

THE KNEELING POSITION

A. GENERAL. Probably the most important change in the recent evolution of international position shooting is taking place in the structure of the kneeling position.

A few outstanding shooters are now shooting scores in the kneeling position that are meeting the standard that is felt by most authorities as approaching the attainable potential. The mental barrier of shooting perfect or near perfect scores in the kneeling position has crumbled. Shooters are beginning to expect their kneeling scores to be very near if not equal to their prone scores. The old goals for kneeling scores were progressively set at 380, then 385, and later 390. Shooters are now striving for 395 or better score. Of course, weather conditions are important considerations in establishing a goal.

B. VERSIONS OF THE KNEELING POSITION. At the present time, the top marksmen of the world are using the forward kneeling position, or some modification of the forward position.

1. The Erect Position: The old school maintains that the right heel and the kneeling roll should support at least 70% of the weight of the torso. In this method, the spine is erect and the head upright. The left foot supports about 15 to 20% of the remaining weight, and the right knee no more than 10% (Figure 61).

2. The Forward Position: In the newer position, with which many of the shooters are having excellent results, the left foot supports the majority of the weight. The body leans forward with a pronounced shift of the weight onto the left knee (Figure 62).

C. USE OF THE KNEELING ROLL. In either variation of the position, however, there are common fundamentals to be observed. It is agreed that the kneeling roll should be used (Figure 63). The best international shooters of the world do not sit on the side of the foot. The selection of a roll is left to the individual. Naturally it must conform to the size specifications as set forth by the ISU. A leather or canvas bag containing sand, sawdust, or rags seems to be the best. The roll should fit the conformation of the instep (Figure 64). Variations in thickness will depend on shooter preference. The right foot, when viewed from the rear, is perpendicular to the ground and the heel is centered at the base of the spine (Figure 65). A newer shooter will frequently have difficulty when first using this position. The right knee, ankle, or foot will be uncomfortable. But as in the other positions, training will condition the body to accept the new strains so introduced. Also, loosening the laces on the right foot will release some of the pressure on the instep.

D. FUNCTION OF THE RIGHT KNEE. The right knee is used to support only a minimum of weight in either of the accepted positions. The angle of the right leg from the line of fire will approximate a variance of between 10 to 60 degrees (Figures 66 and 67). In the forward position the leg will form a smaller angle and the body will face more toward the target than in the erect position.

E. POSITION OF THE LEFT LEG. The left foot is approximately parallel to the inside of the left thigh (Figure 68). If the rifle is pointed to the right or left of the target the shooter should not move only the left foot, but move the entire body in its assumed position, as though the shooting mat were rotated. For some shooters, turning the left toe inward toward the right knee will "lock" the knee and reduce left to right movement of the rifle. The left ankle and shin bone form a straight vertical support (Figure 69).

F. POSITION OF THE BACK. The position of the back seems to play an important part in attaining a good hold. The torso should be positioned so that maximum stability will be derived from the support areas. In the erect position the back is postured so that the weight is supported by the roll. In the forward position, the left foot acts as the understructure for the torso which is leaned well forward over the left knee. In neither case is the spine tilted to the left or right of the vertical as this will result in an unsteady position (Figure 70).

