



## Get A Grip!

by Kenda Lenseigne, CMSA World and National Champion

“GET A GRIP ON THAT THING” he boomed, “STRONGER! YOU GIRL!” now shouting from across the bay. “I ammmmm” my mouse-like voice peeped out in inaudible argument. .... Meanwhile my 9mm Smith and Wesson M&P seemed to be doing jumping jacks in my hand with each passing shot. I knew he was right. The targets don’t lie, and neither do the photos of my less-than-stellar-form, viewed (and dare I admit), deleted at the end of the day.

I had the opportunity this past fall to train with a man known as TGO, (THE GREAT ONE), the best of the best in the practical pistol shooting. People flock from all over the world to spend fractions of time with this legend, soaking up his knowledge and gleaning his skill; and I managed two whole days to train with him. Although I could not trade fundamental for fundamental by getting him on a horse, he was instrumental in opening a new chapter to my mounted shooting training program and thought process.

This article is two-part. First, I wanted to inspire some thought on a small piece of the big puzzle by asking the question: What’s in a grip? You only get one chance to be efficient in seating your gun firmly in your hand as you draw. If you don’t, you spend precious time re-adjusting or “jogging” the gun in your hand, sometimes passing targets or opportunities of timed shots along the way.

A poor grip causes lost time as you are no longer “ahead of

the game”, but playing catch up as your horse gains momentum and speed. It’s important to consciously think about being strong and deliberate when you draw, to squeeze the grip firmly and seat it in your hand right as you pull from the holster. This will help keep the strength in your grip throughout the stage so the gun doesn’t feel like its levitating out of your hand by the finish line. Another point to consider is holsters design; do your holsters bury the gun so deep that it’s impossible to obtain the grip until the gun is already drawn? If your answer is yes, perhaps its time to examine your gear and make adjustments accordingly.

The second part of this article is geared toward pattern management and horsemanship. I am a firm believer in breaking fundamentals apart, setting the dial on slow motion, smoothing out wrinkles and lines then pushing play to speed it all up again as it applies to the big picture. I relate many of the things I train on to other professional sports. Take basketball for example. Lay ups, free throws, and drills comprise the game. The greatest coaches in the world do not set up scrimmages every day for their teams, and mounted shooting should be no different. To fine tune our skills its important that we don’t just run pattern after pattern in our practice sessions, measuring to the exact inch listed in the course book, but instead breaking things apart and work on bits and pieces to become more efficient.



## Here is a drill that I use in my daily training program.

**For the horse:** It teaches efficient turns, helps keep the horse collected and gathered in the turn by creating a cone barrier, with a little accelerate and rate thrown in for good measure.

**For the rider:** It reminds us to ride with light steering of our horses instead of jamming them in the turn, practices “nice neck reining” (see WSH 2012 April/May issue), emphasizes grip strength in rapid shots.

The box shaped arrangement helps give the horse a visual, which helps him stay collected and gathered in the turn. After all, what horse really wants to crash cones over? We may think from time to time that our horse’s main goal in life is to mow over cones and eat barrels for lunch, but perhaps that is our way of justifying our loss when the clock turns from raw time to adjusted time with a penalty. 🐾

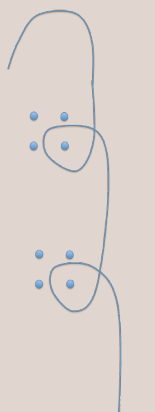
### Drill Number 2: The Loops

Note “follow the leader”. This drill can be fun if you have more than one person to ride with. As rider number one is leaving the first box, rider number two approaches.

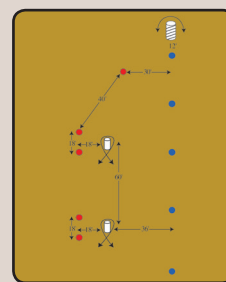
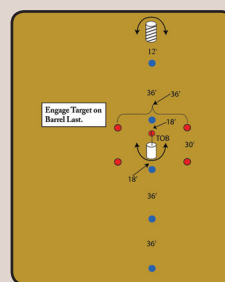
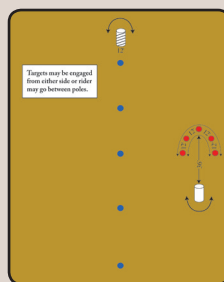
Enter the box, shooting the first target as a cross shot. The remaining three shots are strong. Accelerate out to the next box, change guns, rate the horse down for the turn and repeat the shots.

Turn the barrel and repeat the drill back to where you started.

Boxes are gate width apart. Less or more depending on size of arena and efficiency of horse.



**How it applies:** There are several courses in the CMSA Rulebook that have quick sequential shots while in a turn. Example: courses 3 and 28. There are also patterns such as course 41 that require a full barrel turn, rapid shots, and accelerate to repeat.



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