

COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™

Range Officer Training Course (Level II)



Compiled and Edited
by
The Wild Bunch and Friends

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Acknowledgments

The design and production of this course has evolved from the national implementation of the SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course. This course is the culmination of many dedicated SASS member's collaborative efforts. SASS owes a sincere thank you to Quick Cal, SASS #2707, Har Trigger, SASS # 338, Cole Younger, SASS #4237, Coyote Calhoun, SASS #4864, San Quinton, SASS #4818, and all the other parties that have contributed in this effort. Shooters at all SASS matches will benefit greatly from the increased safety awareness level stressed in this course.

Training Course Administration

Registration

Students interested in taking the SASS Range Officer Training Course require the following:

- Must be a SASS Member.
- Must have completed SASS Range Operations Basic Safety Course.
- Must have actively participated in Cowboy Action Shooting™ matches for a minimum period of six months.

Students are required to register with the SASS Range Officer Instructor at least 10-days prior to the class by submitting the Range Officer Training Registration Form. Each registration must be submitted to SASS at least seven-days prior to the class for SASS membership and Range Operations Safety Course status verification.

SASS Range Officer Instructors are required to verify minimum length of time the student has been an active Cowboy Action Shooter.

Training Fees

The SASS Range Officer Training Course is \$25, and students must pay on the day of the class. Advance registration payments are not required.

Official Certification of Completion

Upon receipt of registration fees, completed test, and trainer confirmation, SASS will issue an official certification of completion certificate and pin directly to the member.

Course material and Facilities

Part I of the SASS Range Officer Training Course requires a classroom setting. The classroom includes seating and writing areas for all students. SASS Range Officer Instructors will supply all course materials. Pencils and other writing tools are recommended.

Part II is the practical field-training portion of the course. This is accomplished at an outdoor shooting range where match conditions can be simulated. The practical field-training portion of the course consists of real time situations and incidents that can occur in a Cowboy Action Shooting™ Match and will require the use of props, targets, loading and unloading tables, firearms, ammunition, and empty shells. Examples of damaged targets, props, firearms with external modifications, appropriate and inappropriate clothing, leather, and other items are provided to make the appropriate points.

Table of Contents

SASS RANGE OFFICER TRAINING	1
BEFORE THE MATCH.....	1
<i>Medical Assistance Plan.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Safety Evacuation Plan.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Non-Shooter Safety.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Appeals Procedure</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Range Safety Rules</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Stage Inspection.....</i>	<i>2</i>
STAGE SAFETY HAZARDS	2
<i>Unsafe Stage Design Elements.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Poor Stage Design Elements</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Props.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Targets.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Bottom Line</i>	<i>3</i>
SHOOTER EVALUATION.....	3
<i>Impairments.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Firearms</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Leather.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Clothing.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Ammunition.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Eye and Ear Protection</i>	<i>4</i>
RANGE OFFICER DUTIES	4
<i>The Course of Fire.....</i>	<i>4</i>
INCIDENTS.....	4
<i>Squibs</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Target Failure</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Prop Failure.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Breaking the 170° Safety Rule</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Tripping or Falling.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Frontiersman Category</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Gunfighter Category.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Shooter Appeals.....</i>	<i>6</i>

SASS Range Officer Training Course

SASS Range Officer Training

The SASS Range Officer Training Course's objective is to eliminate personal injury during a Cowboy Action Shooting™ Match. It is designed to strengthen the integrity of SASS's Cowboy Action Shooting™ safety record. The SASS Range Officer Training Course is a risk management program for SASS Cowboy Action Shooting™ Matches.

This course requires the student to have a thorough working knowledge of the SASS Shooters Handbook and Range Operations Basic Safety Course and is not intended to be a teaching course of rules and regulations for conducting a match.

The SASS Range Officer Training Course is a four-hour course designed to train SASS Range Officers.

Utilizing a classroom environment and written test followed by practical field training in a controlled environment, the student will be trained in the required areas of safety and the navigation of a shooter safely through a shooting stage. The course will expand on the premise of the Range Operations Basic Safety Course.

