



Where you are on the range, where the wind flags are on the range, and where the wind is coming from all determine the accuracy and completeness of the information they provide. At Camp Perry the flags don't always help, especially considering the span of the ranges. Fortunately, the wind tends to be easy to read using mirage as a leading indicator.

Match and shot two sighters which were Xs and then a 100 with 8. The closest score to mine in that match was a 95. I was doping the wind every shot and making one minute, or more, corrections shot to shot. I was lucky too — it could have been 10s and not Xs.

I have three flags on my home range and can see all three at 1000 (two at 600) very clearly and I really watch those flags. My range is a notorious fishtailing range; wind direction will change twenty or thirty degrees in a heartbeat. I normally watch mirage more than a wind flag, but a flag is gives a better indication of how much more or less needs to go on the sight because of directional changes. Remember: a flag is best for direction, mirage is best for speed. An exception to always be aware of, though, is that flags won't always be positioned correctly to make best use of them. Mirage reading is more con-

trollable by the shooter and, therefore, must be a well-practiced skill. Most of the time when I have a tailwind or headwind I am more concerned about directional changes than I am velocity changes. Directional changes move me more than velocity changes. I am trying to watch how much the flag raises and dips but I am looking at them for directional movements.

The fishtail condition is one of the best ways to teach people to dope wind. I do this with my kids. We get in a fishtailing wind, which, again, is not a big step on our range, and make sure our wind zeros are the same. I had them call the wind for that shot. For example, they say "one minute left." We both put one minute left and we both shoot. The targets go down and come up. They call the wind again. They call whether it's from left or right, or if it changed direction (or didn't

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When there is a head- or tailwind, watch out for the fishtail — a wind that comes from one direction and then turns to the other. When you get a fishtail, try to shoot in one condition or wind direction if it's at all possible. If it's switching rapidly, try to shoot one sighter when the wind is coming from one direction and one when it's coming from the other. That way you'll have some idea of the wind value after each switch. When you see it switch, all corrections you had on are going to come off of the sight, and all the corrections are going to go back on for the new direction. To forecast the switch in a fishtail, check the direction the mirage traverses. The warning signal that the wind is about to switch directions is when you see the mirage wave flow slow down and then start to boil (run straight up). Never shoot during a switch.

change direction). We go back to zero. Now they make the call whether we add or subtract off the one minute left we shot with before. This gives them the confidence of calling the wind, it lets me watch what they're doing, and I'm also making a call. Sometimes I'll intercede and say let's go a little more or less. We are, essentially, synchronizing our wind zeros. One reason the fishtailing wind is the best to learn in is because we get a zero and then have left and right changes. Not only do we get a wind direction, but we get to learn a lot about the wind that's here at the line and the wind that's down there at the target. What's affecting the bullet the most; what should we really pay attention to? There are many times at our range where we can have the flag downrange standing out straight and the one nearer the line just barely waving one way or the other, so now it's which way do we want to go?

The only way anyone can get this experience and knowledge is by going out and practicing. In a match the shooter is doing that but he's often working to the next shot. In practice he can wait for that condition to reappear. We have all the time in the world to wait it out. Of course, some shooters try to play that game in a match: wait for the condition to reappear and shoot again. That's fine, but don't run out of time...

Some people rely on the target next to them for their wind information. Some peo-

ple *really* rely on it. If someone has good shooters on either side of him it's fine to rely on them, but he's got to shoot in the same cadence, or close to it, as they do. The success of that strategy depends on how long he waits after seeing what the other shooters did, so it can go either way, but he is exposing himself to more problems. If his neighbor's scorer says "your fourteenth shot for record is a 9..." it's probably a good idea to come off and look through the left eye to see where that shot is on the target, and look at conditions quickly, decide what he's going to do, and make his move. If the neighbor is shooting a similar cadence to our shooter and our shooter stays ahead of him, and of course the neighbor may be doing the same thing off our shooter, so they can work that to each other's advantages. Or disadvantages.

My application of this strategy is, more than anything, dependent on my knowledge of nearby shooter's skills. I get an idea of that by listening to the call outs as the string progresses, and if I'm hearing "X" and "10" over a few rounds, my ears will perk up right away if I hear "9." That lets me know the shooter has found the center of the target and then lost it to a mistake, and I assume this mistake was one of judgement — he missed a change. I still, always, will go with what I see, but the point is that I am liable (almost certainly) to hold up and reassess downrange evidence. It takes no more than seconds for another look.