

COMBAT WITH THE— Femine Touch

The Australian male takes his female counterpart very seriously, especially when the same gal encroaches on his favourite sporting pastime.

IF THE GAME be tennis, golf, squash or even one of the many codes of football, the muscle-chested male knows that his image is somewhat jeopardised by tight shorts, shapely legs and brilliant toothpaste smiles.

Over the years the fairer sex has certainly pushed the bronze male image into the background in many sports just by upholding the right of sex discrimination, and then by competing with and, in several cases, emerging victorious in many once

male-dominated sports.

In their own chosen field the ladies have the power of the media on their side. The lovely Chris Evert (now Mrs Lloyd) certainly overshadowed the top male tennis stars when she was billed as a likely centrefold for a world published men's magazine. Somehow it never eventuated, but it sure as hell caused a stir.

And what about Jan Stephenson, who really stopped the crowd, and the cameras, when she teed off the Australian Ladies' Golf Championships wearing "hot pants"? What a sensation! Then, more recently, a lady jockey, Linda Jones from New Zealand, captured the hearts of the racing fraternity and the news media with her brilliant display of horsemanship. As one punter remarked,

By Charles Mower

"Who's looking at the horse, when a chick like that is in the saddle?"

Great competitors, outstanding sportswomen, lovely to look at, make it all worthwhile, so it seems. But, to the men, is there no end to this invasion?

And so it came to pass.

Here is one Australian sporting girl who is capturing the hearts of the male competitors in still yet another once male-dominated sport. This lovely little lady is blue-eyed, blonde, vivacious, utterly feminine with a bubbly personality, that turns many of the faces of the males every time she fronts the club's firing line.

Michelle's pose for a sitting position shot at 50 metres.



The sport is "combat" pistol shooting, the club is the Metropolitan Pistol Club of Brisbane, Queensland, and the delightful young lady is 20-year-old Michelle Rentoul.

Michelle, who has only been a member for 28 months, has already chalked up a pretty impressive tally of medals and trophies in open competition against men and women. And her more recent success has been in the new competition of police and services combat shooting.

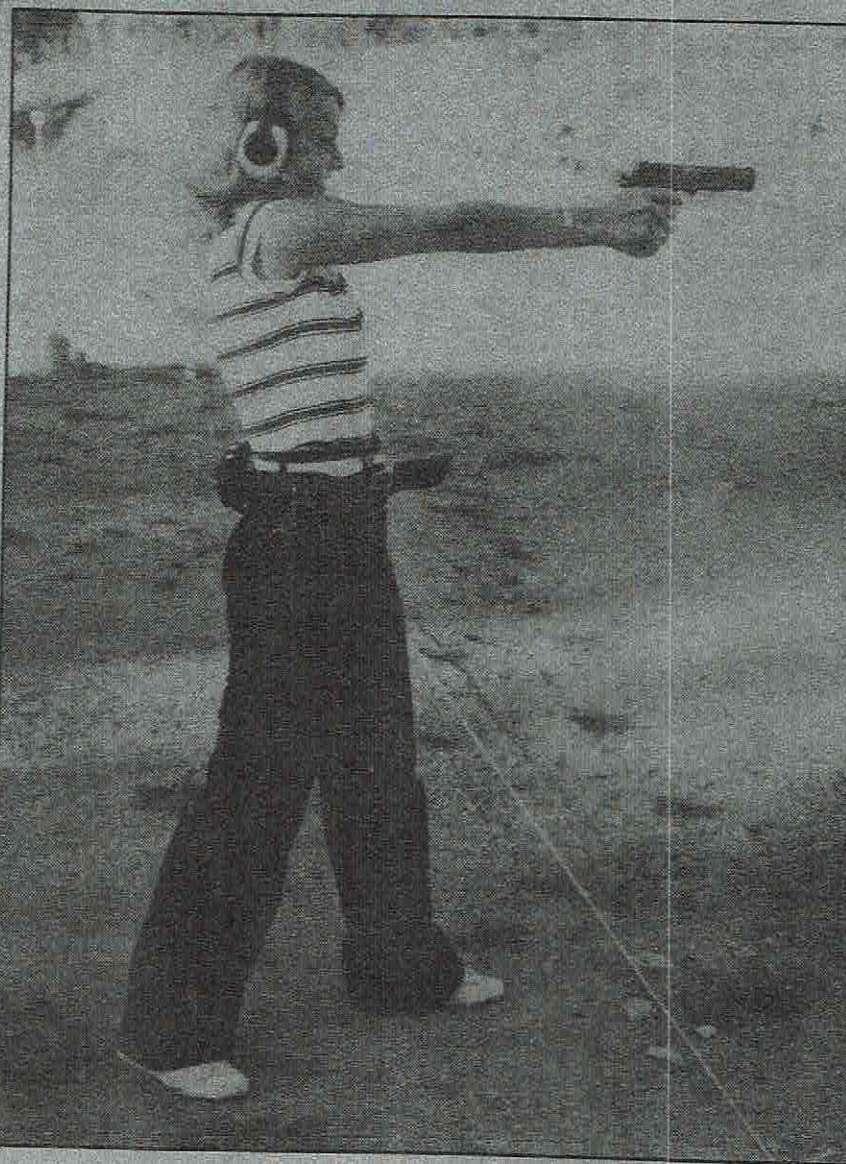
This spunky gal isn't entirely a tyro to shooting, so I am told. The daughter of Jim Rentoul, a well-known shooting identity and presently proprietor of a Brisbane gun store, has been shooting for a number of years. This includes the occasional journey into pig country, where she has scored successfully on the tuskers. Jim, her father, has shown much encouragement to her entry into this new and exciting facet of pistol shooting, and assists her in shooting technique and reloading of ammunition.