Upon completion of this course, a SASS Certified Range Officer will be knowledgeable of all aspects necessary to safely assist a shooter through a course of fire, provide necessary guidance and injury assistance in the event of an accident, and be able to enforce the rules and regulations in accordance with the SASS Shooter's Handbook.

Before the Match

Prior to each and every match, a briefing shall be conducted by the club's match director, range master, or designated club official with all Range Officers and posse

marshals. The briefing shall encompass the following areas:

Medical Assistance Plan

A plan to assist any injured shooter or spectator must be in place in the event of an emergency. Each Range Officer shall be informed of the event's emergency procedures. These procedures shall also be posted or published to facilitate a timely response. These plans shall include emergency medical assistance, location of first aid equipment, and who is the assigned Medical Information Officer. All Range Officers shall have the telephone number and know the physical location of the nearest trauma center. In some areas, 911 is not necessarily the most appropriate number to call.

Safety Evacuation Plan

A well thought out plan of evacuation shall be in place in the event of an emergency. Timely evacuation of an injured shooter or spectator is paramount. The Medical Information Officer for the event shall be responsible for maintaining and implementing a safety evacuation plan.

Non-Shooter Safety

All Range Officers shall be informed of the plan of action for non-shooting participant's control and safety. These aspects shall include a line of demarcation for non-shooters, areas of required eye and ear protection, and the availability of eye and ear protection on the range (either free or for a very nominal fee).

Appeals Procedure

Each Range Officer shall be briefed regarding the appeals procedure. In the event a call is challenged at the line, the Range Officer should know the chain of command for directing the shooter to the next higher authority to settle the dispute.

SASS Range Officer Training Course

It is just as important to observe an appropriate chain of command for a match as in any other organization. Remember, attitudes effect perception, and poor attitudes and shooting sports don't mix well.

Range Safety Rules

Each Range Officer shall be informed of all local range safety policies that may differ from the rules printed in the SASS Shooters Handbook. Otherwise, each Range Officer shall be responsible for understanding and implementing all safety rules and guidelines contained within the most current version of the SASS Shooters Handbook.

Any question(s) pertaining to local or SASS rules shall be clarified at this point.

Stage Inspection

Range Officers shall be briefed regarding the operation of each course of fire. Each stage description shall be read and explained for clarity. All questions concerning the operation of each stage shall be addressed.

All stages shall be visually inspected for safety. Potential problem areas should be discussed and any safety issues resolved at this time. Also, any “**watch out areas**” should be pointed out so shooters can avoid safety problems. Any changes necessary to make the stages safer shall be completed at this time – prior to any of the participants shooting the stage.

Stage design plays a major part in the safety of a match. Poor stage design can lead to shooter confusion and safety problems, and unsafe stage design can lead to injuries. SASS Range Officers must understand stage design so safety issues are avoided prior to the match beginning.

Stage Safety Hazards

Unsafe Stage Design Elements

The shooter shall never be allowed to move with a cocked, loaded firearm in hand. Once a pistol is cocked or a rifle is levered have the shooter expend the round and make the firearm safe before moving to the next position. Shotguns may be opened and rounds removed or replaced without penalty. Movement is defined the same as "traveling" in basketball. Once the firearm is cocked, one foot must remain in place on the ground until the firearm is made safe.

Moving parallel to the firing line can create safety pit falls for shooters. It is very easy for a shooter to break the 170° safety rule moving parallel to the firing line or possibly trip over a gun or prop. Range Officers should pay special attention to stages with parallel movement that may create potential hazards. It is recommended that stages flow from an up range to down range direction.

Shooters shall never be allowed to stand directly over a vertically staged gun.

Safety concerns can arise from requiring the shooter to engage from a prone or other unaccustomed shooting position. Be prepared for possible hazards when encountering these situations.

