

Welcome to the Windygap Regulators Shooting Posse!

Come on back with us to a time when the "Old West" was alive and well! The days when folks looked each other in the eye as they met and weren't afraid to say "Howdy!"

The sport of Cowboy Action Shooting is the fastest-growing shooting sport in the world, and is embraced by men, women and youngsters from all parts of the globe where folks have the freedom to engage in the safe use of firearms.

One of the first things folks ask, besides what GUNS do I need, is how do I dress? Well, dress up in any manner you might have if you were living in any period from 1850 to 1899. Don't be too concerned about having everything to start with. Cowboy or "packer" Boots, cowboy hat, long-sleeve shirt and jeans will work to start. You will collect more as you go...believe me! The ladies may shoot in shirts, long or short sleeve and jeans, "prairie dresses", "saloon gal outfits", etc.

"What other stuff do I need to have?"

Guns:

You'll need: 2 Single-action revolvers of the period from 1851-1899, a lever-action or pump-action rifle in a "pistol-caliber" of the same period, and a Shotgun that is typical of the period. These may be either originals (Usually very expensive and they ARE antiques) or modern copies of the guns (MUCH) less expensive and readily available from MANY manufacturers, importers and distributors.

Shotguns typical of the era would be double-barrel (side-by-side) "coach guns" or a Winchester model of 1897 pump (original, or modern copy), or a lever-action shotgun. Rifles: (Some examples are: Winchester models of 1892, 1873, 1866, or Marlin 1894) They must fire a pistol-caliber cartridge.

Examples of "Pistol Calibers" would be: .45Colt, .45 Schofield, .44-40 (44WCF), .44spl, 38-40 (38WCF), .38spl, .32-20 (32WCF), 32H&R Magnum & .32 S&W. Before you buy.....try.....yep that's right. Ask most any cowboy and they will let you try out their firearms. Just give us a quick email before the weekend that we shoot. Let us know you are coming

and wish to give it a try. If you are bringing a partner, husband or wife, or a Young Gun (Junior) or a Buckaroo or Buckarettette.....let us know that information also and we'll make sure you have everything you need to shoot a stage or two. From there.....it's all downhill. You are hooked!

Ammo:

MUST be lead bullet ammo, usually RNFP (Round Nose, Flat Point) No jacketed ammunition of any kind is allowed. (No ricochets off the steel targets, or holes punched in the targets, please) Many brands of "Cowboy" or "target" ammo are available that will not exceed the velocity maximums of 1000 fps for pistols and 1400 fps for rifles. Shotgun shells: Target loads and light target loads are all that are needed. (No larger than #6 shot)

The lighter the shotgun load, the happier the little woman is. Remember that. Men tend to handle shotgun a lot better. But women can be turned off with shotgun. So make sure the gun "FITS" her and the loads are of a lighter variety. Cutting off a stock to get the right fit is not sacrilege, it can keep your female partner, daughter or little buckaroo shooting for years to come if done right.

Reloading is the cheapest way to Shoot SASS. It is not Rocket Science, but if you have never done it before.....GET A BOOK! Ask for advice, most of these Cowboys and Cowgirls are a wealth of information. Take advantage of it. You will avoid many mistakes that they have already made. Trust me.....you will come up with enough new ones of your own..

What else do I need? Well, how about something to lug those guns and the ammo from "stage" to "stage" at a match? You'll see every kind and shape of gun-cart you can imagine at almost any match and it'll seem that no two of them are the same. Lots of cart manufacturers have ads in the Cowboy Chronicle, from minimal to maximum, rigid to fold-up models. Also, if you see one at a match that catches your eye, just walk up and say, "Hey Pard! Where'd you get that great cart?" I've seen golf bags strapped to one of those golf-bag wheelie-thingies, little red flyer wagons with gun racks and boxes added. I've seen a few folks just use two rifle scabbards and a small valise for the ammo. Up to you.

An ALIAS!

We don't shoot using our real names.....your alias can reflect your origin, a historical ancestor, a humorous play on words, or nearly anything that isn't obscene, profane or degrading. When you join SASS, your alias will be registered and protected, and yours alone. SASS, the Single Action Shooting Society, governs the match and range safety rules, regulations, and standards for the sport.

