



TEAM Smith & Wesson®

15 Questions with 15-Time Bianchi Cup Champion



DOUG KOENIG SETS ALL-TIME MATCH RECORD

Winning his 15th Bianchi Cup, Koenig has now won 11 of the last 13 Bianchi Cup matches and shares the honor of being one of only two people who have won the match in the last fifteen years.

Team Smith & Wesson's Doug Koenig wins the 2013 NRA Bianchi Cup National Championship with a Smith & Wesson 1911DK pistol. Posting a final score of 1920-183X, Koenig set an all-time match record by recording his 15th Bianchi Cup title. He has won 11 of the last 13 Bianchi Cup matches and he shares the honor of being one of only two people who have won the match in the last 16 years. Smith & Wesson was able to sit down with Koenig for a few minutes as he reflected on his latest victory:

S&W: Doug, congratulations on your 15th Bianchi Cup title. After capturing your first cup in 1990, did you ever imagine that you would win the trophy another 14 times?

DK: I can honestly say I never did. Even when I won for the first time, I'm not sure I was quite ready to win. It was a very pleasant surprise then as it is now, but it's just one of those things that you're not quite sure will be possible. There are some really outstanding shooters competing and the race is always going to be tight.

S&W: With your strong track record at the Bianchi Cup, it's hard not to think you and this match were made for one another. Why does this event sync so well with your style of shooting?

DK: I think my success at Bianchi comes down to several things. First, my training both mentally and physically mixes well with the course of fire. I also really enjoy the unique challenge it brings. At Bianchi, you are given a specific problem or an obstacle to overcome along with a pre-set time to accomplish it. I feel I'm at my best in those types of scenarios, because when the pressure builds I can go back to my training and stay focused on the task at hand.

S&W: Over the last 24 Bianchi Cup matches, only twice have the overall winners not shot a perfect score. How do you think this influences competitors and what, if anything, has changed to make shooting a perfect score more achievable for the winner?

DK: I think the ability to shoot a perfect score at Bianchi can be attributed to several things. For one, the equipment has become more consistent. I'm fortunate to have a great group of sponsors and each piece of gear I use, like my Smith & Wesson 1911DK pistol, is utterly reliable. Having the upmost confidence in your equipment is an important piece of the puzzle that can't be overlooked. Another factor is that over the history of the Cup, the courses of fire haven't changed that much. This has allowed competitors the ability to practice at home as local ranges can

now offer all the essentials needed. One of the things that I've found even more interesting is that very few different competitors have shot a perfect score in the same year. I can't recall more than three ever doing it in the same match and most times, it's only the winner. So, while we are certainly seeing more winners post perfect scores, I think it's also a testament to how difficult this match actually is.

S&W: How much skill vs. luck would you say comes into play on shooting a perfect score at Bianchi or at any other match for that matter?

DK: For me personally, I think the luck factor comes into play for all those variables that you can't control. Things like weather, your physical health, and exterior circumstances are all difficult to predict. Likewise, it's hard to make your preparation, training, and focus, all peak at the same time. In my shooting I don't ever like to think luck is a major variable because I know if I've done everything in my power to prepare properly, I should have a good chance to win.



S&W: Let's talk equipment for a few seconds. Your Open gun for Bianchi is a Smith & Wesson 1911 in .38 Super. Obviously for this competition you've made some upgrades to the base model. Why did you select this particular model and what benefit do you feel the .38 Super cartridge provides?

DK: I think in a lot of ways, it all comes down to familiarity. I've been using .38 Super and the 1911 platform for almost my entire career. The versatility of the .38 Super makes it a great setup for USPSA, Steel Challenge, Bianchi or any of the other matches I shoot. The beauty of the cartridge is that you can download it to a .380 equivalent with a 90gr bullet going 1,000 feet per second or you can bring it up to a .357 level with a 125gr bullet going 1,400 feet per second. As for the 1911 style, I've been shooting this type of pistol for over 26 years. When I first started in the sport, it was the platform everyone was using and it stuck with me. With the SW1911DK, I like the all steel setup, grip angle and high performance features. While its true that I've made some alterations for Bianchi, in other events like the Metallic, I'm basically running the stock gun. It's certainly race-ready right out of the box.

S&W: Consider for us the Practical, Barricade, Falling Plates and Moving Target events. It always seems that one of these causes a shooter to smile, while another makes them cringe. How would you rank them?

DK: Going from my least favorite to favorite, I would rank them Falling Plates, Barricade, Practical and then Moving Target.

S&W: Now the logical follow-up question. Why is the Falling Plates event your least favorite and the Moving Target event your most preferred?

DK: In the Falling Plates, there is certainly a higher level of

stress involved. While many would consider it the easiest string of fire, it's also one of the most valuable in terms of points scored. You have a lot to lose and little to gain. The Moving Target event is often where you see match scores start to separate. For a lot of competitors, shooting unsupported at such a small target is probably their least favorite part. But for my shooting technique, this format really works well. Much like shooting a clay pigeon or game bird with a shotgun, this has always been a part of my shooting where I've felt most comfortable.

S&W: This year's match came down to a three-way tie moving into the Moving Target event. You were third in the shooting order. How was this order determined and did you think your placement would be an advantage or a disadvantage before the event started?

