



Above, Kenda wins the 2012 CMSA National Championship overall title in Tunica, Mississippi. This is the second time she won the National overall.

Whose Line Is It Anyway?

by Kenda Lenseigne, CMSA World and National Champion

Smooth is always fast. And efficient is faster.

Have you ever had one of those runs where everything just fell perfectly into place? The kind where you barely had to touch the rein the entire stage and your horse worked like it was on rails. Your lines were just right, you felt balanced in your saddle as you rounded your turns and the clock scored exactly where you needed to be in the standings. Could be pure luck that it happened, or perhaps it was to your skilled planning and line execution.

Here is another drill I've pulled from my bag o' tricks. Born from a sketch on a diner napkin one rainy day, it's one that I believe will help many of us perfect our lines and gate approaches, while besting our most efficient pattern yet.

There are many aspects of this drill that I like.

It creates balance in our horses as it has four lead changes throughout, enabling our horses to build and strengthen the quarters of their bodies.

It is workable for both left and right-handed shooters and builds confidence in gates, cross shots and gun changes.

It can be worked both dry and live, and relates to several

patterns in our course book. Number 6 being an example.

It promotes thought about how each point of the pattern will set up for the next. For example, if we enter and exit the first gate offline, we will have to play catch up as we approach the next set of targets or turn. Typically this creates an over steering/correcting ripple effect which can often turn into a "yard sale" quickly.

Lets talk about lead changes since there are four in this drill. The almighty horse travels from heel to toe, hind end to front (unlike a deer who bounds). The horse has to catch its lead on its hindquarters first to avoid a cross canter situation. It is very important to understand that our weight in the saddle determines which end of the horse is engaged first. Have you ever seen riders try to find their lead by leaning forward to "see" which shoulder is leading? It's a counter productive move on the rider's part because it shifts the rider's weight to the front of the horse, which engages their front end first, typically causing a cross canter in the back. Sit deep in the saddle, with your weight slightly to the rear and use your outside leg to ask for the canter, remembering to LOOK in the direction you want to go (instead of down at the horse). Repeat this every time you change leads

