

Guns and Horses: New Sport Gains Popularity in Kodiak

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Cowboy mounted shooting may sound like an activity reserved for a John Wayne film, but it's actually the fastest growing horse sport in the country. And Kodiak is no exception to the fad.

Johnny Walker doesn't call himself a cowboy, but as a life-long horse rider and lover of mounted shooting, it would make sense if he did. Walker has been in Kodiak this summer leading horse camps with the Kodiak Baptist Mission and recently started working with riders, young and old, on the techniques of the shooting sport.

"And basically what that is, is there's a patten of balloons placed in the arena, and a rider rides in, and they take a revolver loaded with blanks, so there's no danger to the audience, no danger to the rider or the horse. And they burst those balloons with these blanks. And they're under a time and the person that does that in the shortest time becomes the winner."

Walker said he didn't think he'd be teaching mounted shooting when he came to Kodiak, he simply wanted to introduce young riders to horses. But when more than 50 kids signed up for the camp, he said it was clear that they should take it a step further. Walker said he and Mission Director Trevor Jones decided to put on a shooting tournament at the Fairgrounds, and opened it up to anyone interested in taking their horsemanship a step further.

"The children's event in that is basically they ride the pattern. They go into the ring, they won't be handling any firearms, but they'll actually be going into the ring and riding that pattern, under time and trying to sort of get their feet wet in this sport."

Walker said he's been out at the fairgrounds every day working with community members and horses to get things ready for the tournament this Friday.

"The adult portion where they

actually fire the blanks takes quite a bit of work to get a horse ready to stand that blank. The blank's loud, it sounds just like a real gun, so it takes a while to get the horse used to it.

He said he's pleasantly surprised at the interest in the sport, and thinks it could really take off in Kodiak. A handful of local horse enthusiasts have expressed interest in participating in the tournament on Friday, which Walker said will be more of a demonstration than anything. However, folks don't need to own a horse to get involved with it. He said anyone who is interested, no matter their age, should contact the Baptist Mission to meet up with him and learn about how the sport works.

"Some local people have very generously provided some horses to be used in a way that if someone wanted to show up and try this, there'll actually be a horse or two here that they could try. And sort of see how they liked it. So if someone has an interest in this sport, they need to come out, they can try it, they can borrow everything, we have everything necessary here, every cost will be covered by the Kodiak Baptist Mission so it's 100 percent free. Free to the kids, free admission, there won't be any charge to anybody for anything."

But for those who just want to watch the tournament demonstration, they can do so this Friday at 7 p.m. at the Fairgrounds. As Walker said, the entire event is free, and there will be a number of prizes raffled off to spectators and those who participate.

Ideally, if someone is interested in taking part in the actual riding, Walker said they should contact the mission well before Friday so they can get a feel for it before the event.