

SPILGER: The History of 5-stand

OUTDOORS COMMENTARY

- By Jarrod Spilger
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The five shooting cages on a 5-stand course such as these at the Lincoln Trap and Skeet Club are placed close together. (For The Independent/Jarrod Spilger)

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Of all the clay target games, my favorite is 5-stand sporting clays, although I don't shoot it nearly as often as I'd like.

5-stand is a compact version of regular sporting clays. Instead of stations scattered across several acres, the cages for 5-stand's five stations, or "stands," are lined up next to each other. Several target throwers are positioned at various locations around and in front of the stands, to offer a wide array of target presentations. Target angles change slightly as shooters rotate from station to station. In this way, 5-stand is similar to trap.

In fact, the game of 5-stand was actually born on a Canadian trap field. In 1982, Scotsman Raymond Foreman, who had recently immigrated to Canada and was working as a wildlife biologist, was asked to critique the shooting program of the Hunter's Education Department in Alberta.

The Hunter's Ed instructors were using existing trap and skeet fields to teach students how to shoot waterfowl. Foreman immediately inquired, "Why are you using trap and skeet to teach kids how to kill a duck? Why don't you use sporting clays?"

His colleagues' response was, "What's sporting clays?"

As a member of Scotland's shooting team, Foreman was already quite familiar with sporting clays, which was popular in Europe several years before the game came to North America.

"I cobbled together a demonstration of what they could do at their facilities to more accurately simulate what the young hunters could expect in the field," Foreman told me, as he reflected on the creation of 5-stand.

"During this trial, I had three teenage girls and two boys standing in a row, much like a trap rotation," Foreman continued. "I'd arranged a number of clay target throwers in and around the combined trap/skeet field." In setting up his demonstration, Foreman had unwittingly created the game of 5-stand, where shooters rotate through five stations while attempting to shoot targets from a variety of angles.

"The game of 5-stand literally evolved in front of my eyes," the ex-Olympic trap shooter confided to me. "No brilliance on my part," Foreman admitted, "just sheer coincidence."

How the game was named is also interesting. While accurately descriptive, the simplistic moniker "5-stand" lacks a certain pizzazz. "I was scheduled to demonstrate the game at the ICI World Sporting Championship at the Doverage gun club in England in 1990," Foreman reminisced. "The game at this point still did not have a name."

Paul Bentley, an Olympic shooter and writer for Clay Shooting magazine, called Foreman from England and informed him that he'd be happy to cover this new game in his magazine, but what was it called? Foreman's honest reply, "I don't know."

"Well, it must have a name before we can cover it," Bentley advised. He then went on to ask Foreman what the game consisted of, to which Foreman explained how it has a shooting

rotation similar to trap, with five stands and five targets at each stand, which can be thrown from a variety of traps. “How about 5-stand,” Foreman asked.

Bentley was less than enthusiastic. “Well, it’s not very good, is it?” he replied. “If you can think of a better name within the next two weeks before we go to press, let me know.” Foreman never called him back and the name stuck.

Originally, six trap machines were used, although now most courses use between eight and a dozen throwers. The game also didn’t originally have menus letting shooters know where targets were coming from.

“My original intention, which remains my intention today, was to recreate a more realistic hunting simulation, to test the shooter’s ability to hit an unknown target,” Forman stated. Unfortunately, 5-stand, like so many games, has since become more regimented, competitive, and, consequentially, predictable, a fact Foreman laments. The game, when played as Foreman originally intended, is now called International 5-Stand, to avoid confusing it with the more structured, Americanized version.

5-stand isn’t the only shotgun game Foreman has created. He also developed Make-A-Break, a flashier shooting game intended to be more marketable for television. With Make-A-Break, Foreman hopes to attract more participants into the shooting sports.

Foreman also runs Clay-Sport International, www.claysport.net, which designs shooting facilities around the world. Sporting clays is often described as golf with a shotgun. Clay-Sport endeavors to create sporting courses that rival the upscale facilities of top golf courses.

The next time you shoot 5-stand at your local gun club, remember that it’s thanks to an innovative Scotsman turned Canadian that we have this fun and challenging game with which to hone our shotgunning skills.

Jarrod Spilger writes an outdoors column for *The Independent*.