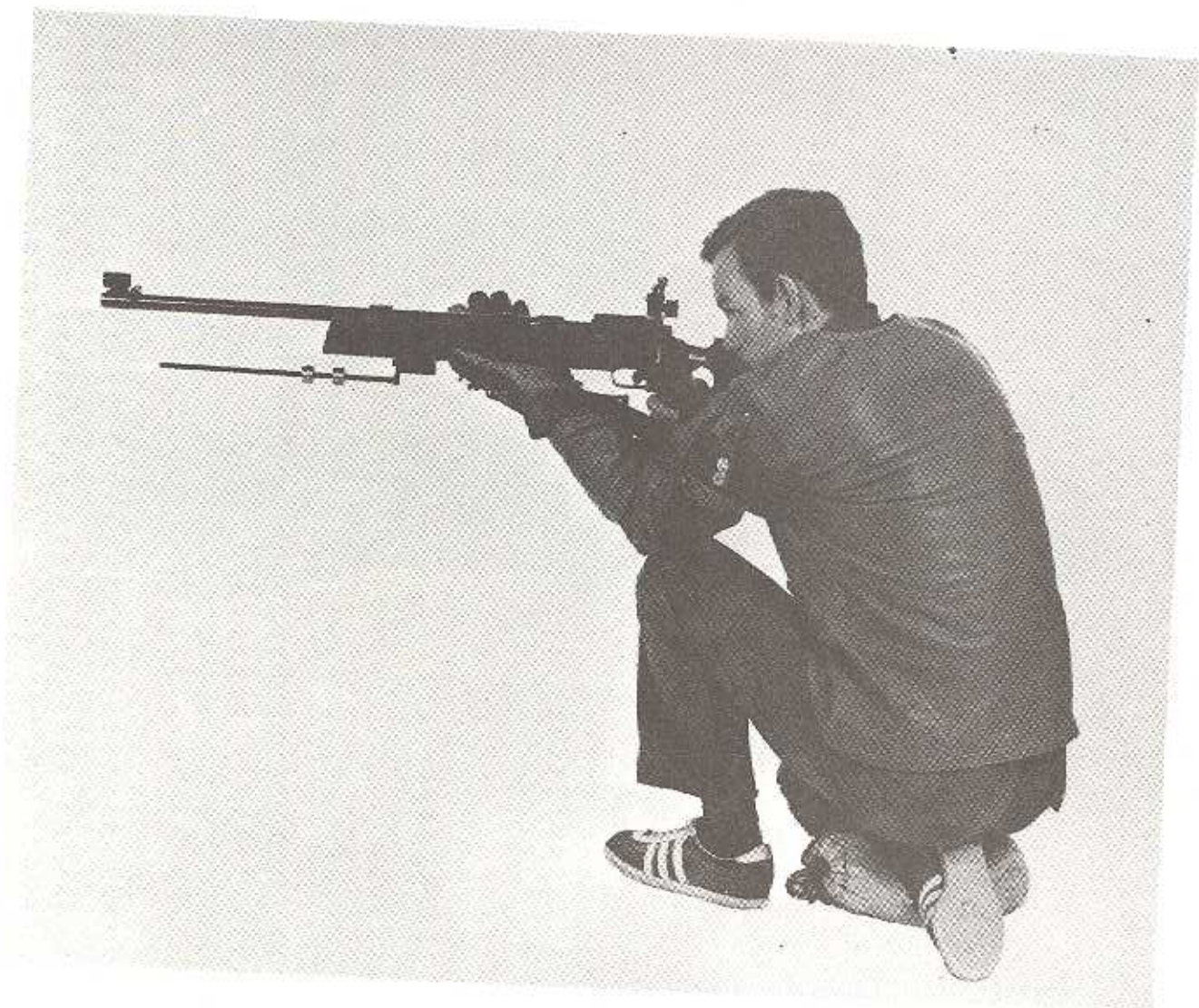


Figure 60. (Shooter B).



Figure 61. (Shooter L).



Figure 62. (Shooter H).

