

Speed, Accuracy, Recovery, and Late Shots

By: Quick Cal, Executive Director

Speed vs Accuracy

Since the beginning of CFDA and decades before our organization existed, Fast Draw shooters have debated speed vs accuracy since the origin of the general sport of Fast Draw during the 1950's. Various regions of the nation established their own versions of the sport. Some based more on speed, some based more on accuracy. Cowboy Fast Draw was designed to emphasize equal weight on both speed and accuracy, keeping them balanced. Accuracy, in that shooters cannot win anything unless they can hit the target with an acceptable degree of consistency. Speed, in that you must also develop enough speed so that you are able to hit your targets fast enough to record enough winning hits if you wish to be competitive enough to place high or even win.

Cowboy Fast Draw is based upon the Romance and Legend of the American Old West. If we lose our ties with the spirit of the 1800's time period, then we lose the essence of the spirit of our game.

In actual Old West Gunfights, these affairs were usually carried out on the spur of the moment after heated disputes, usually involving alcohol. There were certainly gunfighters, normally gamblers, criminals, thieves, and lawmen, who practiced drawing their six-guns efficiently, the ones who usually survived concentrated on being smooth and deliberate. To be called a "deliberate man" was a term used to convey both respect and fear.

Wyatt Earp, who outlived almost all of the gunfighters of his era, and actually had a significant impact on Hollywood, is credited with making two very relevant quotes on this subject. The most famous, "Fast is Fine, Accuracy is Final." The other, "Take your time, in a hurry." Both of these quotes are two of the best examples of how speed and accuracy should be balanced.

The degree of difficulty of Cowboy Fast Draw targets and distances, provides for a continuous challenge in balancing speed and accuracy. Only a fool would ever proclaim that they are unbeatable in any given Cowboy Fast Draw event.

Recovery & Late Shots

Opinions of Cowboy Fast Draw shooters vary greatly on this topic. The most troublesome aspect for me as CFDA Director, is that I'm aware that this issue has caused several inter-personal conflicts and hard feelings between some of our members. I truly wish that this would end.

At the 2015 Marshal's Muster I proposed what I had hoped would be a solution to this issue. Which was a 1.500 time limit imposed at all CFDA Titled Championships in both Men's and Ladies Divisions, not Youth Division. I was very surprised when it was overwhelmingly opposed by the U.S. Marshals. Had it been supported and implemented, it would have at least put an end to those reeeeaalllly long and irritating late shots. Although, I doubt that it would have made everyone happy.

Two Extreme View Points:

On one extreme, some members believe that shooters should never even be allowed a second attempt to re-cock the hammer, if the shooter half-cocks on the first attempt.

On the other extreme, some believe that there should be absolutely no time limit to when a late shot can be fired.

Frankly, I don't agree with either of the above extremes:

In the spirit of competitive perseverance, I believe that even after a bad initial draw that everyone is entitled to take a recovery shot. I can quote endless examples where able competitors must be committed to a "never give up" attitude, in both sports and real life. Quitters never win.

Besides there can be many reasons for a late shot, half-cocking the hammer is just one of them. Gun jamb, defective host supplied ammo, or shotgun primers, contest area distractions (like the shooter two lanes over jumping the light), or just a plain and simple brain-freeze. Why do we need to have an inquisition after every late shot?

This also happens to be a competitive sport in which time is of the essence, especially since it is called Cowboy Fast Draw. If a shooter's opponent has missed, there should not be an unlimited amount of time to fire a shot.

Our rules clearly state, "Under no scenario will a shooter ever fire a shot without an opponent or a time to compete against." Therefore, to be able to take as long as a shooter wants to, "Ready-Aim-Fire", amounts to nothing more than an execution of one's opponent, without the courtesy of a blind-fold.

A very interesting fact is that even though the U.S. Marshals did not support the 1.500 time limit by an overwhelming margin, they also had over 90% support for a rule to be created by CFDA Management forbidding obvious hesitation in the firing of a shot. So, it is apparent that they acknowledge that this is a problem and would like something done about it.

After carefully deliberating upon the task of authoring the obvious hesitation rule that the U.S. Marshals overwhelmingly supported, I came to the conclusion that it was impossible to create such a rule that could be applied consistently for everyone, and that such a rule would place our Range Officers in a position requiring arbitrary judgment while attempting to enforce it, based upon their personal opinion of what constituted an obvious hesitation. In my opinion, such a rule would unleash greater problems and conflicts within our sport. We just can't have it both ways.

I still believe the 1.500 time limit is the only viable solution, that I have heard of. At least it would establish a standard for how long is too long to be considered a fast draw. It would also give newer shooters a goal to shoot for to determine when they are ready and competent to compete in a CFDA Titled Championship. Since I was given a mixed consensus by the U.S. Marshals, I do not consider this matter settled, especially since this controversy continues to arise. We, as a sport, need to agree to come together and find some common ground on this issue and find a basis for a compromise. Then we can at least agree to accept something as a solution and move past the wide difference of extreme opinions.

If any CFDA member has a solution that might work, then please contact me, as I would like to hear it. However, please keep in mind, we cannot settle for any rule that places our officials in a controversial position that requires us to make arbitrary and uneven calls.

Re-printed from 2015 U.S. Marshals Minutes Report:

Note: When I receive any further complaints regarding this subject, I will refer them to their U.S. Marshal, according to our guidelines U.S. Marshals have two responsibilities: To represent their clubs to the CFDA, and to represent CFDA to their clubs. If we (CFDA Management) continues to receive complaints, this issue will be re-opened and dealt with.

We have already received several, so please consider this issue re-opened.

QC