

World Cowboy Fast Draw Master Gunfighter Championship 2003

By: *Chucky* and Hickok Days



Chucky matched up against Brad Hemmah, President of the World Cowboy Fast Draw Association.

The everyday sounds of the street turned quiet. The blacksmith's hammer stopped; the thudding of boots and the tinkling of spurs on the boardwalk stilled. The gloomy clouds started moving in over Deadwood as two men faced off in the middle of the street with their gunbelts pushed down on their right side in order to enhance a fast draw. They touched the grips of their Colts to make sure they knew right where they were. Their lightening-fast hands seemed to make their six-shooters flash out of their holsters. The first shot sounded with a puff of smoke. The shooter stood aghast as he realized he had missed the target while his opponent, who was slower, yet more sure, touched off his round and put his mark in the middle of the steel plate, setting off the flashing light to denote his win.

This, the first major cowboy fast draw championship, was held in Deadwood, South Dakota, the weekend of June 14, 2003 during Deadwood's Hickok Days celebration. Cowboy fast draw is different than any other Western-action shooting sport. It combines elements of cowboy action shooting with fast draw and the Old West. (Editor's Note: The World Fast Draw Association (WFDA) is much different than the Cowboy Fast Draw Association (CFDA). CFDA maintains a traditional 1800s approach to fast draw, as well as maintaining a more period-correct look and feel.)

Started by Brad Hemmah in 2002, the CFDA did not really get up and moving until this year. Brad is a WFDA state champion in Wyoming, Kansas, and South Dakota and held the world record for the distance of 12 feet at a silhouette target for four years. He has won four WFDA regional Top Gun awards. He uses Colts and Ruger Vaqueros tuned by Bob James and Frank Dean respectively. He uses Jerry Croft gun leather that he designed with Jerry.

Brad not only wants the competitors to have fun, but also always starts off the event with a charity shoot. This year, they raised \$1,290 for Easter Seals on the day before the regular shoot started. This was followed by a gun-spinning contest that Joey Dillon, who is an absolutely amazing gun spinner, won easily.

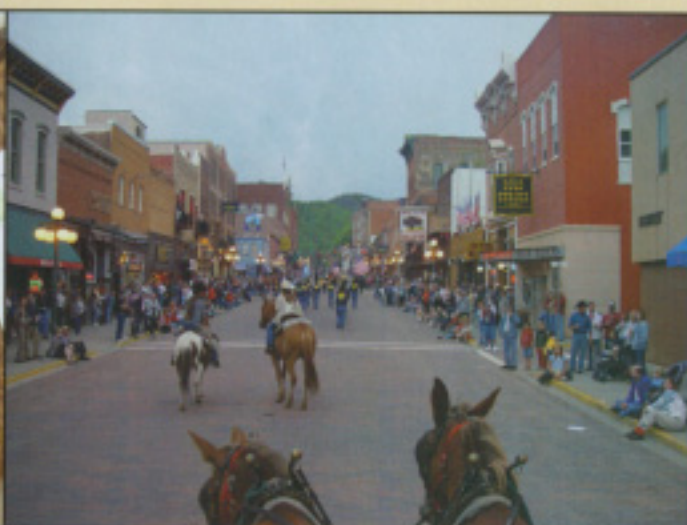
The most important aspect of this sport, as in any shooting sport, is safety. Brad's concept in developing Cowboy Fast Draw is safety first and fun second. He shoots sixguns with wax bullets the traditional way; the way cowboys probably did it from the hip in front of the body in the 1800s. All sixguns are required to be Colts, Colt replicas, or Ruger Vaqueros without any external modifications. This means none of the fast draw fanning hammers or specialty thumbing hammers are allowed. The gun leather used is traditional style. This means that drop-loop Hollywood rigs are not allowed, nor are holsters that have a deep cut in front



Four cowboy fast draw shooting stations. The two targets on the left have the light in the middle lit showing the shooters hit their targets.



A collection of competition holsters for cowboy fast draw made by Croft Saddlery.



The main street of Deadwood South Dakota during the Hickok Days parade.

of the hammer. The leather of the holster must cover the notches of the cylinder all the way around the gun. The maximum forward cant is 20 degrees and the top of the holster must be no further than 3" from the top of the belt, which can be a maximum of a 2-1/2" wide. Though fanning is allowed, you cannot start with your fanning hand in front of your body. When preparing for the draw, your hand can be on the gun, but your trigger finger must be held straight out alongside the gun out of the trigger guard. Note: the harder you hold the gun the slower you are going to draw. This means that the competitor who thumbed the hammer was probably faster than the one who fanned. The cartridges used are .45 Colt with a wax bullet on top of 4 grains of Hodgdon's black powder substitute Triple 7 (other black powder loads could be used, such as 5 grains of 4F) in Starline .45 blank brass that has a larger flash hole than regular brass used in live ammunition.