I can vouch for this girl's marksmanship, as I watched her one Saturday afternoon outshoot a number of men, using a Harrington and Richardson 1873 Springfield replica .45/70 in an impromptu rifle match.

For the gun enthusiast, the 1873 Springfield is the rifle that was chosen by the United States Army and issued to the cavalry during the Indian wars in the 1870s, and was at the now famous "Battle of the Little Bighorn" in which the combined nations of Sioux, Comanche, Kiowas and Arapahoe wiped out the command under General George Custer, 1876.

And then, if that wasn't enough, later at the range, Michelle capped off the afternoon, by accurately shooting a cylinder full of powerhouse wads (with no apparent signs of flinching) from a Smith and Wesson Model 29 .44 magnum, the much publicised revolver from the Clint Eastwood "Dirty Harry" movies of some years back.

This 5ft blue-eyed blonde, built the way blue-eyed blondes should be, also preaches what she practices. In simple terms, Michelle not only shoots but officiates for she is a qualified range officer and one of only a handful of lady certificated range officers in the vast State of Queensland, as well as having the distinction of being the club's only female range officer. Quite an honour.



Michelle, who would look more stunning in a bikini on Queensland's Gold, or Sunshine Coast, has forsaken the suntanned golden beach girl image for denims, T-shirt, sneakers and a gun belt and, for the record, she uses and accurately shoots a Model 66 4" BBL .357 magnum Smith and Wesson. She is more at home popping primers, burning powder and shrinking those .38 cal groups, which appear regularly downrange on the silhouette targets, than lying on the beach watching the boardriders shoot the waves (no pun intended).

Her hasty entry in combat shooting came one Saturday afternoon when, unexpectedly, the number two team was one man short for the major competition which was to be conducted on the Sunday. As no lady shooter had ever shot the match before with full loads, no

Michelle adopting the two-hand hold on .45 ACP at 7 metres.

thought was given to a female in the team.

However, Michelle, though a little obscure as to the fundamentals of the match (she was accustomed to firing a ISU course of fire) surprisingly volunteered to be the stand-in.

