**Shooting Your Practice Scores In The Tournament**

Many shooters have the same problem at this stage of their development. Most guys recognize it when they realize that they are shooting winning scores at home and have not quite done it at the tournament Many never recognize the problem and continue to shoot differently than they do at home. This is the difference between winning the shoot and almost making it.
Freezing and getting light on the trigger is just a symptom of the problem. Sometimes it can be acute and sometimes it is so mild that it is barely recognizable, that is, until you miss. Some guys “feeling the pressure” get snappy on the trigger or go to sleep at the wheel and just misfire, but even though it manifests itself in a different way, it is all the same problem.
Here’s what is most likely going on:

Because you are at a “big shoot” you approach the line with a different attitude. You are trying to be extra careful. This extra careful, hands-on approach is what gets us into trouble. You are over correcting and controlling the shot. When you are in practice, you just stand up there and shoot the score you know that you can shoot. You are not careful, or controlling because there is no price for missing. You can get into the flow a lot easier and you can keep it throughout the game. When you have a great practice score going or you are working on a personal record you may tend to freeze or get extra careful, over correct, and control the last end because suddenly there is a price for missing. Sometimes you can gut it out, but most of the time, you end up with the same old score. You have to figure out what is different in practice from the shoot.

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In most cases, it is the perceived price you pay when you miss. This price makes the shot a life or death situation. You heap a mountain of pressure on yourself by placing such a price on the shot. Pressure causes you to tighten up. Your thumb gets light on the trigger because you are afraid of making a mistake. This slows you down and changes the rhythm of your shot, thereby opening you up for a mistake. You shoot the entire game in a timid and soft-handed manner.

In practice, or shooting with guys you are certain cannot beat your score, you are bold and heavy handed on the trigger. Your shot time increases and you find the zone and ride it to the end. When you are unsure of your ability to win, you get timid and soft handed.

The secret is this. You have to let go and allow the score to happen. In a practice game, you don’t think of your form or worry about anything. You just do it. Never control, never think, and let your form do the shooting. Be bold and sure of yourself. Grab the trigger, Pull through the shot with power and confidence. When you feel the timid shot coming, let down and remind your self how good it feels when you are firm, powerful, and sure it is going to go in. Draw again, aim, and release.

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Sounds easy, doesn’t it?

You can go about teaching yourself this new attitude two ways. You can do it like I did it, and loose enough tournaments over 15 or so years until you don’t really care what the outcome of the shoot is. After you loose enough it’s no big deal any more and you don’t take it as personal. You walk away with the words “well… maybe next year” in your head. You will finally just shoot your game because you are not expecting to win and miraculously you win it.

On the other hand, you can show yourself what the “flow” or “Zone” feels like in practice. Then you have to train yourself to let go and let it happen at the shoot. Relax, and take the score you get. You do have to accept this one little detail. If your average score is not a winning score your probably won’t win, but you can still shoot your average and call it a good showing.
You can practice the feeling and get some positive reinforcement by shooting full games at ten yards. I know…I know…everybody starts dispensing the blank bale and ten yard shooting as a fix all. All the self-proclaimed archery experts out there taking your money, and feeding you all the “type A” personality crap do not have the credentials nor the real world experience to tell you anything about top level shooting. Don’t let them ever tell you it can’t be done because you are not the right personality or that your body isn’t built right. If any body ever tells you any thing like that, find another coach or mentor.

Blank bale does not work. You can blank bale for years and get nowhere because its your eye, and [sight](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=gun+sight), target combination that is causing the problem; not the release. You need to combine all of them together.

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Set up a target at ten yards. Bring your bow rack down. Get a score card and a pencil. Shoot a full game at ten yards. Do it exactly as you would at a tournament. Keep score. Save the target. Do everything that you would do at a tournament when you shoot a perfect score or a personal record. This acclimates your brain to shooting a smooth shot while your sight is dead center on the target. It gives you a positive and perfect image of what it feels like and what it looks like when you are the best archer in the world. Stay at ten yards for a couple of weeks. Bouncing back and forth from 10 and 20 will do you no good. It is not an instant fix. Resist the temptation to shoot at twenty to see how you are doing. You need to burn this image into your brain. After a couple of weeks, move to fifteen and do the same thing. As you work back, slowly you introduce a little more [sight](http://www.ebay.com/sch/i.html?_nkw=gun+sight) movement into the routine and you will learn to shoot with it, and without worrying about missing.

You will notice that your shots will go off stronger and smoother and with less effort than ever before. You have to dedicate yourself to this because, to be frank, it is the most boring thing you can do, but it works.