



Kenda competes during the compete in the celebrity speed event shoot off, against Hollywood actors and country music singers at the NRA Bianchi Cup Pistol Championship in Columbia, Missouri.

Cross Training in Bullets and Ballet

by Kenda Lenseigne, CMSA World and National Champion

In the late 1980's, news headlines boasted the announcement of the Chicago Bulls' most famous superstar and man's-man player Michael Jordan as he implemented a cross training program for his moves on the court by taking ballet. As we watched him glide to fame by effortlessly leaping across the key to sink his signature slam-dunk time after time, it was without-a-doubt-evident that he was on to something in his training program. His Air Jordan logo, a silhouette of his image sailing through the air is a move he learned not on the court, but in the dance studio.

Cross training, why bother? We spend so much time trying to perfect our skills in the mounted shooting arena as it is; by riding our drills, dry firing and keeping our horses fit, it doesn't seem like there would be any room left on the clock to introduce something else. But what if something as deceptively simple as putting a piece of lead on a baseball sized cardboard black dot at 10 yards could help us become more accurate shooters?

The art of pistol shooting (yes, I call it art) is a great cross training method, but lemme tell ya, it's far from easy. I've been a mounted shooter for over 15 years and feel pretty good about what I can do for most of the time, with a blank cartridge and a Single Action Army from the back of a horse. But put a 9mm M&P or a 1911 in my hand, add a little recoil and take away the black powder spread and I become a yay-hoo who looks like she's trying to cast a fly-fishing line into the river. My pieces of lead seem to be magnetically propelled away from the cardboard I'm trying to hit.

For the last four years I have taken part in the NRA Bianchi Cup Pistol Championship in Columbia, Missouri. Legendary shooter and holster maker John Bianchi started this event 35 years ago and it has since grown to global proportions. In a sea of highly respected competition pistol shooters from all over the world (over 8 countries represented), I am the only girl in cowboy boots that shows up each year as the token cowgirl shooter. I compete in the celebrity

Kenda under the Bianchi Cup clock.

speed event shoot off, against Hollywood actors and country music singers, all grateful for the invite and having a blast of a time. The NRA puts on a fabulous 4-day event, with a competitor appreciation night western BBQ, a black tie awards banquet and extensive media coverage, promoting the firearms industry and shooting sports in a positive light. As a competitor, I am still a "bottom feeder" in the sport of practical pistol shooting but love the challenge as I see it as a cross training measure to help me become a well rounded marksman in my mounted shooting game.

To combat my fly-fisherman form, most Thursday nights after the horses are worked, put up and fed, you will find me at the Ben Avery Cactus League USPSA pistol match, attempting to put small pieces of lead into cardboard silhouettes and steel targets that fall with a satisfying clang when hit. The US Practical Shooting Association matches are timed events with penalties; not unlike what we experience as mounted shooters.

Instead of SAA revolvers, semi autos are the norm, but the skills of drawing from the holster, movement and shooting fast and accurately are skills that all of us already have. Employing them in an unusual environment however forces us to think about what we are doing and in many cases, we can pick up new techniques and reinforce old skills. Besides, learning a new shooting sport is just plain fun and it allows us to introduce other people to the world of mounted shooting and grow our own sport a little.

MJ might just have had something when he first headed into the dance studio for the first time. In shooting, as in life, it sometimes pays to step outside of the comforting surroundings of what we know and pick up something different. Being humbled by someone who's an expert in another field forces us to reassess what makes us good at what we do and ultimately helps with form and accuracy, whether it's putting lead on cardboard or powder on balloons. 🐾



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