

# ELR Teamwork

Written by Paul Phillips

I believe there are three main components for success in ELR: Teamwork, Equipment and Science. To win, you need to master all three.

My approach to ELR teamwork has come from many different forms of shooting. I was an avid hunter growing up, served in a Scout Sniper Platoon in the Marine Corps (Scout), Honor graduate of FBI Sniper School, 2 time World Champion (Shooter) on the US Rifle Team (FTR), 10 Time National Champion (Shooter and Wind Coach) on Team Sinclair. I am currently acting as the Adjutant of the US Rifle Team and most recently I was the wind coach (Spotter) on the Applied Ballistics Team that took 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> overall at King of 2 Mile.



Assuming that you already have good Equipment and understand the Science of your ballistics curve, now you need to put it all together using good Teamwork skills. I will use the 2016 King of 2 Mile victory as a reference because it was an actual event that we won using the type of teamwork that allows you to become One with everything. Helping each other out with our gear, double checking each other's equipment, confirming our zeros, checking all fasteners, understanding verbal commands, knowing the course of fire, location of targets, distance to the targets, focusing on your own job while also working in unison with the team, keeping a positive tone and attitude towards each other and, most importantly, having the confidence to never give up.



The AB ELR team had a big advantage in teamwork because we all are members of the US Rifle Team. We already have a good working knowledge of everything I mentioned above including trusting each other's abilities.

I want to break down the King of 2 Mile course of fire and scoring and explain why teamwork is so essential. You have 9 minutes to shoot 14 rounds on 4 different targets. These targets ranged from 1400 to 3500 yards and were located up to a ½ mile apart from each other. The scoring was designed to benefit from first round impacts. You get 5 times the distance on your first hit, 4 times the distance on your second hit, etc. You have to make at least one impact at a distance to continue to the next plate at a farther distance. If you do not hit the first plate at least one time, you are packing your bags and going home. There is also a sense of urgency when you subtract the cumulative 1 min for bullet flight time, leaving you with 8 min to generate a firing solution and operating your rifle. This means you have only about 34 seconds per shot. Remember, you also have to make transitions between targets and adjust your scope settings. This all takes valuable time and if you're not working together it can cost you. Several teams had to stop shooting because they ran out of time.

Our approach for the shooter in his 5 min prep time was to get comfortable with his position while developing natural POA in each of those positions. This helps build muscle memory of these positions and the angles needed to perform these transitions quickly. Placement of mats under his bipod, adjustment of bipod at each target and reducing his magnification for quicker acquisition of the next plate. While the shooter is going through these motions another team member is assisting him with these transitions and double checking his zeros and adjustments. These rifles can become heavy and it's important for the shooter to remain calm and relaxed while letting the other team member do the heavy lifting and moving around. Keeping your ammo clean and dry, and in a good location to load and be ready, is also very important. Anything the shooter might need, the other team members stand ready to help him immediately.

While the shooter is going through these transitions in his prep time, the two other Wind Coaches (Spotters) are discussing what visuals they are using to determine what the wind is doing. This match has a time limit and you will not have the ability to wait for a consistent or calm condition. You have to work together and look for indicators on what is giving you the most accurate reading. (Mirage, vegetation, trees, bushes, flags, dust clouds, etc.) Generally if both wind coaches can agree with the same wind call that generally means you're seeing the same thing. However, if you don't agree, you might want to split the difference or go with the most confident coach. The point is, you need to make an expeditious decision and when you give the command to the shooter it needs to be decisive, so that the shooter is confident.

The coaches also have to make sure they have all of their data ready to make corrections and understand how much it's all worth. They also need to know each distance and what the wind is worth at those ranges. We developed data sheets for both wind and elevation. Your data needs to be very organized and well communicated as you make transitions. If you're not sure about something you need to ask and communicate it to each other.

During down time, it helps to watch the wind and try to see any patterns. This will prove invaluable when you start to shoot.





Game time!

After the command is given to commence firing, you have about 34 seconds per shot. This includes making the transitions from one target to the next. It's paramount to work together. The coaches need to set up in a position where they can both communicate effectively and also see the trace and impact. If you cannot see the trace or impact, you are shooting blind unless you have an impact on target. Some of the targets and their locations were very hard to see because of vegetation. The shooter's responsibility is to load and be ready and make a well-aimed shot. Once the shot breaks he quickly loads and is ready to go. He does not stay on the scope to help look for impacts. This will take too much time. If the shooter does not make the correct hold or jerks the trigger, he needs to let the coaches know so they can take this info into consideration. The shooter needs to be calm and relaxed and let the coaches do all of the work. The shooter also can help by keeping his ammo in a block to make sure the correct number of shots per target is being made. If you mess this up it's on the team. A simple block with the correct number of rounds will help not only the shooter but the coaches can glance down to make sure the round count is correct.

When the coaches are good with a wind prediction, they give the shooter a hold value. This is a lot faster than adjusting a scope knob. It also prevents the shooter from accidentally turning the knob in the wrong direction. The shooter needs to keep his focus on shooting, not adjusting knobs.

MOA vs MIL. Our team uses MOA. Our commands are in MOA, Our Nightforce rifle scopes are in MOA, Our Vortex Spotting scope is in MOA, and all of our ballistic data is in MOA. It works very quickly and is all transparent. I'm not claiming MOA works the best, I would just suggest that you use the same system and what you know the best. (MIL or MOA)



As you're shooting the match, you can use the data from the previous distance to help you make corrections on the next distance. If your data is a little off, you can make corrections. If you're shooting a little low at 1400, you can bet that you will be low at a mile. Go ahead and add the extra  $\frac{1}{2}$  minute to the projected elevation zero.

The coach's job is to look for pickups, let offs, direction changes, etc. Remember, you only have about 34 seconds a shot including transitions and scope corrections. The coach should always utilize a positive tone with the other coach, and the shooter, at all times. When you're not making hits, the worst thing to do is to get upset or create negative energy. Often times this could agitate the other members or make them nervous and take them off of their game. Stay positive and stay confident!

When you're done shooting, everyone helps each other with their gear. We like to have a team meeting immediately after we are done to go over everything that just happened. We also make good notes on the things we need to improve on, and update our ballistic data.





If you executed to the best of your abilities and you had fun, that's all you can do. If you hit on all cylinders and prepared better than the other teams, you will claim victory! Good luck to all of you guys and see you at the next match.

Check out the video link below, if you'd like to watch our team's shooting cadence and communication.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sGlrFaPyoU>