

Spare Change

By Kenda Lenseigne



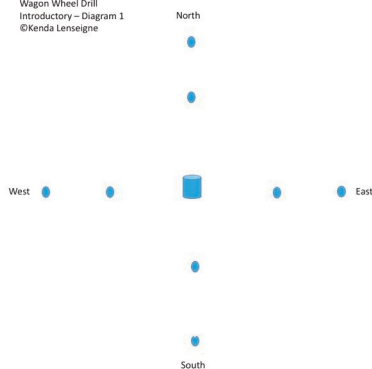
Photo courtesy of Chad Reinhart

hoping and praying that it won't hit the dirt before the finish line?

The first way to improve is obvious, and like most things, requires a look in the mirror. Ask yourself, how much time are you committing to practicing your gun change? Remember to improve, you must put time into it. You can practice your gun change whether the weather is bad or not, or you have limited time to ride because work gets in the way.

Here is a dry firing drill that I use to hone my gun-change skills and timing.

Wagon Wheel Drill
Introductory - Diagram 1
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Notes:

- Standard CMSA gates are 15' apart
- Start with shooting N/S or E/W only before changing guns.
- Advance to dry firing two gates consecutively and then change guns. For example, dry fire E/N, change, then W/S.
- Advanced shooters: Change your guns after every gate in the wheel
- Change direction and repeat the drill on the right lead.
- Remember to keep your eyes on a target and never look down for your holster.

Wagon Wheel Drill
Advanced - Diagram 2
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NOTES:

- Start with the steps in Introductory Wagon Wheel first (Diagram 1)
- Add two more gates making a total of 6 gates.
- Dry fire six targets, change guns, repeat.
- Repeat the drill on the right lead.

Shooter's Lament: The passage of time after a wonky stage, where a shooter informs, rehashes and explains over and over to others as to what went wrong.

"I would have won it, but I missed my gun change". We've all heard this statement during the Shooter's Lament and I'm willing to bet that we've ALL been "that guy" before. It happens to everyone, and no one is above this happenstance; whether you're a pro-super-level6 who rides flawlessly and defies the clock every time-all the time or you're just getting started ... it happens. Let's face it, mounted shooting isn't easy, as there are so many variables that can affect our outcome no matter who we are; no one is exempt from the rebellious balloons that wave as we ride by them, the horse that woke up on the wrong side of the bed or the six shooter that refuses to find its way back to the holster.

As we strive to be better mounted shooters, we can look at ways to lessen those variables. Why not consider the gun change as a freebie; to just ride, and not have to do anything other than simply put one gun in a holster and draw another?

What can we do to improve that split second in time, when the first gun either slides into our holster or it DOESN'T, and we're left stabbing our breadbasket, pinching our ribcage or worse, holstering the gun into our lap and riding the revolver down the rundown

Wagon Wheel

1. Set a barrel in the center of the arena. Step off 20-30 paces (more or less depending on the size of your workspace) and set up 15' gates at the North, East, West and South points.

2. Begin on your left lead and travel in a circle through the gates. You may choose the gait that feels most comfortable to you at the start (walk, trot or lope). Be mindful that you are not looking down for your holster when changing your guns.

3. Dry fire two gates and then change your guns.

4. Depending on your level and experience, you may want to start out dry firing the "north and south" gates first, with a gun change after, then repeat.

5. Advanced shooters: To add another degree of difficulty, change guns after every gate.