



BWSS

British Western Shooting Society

SHOOTER HANDBOOK

Revised September 2008

Rifles

Main, Team and Side Matches (not Long Range or Precision Rifle) any lever action, tubular fed, exposed hammer rifle or carbine manufactured between 1860 and 1899, or any reproduction thereof.

* Centrefire, .25-20 calibre or larger

* Rifle must be in a “pistol calibre” (examples include, but are not limited to, .32-20, .38 Special, .38-40, .44-40 and 45 Colt. No “rifle” calibres such as .30-30 or .38-55 are allowed).

* Only original or replica style open iron sights or tang mounted peep sights of the 1860 to 1899 are allowed.

* Barrel must be over 16” in length.

* Rifles with box magazines may not be used.

Shotguns

Any side-by-side or single shot shotgun typical of the period from 1860 to 1899 without automatic ejectors, with or without external hammers, having single or double triggers is allowed. Lever or slide action single barrel tubular feed shotguns are allowed, whether original or replicas. Certain shooting categories require a specific type of shotgun and ammunition to be used in those competitions. Please see the shooting categories for further information.

* No larger bore than 10 gauge and no smaller than 20 gauge.

* All shotguns must have a barrel over 20” in Length.

* Number 4 lead birdshot or smaller must be used in all events (no steel or plated shot).

* Magnum and high velocity loads are not allowed.

* Pump and lever action shotguns are allowed to load no more than two rounds at a time in the main match stages unless specified in the stage description.

Single loading the pump/lever action shotguns is always acceptable.

* No rifle type sights or visual aids are allowed on any form of shotgun.

Traditional

Two single action percussion revolvers manufactured prior to 1896 or thereof.

* 32 calibre or larger. Preferably of the same calibre to avoid dangerous mix ups on loading.

Frontier

Two traditional style percussion single action revolvers as above.

- * Must use black powder in all loads (rifle, six-gun and shotgun).
- * Must be side-by-side, 1890 pump or lever action shotgun in the main stages.
- * Any BWSS legal pistol calibre rifle is acceptable.

Duelist

Requires a two traditional style single action revolvers cocked and fired one-handed, unsupported. The revolver, hand or shooting arm may not be touched by the off-hand except when resolving a malfunctioning pistol problem. Any BWSS legal shotgun, rifle or propellant (blackpowder or smokeless) may be used.

Rifleman

Any BWSS legal pistol calibre rifle and shotgun may be used.

Working Cowboy

One single action revolver, 1 lever action rifle and shotgun as above. Shot as traditional.

Wyatt Earp

Requires 2 Uberti Buntline cartridge revolvers complying to barrel length restrictions and any BWSS legal shotgun and rifle.

Firearms Restrictions

- * Firearms of all approved types should be maintained in as original condition as possible. The firearm must “look” period.
- * No visible external modifications other than (non-rubber) grips, recoil pads on shotguns and leather wrapping, (e.g. Rifle levers) are allowed.
- * Contemporary rubber grips, modern target grips and grip tape are not allowed. Replacement grips of wood, ivory, pearl, stag horn, bone and the like are perfectly acceptable so long as they are not customized to constitute a “target” grip. That is they must be of original shape and scale.
- * Minor exterior modifications and cosmetic engraving are acceptable so long as the overall outward appearance of the firearm is not altered. Cosmetic Embellishment such as engraving is permitted to the extent it does not create a Competitive advantage. For example, back strap checkering or stippling is not allowed. Engraving your alias on the back strap is permissible.
- * Modifying the stock length to fit you or changing the barrel to a different legal length is acceptable.
- * Coloured sights and sight inserts are not allowed. Sight outlines or inserts

must be blackened or removed, (e.g. Marlins cowboy rifle factory sight).

* Trigger shoes, compensating ports, counter weights, bull barrels and all other such modifications are prohibited.

* A stage disqualification is issued for use of any no-legal BWSS firearms at matches above the club level.

* Sights may be altered to allow the gun to shoot to point of aim so long as the sights appear to be "period."

* No spare cylinders may be carried loaded with cap and ball or cartridge (e.g. Buntline) as they are a potential hazard that only needs to be dropped to explode.

* No loading of caps or cartridges except on the range officer's command and under supervision in designated loading area or on the line.

* No cylinders may be loaded or capped off the gun as these represent the same hazard as spare cylinders.

* No more than two main match pistols may be worn to the firing line.

General "spirit of the game" guidance If you have to ask permission to use something because it offers you a competitive advantage, the response will nearly always be "no".