Poor Stage Design Elements

Safety concerns can arise from moving up/down or over/under props, stairs, or obstacles. All folks are not able to negotiate props in the same manner. It is a good idea to watch the shooter's hands and movement and be prepared to help with corrections or assistance if necessary.

SASS Range Officer Training Course

Stages should never be designed that have the potential to penalize a shooter for anything that is a perfectly safe situation. Examples such as moving with an empty or un-cocked firearm, drawing or holstering on the move, single versus double loading a shotgun, loading a rifle round into the magazine versus the chamber are just a few that have been identified as unnecessary penalty traps.

Target order can create controversy on a stage. Double tapping a shotgun target allows for the opportunity to fire both barrels of a shotgun simultaneously and therefore should be avoided.

Targets that are activated by another target or prop (especially aerial shotgun targets) can be the source of varied interpretations and therefore require special instructions within the stage description to avoid problems.

Props

Props come in all shapes, sizes, and design. Not all are conceived with safety in mind. It is important to ensure guns are appropriately staged, especially when movement is required.

Note where brass is likely to fall. Be sure appointed assistance is in place to clear brass or shells that might impede the movement of a shooter.

Targets

Be cautious of angles at which targets are placed due to the potential for ricochet or splatter.

Pay careful attention to targets that move to unsafe angles during shooting. A dangerous target (dimpled or bent) should be replaced.

Bottom Line

Remember, there are points of bad stage design and setup that cause the shooter or non-shooter to be at risk.

If a stage is found to have severe and hazardous safety flaws, the Range Officer shall politely confront the Match Director with the potential for problems. If no safe and timely remedy is implemented, the Range Officer must quietly dismiss themselves from the event. Voting with one's feet is the ultimate way of communicating with an unresponsive organization.

Shooter Evaluation

As each shooter approaches the firing line, the Range Officer shall conduct a visual inspection. This inspection shall include the following:

Impairments

Does the shooter appear to be physically and mentally capable of safely navigating the requirements of the stage?

Will the shooter need any special assistance to safely navigate the requirements of the stage?

Firearms

Without physical inspection, do all firearms appear to be SASS legal?

Leather

Does the shooter's leather (gun belt, holster, pouch, bandoleer, shotgun belt) conform to SASS rules?

Clothing

Does the shooter's clothing conform to SASS rules?

Ammunition

Does the shooter have all the necessary ammunition on their person or in the

SASS Range Officer Training Course

correct staged positions to complete the course of fire?

Eye and Ear Protection

Does the shooter have the necessary eye and ear protection?

In the event the shooter is found to have illegal equipment or to be unprepared to begin the course of fire, the Range Officer shall direct them to the loading or unloading table where the necessary corrections can be made prior to returning to the firing line.

Range Officer Duties

The Course of Fire

Once the Range Officer has completed the evaluation of the shooter, he or she shall prepare to supervise the shooter and stage as follows:

Make sure the correct numbers of spotters are in position. It is a good idea to have bandanas or batons for the spotters to hold. This helps identify the spotters and keeps them on the line until they hand off the baton or bandana to the next spotter.

Determine the readiness state of the shooter by asking "Is the shooter ready?" The Range Officer shall answer any last minute questions or clear any confusion the shooter has at this point without extreme elaboration. It is inappropriate for the Range Officer to re-explain the stage for each and every shooter. The Loading Officer is available for that duty, if needed.

Prepare the shooter to begin by declaring "Shooter is ready, Stand by" or "Indicate ready by saying your line." The Range Officer shall give a short pause and start the timer so as not to surprise the shooter.

Once the shooter has engaged the stage, the Range Officer shall watch the muzzles of the guns for correct target engagement,

potential squibs, and violations of the 170° safety rule. The Range Officer shall make every effort to safely assist the shooter through the course of fire by coaching and giving appropriate range commands, if necessary. The Range Officer shall always stay close enough to the shooter to control him, if necessary.

After the shooter has completed the course of fire, the Range Officer shall declare the stage raw time to the shooter and then instruct him or her to holster all pistols, retrieve all long guns, and move to the unloading area with the muzzles in a safe direction. The raw time can then be announced to the Scorekeeper.