Having never shot the course of fire which calls for a fast double action as well as drawing from a holster, left the team captain in a dilemma. Would this wisp of a girl be safe enough, and could she handle the full loads of the .38 cal?

The match consists of 24 shots in 2 mins 45 secs (including reloading) fired from the prone, sitting or kneeling, right and left side of the barricade at 50 metres. Stage two is 36 shots at 25 metres, which is broken up into the following:

6 shots in 15 secs from the right

hand barricade. 6 shots in 15 secs from the left side of the barricade. 12 shots in 35 secs including reloading from both sides of the barricade. 6 shots unsupported in 7 secs. 6 shots (3 x 2) at 3 targets in 7 secs.

From there the shooter moves 10 metres where the following times and shots are:

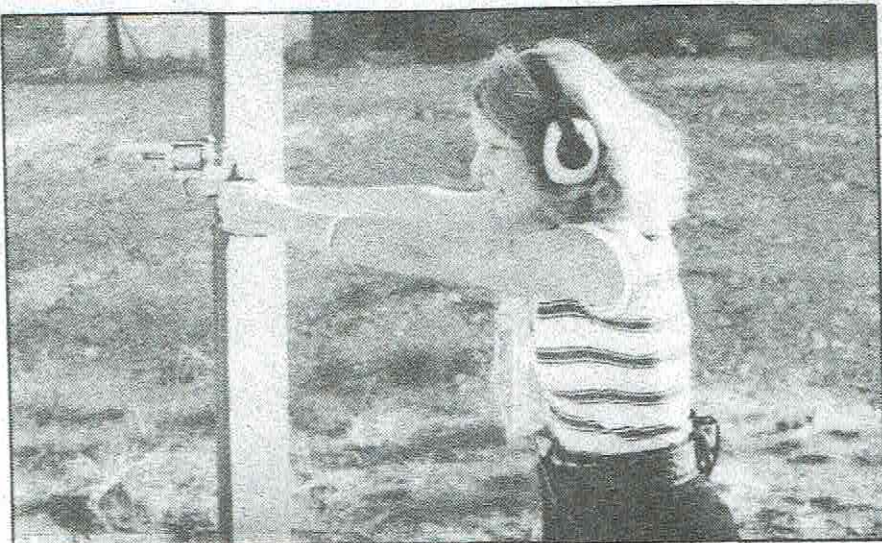
6 shots unsupported in 5 secs. 6 shots (3 right hand and 3 left hand) in 8 secs. 6 shots (2 x 3) at two targets in 5 secs.

Then the shooter finally completes the course by firing 12 shots in 25 secs from below the shoulder height at 2 targets in 2 sets of 3 shots at each target. All Michelle was expected to complete. "Do you think you are capable of completing the course?" asked the captain.

"If you can do it then so can I," replied Michelle.

"Now that's what I call a challenge," said the captain. "OK, you're in. But I want you on the range at 7.30 sharp tomorrow morning for a brief coaching session and match orientation."

"I'll be there," nodded Michelle, and under the tuition of Harry Woodford, a former 7-year Australian Combat Champion, saw this Farrah Fawcett type of femme, not only shooting double action, but



snappily drawing from the holster like a veteran.

For the match, Michelle borrowed a Colt Python 4" BBL .387 magnum which belonged to Harry. What she lacked in expertise was certainly cast aside by sheer determination. Recovering from a severe bout of shakes, Michelle settled down to fire and complete the multi-stage 90-shot course.

Unfortunately the team was unplaced, but Michelle still scored a trophy, and the hearts of the other competitors.

"Well, girl, take a bow. You sure as

The young pistoleer shows good control off the left hand 25-metre barricade.

Below Michelle might well smile. Look at that group at 10 metres with a .38! Almost a possible.

hell showed you're no slouch with that revolver. You can shoot in the team anytime," commented the captain, and since that invitation Michelle has done just that, safely and efficiently.

Come Saturdays or Sundays, when there happens to be a combat style competition, guess who's lining up beside the men?

