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Golf With A Shotgun

By Tony Monzingo
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The analogy between sporting clays and golf is so commonly accepted that even Wikipedia, the internet-based encyclopedia, defines sporting clays as, "A clay pigeon sport. Often described as golf with a shotgun." How accurate is that description? Let's peel back this onion's layers and take an in-depth look at both sports to see if the comparison is accurate—and what it all means for this shotgun game. We will look at factors as diverse as sports psychology, costs, business models, history, and the future to discover useful lessons for recreational "duffers" and serious competitors alike.



Dan Carlisle, an Olympic shotgun medal winner, current US Olympic shooting team coach, and 2007 NSCA National champion, is also a 10-year veteran of the game of golf who approaches the links with the same intensity as he attacks a 40-yard battue. Carlisle possesses an excellent six-handicap golf game and routinely shoots rounds in the high 70s and low 80s. When asked if he thought the comparison between sporting clays and golf is valid, he quickly enumerated common elements.

"To be successful in either sport requires that you develop a mastery of fundamental mechanics and a strong mechanical routine to set up for the shot," Carlisle noted. "Both golf and sporting clays requires that you also have a visual routine that tells you what kind of move you will have to make. Both games require the player to craft a plan in the mind, to see the target in unique ways, and routinely relax and refocus. Developing the ability to do this is a big part of my success." Carlisle concluded his analysis by adding, "The mental part of the two games is exactly alike."

Nathan Carlson is a golf teaching professional, former collegiate golf star at the University of Texas-Arlington, and recreational sporting clays shooter. He and Carlisle agree that although the specific body mechanics in golf and sporting clays have little in common, to become competitive in either sport requires the development of a strong mental game focusing on consistent routines and eliminating negative thoughts. "The need for a strong mental game is identical," said Carlson.

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