



Look Who's LAFFing Now!

by Kenda Lenseigne, CMSA World and National Champion
Photos by Mark Quigley

Here I go again by picking apart the mechanics of our great sport. In the last several issues we have talked about drills for balancing our horses, operating our horse machines properly, and we ever-so-briefly touched on gun handling. So brief that I thought it was time to open a little more thought into the art of accurate shooting because after all, Clean is King.

For those of you who know me, you will know that I spend a lot of time in the saddle, which means most of my time is spent alone. This gives me the opportunity to analyze our sport and attempt to come up with ways of improving my game. From the back of a horse came this Acronym, and the definitions that go with it. It has changed the way I train, and helped me become a more accurate and focused shooter.

It's called LAFF: Lock, Aim, Fire, Follow-through. Implement these four steps on each target.

Lock: Lock your eyes on the target, creating a tunnel vision effect on that target alone.

For those of a certain age and era who remember the 80's hit movie "Top Gun," you may recall a scene where Maverick and Goose are running a drill to achieve a missile lock on their target. This same cross-hair visual is how I like to imagine my sight picture as I cross the timing line and engage my course. My eyes Lock on to each target regardless of the movement of my horse or the potential distractions around me.

Aim is when the hand meets the eye. Let's shift gears from "Top Gun" to your favorite cop show when the hero officers bust through the door in search of their catch. We see them bringing their guns to eye level, and so becomes the Aim. In the case of LAFF, Aim is defined by the gun meeting the eye to create a straight line between the eye and target. Since we are on the subject of Hollywood and all of its special effects, let's imagine a laser beam coming out of your eyes, and another one coming out of the barrel of your gun. Imagine the two lasers lining up to Aim at the target. The less "gap" there is between our eye and the gun at the end of our arm, the greater perspective we have on our target. We do not see our law

Top to bottom: Kenda follows her own "LAFF" principle; lock your eyes on the target, aim the gun by meeting the eye to create a straight line between the eye and target, fire at the target and follow through.



enforcement or military shooters aiming from the hip, as there is little chance of being accurate. As mounted shooters we can use this method to achieve levels of accuracy from our horses as well by creating a straight line from our eyes, down the arm, into the gun and to the target.

Fire. Seems obvious, doesn't it? Lets analyze a little in this third step of LAFF. In my last article titled GET A GRIP (WSH June/July 2012) we talk about getting a firm grip on your gun as you draw, aim and fire. Be deliberate about your grip, cock the hammer and pull the trigger with strength and be sure that these two actions are separate from one another so you do not risk a slip hammer. Because we are shooting one handed without our support hand to stabilize the gun, we must concentrate on our grip strength to fire the gun without allowing the barrel to drop or tip. This will help keep us Locked and Aimed while Firing.

Follow-through. We cannot talk about mechanics of this hand-eye coordinated sport without dissecting the last step and delve into the Follow-through. For those who have ever played golf, tennis, bowling or even horseshoes, you will understand that the Follow-through is the most important step in LAFF. "Keep your eye on the ball", my coaches in school used to preach, and this advice should be carried into our sport as well. Too often we take our eye off of our targets as we search for the next before completing the shot on the first. It's simply human nature to get into a hurry when we are on the clock and our horse's feet are on fire. All great teachers in various sports will tell us to slow things down and "hush the rush".

The Follow-through should look like this if we were to watch it in slow motion: the hammer falls and our eyes remain on the target for a brief moment after the target is broken. Watching the target break and completing the shot is the success of Follow through. It also means a clean stage.

Just remember, he who LAFFS, lasts! 🐾

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