Holsters, Cartridge Belts and Bandoleers

* All equipment must be of leather or webbing construction as used in the 1890's. No plastic or elastic belts or bandoleers. Materials must have been available in the 1890's.

* All handguns must be carried in a sage holster capable of retaining the Firearm throughout a normal range of motion.

* Main match holsters must be located on each side of the belly button and separated by at least the width of two fists.

* Holsters may not depart from the vertical more than 30 degrees when worn.

* Ammunition required for reloads during the course of any stage must be carried on the shooters person in a bandoleer, belt pouch or pocket. Rifle and pistol ammunition may not be carried in a shotgun loop. No ammunition may be carried in the mouth, ears, nose, cleavage or any other bodily orifice.

* Bandoleers, cartridge belts and pouches must be of traditional design (e.g. bandoleers must be loose and not secured in any way to prevent movement). Modern drop pouches, combat style shotgun loops or forearm bandoleers and such are not allowed. Pouches shall have a flap and must carry their contents loose with no special provisions to organise the contents for rapid retrieval. Leather belt slide ammo loops are acceptable.

- * Cartridge loops must not have a metal or plastic liner.
- * Shotgun ammo loops may not accommodate more than two rounds per loop and rifle/pistol ammo loops shall accommodate only one round per loop.
- * Ammo belts must be worn around the waist (at or below the belly button).
- * Shotgun ammo loops must conform to the shooters contour (I.e. Not tilt out from the belt).
- * Cartridge loops mounted on a firearms stock or forearm are not allowed.

Scoring and Timing

* BWSS matches are scored based on elapsed shooting time and added penalty points for missed targets. Each stage is scored individually and, in most club matches, the total combined score for all stages fired are ranked for place of finish, either overall or by category.

Electronic timers are generally used for timing all BWSS events, but, stopwatches may be used.

Rifle, pistol and shotgun targets must be engaged with the appropriate type firearm. A “miss” is defined as the failure to hit the engaged target using the appropriate type firearm. Missed targets are scored as 5 second additions to the competitors raw time for the stage (at annual matches and above). If any targets are shot (hit) using the wrong type of firearm, I.e. Rifle instead of pistol, a single procedural penalty is assessed in addition to the miss.

Procedurals are unintentional “mistakes” where the competitor engages the stage in a manner other than the way it is supposed to be shot. Procedurals are scored as a 10 second penalty, no more than one procedural per stage.

A stage disqualification is issued for each stage in which a non BWSS legal firearm is used at matches above club level.

Minor safety infractions occurring during a course of fire that does not directly endanger persons will result in a ten second penalty being added to the shooters time for that stage. “Minor” safety infractions are occurrences such as failure to open a long guns action at the conclusion of a shooting string or failure to return a handgun to its holster at the conclusion of a shooting string.

Major safety infractions will result in the shooters disqualification from the stage or the match. A second major infraction in the match shall result in the shooters ejection from the range. “Major” infractions include a dropped gun, an accidental discharge that impacts within 10 feet of any person (an impact within five feet is a match disqualification) and, accidental discharge other than on the shooting point, handling firearms when people are down range, whether loaded or unloaded, except in the designated safety areas or loading areas, violation of

The 170 degree safety rule, “sweeping” any person with the muzzle of a firearm and similar acts that have high potential for personal injury.

In the event a competitor feels a range officers ruling is in error, the ruling may be politely and immediately appealed to the Rangemaster/Match Director after clearing the range, allowing match activities to resume. The Rangemaster/Match Director will consider the appeal on grounds of policy and rules interpretation only, and their decision is final. At major matches special protest juries comprised of Territorial Governors may be empanelled to aid the the Rangemaster/Match Director in making a reasonable judgement.

Failure to Engage

A “failure to engage” occurs when a competitor wilfully or intentionally disregards the stage instructions in order to obtain a competitive advantage (i.e. taking the penalty would result in a lower score or faster time than following the instructions) and is not assessed simply because a competitor “ makes a mistake”. In such a case, in addition to any penalties for misses, a 30 second failure to engage/spirit of the game penalty is assessed.

Range Operations

Western shooting is not intended to be a precision shooting competition. Small targets long distances take the “action” out of the game and make it more discouraging for newer shooters.

Both experienced and inexperienced shooters want hits on their targets. Some folks just hit (or miss) a little faster than others. Too many misses, or the perception the targets difficult to hit discourage folks from continuing to play, especially the less proficient shooters.

Any shooter who holsters a revolver with unfired rounds still in it and engages the targets with the other revolver, may, discharge the 1st revolver after shooting the second, if it is safe to do so, without penalty. E.g. Fire 4, holster, fire 5 holster and fire a further 1. Ask any experienced western shooter and she or he will tell you there is no such thing as a target too big or too close to miss!!

