

# COMBATING CROSS- DOMINANCE

CPSA Senior Coach **Mike Williams** talks us through how cross dominance can affect your shooting, and how a simple device could be the answer.

To paraphrase the Speaker of the House of Commons – ‘the eyes have it’ – and there is nothing more important in our sport than our visual accuracy, and the ability to see the target clearly. Anything that helps in this respect has got to be an asset. This includes things like having your eyes checked regularly, prescription glasses if you require them, tinted glasses to enhance the contrast between the background and the target, and the position of your face on the stock to enable the target to be seen clearly over the barrels.

Allied with clarity is having the correct eye dominance, so that the gun shoots where you point it. There are numerous reasons as to why someone has the wrong eye dominance. I am not an ophthalmologist, however as a coach I have previously dealt with the symptoms of this cross dominance to get a shooter to hit the target. If you have a problem in this area and you are not particularly aware of it – you are going to struggle to hit anything.

## PROVISIONAL CHECKS

If you are unsure as to which of your eyes is dominant, you can carry out a provisional check yourself for later confirmation with a coach. Should you be a right-handed shooter, then pick an

object in the distance to focus on, point at the object with your left index finger, and on pointing at it close your left (off-eye).

If the finger stays on the object then you are right eye dominant, and any movement away from the object means that your off-eye is having some influence on where you are pointing. If you are left-handed then the reverse is true – point at the object (with your right index finger), close your right eye, and providing the finger stays on the object you are left-eye dominant.

A shooter that has ‘correct’ eye dominance has a distinct advantage in that they can keep both eyes open when shooting, and benefit from a normal three-dimensional sight picture, with that ever-important perception in depth.

Well intentioned friends, if they are aware of your problem, will tell you to shut the offending eye, which will get the gun pointing to where you think it is. However, you have not only lost the central vision of the off-eye but also the peripheral vision. So with that eye closed, you are not aware of the target until it arrives in the peripheral vision of your ‘shooting’ eye (the eye that is over the rib). That could well be a lot later in the target’s flight, and brings in a whole host of problems, such as having to chase the target, or forcing you to use a shooting



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method you didn’t intend on using.

You could well be advised to shoot from the other shoulder, but this will only be a perfect solution if you are 100% off or cross-eye dominant, which most shooters are not. There is a great number of people coming into the sport (and some old hands) who exhibit central dominance. The trouble with this is, whichever shoulder you place the gun, you will have to do something with the opposing eye – by either closing it or using a tape or foil to stop the brain from receiving information from that eye.

## CENTRAL VISION

The ‘central vision’ phenomenon has become very prevalent in the last 15-20

years. Looking at events that may have caused this brought me to the conclusion, that with the introduction of computers and an increasing amount of screen time, the eyes are now more used to focusing at very short distances.

I have been searching for a solution to this problem as a coach for several years. Before going out on a lesson with a new client, I will always check their eye dominance as I need to know where (and why) they are pointing the gun. I then confirm what I have observed on the range. For anyone exhibiting an eye dominance problem, in the past I have either used translucent tape or a micro foil product on the shooting glasses, to

remove the central vision of the offending eye, but to leave the peripheral vision.

With either of these, most targets can be dealt with efficiently, with the exception of a driven target. To hit this target the gun has to be moved in front of it and when doing so, visual contact with the target is lost (the tape/foil has removed the central vision) and the barrels now obscure the target. This results in slowing or stopping the gun to see the clay again and ultimately results in a miss behind.

## THE SHOOT SP

I have little faith in anything that fits on the top of the rib (although it does work for some people). It is in the shooter’s eye-line and a lot of the time grabs the shooter’s focus which needs to be on the target, not the gun. So I was intrigued when I read about the Shoot SP paraboloid, especially as it had claimed to help a top Sporting shot, who I knew first hand had eye dominance issues. The SP wasn’t in the shooter’s eye-line, not on

**Above:** A piece of tape placed correctly on shooting glasses can help to correct eye-dominance issues, but is not ideal. **Below:** A Coach’s view of a shooter’s eye dominance test.



## HOW TO TELL WHICH EYE IS DOMINANT



LEFT EYE  
DOMINANT



RIGHT EYE  
DOMINANT



the rib, but fixed to the side of the barrel, and most importantly the shooter could keep both eyes open with it, retaining the all-important binocular vision.

Being as sceptical as ever, I made a phone call to ask how she got on with it. She explained that it was as good as she had said and that she was very impressed. I then contacted Steve Randle, the inventor of the SP, and asked if I could see it in action. He invited me to a Coach Training course in the New Forest. I jumped at the opportunity and couldn't wait to see the SP in action.

Present on the course were a half a dozen individuals, some left and others right-handed, but all had eye dominance issues of differing degrees. None of them were able to hit a slow incoming target with both eyes open. The SP was fitted to each of their guns in

turn and without exception, all 'smoked' that incomer with both eyes open. They went on to hit a variety of targets, both eyes open, with the SP fitted to their barrels.

I asked Steve how this had come about and he explained that he had been oscillating around B and A class for a while, and couldn't put his finger on it as to why he wasn't able to shoot consistently and upgrade to AA. Whilst looking further into it, he discovered that he had an eye dominance issue and set about resolving it. At this time, Steve was a graphic designer and had partnered up with an optometrist.

Together, they came up with the solution that for a shooter with an eye dominance problem, the SP 'super-switched' the shooting eye by making it unnecessary to close the offending eye. Incidentally, Steve is AAA now and is frequently winning class prizes and championships, with the SP on his gun.

I was convinced that the SP worked and signed on the dotted line to become a coach offering the SP, being confident that a

shooter with an eye dominance issue would be able to keep both of their eyes open. This has proved a revelation to my clients that came to me shooting with one eye closed. Probably the most spectacular was an A class shot, who started shooting with me about 25 years ago. They came to me because of a recent loss of form and it became clear after shooting a couple

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of targets that his off-eye was coming into the equation, and with an instruction from me to close this eye, he smoked the next clay out. I then explained what I had learned about the SP and suggested we try it. He soon regained his old form and was putting in increasingly higher scores.

If you have eye dominance problems then it is worth giving this a try, it has worked with everyone that I have tried it with so far. For more information, or for instructions on how you can 'DIY try before you buy' see the [shootsp.co.uk](http://shootsp.co.uk) website, click on the 'videos' tab and then select the video titled 'SP Dry Mount Test'.

**Above:** The SP device can be seen on the side of the barrel near the muzzle on this shotgun if you look closely.