This event was at 21 feet, shooting at a 24-inch diameter metal target and was a 4 X (four loss) elimination competition. During this competition, each person shoots a maximum of five

draws against their competitor. The individual who wins three out of the five draws is the winner, while the loser receives an X. This was the first ever elimination competition event at the long distance of 21 feet, the set distance for the Master Gunfighter competition. Other cowboy fast draw competitions are held at 18 feet (the Gunfighter) and 15 feet (the Gunslinger).

I was lucky enough to make it through the six rounds that took place the first day although I ended up with three X's. I beat some of the top shooters in fast draw by shooting in the .9 to 1.2 second range and hitting the target more frequently than the others. Accuracy is the key to this game, then speed. For your time to count, you must hit the target. By the middle of the match it became apparent that if I was to consistently hit the target, I would have to change the way I was shooting from thumbing the hammer to a modified SASS traditional shooting stance. In fact, it became apparent very quickly after my first couple of rounds that if most of the competitors who were hitting .5 through .7 seconds, with some hits going into the low .4's, could hit



Ron Martinez, Montana state WFD champion, going up against Michael Lloyd of Deadwood.



Ted Simpson, of Wisconsin, facing off his opponent. Ted has been instrumental in promoting cowboy fast draw.



Dr. Karen Tjaden of Lead, SD, going up against Darci Seymanski of Rapid City, SD.



Tom Blasgin, a 41 year veteran of WFD, going up against Frank Dean a 30 year WFD veteran.



Duffy Croft, of Croft Saddlery, in her first ever shooting competition up against Lynn Corbin of Ogden, Utah.

their targets consistently, they would put me out of the running. The recorded time includes reaction time from when you see the light come on in the middle of the target. Thumbing the revolver, drawing fast, and hitting the target was tough. In order to stay competitive, I had to hit each shot. I had to improve my accuracy, so I moved my left hand over and thumbed the hammer back, pulling the trigger at the same time as I grabbed my right hand to take a two-hand hold while still point shooting with the gun held out at waist height. This strategy worked well for me, and I will more than likely use it the next time I practice or compete in fast draw. My best time using this style was .72 seconds.

This is a great sport and I recommend that all of you try to participate. You can sign up for membership on the SHOOT! MAGAZINE Mercantile at www.ShootMagazine.com, or call Brad directly at 1-800-274-1876.

A variety of infamous outlaws and lawman known throughout the West as fast draw experts and the dreaded "bad men" participated, as well as some first-time fast draw contestants.

Bob Graham has been shooting in the World Fast Draw Association (WFDA) since 1959 and

he won the '65, '66, '76, and '83 WFDA World Championships. He shoots a Ruger Vaquero in WFDA and an AWA Peacekeeper in cowboy fast draw. He uses a Bob Mernickle rig for WFDA and a homemade holster for cowboy fast draw. Bob Graham has been working with a Canadian timer company, R You Ready, in order to produce a practice timer for fast draw that has a light with it.

Greg Danielson from Sturgis, South Dakota, a five-time world WFDA champion, was ready to compete in his first shooting cowboy fast draw Master Gunfighter world championship. Not only was he ready, he won it!

Mike Lloyd, who has participated in World Fast Draw since 1996 and has won the Wyoming state championship in B class, was also there shooting a Uberti from Mitchell Arms Inc. with a holster rig made by Bill Corbin.

Jerry Croft, who just started cowboy fast draw a few weeks ago and has never done any formal shooting competition, was also ready to draw against the best. Croft is a guy to watch out for according to those familiar with him. He is one of the most natural and outstanding shots around, able to hit a dime at 100-yards with an old .22 Remington pump with the first shot. Jerry



Bob Graham, four time WFD champion, going up against Gary Adrian, the 1999 and 2001 B-Class WFD champion.



Ron Martinez's Clint Eastwood-style sixgun with snake skin grips lying on top of a pair of Duffy Croft's custom built chaps.



Brad Hemmah, President of the World Cowboy Fast Draw Association and world record WFDA holder for four years for silhouette at 12 feet.



Richard Whitcomb (thirteenth place) of San Diego, CA, up against Tom Blanchard (second place) of Layton, UT.



