

Hey Neighbor For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Mounted Shooting Requires Special Horses

It takes a special horse for a mounted shooter to be a champion.

"There are a lot of characteristics necessary for a top mounted shooting horse," insisted Ross Yordy, a champion shooter in the Mounted Shooters of America (MSA).

"First, the horse has to let the rider shoot a revolver from his back," continued Yordy, now of Fort Atkinson, Wis.

"Not all horses, even with work and exposure, ever get so they'll work consistent for a shooter," added Yordy, who with his wife Terrie, was in Kansas recently for competition and visiting.

Natives of the Brookville area, the Yordys are charter members, with Carey and Wanda Macy, of the new Flint Hills Roughriders, Kansas chapter of MSA.

A mounted shooting competition was planned at the Macys' Five Bar Ranch near Alta Vista, but muddy conditions canceled it. However, the Yordys and Macys did practice later in the afternoon and talked about the sport of mounted shooting.

"It's essential to hit the targets, but your horse is the difference between winning and losing," Yordy confirmed. "This is a timed event, like a barrel race. The shooter who hits the targets going through a pattern with the fastest time is the winner."

While Yordy's ridden several horses since he's been shooting for seven years, a ranch horse has made his top shooting mount. "I have a former barrel racing horse that is faster, but he is still shy when I shoot, so my

shooters ride Quarter Horses, because of their ability, speed and consistency," Yordy explained.

Horses must be well broke. Reining, cutting, penning, ranch and barrel horses have been made into shooting horses. They must be accustomed to guns being shot from their backs.

"We start by exposing the horses to gunfire near them, not when we're riding. Certain horses really get upset, but others take to it readily," Yordy related. "You can tell by watching their head and ears. Some horses never really accept the explosion."

Firecrackers are sometimes used initially to acquaint horses to gunfire.

"When we begin shooting from a horse, we shoot over his hip, and eventually move to shooting from the side. We don't ever shoot

over his head," Yordy advised.

Depending on the pattern, riders sometimes shoot on one side of the horse and then stretch their arm over the horse's neck and shoot from the opposite side.

Ear plugs can be used for horses that don't like the explosion and also to protect ears from noise damage. "I don't use ear plugs in my horses because they won't accept them, but I think gunshots have damaged one's hearing," Yordy said. "It is best to use the ear plugs in your horse if possible."

Many horses never become elite mounted shooting horses. "They will work for fun and practice, but for a champion, the horse has to like what he's doing and do his best every run," stressed Yordy, who said some patterns can be run in less than

10 seconds.

The Macys have been doing mounted shooting for over a year and have found their horses are different in ability. "My horse took right to it," Wanda credited. "However, Carey's one horse was cautious of gunfire, but he's tried another horse who seems to enjoy the sport."

Certain lines of horses work well for mounted shooting, according to Yordy. Magazines produced for mounted shooting enthusiasts have advertisements for stallions standing at public service, with emphasis on their ability to sire shooting horses. Likewise, there is strong demand to buy mounted shooting horses.

Mounted shooters use single-action Colt 45-caliber pistols. "Guns will hold six shells, but only five shells are allowed to be loaded for a shoot," Carey stated. "Ten

times end up slower," Yordy acknowledged.

"The horse is over 50 percent, actually about 70 percent of winning," Yordy contended. "It looks easy, but when it comes down to shaving seconds off a time, it gets pretty tough. In my last competition, only seven seconds separated the top ten riders."

A number of horse breeds could be used for mounted shooting. "There are champions who ride Paso Finos and Walking Horses, but most mounted



Ross Yordy and Wanda Macy load Colt 45 pistols for mounted shooting as Coy and Carey Macy and Terrie Yordy are mounted ready for practice runs at Macy's Five Bar Ranch near Alta Vista.

targets are in a stage, and each stage is a different pattern.

"A shooter must have two pistols, with one drawn and one holstered at the start, and then switch pistols halfway through the pattern. A match consists of four to six stages," he verified.

Costs of pistols vary considerably. "They range from \$300 to over \$2,000. There are a lot of styles," Wanda clarified. "Pistols must fit

the hand of the shooter in order to be able to cock and shoot at each target."

Lever-action Colt 45-caliber rifles are also used in mounted shooting. "I have a rifle and have won some rifle events. It takes more skill for the shooter and his horse with a rifle," Yordy avowed.

A variety of holsters are available, and they are positioned in front of the shooter, rather than on the side.

"All MSA participants must be in western attire, with specifics in the rulebook, but they are not overly stringent," Wanda shared.

There are no bullets in the shells used for shooting. "It is the black powder that breaks the balloons, so you have to be within 20 feet of the target. The powder has about a 1 1/2-foot spread," Yordy noted.

"While we reload our own shells, shooters are provided ammunition at competitions. Participants can not bring their own shells," Wanda emphasized.

Shooters often wear ear plugs. While the Yordys do not wear them, Wanda pointed out, "We wear ours, because I know what damage gunfire can do to ears."

Different devices are available for blowing up the target balloons. The system used by Yordy consists of a six-inch, one-half inch diameter plastic pipe with a tire valve on one end, and the balloon is looped over the opposite end. An air com-

pressor supplies the air. Balloons are inserted into pipes in highway safety cones.

Patterns are selected from the MSA rulebook, and shooters must run them as set or be penalized. Divisions for men, women and children are broke down into ability levels. "Youth don't use the blank ammo, but they must cock and shoot a cap gun at every target," Wanda remarked.

There are two mounted shooting organizations. "We are members of the Mounted Shooters of America, and there is also a group called the Cowboy's Mounted Shooters Association," Yordy asserted.

Management of the two groups is distinctively different. "Briefly, payback in MSA shoots is much higher, fewer patterns are used and dress codes are more lenient," Yordy described.

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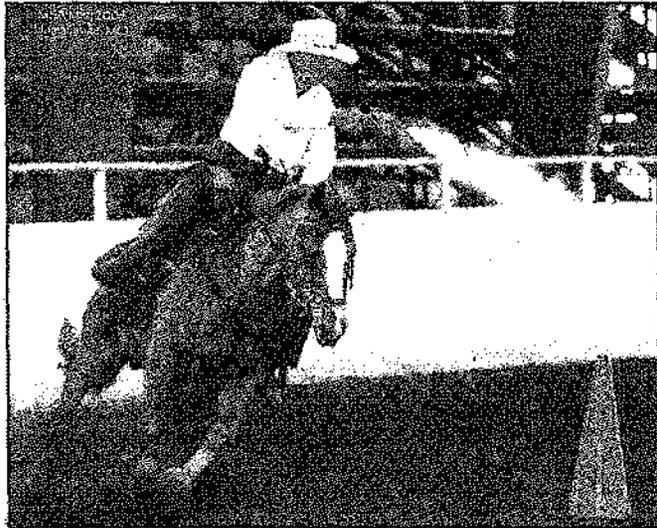
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terested in competing that much ourselves," Wanda indicated. "We just want to do it for fun."

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Carey Macy and Ross Yordy blow up balloons as targets for a mounted shoot at Macy's Five Bar Ranch near Alta Vista. A six-inch, one-half inch diameter plastic pipe has a tire valve on one end, and the balloon is looped over the opposite end. An air compressor supplies the air.



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