

Steel Challenge Stage: Accelerator

Steel Challenge is the drag race of the shooting sports focusing on the delicate balance between speed and accuracy. In order to place well, you have to shoot all eight stages well or your competition will. In order to be proficient on all stages I am starting a stage breakdown series focusing on some tips and helpful hints on how to maximize your performance in your next match.

Let's start by examining The Steel Challenge Stage Accelerator, one of the most interesting stages with all three target sizes and all three types of shots in Steel Challenge as the newest stage added to the 8 stage venue. There have been many trials conducted by the fastest shooters in the country to determine which is the 'fastest' target order and the majority of competitors shoot it in the 1-2-4-3-STOP plate order. For the purposes of our discussion we number the plates from left to right and we don't include the STOP plate in counting the number of plates. This pattern does not differ with the type of division being shot; when I shoot any gun from the low ready or from the holster the order is the same.

Here are some tips to be successful on this stage:

Tip #1: I prefer to have my index setup on plate #3 which is the plate missed the most by competitors. A way to test this is to hold both hands out in front of you as if you were holding a handgun and you should be pointed naturally at plate#3. The reason why this is important is as you are swinging fast you want your natural point of aim at the most difficult target on the stage and your likelihood of hitting the plate goes up exponential even if your shooting fundamentals breakdown during the string of fire.

Tip#2: Make sure you get your hit on the first plate. This may seem basic, but on this stage Plate#1 is deceptively difficult and if you miss this first plate your string times will go up significantly. The reason many prefer to start on the 10" target on the first shot is you have to draw to the target which takes time and the incremental time getting a sight picture on a small target is negligible compared to re-adjusting your sight focus mid string.

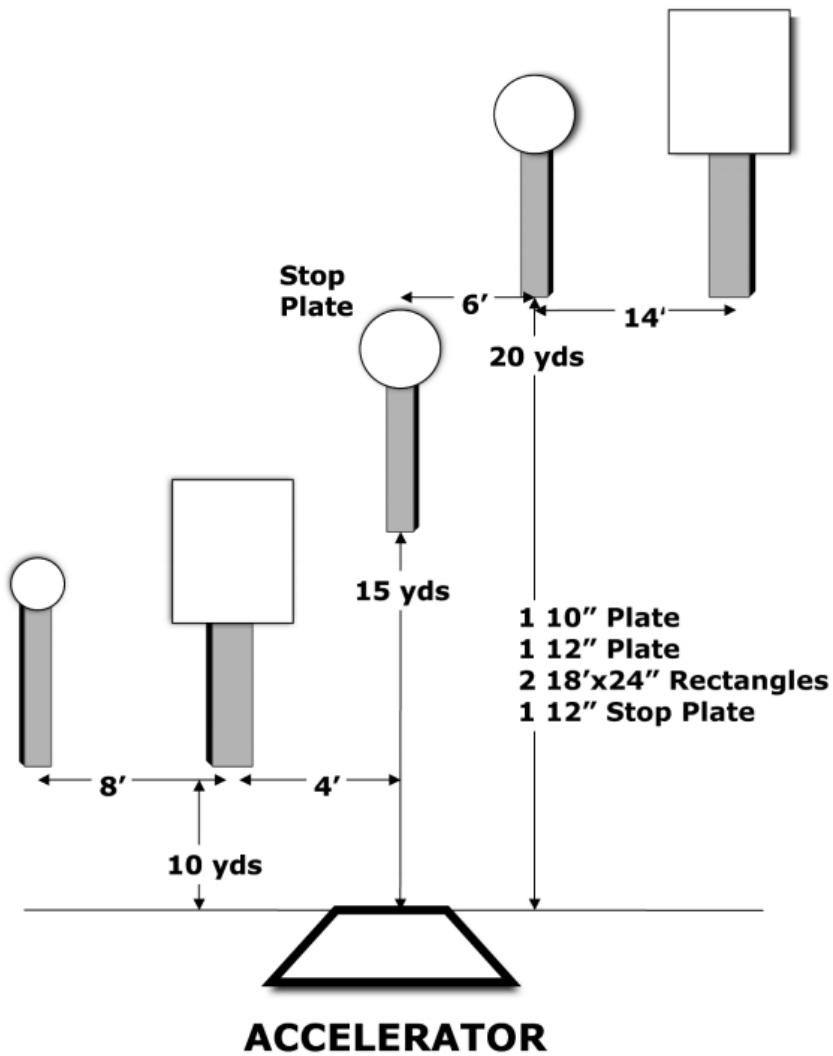
Tip#3: Plate #2 is one, if not the fastest plates to shoot in all of steel challenge. You want to make sure you are accelerating through the plate, but have a good index on the plate to ensure a solid hit. I still recommend a sight picture on the plate, but depending on your skill level/index, it can be point shot.

Tip#4: Keep the gun level through all of the targets. This stage is shot quickly with left to right and then right to left motions, there should little to no up to down movement. After training shooters from all over the country, a lot of shooters have the same shooting tendency and when they attempt shooting fast, they "dip" or lower the gun.

Tip#5: Make sure you see the sights/red dot on every shot including the hard pivot on Plate #4. Although Plate#2 and Plate #4 are both 18" X 24", Plate #4 is visually near half the size of Plate #2 because it is twice the distance away from you. What sight picture works on Plate #2 does not work on Plate #4.

Tip#6: Do not take plate #3 for granted, it is a 12" plate but its at 20 yards. As shared in Tip#1, this is the plate most missed by competitors in Steel Challenge. Take a brief pause on this plate to make sure you have an adequate sight picture, get your hit and accelerate to the Stop Plate.

Tip#7: Follow through on the stop plate. The concept of follow through when shooting in steel challenge on a stop plate means as you drive the gun hard to the stop plate, stop the gun on the stop plate as you are pressing the trigger. I advise students to count "One Mississippi" with the gun on the plate. This helps reinforce the concept of "calling shots".



Keeps these tips in mind the next time you step into the box in practice or in a match and watch your times fall! Stay tuned for more analysis of the other Steel Challenge Stages.

See you out on the range soon!

Steve