

# EXPLAINING SIX-GUN RULES FOR COWBOY FAST DRAW

Updated 12-29-16 (9<sup>th</sup> Edition Changes)

By: *Quick Cal*, Executive Director of CFDA

Probably the most often asked question by new and prospective members of CFDA is about our Gun Rules. Choosing the right six-gun can get very confusing, especially with all the options that are available in the market place these days. So, it was about time that I put the explanations and reasoning behind our rules in writing, after explaining it in person and over the phone countless times.

## Founding Principle of CFDA - Keep our six-guns and holsters true to form of the time period that we represent...

Keeping our competition equipment true to the 1800s time period is important for several reasons.

### 1. Spirit of the Game

Spirit of the Game is a very important aspect of our sport. While we are not technically reenactors, we do enjoy basing our competitions on equipment that was available in the time period that we honor.

### 2. Limit Modifications

Historically, modifications of sporting guns start out to be very small and practical, but competitors, gunsmiths, after-market suppliers, and even manufacturers love competitive innovations, and the "Equipment Race" begins! Equipment Races have happened to practically every major competitive shooting sport and can take decades to develop, or it can spread like wildfire. Such an escalation in equipment converts once affordable firearms into very expensive "raceguns", that shooters feel that they must acquire in order to be competitive. Basic equipment becomes expensive, and can take months to acquire, which makes recruiting new members much harder.

The other aspect of Equipment Races is that they are especially dangerous for sports such as Cowboy Fast Draw that rely on a "Spirit of the Game" that honors a historic period of time. Cowboy Fast Draw has very little meaning if it is not tied to the Spirit of the American Old West and the Cowboy Way.

CFDA is committed to the principle that our members can go to their local gun dealer and purchase a six-gun right out of their showcase that is competitive at any level of CFDA event. We do however, recommend that a competent gunsmith inspect and tune the action, as needed, so that your six-gun will stand up better and last longer under the stress of speed cocking that is common in Cowboy Fast Draw. (See Tuning Action Rules) below.

Our Current CFDA Gun Rules are only these few following paragraphs, and haven't changed in years, because we keep it simple.... Although they are very short paragraphs, they are worded very carefully so that a few words have a lot of meaning. Below, each main topic section of the rule is highlighted with a (#), and clarified and explained under each paragraph.

## GUNS

Single-action revolvers, (1)factory chambered for .45 Colt caliber, (2)with non-adjustable rear sights, such firearm types as: (3)S.A.A. Colt, Colt Bisley, 1858 Remington Conversion, 1875 Remington, 1860 Army Conversion, 1872 Open Top, S&W Schofield, and (4)"faithful reproductions" thereof.

Plus, the following (5)Ruger models; Vaquero, New Vaquero, Bisley Vaquero, CFDA Vaquero, and Short Spur Vaquero. Special Exception: Vaquero (Short Spur) hammers may be interchanged with a New Vaquero, which is the basis for both a CFDA Vaquero and Short Spur Vaquero Models.

(6)The exterior parts of the revolver must match factory stock contours and made of original type material: i.e. hammers must not be bent in anyway, no trigger shoes, no aluminum/ titanium barrels or cylinders, no skeletonizing, no modifications to the trigger guard, or grip frame, etc.

(7)All external parts must match the manufacturer's stock product, i.e. a Bisley revolver must have a matching Bisley hammer, a SAA must have a stock SAA hammer. (8)Front sights are optional. (9)Minimum barrel length is 4-1/2", except in the Shootist category (see Page 6), when measured from the cylinder to the front of the barrel. (10)Hammer knurling may be smoothed.

## 9TH EDITION CHANGES

The 1860 Army Conversion was added back into our rules as an example after being omitted for since the original rules were written.

The 1872 Open Top was also added for the first time since reproductions of this period firearm type have been recently been produced, it is an important historical "missing link" in Colt's transition from the conversion era of percussion revolvers, as it is Colt's first factory production of a cartridge revolver that tried using existing percussion parts. It was immediately followed by the 1873 SAA.

