

Is There a Gut Shot?

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A controversy that has evolved over the past several years which largely circulates around situations wherein a faster shooter misses a shot and then has to endure their opponent firing a late shot.

Sometimes a late shot is actually a recovery shot, caused by a half-cock, bad draw or a bad primer. Sometimes shooters just freeze on a start light, and this can happen for several reasons.

Sometimes, and I have rarely seen this, a shooter intentionally waits until a faster shooter misses, then draws and fires a shot making sure of a hit. I have even done this myself on occasion, but only in a friendly manner in jest, or to someone I know well who is known to do that sort of thing to others. It should be noted that often a shooter may appear to do this but did not intend to, in that they initially froze on the light and have a delayed draw. This is usually the result of a false mental anticipation of the light.

Some members have stated and firmly believe that the name of the game is "Fast Draw" and all competitors should be obligated to shoot their true speed potential each and every shot. Some, actually believe that shooters that don't shoot to their true speed potential should be charged with a Conduct Violation Penalty for breaking the Spirit of the Game, or, at the very least, be heckled and made to be ashamed.

This controversial subject that is commonly labeled the "Gut Shot" has simmered for years in the Sport of Cowboy Fast Draw. I have received numerous phone calls and have had many personal conversations with our members on both sides of this topic and I've listened carefully.

Folks, it's time to address this issue and settle it once and for all.

Mississippi Marshal, our past Membership Director, attempted to settle this matter a few years ago with an article in the Gunslinger's Gazette, the basis of his article was, "There is No Such Thing as a Gut Shot."

At CFDA Headquarters we receive calls from various parts of the nation from our members who have been made to feel unwelcome and persecuted for taking a late shot, even if they simply half-cock the hammer in the heat of competition and then fire a recovery shot. These members will actually call and try to explain why they took a late shot and how it got misunderstood and they feel that they were wrongly persecuted for being a "Gut Shooter". They actually have been led to believe that they have broken some kind of rule by taking a simple recovery shot, and we have lost members over this issue!

When Cowboy Fast Draw was founded there were no time limits placed on shots, I might mention that at that time most fast draw timers timed out at 2 seconds. The CFDA target was sized and placed to emphasize that hitting the target, was more important than all-out speed. There is a long and detailed history of what has happened with many of the time-based shooting sports over the years whether it was Fast Draw, IPSC, or Cowboy Action Shooting. When in an all-out quest for speed, equipment became highly modified, and stage designs or target distances were simplified, to the point that the principles, integrity and very meaning that many of these sports were founded upon were compromised. It usually happens in a way that is so subtle that it is recognized too late. Only then do the leaders of the sport try to implement rules, at the risk of starting a revolution of its membership, usually led by those who have invested in advanced equipment. Unfortunately, it amounts to attempting to close the barn door after all the horses have escaped. It is my sincerest wish that these "evolutions" will never happen to Cowboy Fast Draw. We must stay vigilant in keeping the integrity of our game based upon time period equipment; and targets of size and distance to provide a balance between speed and accuracy.

Some of our members really work hard at obtaining optimum speed in our sport, they play the game at a level which is right on the envelope of how fast it can be humanly performed. I applaud and admire these folks, they spend huge amounts of time honing their skills and deserve whatever accolades their accomplishments can bring them. Our Top Guns are truly the stars of our game and it's exciting to watch them shoot and a pleasure to cheer them on.

On the other hand, the large majority of our members practice hitting the target to the best of their ability and speed. Some of these folks have developed their skill into deliberate and deadly accuracy. I can guarantee you that the “fast shooters” fear drawing one of these types of shooters more than any other. They know that deliberate competitors will hold them accountable for hitting their target and this is a very valid strategy, especially against a faster competitor.

Some of our members feel very strongly about the so-called “Gut Shot”. As Director of the CFDA, it falls to me to listen and consider all viewpoints from our members. Every once in a while a member contacts me with an idea on how to stop the “alleged gut shots”. I listen carefully to all of them and here are a few...

1. Set the maximum time at One-Second or Two-Seconds.
2. Keep an average on file for each and every shooter and if they exceed that average by a certain amount, say 10 hundredths of a second, they would lose the shot.
3. Not allowing any recovery shots or second attempts of any kind.
4. Penalizing shooters for not obviously shooting their speed potential.

The Reason We Must Keep Our Rules Simple

Before we go further into addressing the above possible solutions there is a very important point that must be made extremely clear. Cowboy Fast Draw is one of the few professional sporting event that pays prize money, has hundreds of competitors, and enshrines champion’s names and titles into a “Hall of Champions”; which also must depend on its competitors to act as judges for their fellow competitors. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!** This is precisely the reason we must keep our rules simple, pure and to the point, with a very limited amount of judgment calls to make. The last thing we want to do is place our fellow competitors in a position where they must make judgment calls based upon what they think people’s intentions are when they fire a shot, any shot.

