as carefully, quickly, and thoroughly as you would want done for your string.