Here again, “Team Abbate” operates like a NASCAR racing organization. Where most top shooters have a main match gun and might have a backup, Team Abbate shows up with backups, and backups to their backups, with another three or four in a drawer at home for parts. Should something go haywire, after a pit stop they’re back at 100 percent.

When Jessie and Billy started competing with .22s in a serious way, the Abbates burned through rimfire designs before settling on a particular setup for the S&W Model 41. The stock barrels weren’t quite what they wanted, so they started trading ideas and CAD drawings with Ray Brandis.

“With many of the .22s, you have to baby them. Oil them here, keep them clean there, it’s like a superstition. With this one, you can run it hard and treat it like a racegun. Ray Brandis makes the barrels, and we’ve bought tons and tons of Model 41s….Billy does the trigger, Ray does the barrels, we do a little fine tuning, slap them together and they run.”

That was a rough learning curve (she DNF’ed – “did not finish” – two world championships), but one that yielded wisdom, and a targeted investment where it was needed. Who among us wouldn’t love to have “tons” of S&W Model 41s to work with?

The Abbates’ farm has all eight Steel Challenge stages set up (permanently), along with a full-scale Bianchi Mover, Bianchi plate racks, barricades, and various USPSA/IPSC props to train on. Here again, notice the focused investment. If the Abbates need to work on something, they can be on the range doing that *exact* thing in under an hour.

“It’s MY range, that’s the best part of it,” says Jessie. “And it’s 15 minutes from the house.”

Another example: Jessie’s two-seater BMW Z3 just wasn’t working for getting Jessie’s gear to and from the range, so Billy bought her a Hummer H2 as a wedding present.

“I love it, it’s my tank,” says Jessie. “Anything else feels like a skateboard.”

Work(out) Ethic:

When the Abbates were living on the farm, Jessie could be seen in the morning running the property with their “kids” (two Dobermans named Tsavo and Scarlet) before retreating inside to work on various high-cardio-output exercises. Even her competitors honor her work ethic.

“I work out constantly,” Abbate admits. “I do P90X,” which is a workout regime comparable to Crossfit. “One day it’s yoga, the next day kickboxing, the next day weights. By constantly doing something different, your body doesn’t plateau or get used to something.”

She’s taking a cue from Lisa Munson, whose physical training helped her dominate USPSA’s Limited Division. “Limited” guns shoot full-bore .40 S&W rounds. The recoil is real, and controlling it through strength and posture is part of the game.

The top ladies in USPSA employ a relatively wide, strong stance, but Jessie’s is especially so, reminiscent of the fighting stances found in various martial arts.

Everything about “the Jessie stance” is thought out. Her hands touch the brim of her hat before the draw, locating them in space so they fall to the gun exactly the same way. Her weight is forward, right foot back, both knees bent so that she can drive her torso to and fro using her legs. Her head is up, allowing her eyes to “get ahead of the gun” for faster target transitions.

So How Good Is She?

A young Anika Sorenstam forced the PGA to debate whether women could play pro golf in men’s tournaments. Until she came along, that wasn’t really an issue, but when Sorenstam posted a pro average below 70, things changed. There’s still quite a gulf between multi-millionaire Sorenstam’s accomplishments and World Champion Jessie, but there are parallels.

Jessie won two USPSA national titles and swept the Steel Challenge nationals in 2007 and 2008. In 2009 she took two more USPSA National titles (Production and Limited), swept the Steel Challenge Nationals, and shot a perfect hat trick at the Worlds. That made her unbeaten in 18 starts over three years. Sorenstam never did that.

Abbate set six world records in 2009, handily out-pacing all other women, past or present. Of the eight stages shot at the Steel Challenge, Abbate holds records on five, and holds the fastest time ever shot by a woman (94.94).

At 18th overall at the Worlds in 2009, she’d beaten many of the semi-pro men – including Michael Voigt, Angus Hobdell, and Michael Seeklander – three top names in practical shooting. If there’s a woman on the tour that has a shot at winning a Steel Challenge event title outright, that person is Jessie Abbate. For the sake of a sport that really wants women’s participation, what a wonderful day that would be.