**Ruger New Vaquero vs “Old” Vaquero Hammers (9<sup>th</sup> Edition Exception)**

Ruger introduced the Ruger Vaquero Short Spur (Model 05158) in 2016. Other than the Dooley Grips it is the same as the CFDA Vaquero. There is no special model name, model number, or special serial numbers on the actual firearm. Only the box it comes in has the model number. The CFDA Vaquero (circa 2008) was simply a New Vaquero, with an “Old” Vaquero hammer in it.

Since someone could simply change the grips, which is allowed under our rules, there would be no reasonable way for our gun checkers to distinguish a Vaquero Short Spur from a New Vaquero with an “Old” Vaquero hammer installed in it. Therefore, it was time to allow hammers to be interchanged between “Old” Vaqueros and New Vaqueros.

**CLARIFICATIONS**

**(1) WHY Factory Chambered .45 Colt caliber Only?**

Yes, the Colt Peacemaker was originally chambered in the .45lc or .45colt when Colt introduced this very popular and powerful cartridge. But, there are other very important reasons that we require .45lc as our standard.

**1. Safety First**

Since Cowboy Fast Draw competitions and exhibitions are carried out in many public areas, we use a variety of very effective backstops that are temporary in nature. Archery Netting and Ballistic Nylon are the two most popular. These backstops stop .45 wax bullets, dead in their tracks, when powered by shotgun primers. However, we are concerned that smaller caliber wax bullets that would be traveling at higher velocities with the same charge, would penetrate our backstops.

**2. Host Supplied Ammunition**

Host must supply all ammunition used at CFDA Titled Championships and Town Folk Alleys. We cannot expect hosts to supply the wide range of calibers that shooters might choose to use.

**3. Competitive Reasons**

Since Cowboy Fast Draw is timed to 1/1000th of a second, a velocity difference of a few hundred feet per second, can add up to almost 2 hundredths of a second, turning a .410 to a .390, that is a huge difference in our sport. For instance, if we allowed .38's, which travel at almost 1,000 fps with a shotgun primer, soon most everyone would feel forced to use them. So, it is imperative that we keep our ammunition standard at all levels of CFDA competition.

**4. Factory Chambered**

Many Fast Draw guns in the long history were highly customized using smaller framed model bored out to .45, therefore, our rules prevent guns that are chambered in .45lc that will not sustain actual .45lc live ammunition being shot through them.

(2) Adjustable rear sights are considered modern target pistols and were not commonly found in the 1800s time period.

(3) These are examples, but not a complete list of allowable period gun types.

(4) Faithful Reproductions"

Faithful Reproductions has become a very confusing aspect of our rules, especially in the past few years. With the success of both Cowboy Action Shooting (SASS) and Cowboy Mounted Shooting (CMSA), manufacturers starting designing and installing upgraded hammers, with lower profiles to accommodate thumb cocking for eye level one-handed shooting. These low-profile hammers are modern sport hammers and are not "faithful reproductions" found on 1800s period firearms. While some of these modern low profile hammers may vaguely resemble a Bisley Hammer, they were never produced in the 1800s on any 1873 SAA (Single Action Army) models, therefore, these gun types cannot be classified as "faithful reproductions".

Birds Head Grips - are another item that are currently being offered by several manufacturers on SAA revolvers, these also were never produced on any models of SAA revolvers, single action revolvers in the 1800s, only on double action revolvers. For this reason, Birds Head Grips are not allowed in CFDA.

(5) Ruger Vaquero models are specifically written into our rules even though they are technically not a “faithful reproduction” of the 1800s period. Externally speaking, they are very closely related, although a trained eye can see the differences immediately. The Ruger Vaquero is a very popular choice in Cowboy Fast Draw, due to its reputation as a very dependable single action revolver.

