

Steel Challenge Stage: Showdown

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 Showdown, arguably one of the fastest stages in all of Steel Challenge with tight transitions from plate to plate. With this stage you have to shoot (3) of your strings from one box and (2) strings from the other box. It does not matter which box you start in, unlike Outer Limits, or the string order you shoot in from box to box. Most competitors shoot (2) or (3) strings from one box and then head to the other box to shoot the remaining (2) or (3) strings of fire. If a competitor desired to do so, they could alternate boxes on every string although there is not an advantage of doing so. For the purposes of our discussion we number the plates from left to right, while standing in the left box, and we don't include the STOP plate in counting the number of plates.

So, what is the fastest order for this stage? The most popular and accepted option while shooting from the left box as we are looking down range and is shot 1-2-3-4-Stop Plate. When moving to the right box the order is reversed; 4-3-2-1-Stop Plate. This pattern does not differ for most with the type of division being shot; when shooting 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 #4 when shooting from the low ready in the left box. When I head to the right box, my index is towards Plate #1. This allows my body to wind up on my first shot and when I transition the gun fast, the height of the gun does not change.

Tip#2: For those who are starting at the low ready, take a few 'sight picture' repetitions to the first plate to make sure when you move the gun up the dot or front sight is on the middle of the target. This allows you to get the gun up fast and get a solid first shot.

Tip#3: This should be a fast first shot, but as with any stage you want to make sure you don't take your eye off your sight(s) until you break the shot. The first plate is the largest style of plates in Steel Challenge being an 18" X 24", but at 25 yards you can't take this target for granted.

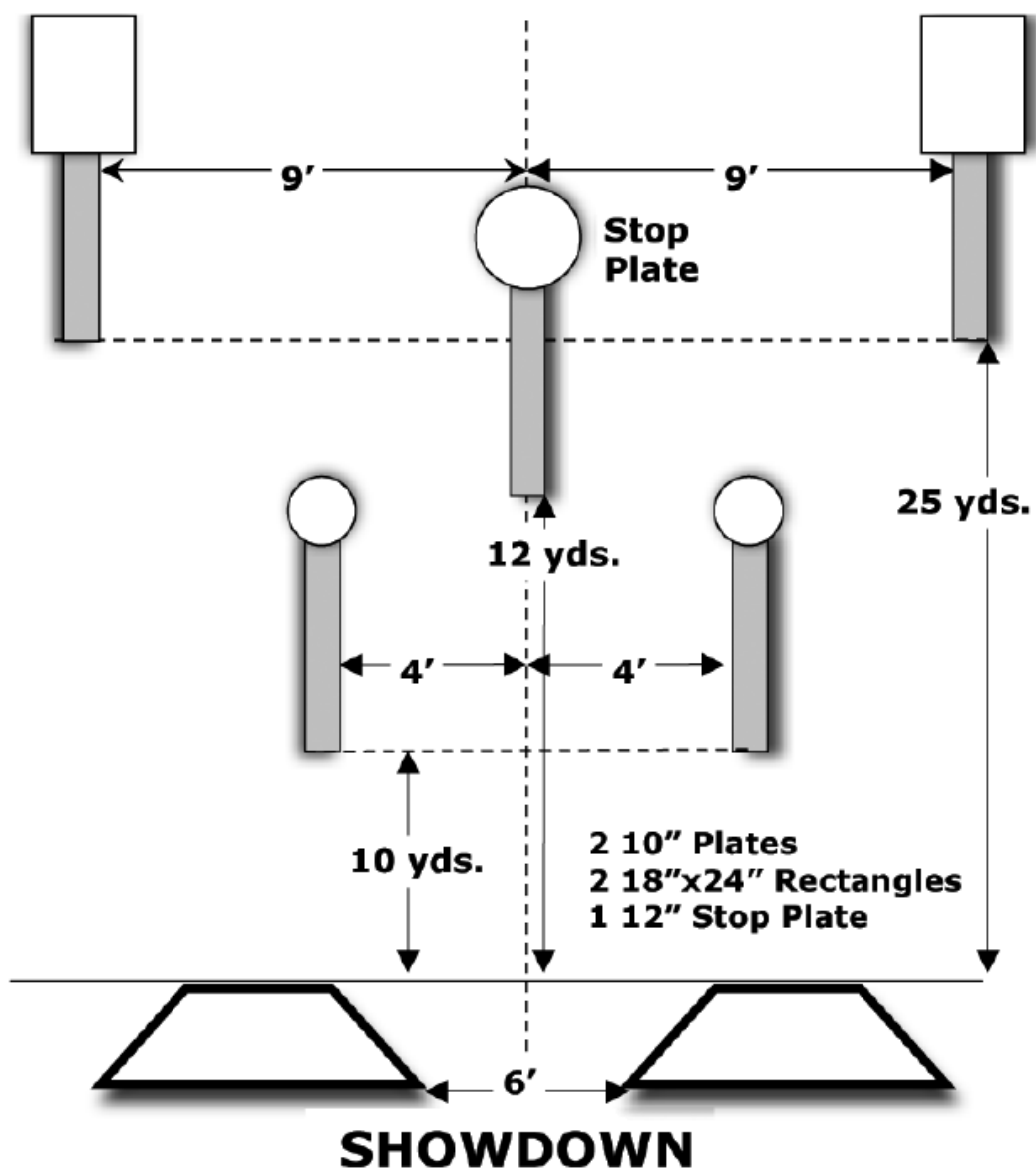
Tip#4: If the stage is setup properly, the targets should be all in alignment on a horizontal axis; you should be able to make all five shots without moving the gun up and down. If the stage happens to not be setup straight across, I break the targets into arrays. Plate 1 and Plate 2 are the first array, and then Plate 4 and Plate 3 are an array and finally the stop plate. This allows me to shoot the back plate and

then front plate fast and then I reposition to the next back plate as I would on my first shot and shoot the other front plate fast.

Tip#5: 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".

Tip #6: When you are given the "Make Ready" command, bring one magazine to the table/barrel you plan to shoot your last string to. This allows you to do all magazine changes besides one from one location. Less you have to carry/forget from the last shooting position.

Tip #7: As most Steel Challenge shooters engage targets from left to right, practice your transitions from right to left. This will pay dividends when shooting from the right box.



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