If the shooting bays are in close proximity of one another it is important for the Range Officer to cover the acoustic microphone immediately after the shooter is finished, preventing recording adjacent bay shots.

The Range Officer shall determine any misses by polling the assigned spotters and communicate the misses and any procedural or safety penalties to the person recording the score as well as the shooter.

Incidents

As each shooter engages a course of fire, the Range Officer shall be prepared for any or all of the following incidents to occur and be expeditious in his or her necessary corrective action. The Range Officer shall never be tentative with a safety call. If a command given by the Range Officer is determined to be errant (e.g., if a squib call is determined to actually be clear), the shooter will automatically receive a re-shoot.

Squibs

In the event a Range Officer suspects a squib load has been encountered, an immediate command shall be given to the

SASS Range Officer Training Course

shooter to make the gun safe and continue on with the next procedure. The Range Officer shall assist the shooter in making the gun safe by allowing them to “hand off” the gun safely, if necessary.

Target Failure

In the event a target fails, the Range Officer shall instruct the shooter to “shoot where it was.” This call will never result in a penalty of any kind to the shooter. This process has been found to be far less confusing, and thereby safer, to the shooter than requiring an alternate target to be engaged, although it is perfectly acceptable for the shooter to engage an alternate target and be scored for hits and misses in the normal manner. Do not allow the shooter to engage a downed target.

Prop Failure

In the event of a prop failure, the Range Officer shall be prepared to make a determination of whether or not the shooter shall continue the course of fire or cease-fire immediately. In any event, the shooter shall not be penalized as the result of a prop failure.

Breaking the 170° Safety Rule

A Range Officer shall make an immediate “Cease-Fire” call if any gun breaks the 170° safety rule. This call will result in a Stage Disqualification to the shooter. The Range Officer shall make a good faith effort to prevent the shooter from breaking the safety rule by verbal command or physical contact, if necessary.

It is also necessary to note the shooter must be given the ability to draw and holster pistols from “straight hang” holsters and the ability to retrieve and return vertically staged double-barreled shotguns without penalty.

Tripping or Falling

In the event a shooter accidentally trips or falls during a course of fire, the Range Officer shall make an assessment of the shooter’s condition and give a “Cease-Fire” command only if a safety infraction has occurred. Otherwise, the shooter will be allowed to regroup and continue with the course of fire.

Frontiersman Category

The Range Officer shall be prepared for the idiosyncrasies of cap and ball revolvers. These items include potential “hang-fires,” “cap only” ignition, and a complete failure to fire. The Range Officer shall not confuse these occurrences as potential squib loads. Misfires on the firing line by Frontiersman will require the Range Officer to accommodate clearing the gun after completing the stage. The Range Officer shall always require these clearances be accomplished at the firing line. It is acceptable to recap and discharge the still loaded chamber(s) or simply uncap the charged chambers.

Gunfighter Category

Since the Gunfighter uses both pistols, shooting right and left handed, the best position for The Range Officer is directly behind the shooter. When the stage calls for ten pistol rounds in a single sequence, the Gunfighter shall engage the targets with a six-gun in each hand, shooting the targets in exactly the same sequence as prescribed in the stage scenario (e.g., if the stage calls for sweeping a bank of targets left to right and then right to left, the Gunfighter shall sweep the bank of targets left to right with both guns and then sweep the bank from right to left with both guns). Gunfighters shall shoot the pistols alternately or may change leads, which is defined as no more than two sequential rounds from the same pistol.

SASS Range Officer Training Course

Shooter Appeals

The Range Officer shall discuss with the shooter any discrepancies or questions with regard to safety or penalties. These discussions shall not cause backups for an

entire shooting group and shall be done away from the firing line. If a shooter feels unfairly judged, the Range Officer shall be familiar with the appeal process in place for the event.

SASS Range Officer Training Course

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SASS Range Officer Training Course

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