



# This is Practical Pellet Pistol shooting

Terry Doe visits the demanding world of air-powered Practical Pistol shooting and shows that it's not so easy after all...

**I**F YOU LIKE FAST, inventive and exciting shooting, some sort of Practical Pistol could be just what you're looking for, a sport that can be as accessible as plinking yet allows you to train to its highest level in your back garden. Shooting air pistols is fun, demanding, rewarding and just about everything else that shooting should be. If you want to belong to something worthwhile, supported by a growing club and competition network in which you can play your part to whichever level suits you – it really is time you considered practical pistol shooting.

But just what is Practical Pistol shooting? It's a sport that's all about the trade-off between speed and accuracy where you shoot against the clock at a wide variety of targets, using pistols that fire pellets or BBs. Various versions of the sport have their own rules, regulations and restrictions on equipment, but this all adds to the variety and choice available to you.

There are two main types of PP, Falling plate, where competitors fire at metal plate targets, and PPP (Practical Pellet Pistol) with a wide variety of target situations. We'll look at what you're likely to encounter further on, but by far the best way to become involved in PP is to do your research, speak to those that take part, try as many aspects as you can – and then get stuck in.



Practical Pistol shooting can take several forms, but within each there's an all-action format involving potential match-winning decisions to be made by the shooter. Unlike most target-based shooting sports, practical pistol doesn't demand deliberate, calculated, n-th degree accuracy based on hitting tiny bullseyes at long, or even relatively short ranges.

'Practical' targets are usually large, set at close range and, to the uninitiated, can look deceptively easy. It's when that 'against the clock' time element is factored in, plus the stress of penalty points for missing or even failing to attempt the target, that the demands of this sport really kick in.

Basically, you have to choose between taking enough time to ensure you hit the targets or risking missing some by shooting faster. Within this format, you'll probably have to work out the best route from target to target and how to increase your chances of scoring maximum marks on the more tricky shots. Not getting to them puffing and panting could be a big help. You'll have to deal with changing magazines too, of course, with a bit of competition nerves thrown in to spice things up a little. Make no mistake, whichever type of practical pistol you choose, you'll have all the challenge you need from those 'easy' targets.

### The gear you'll need

Your first visit to a Practical Pistol competition will open your eyes to the tremendous array of guns and accessories available to the PP shooter – and on the subject of eyes, the first thing you'll need to buy is a pair of good quality shooting safety glasses, which will be worn at all times during competition. Through them you'll see the world of practical pistol unfold, but without your shooting glasses, in many cases you won't even be allowed on the range, even as a spectator.

You can see from the photos in this feature to see that the sport is well catered for as far as hardware and clothing goes, yet, as always, the amount you decide to spend is entirely up to you. One thing's for certain in PP, as in most shooting sports, there's no room on the competition circuit for anything that doesn't earn its keep.

Gadgets are fine and anything that increases the pleasure of shooting, looking after or simply owning our guns is usually worth its investment, but when it comes to competition, a rule of 'no excess baggage' definitely applies. If you're carrying it – and quite often running with it – then it needs to be accessible, secure, fast, easy to use, and above all, totally reliable.

As far as guns go, you'll find competitors using CO2-powered pistols, airsoft pistols – which fire plastic BBs and usually run on injections of gas propellant from aerosol cans – and a sprinkling of Brocock air-cartridge revolvers, used by owners of specially-

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devised Firearms Certificates. Brocock TAC pistols are no longer available for sale, so your options lie effectively between airsoft and CO2-powered guns, all of them multi-shot, fast-fire autoloaders.

Airsoft guns are no good for falling-plate shooting because they just don't have enough power, along with the likelihood of BBs bouncing around the range. But if plate-shooting does attract you, go for a pellet-firing pistol and, as always, the best way to choose your pistol and accessories is to meet up with those that use them where it matters most – at the club, in competition. To do this, check out the links in this article and sort out a visit to a club where PP is a regular feature.

### What are you likely to find at a PP comp?

The first thing anyone new to the sport finds at a practical pistol competition is plenty of like-minded people. This in itself makes visiting a competition worthwhile, but there's plenty more.

At a practical pistol shoot, you'll see a series of target layouts or 'stages', which combine to form the course of fire. Typically, the competitors will be divided into groups and each group of shooters works its way from stage to stage until all have been completed. Each stage will be shot by one shooter at a time, but no-one moves to the next stage until his or her entire group has shot it.

It's hard enough to shoot a pistol accurately one handed anyway, but when you've got twin air cylinders in the other hand it's a nightmare! PPP fans keep up to speed with one another's hardware, always looking for improvement. With the right certificate, TAC users can gain the most realistic comparison to the original Practical Pistol discipline



