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The Reigning World Champion Kenda Lenseigne

In 2009, Kenda Lenseigne became the first woman in the history of the Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association to win the overall World Champion title, beating out all comers, men and women alike. In 2010, Kenda made history for a second time by winning the overall National Champion title. These uncommon feats have given Lenseigne the distinction of being the only woman to accomplish such a task. The question is...can she maintain the winning streak in such a competitive field?

Article by Mark Boardman
Photos and graphics by Lucinda Wood

Kenda and her Quarter Horse Justin have a special relationship that is almost ten years in the making.

We caught up with Kenda to get an update on the life of the reigning World and National Champion since winning the World back in October of 2009. Not surprisingly we discovered she's as determined as ever and plans on taking her game and her horse Justin to the Worlds again when the CMSA holds it's 2010 World Championship at the Amarillo National Center this October.

Back in June 2008, *Western Shooting Horse* did a cover article on Kenda Lenseigne. Just to refresh your memory, we referred to her as "the perfect lady" who had an eye on beating everyone she rode against—including men.

Maybe we were a little premature in printing that story.

Just a few months later, Kenda accomplished that goal, winning the Overall title at the 2008 Westerns.

It was the start of a remarkable run, during which she has made CMSA history by winning the High Overall at the 2009 Desert Classic and Lazy E and Worlds. And this year, she's already taken High Overall at the Nationals.

Kenda Lenseigne is on top of the mounted shooting world, plain and simple. She and Justin, her 12 year old registered Quarter Horse sorrel gelding, are a threat to win every time they compete—and Kenda says Justin just keeps getting better every year.

To other competitors: Be afraid. Be very afraid.

So what happened? Kenda was a great competitor prior to this streak, but what took her to the next level?

The Keys to Success

The answers are a bit complicated.

Of course, you can point to Justin, who she bought for $2000 in 2004. "Getting the right horse under me—or under any rider—is the real key. Justin had raw ability when I first bought him but no mounted shooting experience. Building him from a green foundation all the way up to a proven champion took extreme patience and a lot of time."

About four years, to be exact. Sure, they'd won a bunch prior to that, but the Kenda-Justin partnership hit its stride, so to speak, in 2008.

Part of the reason for their rise to the top: Kenda's maturation, as a person and as a competitor. "When you're young, you have no fear," she explains. "But there's a point where experience trumps that. When I first started, my approach was 'yahoo, let's go, let's shoot!' And if I missed five, it was 'oh well, that's okay because I had a really fast run.' But now, experience and age go hand-in-hand with being able to keep a consistent focus."

But there are two factors that really stand out.

The Program

Kenda points to her preparation program—which took shape about two years ago. "I implement a focusing routine, plan a strategy and mentally get into game mode before I compete" she says. "This program has really worked for me

THE KENDA FILE

AGE: 35

HOMETOWN Ellensburg, WA

OCCUPATION: Trainer/instructor; product spokesperson; mounted shooting competitor.

STARTED COMPETING:1998

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:
2010: Overall National Champion
2009: Overall World Champion
2008: Reserve World Champion Cowgirl
2008: World Point Champion Cowgirl
2007: Reserve World Champion Cowgirl
2006: World Point Champion Cowgirl
2005: World Point Champion Cowgirl
2000: World Point Champion Cowgirl
Set six World Records between 2005 and 2009

Smooth as silk. Kenda systematically cleans another stage at the 2009 CMSA World Championship.

over the last few years. It doesn't matter if I'm competing at a 20 person shoot or a 200 person shoot. The routine has to remain the same every time to work when it's really needed, like at the World or Nationals when the pressure is on."

Kenda does not shoot off Justin at home. Because he is already seasoned, she mainly long trots a trail to keep him fit. One or two days a week she may take him into the arena to do some slow drills—basically, tuning him on components of mounted shooting patterns to keep him balanced.

Her own preparation doesn't really include Justin: "Most of my time in the saddle is spent on my clients' new shooting horses. I treat everything I do as some sort of practice. I start all the horses on different drills which include a lot of dry firing work that is repetitious. This helps build an efficient horse in patterns, and the slow meticulous work helps perfect my timing in shooting. Accuracy is not about how fast you can shoot, it's about the timing of your shots."

And then there's the "X" factor.

The Book

As much as anything, Kenda credits a book for her winning ways. A friend in Oregon gave it to her about two-and-a-half years ago: "It's written by an Olympic Gold medal rifle shooter, and it teaches mental management in competition. The book is easy to relate to because the author writes from a shooter's perspective. I studied his program, along with some other books that are written by golf and tennis pros. All have the same philosophy—the game is won (or lost) in the mind before ever stepping in to the arena."

The book talks about focus and positive thinking; and how the two work hand-in-hand to boost performance. Kenda says, "When I ride into the arena, I rely on the fact that I have done all I can do up to that point to prepare, and now it's time to just let it happen. Looking back, for many years I think I tried to force it by riding too hard, being too

Kenda and Cimarron Firearms have joined forces to introduce the Thunderstorm Factory tuned Mounted Shooting Championship Series of pistols and rifles. Here Kenda fires her Cimarron pistol at the Wil Lantis Memorial in Spearfish, South Dakota.

aggressive, trying to make a world record run every single stage. And that just doesn't work."

Kenda generally gives the title of the book to her students and those who attend her clinics. Me? She said something about having to kill me if she told me. . .

What's Next?

Kenda is frequently asked, "So you've accomplished your goals. What's next?"

Her answer: "The goal remains the same, no matter what I have accomplished before. I'm here to one-up my personal best and of course win."

Kenda thinks about winning all the major championships in one year—the Worlds, Nationals, Easterns, and Westerns. A CMSA Grand Slam.

Kenda Lenseigne has reached the point where she knows she can do it. Because all of those things—maturation, partnership with Justin, preparation program, and mental approach—have come together to put her atop the world of mounted shooting.

Makes you wonder what a *Western Shooting Horse* article on Kenda in 2012 may say. . .

THE FRUITS OF HER LABOR

Kenda Lenseigne will be the first to tell you—winning has its benefits.

Her personal sponsorships have jumped due to her success:

Kenda got a well-publicized deal with Circle Y Saddles in March 2009. Cimarron is working with her on with a new line of firearms made specifically for mounted shooting. She's brought Professional's Choice equine medicine products to the sport. She has her own brand of reins. The Kenda Lenseigne brand is growing every day. And she's getting new sponsorship inquiries all the time.

Kenda—with those stunning looks of hers—has also gotten numerous modeling offers.

And the requests for horse training and instruction could keep her busy forever.

The end result: "I'm very blessed that I'm one of the few people in our sport that can say they've made a living off it."

The business side takes up an increasing amount of time and energy. But Kenda says her mental approach to the sport—combining preparation with relaxation and focus—also helps her outside the arena.

And the sponsorships, modeling, training and instruction are providing her with a professional and financial foundation for that time when she's no longer a mounted shooting competitor.

In 20 or 30 years. . ..