OK, Now I have all this stuff.... What does a Monthly Match entail?

Our monthly matches consist of shooting 5 separate "stages", in which you will shoot your 2 revolvers, rifle, and your shotgun, at steel targets placed at ranges of approximately 7- 10 yards out for pistols, 25 to 40 yards for rifles and 15-25 yards for shotguns. The targets are large enough and close enough to miss easily while you are being timed with an electronic timer. You'll usually shoot 5 rounds from each revolver, 9 or 10 from your rifle and anywhere from 4 to 14 from your shotgun, all at "reactive" targets. (Half the fun is the "bang - clang!")

This is NOT a "fast-draw" competition, and if you are new to the sport, the most important thing is to be safe and stay on target. Speed will come later. Watch the other shooters, but don't expect to be as fast. In time, if you have the inclination, you will be. But then, you might just want to shoot and have a little fun and speed is not at the top of your list. So do what is good for you.

Accuracy is important as each target missed adds 5 seconds to your time! Shooting the targets "in the wrong sequence" earns a ten-second penalty, and safety infractions are penalized running the gamut from 10 seconds to ejection from the match. Safety, in Cowboy Action Shooting is equally as important as having fun!

OK... What can I expect at a monthly club match?

The first thing is to arrive early enough to give yourself plenty of time to get your stuff out of the car/truck and get "ready" for the match. (At least 30 minutes before the posted match start time) As soon as you arrive and park, head over to the registration truck. Stumble Leena is usually around somewhere near. Give her your gold dust and she'll sign you up. If you know your category, you can tell her along with your SASS number if she does not have that on file. The Windygap Regulators have never been one to hand out prizes at the monthly

matches. We don't usually use Categories, most of us know what category we all are shooting. But if you are curious, just ask. We have begun to give out "Clean Match" nickels, if you collect 5 of them, turn them in and you can shoot the monthly match free.

OK, you've signed in and unloaded your "stuff".. NOW what?

We ALWAYS conduct a Pledge of Allegiance to the FLAG, and hold a SAFETY BRIEFING before starting EVERY match. We've all heard the safety brief many times, but it is a very important part of every match. 95% of the brief is the same at every club, but this is also where you find out about anything that a particular shooting range requires that may be different from your "home" range.

An example if you have a rifle or pistol shot that goes OVER the back berm, you will receive a MATCH DISQUALIFICATION and will be asked to put away all your firearms for the day. This is because we have an "Airport" just across the way. In Farmington, at the Tre's Rio's Bandidos' club, you would have to pretty much decide you were going to put one over the berm as you are up against a good size cliff. So no matter what club you are shooting at, make yourself mindful of the range rules.

If they don't have them posted. Be sure to contact the Match Director of that club for any "new" "different" or more "stringent" rules that are not in the SASS Rule book. Clubs may, can and will come up with those for their own protection as well as yours. Some can be a little unorthodox, but you must still adhere to them if you wish to shoot on their range.

The next thing of importance is the announcement of which "posse" you will be shooting with, and on which "stage" you will start to shoot. Most clubs like to keep one "open" stage between posses if at all possible. In other words, if there are several posses, (a posse size should be from 10 to 15 shooters, with 10 pretty much a bare minimum to get all the work/positions covered) posse #1 may start on stage one, posse #2 on stage #3, posse #3 on stage 5, etc. As you probably know a "posse" is the group of shooters that you will stay with, moving from "stage to stage" to shoot the match.

The posse scorekeeper will be handed the score sheets for the shooters on that posse, and will determine the shooting order. At some matches, instead of a fixed shooting order, folks just head for the loading table when they are ready. The advantage of a fixed shooting order is that you can keep track of who shoots ahead of you and watch them when they head for the loading table. When the person that shoots just ahead of you heads for the loading table it's time for you to stop helping to pick up brass or acting as a "spotter" and head for your gun cart and get your gear.

