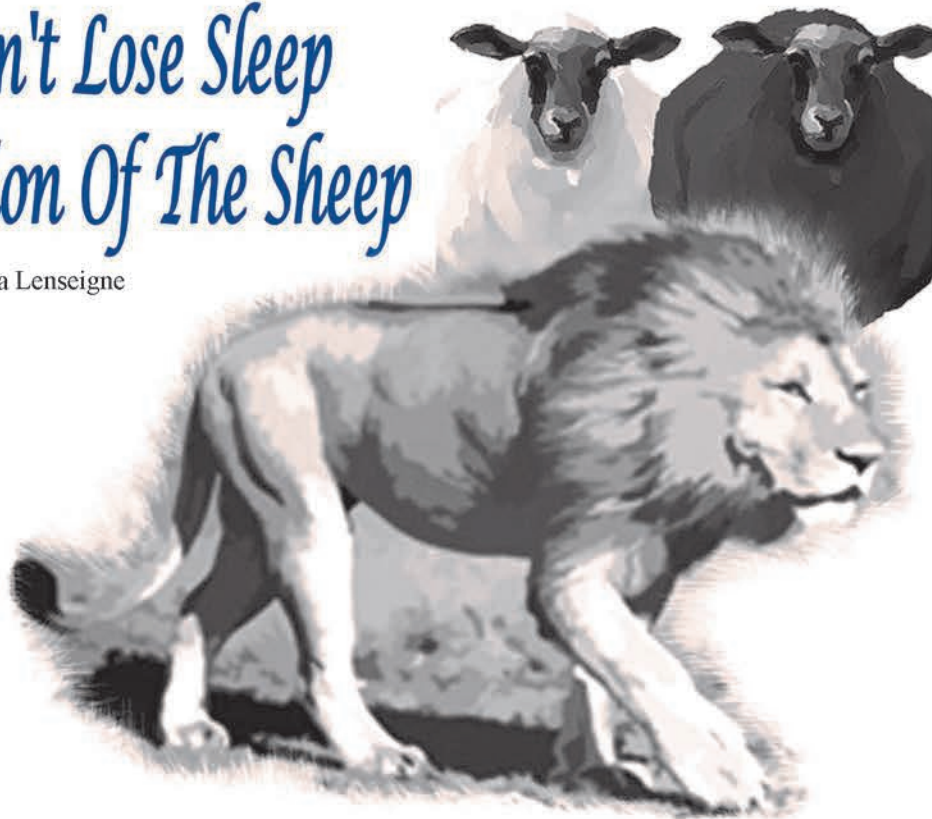


# A Lion Doesn't Lose Sleep Over The Opinion Of The Sheep

By Kenda Lenseigne



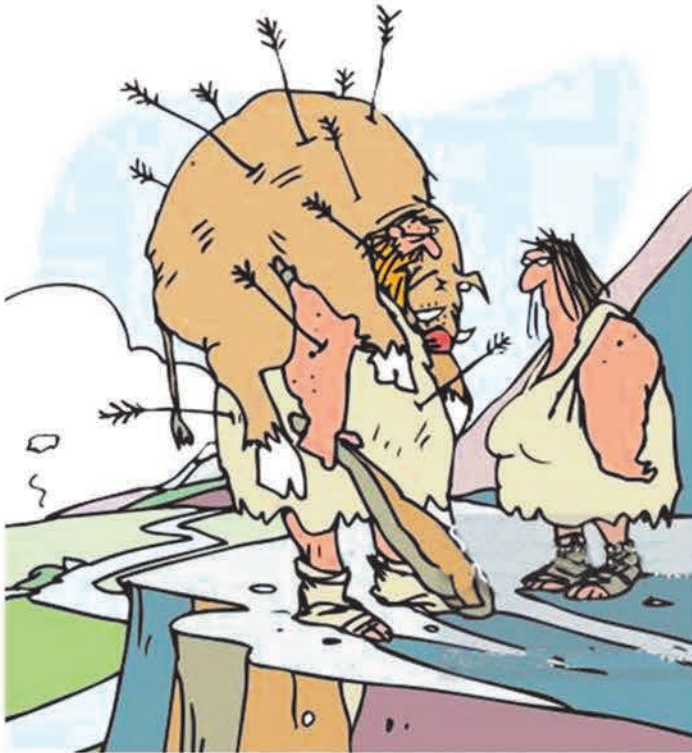
It's recently come to my attention that there are a few of our younger shooters who are having a tough time rising above the heartache of gossip. It's an unfortunate byproduct of our social media age and as our sport grows more and more competitive with each passing season, it was just a matter of time before the dark side of human nature crept its way into the shooting arena. People negatively judging their fellow contenders in one form or another is nothing new in competitive sports, and typically has nothing to do with one's actual performance. Meaning that hitting all the targets in the fastest time is not relevant to who a person is in their personal life; after all, Cowboy Mounted Shooting is a timed event, there is no benefit to playing a political game to win the buckle and there's no way of persuading the clock to favor us.

The actual word 'competition' dates back to the early 1600's, although it was born with the dawn of mankind when competing for food was necessary to survive. Modern day competition, whether in sport or business is often associated with harsh words such as 'rivalry' and 'opposition', and now the subsequent shorthanded comments on social media. It has a way of drawing a dividing line in the sand - on one side is the lion, and on the other those who choose to be sheep. And a lion doesn't concern itself with the opinion of sheep.

In my 19 years in the sport, with a good percentage of those years doing pretty well, you can guess that I've heard it all, and have first-hand experience with personal attacks, nasty gossip, anonymously written hate mail and downright dirty play from other competitors on game day. Because I'd hit all of my targets with the fastest time, I'd become a punching bag. Folks I'd never met had opinions and unfounded disapproval of my very existence, when really I was simply working hard to accomplish the goals that I had

set for myself. It was hurtful and unbelievable how the snowball kept growing with each win, and after feeling discouraged by the brunt of the blows, I had to make a choice. Would I let the haters tear me down, or would I tighten my gun belt and ride harder to give them all something to talk about?

So, young competitor, if you're on the receiving end of gossip, consider the source and the person who's stirring up the trouble. Decide at that point if they're worth an investment of your time and energy in worrying about what they say. Chances are they're going to say what they want no matter how you feel about it. We won't be able to change how they conduct themselves, but we can change what we do with the verbal or virtual punches when they come our way. My epiphany came when I chose to find acceptance of the chatter. Remind yourself that while you are spending your time in the saddle working harder toward your goals, they're squandering their time on this earth gossiping about things they can't influence - which, incidentally is also a waste of valuable training opportunities. Being able to implement this strategy by no longer letting their words bother you is all part of the mental management aspect of being a successful athlete, and one who refuses to let the opinions of others negatively influence an aspiration to be the best you can be.



“The competition’s getting brutal.”

Author Seth Godin helps put this into perspective as he writes about his toughest critics, “You’ll be judged or you’ll be ignored and those are pretty much the only two choices there are. The former doesn’t feel good of course. It’s uncomfortable, hurtful and even plain weird but this is something you must accept if you want to be remarkable; to stand out. Being judged is better than being ignored as that’d mean who you are and what you’re doing isn’t worth talking about”.

Churchill put it even more succinctly. “You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something, sometime in your life.”

As we continue climbing the CMSA levels ladder, dodging the slings and arrows along the way, also consider a glimpse into the future. Is the person or group who is targeting you going to matter in month, six months or a year from now? Life changes all the time, and nothing ever stays the same. Chances are the sheep who are causing the heartache now will move on to someone else sooner or later. Be the lion.

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