So now let’s go through the above proposed solutions step by step....

1. Some of our members, especially new members, have a hard time shooting consistently under a second. Even our members that shoot a .60 or .70, would never have the same chance to recover from a half-cock or bad draw and fire a recovery shot if the time was limited to one-second.
 - A. We have all seen or participated in bouts go into many multiple shots. Frankly, many of us are glad to see a hit, any hit, that helps bring such a bout nearer to a conclusion.
 - B. Members who don’t like being beat by a late shot, won’t be satisfied by a one or two second time limit, as some of them still appear to become agitated by someone hitting a slower shot at any speed.
2. I can’t imagine who would keep all the records to know what all shooter’s true abilities are. Even if we had such capabilities, are we going to stop a championship match and have a vigil over each and every shot fired? It could also lead to planned sandbagging to keep averages higher. Do we count recoveries or missed lights in the average? Do we penalize our shooters that shoot in the 3’s, for shooting in the 4’s?
3. Not allowing recovery shots or second attempts is like saying, “Just give up if your gun doesn’t go bang?” That goes against every principle of gunfighting, combat or any other kind of competition I’ve ever heard of. Not to mention the pure time it would add to our matches.
4. Who knows what goes through a competitor’s mind in the heat of a competition? Sometimes the competitor doesn’t even know what is going through their own competitive mind. Who is going to make such a judgmental and arbitrary call? Are we going to start issuing penalties for thought-crimes? George Orwell warned us of this.

If you couldn’t tell by now, I have been discussing and thinking about this issue for a very long time, and this a conundrum of the first degree. In other words, it’s a riddle that cannot be completely answered without creating unintended consequences on both sides of the equation.

The Solution!

I’ve only heard one solution that would be fair to shooters of all abilities, not require judgment calls by fellow competitors, or an unbelievable amount of record keeping. The solution is to the point and as simple as blinking lights. This solution stops all of the late shots or the “alleged gut shots” dead in their

tracks and is only three words long. The solution is simple, **“Hit Your Target!”** If you are the faster shooter in any bout, that’s really all that you have to do!

The faster shooter is only required to hit 3 out of 5 shots to win any bout, that’s just a meager 60% of the shots! If the faster shooter just does that one thing, no one can ever pull a late shot or the so-called “gut shot” on their opponent.

The History of the Duel

According to Wikipedia: “A **duel** is an arranged engagement in combat between two individuals, with matched weapons in accordance with agreed-upon rules. Duels in this form were chiefly practiced in Early Modern Europe, with precedents in the medieval code of chivalry. Pistol duels were employed many times in the Colonial United States until it fell out of favor in Eastern America in the 18th century. It was retained however in the American Old West for quite some time due to the absence of common law.”

There were very few actual pre-arranged duels fought in the American Old West. Most gunfights were spontaneous usually caused by a mixture of alcohol, pride and anger. The Dime Novelists of the day would follow certain law enforcement officers, gamblers and some criminals with reputations as gunfighters. They would spin tales of chivalry and honor that became profitable, since they were hugely followed in Eastern America and Europe.

The first actual feature motion picture was a “Western”, it was called “The Great Train Robbery”. It was an instant hit! Dime Novels provided ready-made stories that were hastily developed into screenplays and the Hollywood version of the Western Gunfighter was born, complete with all the chivalry of the classic duel of honor.

Cowboy Fast Draw is Modeled after a Duel

Cowboy Fast Draw is a fantasy sport, it is based on the reality of period equipment and the basic rules and chivalry of the classic duel. In a classic duel, if one of the parties hastily wasted their shot, it was a matter of honor to stand and take the return fire, not to cut and run. In fact, one of the duties of the Second was to execute their best friend, if need be, in order to preserve their honor. The faster shooter had their shot and why would they ever expect their opponent not to take theirs. However, it was not uncommon to see an actual historical duel end with the aggrieved party firing their shot into the air if they had felt that the question of honor had been satisfied, but they were always required to fire their shot, if not, they would dishonor their opponent by insinuating their opponent was not worthy.

Cowboy Fast Draw is a real competition that has adrenaline flowing at full speed. It takes a keen competitive mind to play our game and it is certainly about winning the honor and respect of your fellow competitors. I believe that this is the reason that there is such a strong feeling of brotherhood within our sport.

Cowboy Fast Draw Competitive Strategies

What makes Cowboy Fast Draw such a dynamic sport is the range of strategies that our competitors must choose from, for each match, against opponents of various skill levels.