The Windygap Regulators and most of the clubs in this area do not use the "fixed" shooting order. We use the "Shoot When Ready" order.

If by chance you are a new shooter (1yr or less) and find yourself in a shooting order and you wind up being the "first shooter" on a stage, and don't feel comfortable shooting first, just ask the posse leader or scorekeeper to move you down in the order.

If you are first...take your time. Make sure you know your position, can see the props and targets, and remember the shooting string order. If not, take the time to go over it. Being first, second or third shooter, your timer operation (TO) will answer any questions you have and make sure you know it before the buzzer beeps. We've ALL been there, and you are among friends. (You've been among friends ever since you drove up, actually)

OK, what jobs or "positions" do you need covered to shoot a stage?

A Posse Leader (Usually – who generally also works other positions) PL

The Range Officer/Timer Operator. RO or TO

3 "spotters" to watch the targets for the shooter's

A Scorekeeper

An Unloading Table Safety Officer

A Loading Table Safety Officer (if possible) If not, the shooter following the person who has just loaded will be asked to check the guns of the person ahead.

(Please read our Range Rules page on the home page of the Windygap Regulators)

Brass pickers for the rifle and shotgun rounds extracted. Most folks reload, so the empty brass is important.

Target re-setters as required.

Oh, and a shooter!

With just ten folks, that doesn't leave many folks getting loaded at the loading table, does it?

10 on a posse is Doable, but everyone has to do a job.

PROCEDURES

The “walk-through”

When all shooters on your posse have arrived at the stage, the Posse Leader will read the “Stage Description”, which usually has a “scenario” explaining just what you are doing there, (Driving off claim jumpers, saving the train from robbers, robbing the train yourselves, or whatever.) This is where you will learn how many pistol rounds, rifle rounds and shotgun shells you will need to load, or have on your person, for this particular stage.

It will ALSO give you another VERY important piece of information: What sequence do I shoot the targets in? LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY to this info. It will make the difference between shooting the stage as the writer meant it to be shot, and getting a 10 second PROCEDURAL ERROR added to your overall time. Bad enough to get the standard FIVE seconds added for each target MISSED; you don't want any procedurals added on also.

I guess the only GOOD thing about a PROCEDURAL is that you can only get ONE on a stage. If you have any questions about the shooting sequences, NOW is the time to ask them. DO NOT BE EMBARRASSED TO ASK FOR A REPEAT OF ANY OR ALL OF THE SHOOTING SEQUENCES.

Everyone I know has done this, and not just once, either. It is MUCH better to get the sequence clear in your mind than to have a total “brain shut-down” on the firing line. (And you usually can't “fake it”...)

If there is a “line” to be said to start the timer, here’s where you’ll find out what it is. (“Common Cheerios!!” Oops! I mean, Comancheros!”)

After the stage instructions are read you palms will sweat, your hat will get a little tighter and breathing may become difficult. This will pass after about 2 years of shooting..... or not.

When should you head for the loading table?

Depending on the size of the table itself, when there are about two shooters ahead of you, not counting the one on the firing line.. If it is a “Shoot When Ready” and you are “New” someone will come and get you, or yell that you need to get loaded. (No...not that loaded”) You need to get to the table. If you are a “NEW” shooter and your Mentor has not found you, go find them. If your Mentor is busy, just about anyone else can help you. (Ask the scorekeeper, they usually know what’s what and how to get you going and with who.)

Moving from your guncart to the loading table :

Be very careful to keep the muzzles of your long guns pointing up, with the actions OPEN, your pistols still holstered, and NEVER “sweep” anyone with the muzzles of your guns. When you get to the loading table, lay your long guns down with the muzzles facing the berm/wall and actions still open. Draw your pistols and lay them on the table, also facing the berm or wall. KEEP in mind that once you arrive at the loading table and lay your first firearm down YOU ARE CONSIDERED TO BE “ON THE FIRING LINE” and the SASS Rules regarding dropped guns and “breaking the 170 degree arc” DO apply.

WHAT?