* Metal and paper targets of generous size are used. Reactive targets such as pepper poppers and falling plates are used when practical to enhance shooter feedback and spectator appeal.

* Targets are set at close to medium range. There are no absolute rules, but, we suggest the following distances by firearm, if using a target approximately 16” x 16”.

- * Revolver - 7 to 10 yards.
 - * Shotgun - 8 to 16 yards.
 - * Rifle - 13 to 50 yards.
 - * Handguns are returned to leather (reholstered) with hammer down on an empty chamber or a spent case at the conclusion of the guns immediate use, unless the shooter has been specifically directed otherwise. For example, when changing from handgun to rifle in a two gun stage, the handgun will be holstered before the rifle is picked up.
 - * Competitors using 6 shot percussion revolvers may cap only 5 chambers. It is recommended that the nipple be removed.
- BWSS matches above club level are “no alibi” matches. Once the first round goes down range, the competitor is committed to the stage and must finish the hooting problem to the best of his or her ability. Reshoots are not awarded for ammunition or firearm malfunctions. However, if there is a range failure (failure of props, timer, or the range officers) beyond the competitors control, a reshoot may be granted. On a reshoot the competitor starts over clean carrying only accrued safety penalties with him.
- * The role of the Range officer is to safely assist the shooter through the course of fire. Coaching and constraining the shooter from unsafe acts are expected when appropriate, minimising procedural and safety penalties when possible.
 - * It is expected the Range Officers will be the responsible parties for observing and resolving all safety related matters in the loading, unloading and firing line areas. However, any shooter who observes a safety infraction not seen by the Range Officer(s) should call the infraction to the Range Officers attention at which time the matter will be resolved.

Safety Practices

First, Last and always

Our sport, by its very nature, has the potential to be dangerous and a serious accident can occur if we are not stringent in our safety procedures. Every participant in a BWSS match is expected to be a safety officer. Each shooters first responsibility is for his or her own safe conduct, but, all shooters are expected to remain alert for actions by others who are unsafe. Do not feel embarrassed to tell any shooter or report him or her to the Range Officer, whether friend or unknown if they are not observing the rules. ..

A moment of embarrassment is better than a lifetime of regret.

Any Range Officer or shooter may confront any participant about an observed unsafe situation, and it is expected the matter will be quickly corrected and not repeated.

Any argument concerning the correction of a safety related matter could be expected to result in that shooter being ejected from the range.

Hearing protection and eye protection are mandatory in and around shooting areas. While small period glasses look great, full protection high impact glasses are strongly recommended.

Shooters shall adhere to the following safety guidelines.

1. Treat and respect every firearm as if it were loaded.
2. Muzzle direction direction is important between, before, during and after a shooting stage. A muzzle must not be allowed to “sweep” the other participants at any time. Long guns will have their actions open with chambers and magazines empty and muzzles pointed in a safe direction when transported at a match. Failure to manage safe muzzle direction is grounds for disqualification from the stage, and, for repeated offences, from the match.
3. All firearms will remain unloaded except when under the direct observation of a Range Officer on the firing line or in the loading area.

4. All loading and unloading will be conducted only in the designated areas.

NOTE: Percussion revolver shooters must exercise care to ensure they maintain safe muzzle direction during loading and have fired or cleared all capped chambers prior to leaving the unloading area.

5. Six-guns are always loaded with only five balls or cartridges, the hammer lowered and left resting on the uncapped chamber.

6. No cocked revolver may ever leave a shooters hand.

7. Once a live round or capped chamber is placed under the hammer the round must be expended. If the firearm is shot out of sequence, the shooter will receive a single procedural penalty. The shooter has the option of making the gun safe and moving to the correct position or restaging it. Shotguns may be opened and rounds removed or replaced without penalty.

8. The shooter shall not cock his revolver until the firearm is pointed safely down range. Any accidental or premature discharge of any firearm within ten foot of the shooter is unsafe and will result in disqualification from the stage, or, if less than five feet, from the match. A second stage disqualification on the same day shall result in the shooters ejection from the match. A safe practice is to develop the habit of cocking handguns with the “weak” or off hand after the gun has been cleared, leather and is pointed safely down range.

9. Rifles may be staged down range from the shooter with the magazine loaded, action close, hammer down and chamber empty.

10. Shotguns are always staged open with the magazine and chambers empty and are loaded on the clock unless the stage begins with the shotgun in the shooters hands. Mule eared shotguns can be cocked at the beginning of a scenario, whether staged or in the shooters hands. Long guns are never staged with their muzzles on the ground.