Only the specific Ruger Vaquero Models that are named are allowed. The Ruger Vaquero Montado series are not allowed due to the Montado Hammer due to the low-profile hammer (See (4)), also the Ruger SASS Vaquero is disqualified due to its hammer, which is the Montado Hammer.

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(6) This section insures that original contours and metal types must be used. Lighter or non-matching after-market parts cannot be used, or skeletonizing of existing parts of the six-gun cannot be performed, which can gain a weight advantage.

(7) This section means that external parts from one model cannot be interchanged from another model, unless they match the manufacturer's stock external contours for that model.

(8) Front sights may be removed or reduced in size. Eliminating or reducing the front sight may reduce some barrel drag within the holster. CFDA prefers to see front sights remain on six-guns even if they have been reduced in size.

(9) In the beginning of CFDA many shooters had guns with longer barrels and were cutting them down, that doesn't happen a lot these days. Minimum barrel length is 4-1/2", even though factory standards Ruger 4-5/8", Colt 4-3/4" are the most common and preferred barrel lengths found in CFDA. Sometimes gunsmith fitting procedures and those that have cut longer barrels down causes barrels to be slightly shorted, so CFDA built in a 1/8" cushion.

(10) Hammer knurling can sometimes be very sharp and can irritate the shooter's thumb. Therefore, it is fine to have the factory knurling smoothed to the shooter's liking.

**TUNING ACTIONS**

Tuning stock actions or action jobs are allowed. (11) No factory installed safeties may be removed. (12) No action job may affect the factory designed external operation of the revolver: i.e. no short stroking actions, slip-cocking actions, or adding half-cocks or free-spin pawls in Ruger Vaquero models. (13) Safety, Half-cock, and full-cock notches must be able to withstand a reasonable jar. (14) Cylinder notches may be deepened and cleaned to fit the bolt. (15) Cylinder lead-in grooves may be modified as needed, but may not be lengthened more than 7/16" when measuring from the far side of the bolt notch to the far end of the lead-in groove.

**Note:** Child Safety locks such as beneath the grips of some Rugers models and double notched base pins in some Colt Clones, may be removed and are not considered part of the firearm's internal safety mechanism.

**CLARIFICATIONS**

(11) The safety notch, which is the first click on a colt-style action or transfer bars when provided from the manufacturer must not be removed. Our manufacturers do not want them removed either.

(12) "No action job may affect the factory designed external operation of the revolver." The examples provided shows the wide range gaming tricks that this one sentence eliminates.

(13) All hammer notches are checked before each major competition to make sure they are able to withstand a reasonable jar. This is a safety measured that helps ensure that the six-gun cannot discharge, even if dropped in a cocked and loaded condition.

(14) Cylinder notches have been deepened to the point where it has penetrated the chamber wall, this is not allowed due to safety concerns.

(15) Cylinder lead-in groove may be lengthened some, but not to the point where it is considered an exterior modification.

**GRIPS**

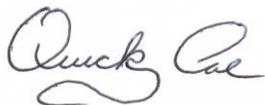
Contemporary rubber or target grips and grip tape are not allowed. Grips made of simulated and natural materials are allowed. Grips may not extend beyond the grip frame in any direction more than 1/8". Since shooters have hands of various sizes, grips may be contoured to fit a shooter's hand and may be thickened or thinned. Bird's Head Grip Frames and Grips are not period correct on Single Action Revolvers and are not allowed.

**COSMETIC EMBELLISHMENT**

Engraving anywhere in the revolver is permitted.

I hope that this answers your questions and gives you a better understanding of CFDA Gun Rules, so that you can choose your six-gun with confidence for Cowboy Fast Draw competition. If you still have questions after reading this Clarification Letter, please feel free to contact the CFDA Office at 775-575-1802. Or drop us an email at [info@cowboyfastdraw.com](mailto:info@cowboyfastdraw.com)

Hit'em Fast & Have Fun!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Quick Cal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Quick Cal

***Our Motto: Safety First, Fun Second, and Competition Third!***