What’s that 170 thing? When on the actual firing line, an imaginary line running to your left and right as you face downrange at the targets is the “180”. You must keep the muzzles of ALL of your guns pointed within an arc running 5 degrees from the left extreme of the 180 degree line as well as 5 degrees from the extreme right of the 180 degree line.

In other words, an arc of 170 degrees or 85 degrees either side of straight dead center downrange. This arc also applies to a muzzle pointed UP or down. Care has to be taken by shooters of side-by-side shotguns when “shucking” the empty hulls to avoid pointing the barrels straight up.

If you shoot a cross-draw rig, you must twist your hips as you draw from the “cross” holster to avoid breaking the 170, either on DRAWING the pistol OR returning it to leather. Some folks stand at the firing line at an angle so that they don’t need to do the “twist”. The 170 degree thing also applies at the loading and unloading tables.

Once you have all your guns on the table, take out exactly the number of shells you need for your rifle and lay them next to it (and recount them). Close the lever on your rifle and be sure to let the hammer down. If you forget....it is bad ju ju and a penalty could be imposed if you make it all the way to the line with that hammer back. So make sure you lower it before you load.

Load it with the required rounds. Now load your pistols with FIVE each. Rotate the cylinder to make sure you have no “high primers” that would jam the gun. Then turn the cylinder so that the hammer is now down on an empty chamber, show it to either the loading table officer or other shooter for verification. And “ALWAYS” check it yourself.

If there is no loading table officer you will probably be asked to check the loaded pistols of the shooter ahead of you to see that there is NO cartridge under the hammer, by looking into the rear of the cylinder from the side. Verify with that person that their rifle is loaded with the correct number of rounds. Shotguns are NEVER loaded at the loading table but are ALWAYS staged open and empty.

If you now have to leave the loading table for ANY reason other than to proceed to the firing line remove your pistols from your holsters if they are now holstered and lay them carefully on the loading table. Leave ALL firearms on the table.

When called to the firing line by the Timer/R.O.,

Keep the muzzles of your long guns pointing slightly up and downrange. Stage your long guns as the stage scenario requires and assume the start position as described during the “walk-through”. If no starting position is described in the “stage instructions” the normal position is standing facing downrange with both hands at your sides.

NOW is the time to quietly ask the Timer to “coach” you if you would like to have him do so. As a new shooter in this sport, he will know that you are probably a bit nervous “putting it on the line” for the first few matches, and will be happy to give you some “direction” as needed. **DON’T** hesitate to ask. Many stages are started by the shooter saying a “line”. Saying the line tells the timer that you are ready to start shooting the stage. If there is no line, the timer will ask: “Is the shooter ready?” When you acknowledge that you are, he’ll say: “**STAND BY**” and press the timer button. When you hear the “beep” of the timer, start shooting! If you are very hard of hearing, or partially deaf in one ear or both, ask the timer to tap you on the shoulder as the beep goes off.

Shoot the stage in the order it was briefed at the “walk-through”.

Unless otherwise stated in the stage instructions, pistols should be reholstered immediately after shooting them, long guns restaged **OPEN** and **EMPTY**.

Make sure you don’t leave a shell on the carrier or in the breech of any long gun when you lay it down. If you do, you may correct the situation if you do so before taking up the next gun. Due to the occasional difficulty in the electronic timer picking up the sound of **SOME** rifle shots, a stage should never have the rifle as the last gun fired.

The last shot fired is, usually, a shotgun blast. If, while on the firing line, you drop a live round, either while loading it in a gun, or accidentally jacking a live round out of your rifle or shotgun, **LET IT FALL** and **DO NOT** pick it up. This is a safety violation (muzzle control problem) and the live round will be retrieved by the “brass pickers” or others after you have gone to the unloading table. The only exception to this rule is if your ammunition (usually shotgun shells) is staged in a place other than on your body, such as in a box or can, on the table, etc., and the round falls back where it was staged, you may retrieve it.

OK, you’ve successfully shot the stage!

The timer should then turn toward you and announce, clearly, your raw time. Look at the timing device and verify the time. The timing **R.O.** will then “show and tell” to the scorekeeper.