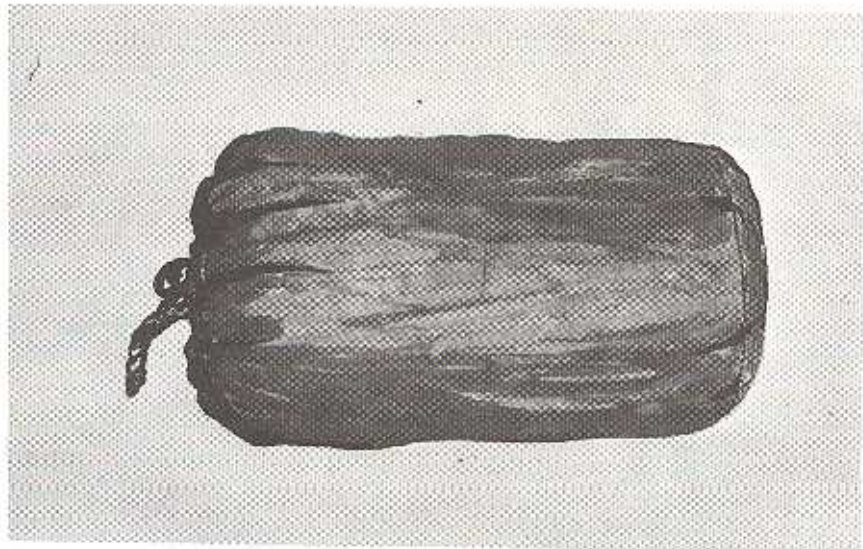


Figure 63. Kneeling Roll.

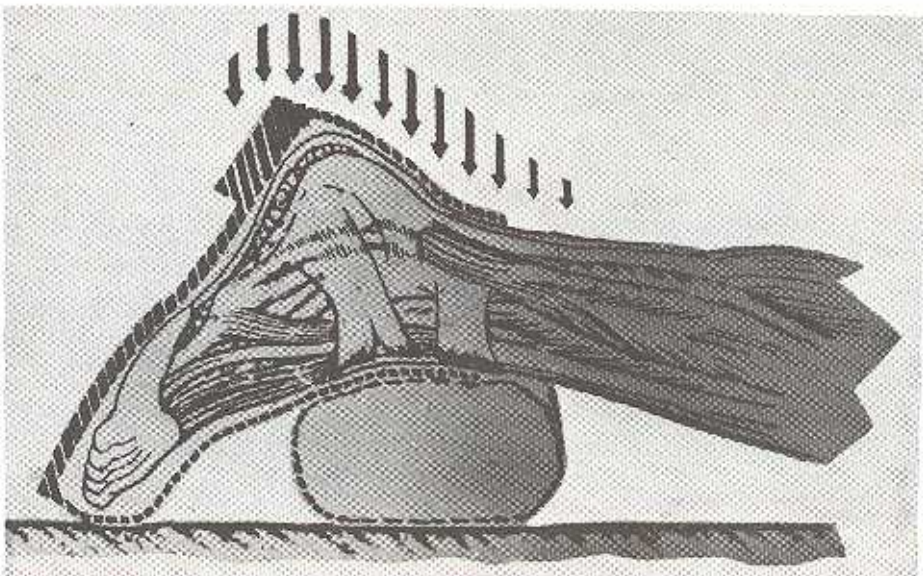


Figure 64. Placement of the kneeling roll.

