

The Role of the Spotter

All Metallic Silhouette disciplines, rifle and pistol, require each shooter to have a spotter with them on the line when shooting. The spotter should record the score after each shot (X for a hit and O for a miss), and not wait until the shooter has completed a bank of targets before writing down the score. This is because the wind may blow a standing target over, or another shooter may cross-fire by mistake. Another of the spotter's duties is to act as a one-on-one safety officer to make sure their shooter's firearm is only loaded with five rounds and then clears the firearm at the end of the detail and indicate to the Range Officer that the firearm is clear and flagged when required.

But another very important role of the spotter is to inform the shooter of the fall-of-shot even if the target falls after a successful hit. This is because a shooter may be shooting a very good group but close to the edge of the target and the spotter should make that known to the shooter. This is where the old adage, *a silhouette shooter is only as good as their spotter*, comes from. The shooter and spotter usually work as a team and apart from being friends they may also be rivals in the game. But they will regularly travel together, share car and accommodation expenses as well as spot for each other. Sometimes firearms will also be shared especially among family members. In my experience, spotters will support a shooter even though they are in the same grade for the same prize knowing that in the next detail the tables will be turned, and the shooter will now become the spotter.

As a spotter I like to stand behind the shooter looking over the shoulder of the shooter's arm so as to reduce parallax error. Very often a shot has been called high when in fact it has gone under the target, where the bullets hit on the mound 'appears' to have gone over the target. Also being directly behind the shooter's ear, you don't have to raise your voice for the shooter to hear you. I like a quiet firing line. A good spotter will also remind the shooter what target they are about to engage. It's interesting to see how spotters and shooters have a routine when working together. I will sometimes ask the spotter to call the target number; 'Pigs two, third target.' In order to keep the noise down on the line I will only ask the spotter where the shot went only if I don't know myself or am unsure. Sometimes the 'ask' is simply a matter of turning around to the spotter looking for confirmation. A board with a picture of the animal is useful for indicating the fall of shot to the shooter. See below. Sometimes spotters will ask the shooter if they have checked they sight settings for the animal they're about to engage. The job is a bit like a golfer's caddy.

If your spotter can't tell you where your shots are going and you can't pick them either, then you're really wasting your time and money throwing bullets down range. In the wet it may be difficult to see where a shot hits the mound.

When signing in to a silhouette shoot, tell the organiser who you are shooting with and you will be put in separate squads, usually on the same animal. Bring a good spotting scope, or pair of binoculars in the case of the lever action rifle disciplines.

