

## Steel Challenge Stage: Smoke and Hope

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 Smoke and Hope, which is the stage most people have the most fun on! So, what is the fastest order for this stage? The most popular and accepted option as we are looking down range and is shot 1-2-3-4-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. There are a lot of variants of shooting order and are acceptable. Some of them are; 3-4-1-2-Stop, 2-1-4-3-Stop, 4-3-1-2-Stop, etc.

Here are some tips to be successful on this stage:

Tip #1: I prefer to have my index setup on the Stop Plate – right in front of me. I test this by pointing my pistol straight out and it will show me where the gun is pointed. I will also hold a rifle like a pistol and do the same check. 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: Drive at the knees. If you want to shoot fast, you have to move fast. Driving at the knees will increase your transition speed.

Tip#3: 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.

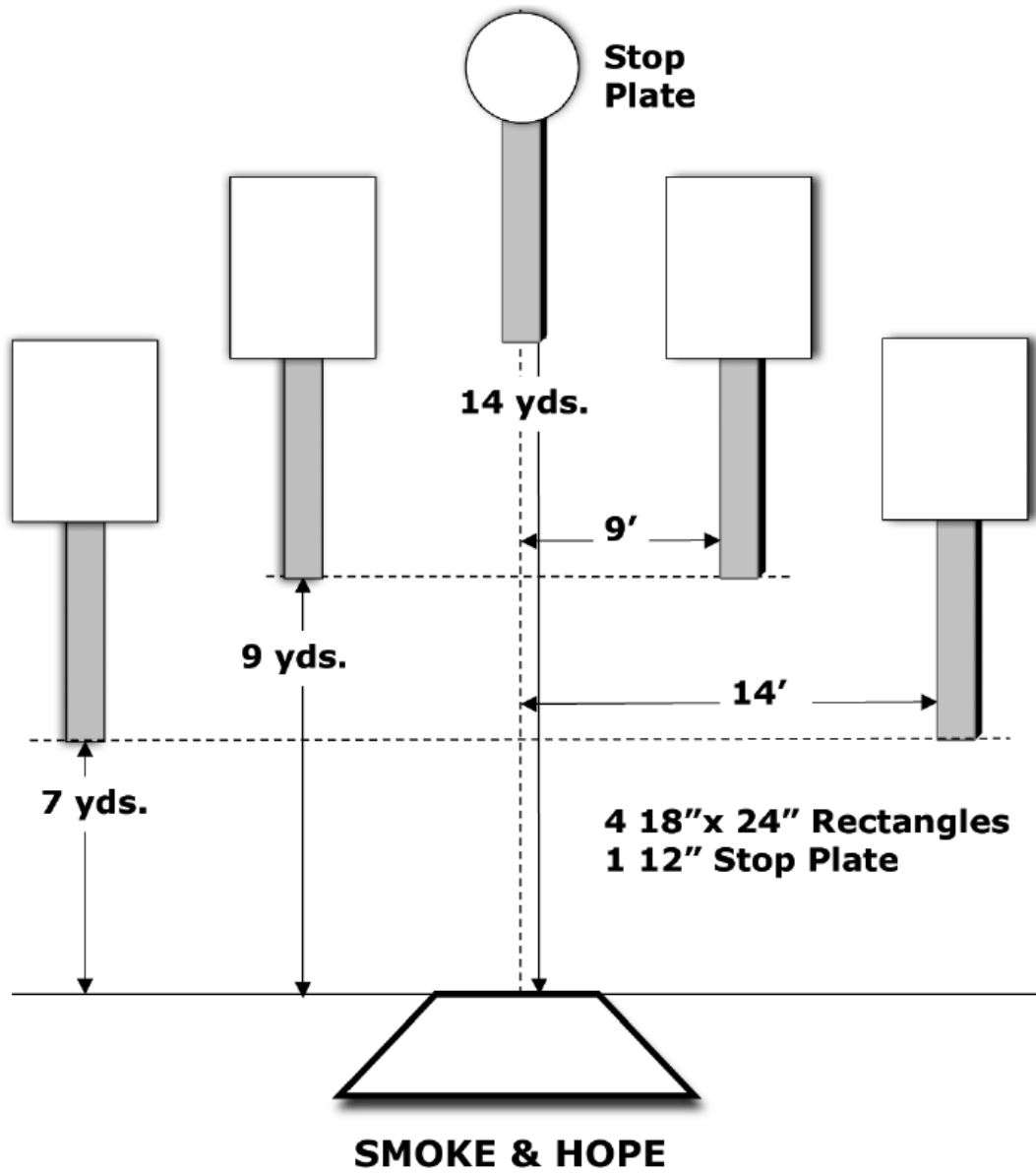
Tip#4: Keep your eye on the sight/dot when shooting. Too many times I have heard they are 18" X 24" and they are right in front of me, how could I miss them?! If you see the sight/dot on the target, your odds of getting a hit on the plate go up drastically.

Tip#5: Break the stage into arrays. When I shoot this stage I break it into two-shot array. Array #1 is Plate #1 and Plate #2. Array #2 is Plate #3 and Plate #4. When you are standing in the shooting box, it is

the same array shot twice. Breaking any stage down into manageable arrays is a proven and effective strategy in the shooting sports.

Tip #6: 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 #7: Don't miss!



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