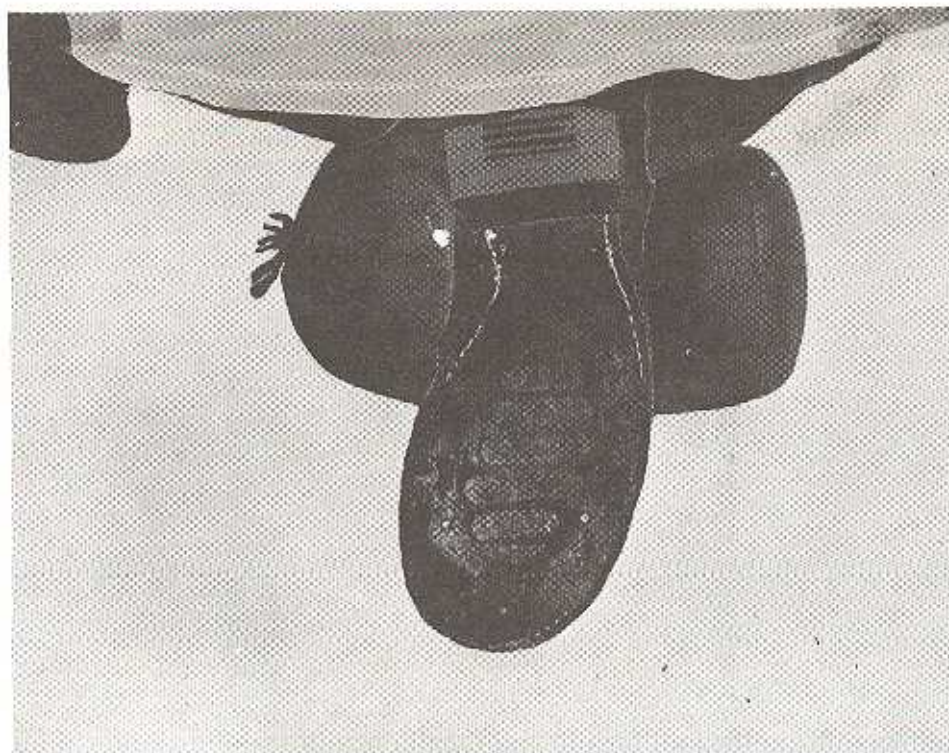


Figure 65. Position of the right foot.

G. POSITION OF THE HEAD. The head, in relation to the body, should be erect or leaned forward slightly; not to the extent, however, that the eye will be looking through the upper lid or brow, or that the neck will become cramped (Figures 71 and 72). Proper eye relief should be maintained. The head should not be leaned to the right to be placed on the stock. The head, like the spine, should be vertically (Figure 72). The rifle may be canted, if necessary to bring the stock so that the proper aiming techniques may be performed.

H. FUNCTION OF HOOK BUTT PLATE. The hook butt plate is used to the extent that it assists in the proper placement of the rifle into the shoulder. It also enables the stock to be raised up to meet the face while continuing to give maximum rifle-shoulder contact (Figure 73). For many marksmen, the stock is somewhat shorter for kneeling than it is for prone.

I. USE OF THE SHOOTING JACKET. The shooting jacket may be fastened or left open in the front. The latter method allows for freer expansion of the chest and stomach while breathing. It may be fastened loosely only to hold the jacket in place. However, by electing to fasten the jacket securely, a shooter might feel that he has a more "solid" position. In the forward position the bottom button and the belt of the pants may have to be loosened in order to keep from putting too much strain on the stomach muscles.

J. POSITION OF THE RIGHT ARM. The right arm hangs naturally at the side in most cases. Occasionally one will see the right elbow being held up just slightly. This will insure that the weight of the arm is not pulling down on the rifle. The sole job of the right arm is to get the trigger finger to the trigger. The right hand is placed on the pistol grip with the thumb either along side the stock or through the thumb hole (Figure 74). The trigger finger should touch the rifle only at the trigger itself. The degree of firmness that the grip is applied with the right hand varies with individual preference.

The important point to remember when thinking of the opposing forces pressing against the rifle with the right hand, the face and at the butt, is not how much pressure is applied but that the pressures be consistent for each shot fired.





Figure 67. (Shooter 1).





Figure 69. (Shooter D).





Figure 71. (Shooter G).



Figure 72. (Shooter D).



Figure 73. (Shooter C).



Figure 74. (Shooter A).

X. FUNCTION OF THE LEFT ARM.

1. The rifle is placed in the heel of the left hand with the stock being nearer the thumb than the more flexible area towards the fingers (Figure 75). A shooting glove is worn on the left hand. The fingers of the left hand do not grasp the rifle in an attempt to guide it.

2. The left wrist should be straight. The left elbow is placed on the top of the left knee or slightly to the left of this position (Figure 77). The elbow will be directly under the stock or slightly left of it (Figure 75 and 76). To place the elbow completely under and to the right of the stock results in considerable strain in the arm and back muscles. As a guide for the average shooter, the left forearm and the left thigh should form a straight line when supporting the rifle (Figure 75). The forearm may angle up or down from this line, depending on the individual's body conformation.



Figure 75. (Shooter B).



Figure 76. (Shooter C).

3. The left hand will be tight against the hand stop and the placement of the sling on the upper arm may be high or low. The sling, not the left arm, should do the work of supporting the rifle. The place at which the sling is attached to the stock depends upon the position used and the length of the shooter's arms. In the forward position, the sling is attached much closer to the trigger guard as compared to the erect position.