Now, gather up your guns, long guns open and empty, and head for the UN-loading table. DO NOT GO ANYWHERE ELSE until your guns have been “cleared” by the Unloading table Safety Officer! At the unloading table you will “show clear” by levering your rifle several times and showing the safety officer the breech and that the magazine follower is visible with no round stuck in the tube. If using a '97 shotgun, clear it the same as the rifle. A side-by side is easier. Just show it with the action open and no empties in it. That is when you will notice that your hands have stopped sweating and are now shaking uncontrollably. That’s okay....and normal.....and it will pass.....or not.

If by chance you have an empty hull or a live round or brass in your shotgun or rifle, you will receive a 10 sec safety penalty. It is not the end of the world. But a lesson well learned. Different ranges handle this in different ways. No one likes to “tattle” on anyone else, but in this game it is the proper way to handle it.

The unloading table officer at the time will usually walk over and make sure that you have turned yourself in to the scorekeeper. Don’t take it personal, it’s their job. If you have not turned yourself in, they will do it for you. A live round in your pistol is just a miss. NOT a safety.....if you have one under the hammer in your Pistol it is a Stage DQ.

By not giving you the penalty you earned, we have cheated everyone. Exceptions have been made for “new” and “old” shooters alike and you will hear a litany of reasons for the calls that are made or not made. But since the last Pink Cadillac was given away...we are human and good or bad...it’s just the way it is. Some days you are the bug, and some days you are the windshield. In the great cosmos of life....it won’t matter tomorrow.

Keep the long gun actions open until you reach your gun cart. For your pistols, take each one separately and open the loading gate and remove the empty shells. Keep the gate open and revolve the cylinder to show that ALL chambers are empty. Each time you show a gun as clear you will get a “Clear” from the Safety Officer, and he/she will usually say: “All guns are clear” when you’ve shown them all. One note: If you take ANY guns other than your “main match guns” to the firing line, such as a vest-pocket Derringer, etc, those guns must ALSO be cleared by the unloading table safety officer.

If the unloading person is not there, grab the first Cowboy/Cowgirl to walk by or the person that brings your brass back to acknowledge that you are clear.

Now with that BIG SMILE that is now permanently planted on your face, with all guns cleared, long gun actions open and empty, head for your gun cart and secure them, without sweeping anyone and keeping the muzzles pointed up or whatever direction that particular range requires. Now, wipe your brow, get some water down your gullet and go help “spot”, work the unloading table, “pick brass”, re-set targets or whatever else needs doing to keep YOUR posse moving along safely and happily. Don’t be shy.....

Here are some safety rules that we live by and are subject to DQ penalties:

- 1. A dropped unloaded gun on the firing line (from the loading table until the guns are all cleared at the unloading table) is a stage DQ. A dropped LOADED gun is a MATCH Dis-Qualification. The shooter WILL NOT pick up a dropped gun (Loaded OR empty). An R.O will recover it, examine it, clear it, and return it to the shooter.**
- 2. Any discharge striking anything within ten feet of the shooter, any discharge at the loading or unloading tables or any other discharge that is deemed unsafe.**
- 3. Violation of the 170 degree safety arc. (Failure to manage muzzle control (Stage DQ))**
- 4. Returning a revolver to leather with the hammer not fully down on a spent round or empty chamber.**
- 5. A cocked revolver leaving the shooter’s hand**
- 6. An unfired round left in the chamber of a long gun.**
- 7. Changing location with a live round under a cocked hammer or a gun with the hammer down on a live round. Basketball Traveling Rule applies (You can take only one step in any direction)**

- 8. Failure to comply with loading and unloading procedures.**
- 9. Use of an illegal or illegally modified firearm, illegal ammo or any other illegal item.**
- 10. Holstering or staging a revolver with the hammer down on a live round.**
- 11. Sweeping anyone AT ANY TIME with the muzzle of a firearm.**
- 12. DRY FIRING at the loading table. (Dry firing is allowed only in designated safe areas.)**
- 13. Decocking a revolver, Rifle or external hammered shotgun with a live round under the hammer.**
- 14. Unsafe gun handling, spinning or FANNING... “Slip-hammering” is OK.**

Of course, no alcohol or illegal or performance-affecting prescription or over-the-counter drugs are allowed on any range.