11. Long guns and shotguns will be left open with magazines and chambers empty at the conclusion of each shooting string (i.e. whenever the gun leaves the shooters hands during or at the end of a stage). This does not apply to “restaged” guns.

12. A live round left in the chamber constitutes a stage disqualification. Any other rounds, live or empty, left anywhere in a long gun or shotgun is a ten second minor safety violation. Broken guns still containing rounds will not warrant penalties so long as the malfunction is declared and the gun made safe. Shooting will be stopped if in the opinion of the range officer the gun is unsafe and cannot be cleared.

13. All shooters must demonstrate rudimentary familiarity and proficiency with the firearms **being used**. Shooters are expected to perform within their capabilities at all times. BWSS matches are not the forum in which to learn basic firearms handling.

All shooters are encouraged to complete the basic safety course prior to shooting in a competition, entry to the intermediate and advanced course is actively encouraged.

All shooters must prove their competence prior to competing in a competition for the first time and any shooter who is deemed to be not capable of attaining these Standards will not be allowed to shoot.

14. BWSS matches are not fast draw competitions. Any unsafe gun handling in the course of a draw from the holster or any “fanning” will result in the shooters disqualification from that stage. “Slip hammering” is not the same as fanning and is legal.

15. Extreme care must be exercised when drawing a pistol from a cross-draw or shoulder holster or returning the pistol to leather. The user must “twist” their body, if necessary, to ensure the muzzle never breaks the 170 degree safety rule during the process. Failure to ensure the muzzle is always down range is grounds for an immediate stage disqualification. A second infraction during the same match is grounds for match disqualification. (Note: the 170 degree safety rule means the muzzle of the firearm must always be straight down range +/- 85 degrees. If a competitor comes close to breaking the 170 degree safety plane the 170 degree safety rule has been violated and the competitor is at fault).

16. When changing location during a stage, all firearms being carried must either have the hammer down on an empty chamber or spent case, or, have the action open.

17. A dropped unloaded gun results in the shooters disqualification from the stage. A dropped loaded gun results in a match disqualification. A shooter may not pick up a dropped gun. The range officer will recover the gun, examine it, clear it and return it to the shooter.

18. Ammunition dropped by a shooter in the course of reloading any firearm during a stage or “ejected” from any firearm is considered “dead” and may not be recovered until the shooter completes the course of fire. For example if a round of shotgun ammo is dropped while reloading or ejecting, the round must be replaced from the shooters person or count as a missed shot. No attempt may be made to pick up the dropped round as to do so prompts muzzle direction loss of control. Staged ammunition dropped back where it was staged is not considered “dead”.

Topping up is defined as firing and additional round to the normal staged amount not reloading from your person a dropped round. Topping up is only allowed when instructed.

19. The unloading officer or range officer **MUST** inspect all firearms before they leave the shooting stage. All rifles and pump action or lever action shotguns must have their action cycled for the inspecting official. All pistols, whether or not used in the stage, must also be inspected.

20. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the range area for all shooters, guests, range officers and others until shooting is done for the day. No shooter will consume any alcoholic beverage until he or she has completed all of their shooting for the day and stored their firearms.

21. No shooter may ingest any substance that will affect his or her ability to participate with a maximum of awareness and in a completely safe manner. Both prescription and non prescription pharmaceuticals that may cause drowsiness or any other physical or mental impairment must be avoided.

22. Eye and hearing protection must be worn by all competitors when in the loading area or on the firing line. Such protection is recommended for everyone when in the range area, and eye protection is mandatory for spectators when within direct line of the sight of steel targets.

23. Only registered competitors may wear firearms.

Selecting an Alias

Every BWSS member is required to select a shooting alias representative of a character or profession from the Old West or the western film genre. Your alias may not in any way duplicate or easily be confused with any other members alias. BWSS headquarters is the final arbiter of whether an alias is acceptable or not.

Clothing and Accoutrements

Western dress is encouraged but not compulsory. If you do not wish to wear full western clothing please try to enter into the “spirit” of things. A pair of jeans and a checked shirt adds to the atmosphere without making the wearer feel uncomfortable

Outlawed

- * Modern shooting gloves.
- * Short sleeved shirts.
- * Designer jeans.
- * Ball caps.
- * Tennis, running, jogging or aerobic shoes (Indian moccasins work well for relaxing after a long day in boots).
- * Clothing displaying manufacturers or sponsors badges or logos.
- * Nylon, plastic or Velcro accoutrements.