Figure 77. (Shooter L).

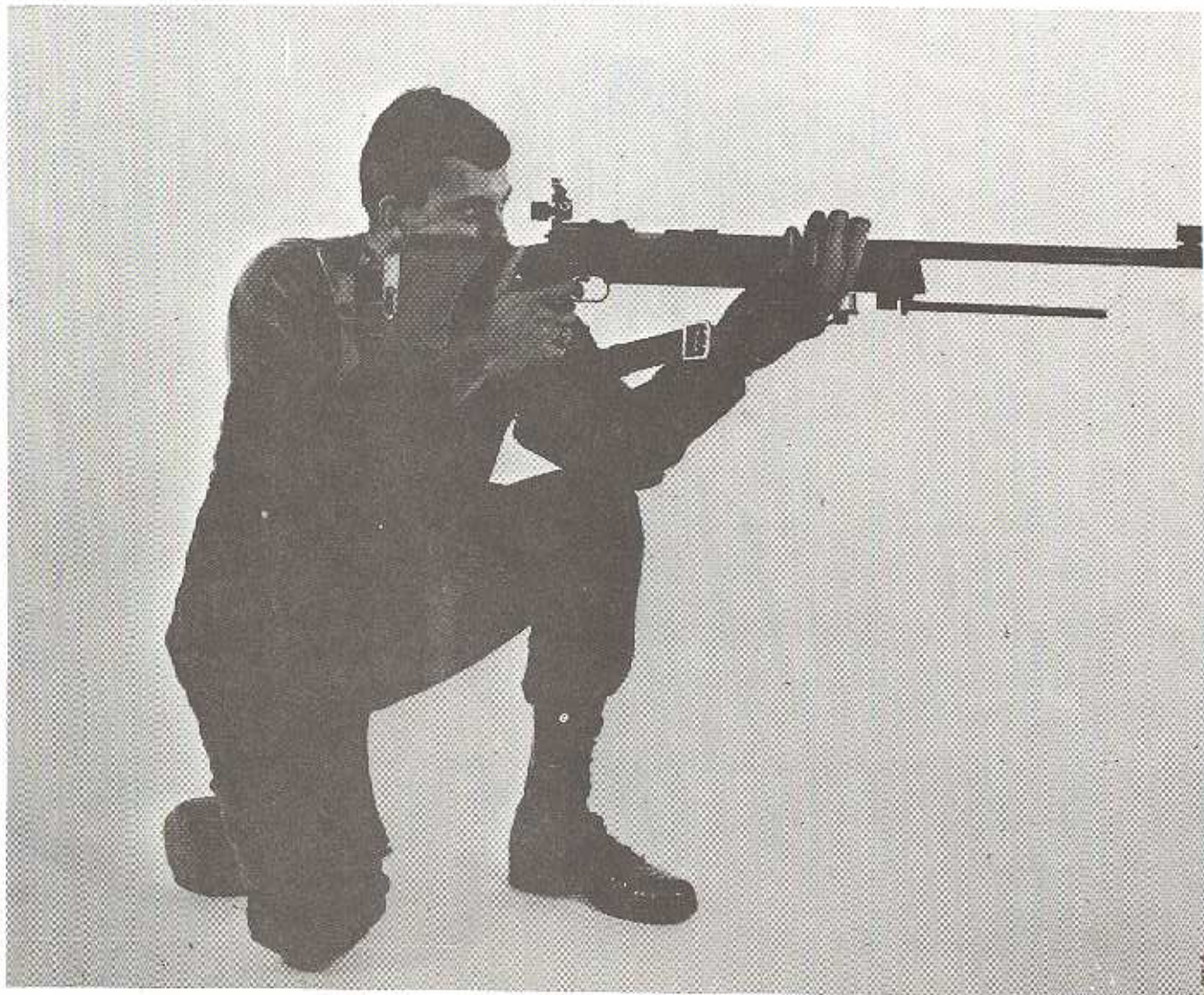


Figure 78. (Shooter M).



Figure 79. (Shooter D).



Figure 80. (Shooter K).