Interpersonal conflicts should be settled somewhere other than on the range and will not be tolerated.

A few other notes and random thoughts:

Gun rigs:

Main match holsters and gunbelts will be worn at NORMAL positions on the body (around the waist or hips).

2 Main match revolvers may not be worn on the same side of the body (such as a Cross-draw belt holster and a cross-draw shoulder rig)

2 holsters on a gunbelt must be separated by a minimum of the width of two of the shooter’s fists.

The “cant” of a cross-draw holster must be such that the barrel of the revolver when holstered does not exceed an angle of 30 degrees from the vertical when worn by the shooter.

A shotgun shell “slide” may be worn over a pistol belt, but a shotgun “slide” may NOT be worn over a separate shotgun belt/bandoleer . Any shotgun or other ammo bandoleer must be worn “loose” and NOT tied down in any manner. A shotgun belt must be worn around the waist near the belly button and just above the gunbelt. (Just under the armpits so you can get at the shells quicker for your ‘97 is NOT fair...)

Penalties: Collect TWO Stage D/Q’s in one match and you have collected a MATCH D/Q. We all have the occasional “brain fade”, but if you get a pair of SDQ’s in a match your head is just not in it that day and you should just take it easy for awhile. Collect a stage DQ and a Spirit of the Game, or Failure to Engage or a combination of two is also Match DQ. You may earn as many safeties as warranted in any one stage. But as stated above, only get one P.

Categories: There are just too many to list here, and they are ALL covered in the SASS Shooter’s Handbook, which may be downloaded from the SASS Website at: www.sassnet.com as well as the Range Officer 1 and Range Officer 2 Course Materials.

The Shooter’s Handbook provides you with all of the information you need to determine what category best suits YOUR needs. It will list any specific firearm requirements, clothing requirements or shooting “style” requirements. Do you want to shoot an “age-based” category? How about one of the “costume” categories when you’re a little bit farther down the trail, such as “Classic Cowboy” or “B-Western”. Got a hankering to try shooting that Black Powder stuff in one of the “Frontier Cartridge” categories?

One last note about “age-based” categories:

If you are OLDER than the category requirements, you MAY shoot in that category. Meaning....you can shoot in the 49’er Category, Wrangler Category and most others if you are say 60. But you may NOT shoot in the 49’r category if you are 35. There are NO men’s categories. And only Women may shoot in Women categories, and Women may shoot in Men’s categories. That’s because we are special. (I think that is the reason!)

Scoring

Scoring can be based on Total Time or Rank. There are several good and bad points to each, depending on if you are on the losing side of either. The Windygap Regulators always use Total Time. If you are really curious, ask.

How to keep score: You might find yourself with the score book, or looking at the scores. This is how it is done.

You may shoot a stage in 59.60 seconds with a 5 second miss and a P to go with it. Total: 74.60 seconds for that stage. If you have the score book, you will see columns.

Raw time: 59.60 Misses 1/5 P/S 1/10 Total 74.60.

All misses, P's and S', must be written as 1/5 for one miss, 2/10 for 2 misses etc. Since you can only get 1 P. It is written as 1/10, but you can get more than one SAFETY or a combination of either, so it would be 1/10p and 1/10s in the same box. Or if 2 safeties it would look like this. 2/20s.

It is explained much better in the SASS Rule books, which by the way....you should read. Shooters Hand Book, RO1 and RO11. You don't have to memorize it, but it is important to read them. Take the RO1 Class as soon as possible and RO11 Class as soon as you have shot for 6 months. Most folks take them at the same time if they are offered on the same day. Check with your RO to find a class or give them your name and number to be contacted when a class is going to be held. Go to www.sass.net and scroll across the top, you will see a link to the Shooter's Handbooks.

Now that I have filled your poor head with all this stuff. About 3 matches and it will become second nature. So hang in there, don't let all this stuff overwhelm you, have fun, ask questions.

Stumble Leena +