

Alcohol And Shooting Performance

Shooters in the United States have been trained to avoid alcohol when practicing for a big meet, and the social pressures to avoid drinking at the range are intense. In fact, most ranges in this country forbid alcohol consumption on their premises at any time.

However, that wasn't the case at the Winnsboro Gun Club's private facility. After the line was called safe for the day and everyone's gun was cased and put away, kegs in a Budweiser trailer were tapped, and the suds flowed. Still, such an arrangement would be considered restrictive in Mexico, where the game of silhuetas metalicas originated, and where observers and some shooters drink around—and on—the field of play.

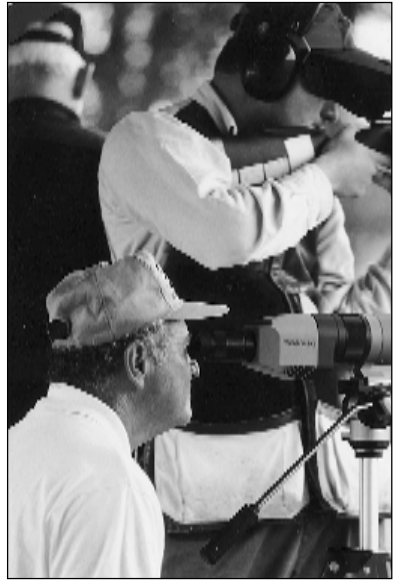
Antonio Barriga, a 64-year-old resident of San Luis Potosi, Mexico, won the high senior award in the smallbore rifle silo championship with a three-day total of 90. He said he didn't think drinking was a safety factor in shooting as much as it was a performance factor.

"In Mexico, as well as many of the European countries such as Germany, drinking is part of the social aspect of shooting," Barriga said. "I think people in your country don't allow drinking because it can give some shooters an edge, not because of safety."

Barriga's opinion runs counter to most training dogma in the U.S., which says that alcohol interferes with reaction time and depth perception. He also qualifies his stance by saying that alcohol might not help shooters in the Olympic events, where a great deal of precision is required.

"But for silhouette, alcohol is not bad," Barriga said. "I would say that 60 percent of the shooters in Mexico drink before or during a match, and it helps them stay calm and shoot better. The other 40 percent are dangerous with alcohol, and they don't drink. But Mexican shooters know who is who." He says he personally knows certain shooters who have won major championships in Mexico under the influence.

"When I was younger, I was a much better shooter when I drank something before a match," the 32-year silo veteran said. "But one of the problems is that you must drink more as time goes on to get the same effect. At some point, it is too much. Because I am older, I don't drink anything now."



Above: Antonio Barriga, who's spotting for his son Marco, says drinking alcohol can help some shooters' performance.