

ON DECK

Tiger Sharks swim team holds annual awards banquet

SPORTS

SECTION B

LOS BAÑOS ENTERPRISE

Friday, August 3, 2007



ANDREW GREEN/THE ENTERPRISE

From left, Kent Sandhagen, Bob Meyers and Todd Springer practice their fast draw skills Saturday at the Golden State Gunslinger's practice session. Sandhagen and others said they hope the team will hold their own against those from around their nation during the state's first fast draw championships Oct. 12-14. The competition will be held in conjunction with the city's Henry Miller Wild West Weekend celebration.

BANG, BANG, SHOOT 'EM UP

Los Baños' fast draw team prepares as date for California's first state championship competition nears

By Andrew Green
AGREEN@LOSBAÑOSENTERPRISE.COM

Twice a week, Kent Sandhagen and Geneva Brett's back yard off Ortigalita Road becomes a wild west corral, complete with western-clad cowboys, six-shooters and plenty of tough-sounding wild west aliases. All that's missing is the tumbleweed.

"It makes it more fun. We feel like little kids dressing up in cowboy outfits," said Sandhagen, aka "The Undertaker."

Along with the rest of the Golden State Gunslingers, Sandhagen hopes more people will join their cowboy fast draw club and learn about cowboy fast draw, the newest sport to make the scene in Los Baños.

Much like the old days of the Wild

West, fast draw participants compete by holstering a single-action .45 caliber replica by their hip.

Contestants' hands are not allowed to touch the gun until their signal. Shooters can either go alone or compete with others head-to-head with each facing a metal target. When the target lights up, both shoot, with a timer judging whose wax bullet hits first.

Sandhagen said what was supposed to begin as a Los Baños Chamber of Commerce centennial demonstration became the fast draw club in March.

According to the World Fast Draw Association, fast draw is one of the world's quickest sports, with world records of less than one-third of a second.

But with a little practice anybody can become proficient at it, Sandhagen said.

"We got introduced to it for the upcoming (Henry Miller) Wild West weekend just to do a demonstration. We went over to this one guy's house to shoot and we got hooked. They had the targets and timers there with a lot of the shooting stuff and that's how it started," he said.

"In three to four months you can get pretty darn competitive. You might not be right there at the top but you can get competitive. It's not all about speed, it's also about hitting that target."

Along with the rest of the Golden State Gunslingers, Brett and Sandhagen hope the public will also participate in the Cowboy Fast Draw Association's first California State Championships.

Brett said the championships, sponsored by the chamber of commerce and the San Jose-based Sundowners Single Action Shooting Club, will be held on October 12-14 at the Merced County Spring Fairgrounds.

The three-day competition will be part of the larger Henry Miller Wild West Weekend, the final event for the city's centennial celebration, she said.

"The chamber of commerce planned to do a barbecue cook off for the event and members saw targets and old shooting stuff at a house. People asked us if we could sponsor a fast draw event through

SEE GUNSLINGERS, PAGE B2