

## Notice to all CSA/MSA Members

When Karin Page first approached Ann and I to purchase the CSA, after giving it much thought, we reluctantly felt at the time we must turn her down. While she had been successful in starting a grass roots association that was comfortable to new shooters and returned to the social aspects that were key to mounted shooting at its inception, the membership is significantly less than the MSA and taking on a start up association with substantial differences was thought to be too great a task. The lower fees that have been popular with members did not sustain the CSA as a business and in its short lifespan, it had incurred sizeable debt and the business plan projected forward showed increasing.

As Karin Page shares our long-term confidence in offering great customer service and programs that are fair and transparent, we kept the door open and as you know, eventually took her up on her offer to sell us the CSA and for her to continue on as CEO of both the CSA and the MSA. Unfortunately, Karin found that running two associations with different programs and expectations from their members became overwhelming and felt her family was not getting the attention they deserved, which we respected when accepting her resignation.

With the help of a CMSA founder, Frank Turben, Ann and I have once again taken charge and have begun making necessary corrections to actions taken in our absence and continuing to seek improvement. As is often said in business, you must adapt or die. One of the ideas we had discussed after acquiring CSA was to merge the newer association into the MSA for overall strength and easier administration.

We initially held off on such an action due to fear that CSA members would feel that the grass roots structure and looser rules of the CSA would be lost in the transition. We have not wanted any impression that we did not respect the legacy created by Karin or the differences in the programs that were important to CSA members.

As we have dealt with the challenges of running two such diverse associations, we have reconsidered the idea of merging the two associations for the greater good. While affiliates of both associations have had freedom of options as to how they are operated, running things from a national level has been much more complicated, as we do not have the benefit of such flexibility. Having one system of rules and fewer national events and programs to organize, track and fund, makes much better business and economic sense.

Therefore, we are writing to explain a merger between the two associations. I understand that this is what some of you have feared, while this is something others have favored and we wish to remain true to our longstanding adherence to fairness and transparency by explaining our reasons in detail.

We have dedicated much effort in Western Horse & Gun to the term Western Mounted Shooting, since being put on notice by the CMSA not to use the term *Cowboy* Mounted Shooting. Owning an association with the name *Cowboy* weakens the argument we have made that this word should not be used to describe our sport, as mounted shooters are not cowboys and the term unfairly ignores woman.

We have invested heavily in the MSA brand and have made numerous strides in achieving national status through significant venues like the Patriot and Road to the Horse. Merging the associations will provide current CSA members with an opportunity to also participate in these events as MSA members, as well as our World Championships and other major events we host across the country. We are also involved in a reality TV show named *Straight Shooters*, currently in development, about Western Mounted Shooting and exclusively the MSA, with the Ride Network. Our push for growth is making significant strides, while our success still relies heavily on the partnership and participation of all our members.

It is well known that the strength of the CSA is that its members wish to compete for fun and to interact socially with fellow mounted shooters, going back to the roots of mounted shooting. Ann and I have long been using Western Horse & Gun to educate mounted shooters that due to the small size of our sport, it should be recognized for the hobby that it is and that the competitors focus, needs to return to the grass roots ideals of fun and comradely if any national associations are to be successful. With the cheapest fees in the sport, this is especially necessary for our success, as the cost of providing major events and awards is substantial, not to mention the time and effort it takes to plan and execute each season's programs and activities.

We have carefully considered the issues of merging two systems that have unique interests and expectations and do not wish to ignore or diminish the legacy created by Karin Page and we want you all to know that you have our respect and we are thankful for your participation. So that you will understand we do not expect to absorb CSA members directly into the MSA system without consideration for what you have grown to like about the CSA, we have decided to adopt most of the more significant rules of the CSA into our merger to create a New MSA, that includes what has been proven successful for each association. You should be proud to know that your system will help to lead the way into our future.

We will continue to control our major events to assure they are professionally run and of top quality and affiliates will not be asked to host national regional events at their expense and financial risk. We will rely on local clubs to help us with staffing and assure major events run smoothly. It is our hope that combining membership will increase turnout at these events for the benefit of all.

Our main focus will remain on supporting our affiliates through the national association and added value of exposure in our national magazine, which no other mounted shooting association has available. We will continue to offer clubs incentives by paying back 50% of first time individual membership fees as an

ongoing royalty program. As MSA affiliates you will also qualify for our Club Cup program, which is explained on the MSA web site. Active clubs that offer significant membership will have the benefit of major events being scheduled nearby, while we understand that many CSA members prefer to participate at the local level. While this preference will continue to be supported, those who wish to test their skills against broader competition will now have an opportunity to participate in a more competitive environment for greater bragging rights.

In order to keep things much the same at the local level, we will continue to encourage the jackpot system that has been so popular with smaller clubs. As jackpots have also been available to MSA clubs, this is not a change with the merger. However, since the CSA has developed its own jackpot method and software, we will implement this method into our rules. Local events with less than 25 entries may use the jackpot method, with points awarded. Events with more than 25 entries may still be run as jackpots, but points will not be awarded, as we want to encourage people to use our level system and keep ringers from avoiding legitimate completion.

Also, the popularity of the CSA dress code at local matches will now be allowed in MSA affiliate rules and clubs will have the right to decide for themselves which dress code to follow, while current MSA dress codes will continue at regional or national major events. The shooting horse registry will continue as an MSA program, under the name *Western Shooting Horse Registry* and results will be published in *Western Horse & Gun* for international exposure and bragging rights.

As the CSA has shown that smaller clubs benefit from not using a gender split, the MSA will now remove the gender split for any affiliate competition, which does not fill each division with a gender split. The gender split will remain for regional and major national events. Entering two horses will still be allowed at all MSA matches. In addition, beginning in 2016, Platinum and Platinum Plus divisions that are not full, may be moved into the younger divisions at the discretion of the match director.

Other rule changes and new programs are currently being considered for next season that we hope will add to the excitement of mounted shooting and announcements will be coming soon to give members time to absorb them. These changes will be discussed with the national advisory board and current affiliate owners. While changes are not always popular with mounted shooters, we are seeking to distinguish ourselves from our competition in substantial ways and continue to seek professionalism and respectability in the equestrian world, which we wish to attract into our sport. Implementing rules from the CSA system will help us to do this.

The merger between the CSA and MSA will become official at the end of the 2015 season and we hope this will be viewed as a sound business decision that will benefit all our members by showing strength through numbers and simplifying efforts needed to support mounted shooting at a national level. As being divided has

proven challenging, together we will gain new strength for the betterment of all our members. As we make this historic partnership, always remember our slogan and our ongoing commitment to: *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Victory!*

Rick and Ann Pihl