When two shooters are on the line of similar speed ability...

It’s not only about hitting the target, but how fast you’re hitting it. It’s a true test of nerves and the ability to perform under pressure. These are the best matches, I love to watch or be involved in any close match no matter what speed level is. That’s why Bracket Matches such as the “Blast for Cash” at the Fastest Gun Alive are becoming more and more popular.

When two shooters are on the line of different speed abilities...

The faster shooter has a big advantage because every time they hit the target their light will be blinking. So all that they must do is hit 60% of their shots, this is not easy since our targets at 21’ are purposely challenging to hit on the draw. Faster shooters can never take any bout for granted, no matter who their opponent is.

The slower shooter’s strategy is to hold the faster shooter accountable to hit their target scoring at least a 60% hit ratio. It really is the only strategy that a slower shooter has, and more times than not the steady and accurate shooter will defeat an inaccurate shooter, no matter if they are faster or not. If the slower

shooter misses one or more shots, that allows the faster shooter to win with a 50% or lower hit ratio, which just gave the bout to the fast shooter based on luck.

Wyatt Earp had two noted quotes on this subject:

1. “Fast is fine, but accuracy is Final.”
2. “Take your time in a hurry.”

Wyatt Earp lived to be an old man for a number of reasons, including luck, but a major reason is that he was a very deliberate man. A noted term of the period actually used by Gunfighters to describe their counterparts and piers that they both feared and respected was, “He was a deliberate Man”. Being a “deliberate man” was a compliment of the highest order. So, it is no wonder why some of our fastest shooters, fear drawing the “deliberate shooters”, no matter what their speed range is.

Honor, Integrity, and Competition

Cowboy Fast Draw similar to the classic duel in that it is all about honor, integrity and competition. What is there to really win at a CFDA event? Prize Money, Fame, Prizes, or Top Gun Points. While all these things are nice to win, none of them will change your life. *If you're going to drive home in a Cadillac from a Cowboy Fast Draw Match, you better had arrived in one.* What there really is to win at a Cowboy Fast Draw competition is the honor and respect of your fellow competitors, and in turn you will make some of the best friends of your life, which will indeed change your life in a very positive way.

Winning is not everything in Cowboy Fast Draw, it's how you win that counts. And, everyone who shows up and plays our game is a winner, no matter where they place in an overall competition, as long as they do so in a sportsmanlike manner.

Is There Such a Thing as a “Gut Shot”?

If you are the type who purposely waits for an opponent to miss, and then draws your gun and carefully aims your shot, you're not going to be very popular in the sand box and you are very close to crossing a line of unsportsmanlike conduct. But, if you do this repeatedly in an unfriendly, sneering and taunting sort of manner, then you have clearly crossed that line. There is no honor here, and this is unsportsmanlike conduct, and is not in the spirit of our game. **This is an Intentional Gut Shot!** If you do this in a way that repeatedly offends your opponents in a manner that becomes obvious to the officials of a contest, then they are well within their authority to give you one warning for an **Unsportsmanlike Conduct Violation**, and then start applying **Loss of Shot, Loss of Round**, and even **Match DQ** penalties, accordingly.

But, I must warn our officials that **this does not apply just because there is a late shot**. It must be carried out intentionally, maliciously and repeatedly as stated above, only then can it be termed an **Intentional Gut Shot**

The Late Shot

If you are the type to whine, complain, or demean your fellow competitor for taking a Late Shot; no matter that it is at a strategically conservative speed, half-cock, bad draw, bad ammunition or just a brain fart. There is no honor here either and is also unsportsmanlike conduct and should be subject to an **Unsportsmanlike Conduct Violation**, with penalties also applied as stated above.

If this had happened in an actual classic Duel of Honor, this would be the same as a faster shooter firing hastily at their opponent, wasting that shot by missing, and then cowering for their life.

If you are a competitor that took a Late Shot at a strategically conservative speed, half-cock, bad draw, bad ammunition or just a brain fart, you owe no one an apology and you should not expect to be ridiculed or persecuted in any way. If you should win such a bout, your opponent shouldn't have to like it, but they should handle it with the poise, grace and honor of a sportsman. It is wrong for them to attempt to lay a guilt trip on anyone but themselves for failing to hit a meager 60% of their shots. You simply held them accountable for hitting the target and it is them who failed to perform.

In closing, as stated in our Gunslinger's Guidelines, CFDA is a non-political organization. This subject has evolved into a heated political issue within our organization. This decision has been reached after much discussion, research and deliberation by CFDA Management and our team of advisors; and is classified as a business decision. This is the Final Word on this topic, it ends here.