DK: The shooting orders for the stages of fire at the Bianchi are predetermined. All of the shooting times are set in advance and there are several variables that come into play such as your finish the previous year. Personally, I prefer to shoot last. Just like a QB in football, I like to have it in my hands during the final minutes. I've experienced it both ways. In past competitions, I've had to watch other shooters compete and wait to see if my score would hold up. Having experienced that, I would much rather be the last shooter knowing that it's mine to win or lose.

S&W: Obviously an event such as the Bianchi carries with it a certain amount of extra pressure. Shooters, like any athletes, have all seemed to come up with a way to combat stress whether it's music, meditation, breathing, etc. What do you do when you start to feel the heat of the competition rise?

DK: For me, I like to break away from the action and try and find somewhere secluded to sit and relax. When I was younger, I used to listen to music, but now I find it to be more of a distraction. At around half an hour before I compete, I like to take a few minutes to collect my thoughts, concentrate on my breathing



SMITH & WESSON DK1911

The Doug Koenig Champion Series Model SW1911 features Doug Koenig's Speed Hammer, Flat Competition Speed Trigger with Over travel Stop and a variety of other special features that deliver superior accuracy and performance.

- Oversized Magazine Well
- Ambidextrous Safety
- 5" 1911 Configuration
- Doug Koenig Speed Hammer
- Flat Competition Speed Trigger
- Rosewood Grips with Smith & Wesson Silver Medallions
- External Extractor for Extremely High Reliability
- Adjustable Target Sights



and mentally walk through the course. It's no secret that stress can make you do crazy things, but being able to go back to the basics and focus on my training allows me to avoid making some of those costly mistakes.

S&W: Since the Bianchi wrapped up; there's been a lot of chatter about your friendship with fellow competitor Carl Bernosky. What is the relationship there and is it true that you've been helping out with Carl's action pistol shooting?

DK: Carl and I have been good friends for the last 15 years. We hunt together, compete together and spend a lot of time training together before matches. While I've helped him in some aspects such as assembling gear and walking through courses of fire, I wouldn't say I've actually taught him anything. Carl is a very skilled shooter as evidenced by his multiple world and national titles. If anything, I've helped him adapt his technique to the world of action pistol shooting. With that said, the relationship goes both ways. He's helped me in my preparation and I think it's clear that the friendly competition between us has helped elevate our respective skill sets.

S&W: Given that Carl was just a few X-rings away from winning the Cup, does that mean the training sessions are about to end?

DK: Absolutely not. We still plan to push each other regardless of what happens during a match. I'm still going to go down to his range and practice during the season and vice versa. There's a very high level of respect between us and along with our personal pride, we are always going to enjoy the friendly rivalry.

S&W: Let's pretend that we could make you Mayor of the Bianchi; free to change, alter or basically do whatever you want to the match. Would you make any modifications?

DK: Wow, that's a tough one. The Bianchi Cup is such a well regulated and kept match I'm not sure I would want to change much. If you really pressed me and if we ever get to a point where multiple competitors are shooting a perfect score at each match, I might suggest changing the size of the X-ring. I would look at changing it from the 4" standard to a 2". In my opinion, that would go a long way toward impacting the shooters who hit



an X-ring with every shot and those who routinely punch the center out of it.

S&W: I'm not sure many of your fellow competitors will like that idea. I think you might not stand much of a chance getting re-elected Mayor the following year.

DK: (laughing). Well, you did sort of press me into that one.

S&W: Out of all of the things we discussed, training, equipment, mental focus, is there one of these areas that has served you the best.

DK: They are all equally important but in terms of just the Bianchi Cup, I think my practice time has had one of the biggest impacts. I'm fortunate to have a range just outside my home where I can practice each of the courses of fire without much prep time. In literally under 2 hours, I can pull up to my range and realistically shoot the entire match three times through.

S&W: Many people follow the Bianchi Cup and would like to be a part of it. What advice would you give someone who might not have access to a range like yours but wants to get a little taste of the Cup?

DK: Actually, setting up the Bianchi courses of fire is really not all that difficult. Almost all ranges have a 50-yard bay where you can practice the Practical and most also have a plate rack you can access. If you really want to get a feel for the Mover, you could purchase a portable mover with a couple of friends and use it whenever you like. Another thing that a lot of people overlook is going online to the NSSF website and using their Find a Range tool. With just a little bit of searching, most people can probably find a range within an hour's drive time that has almost everything they need. Once you've accomplished that, obtaining a competition-ready firearm like the Smith & Wesson I'm using and the other appropriate gear is all you need to get started.

S&W: What's next for you on the schedule this year Doug? Are you off to the next match soon or will you have a little time to celebrate at home with the family?

DK: I'm definitely going to enjoy this as much as I can, but I'll be back on the road for the Sportsman's Team Challenge. Next, I'm off to the Steel Challenge and then again competing at the Masters in August.

S&W: Thanks for taking the time to talk with us Doug. It was very enlightening and we look forward to doing it again soon. Good luck the rest of the season.

DK: Thank you.



Follow Doug's exploits both on and off the competitive circuit, by tuning into *Doug Koenig's Championship Season* airing on the Sportsman's Channel. The show follows Doug as he prepares and competes during the season and also captures Doug's second passion of handgun hunting. For more information check out Doug's website at DougKoenig.com.

Learn more about the Smith & Wesson DK 1911 and members of Team Smith & Wesson at www.smith-wesson.com. Special thanks to ShootersMagazine.com for photos.