The middle shooter is Greg Danielson (first place) of Sturgis, SD, against Tom Blanchard (second place) for the final shootout.

uses a Ruger Vaquero from which he removed some of the coils on the hammer spring. He uses his own Jerry Croft gun rig that Brad Hemmah designed and Jerry built to Brad's specs. Jerry owns Croft Saddlery and makes leather goods for one of the most popular movie stars, Tom Selleck. His saddles were used by Selleck in *Monte Walsh*, and he just finished building a limited-edition Tom Selleck saddle series designed by Selleck. His saddles have appeared in *Quigley Down Under*, *Last Stand At Saber River*, *Ruby Jean and Joe*, *Crossfire Trail*, and *Monte Walsh*. Duffy, Jerry's wife, makes Selleck's chaps, and she was there to compete in the ladies' division.

Jim Boensch shot in WFD for a couple of years with Brad. This was his first cowboy fast draw competition. He used a stainless Ruger Vaquero, a totally stock gun with imitation Ruger ivory grips and Jerry Croft gunleather, which is the first and only black rig Jerry has built.

Tom Blanchard never shot in any shooting competition until this match. He used a Ruger Vaquero with an action job done by himself and a Bill Corbin gun rig.

Gary Adrian has shot in the WFD for eight years and was the 1999 Men's B class world champion, 2001 Men's B class champion at Dead-

wood, and 2002 area 9 and 13 Top Gun. He used a Colt replica by Mitchell Arms, had his gun work done by Tom Blasgen, and used a standard Hunter right-off-the-rack gun rig.

Clint Felten came from Monticello, Minnesota, to shoot in his first-ever shooting competition. He shot a Ruger Vaquero in which he replaced the hammer spring with a Wolff spring kit, everything else being stock, and used a Triple K gun rig purchased at Cabela's.

This was also Gary Tholkes first time in any shooting competition and he used a stock Vaquero and a Cabela's gun rig.

Richard Whitcomb, a San Diego resident, only shoots cowboy fast draw. He was very happy with his stock American Western Arms sixgun and did quite well with it.

Mark Latza, aka Diego Kid, has been shooting SASS for a few years, but this was his first fast draw competition. He shot a SASS Colt that he custom-tuned by putting in a spring kit and smoothing the action, and used an El Paso Saddlery gun rig. Mark is also the stock maker for Dakota Arms.

Don Valle has been shooting WFDA for about ten years. He and his wife Candy are also mounted shooters. Don is a SASS member who shoots in SASS ground matches. They are outstanding Old West



Plaques were given out for the first 15 places in the men's division and included a non-firing Colt 1860 replica.



Bill Corbin, the oldest participant at 76 years-old, competing against Mark Garrett who had the fastest contest overall time of .42 seconds.



Jerry Croft (fourth place) of Croft Saddlery, in his first WCFD event against Frank Dean (seventh place).

historians and related some of the history of Deadwood and the surrounding area to me. Don used an EMF Uberti 4-3/4" barrel, with a Mexican double-loop holster made by Richard Bickel.

Frank Dean has been shooting world fast draw for 30 years and placed 2nd in his class at Deadwood in 2001, missing 1st place by .003 of a second. This was his first time shooting cowboy fast draw, though he has been of enormous benefit in helping Brad set up the Cowboy Fast Draw Association. Frank shoots a Ruger Vaquero that he tuned himself since he is also a professional gunsmith and does outstanding work. He used a Jerry Croft gun rig.

It was Mike Sander's first year in WFD and his first cowboy fast draw match. He shot a stock Ruger Vaquero and used a Jerry Croft rig, belt, and holster.

Shannon Croft competed in her first-ever shooting competition in the ladies' category during this event and hit her first target. She used a Ruger Vaquero with an action job done by her husband, Shane, through his gunsmithing business. She naturally wore a Jerry Croft gun rig.

Karen Tjaden, a local doctor, used Jerry Croft's leather and Jerry's personal gun. This was also her first shooting competition.

Darcy Szymanski has been a SASS ground shooter for two years. She competed in her first CFDA competition using a Ruger Vaquero stock gun without any work done to it and a Triple K gunrig.

Lynn Corbin, aka Cowpatty, has been shooting WFD for 20 years. This was her first cowboy fast draw competition. She used a Dakota sixgun and a gun rig by Bill "Billy Joe" Corbin.

Duffy Croft, using a Ruger Vaquero which is Jerry's personal sixgun and a Jerry Croft gun rig, has never competed in any shooting event before and just shot her first pistol last summer.

Tom Blasgen, a 41-year veteran of WFD, Ohio and Illinois state championship, and winner of the Old Frontier Thumbers Conference (OFTC), shoots a Colt and uses his own gun leather.

Charley Boyle, in his first-ever shooting competition, shot a Ruger Vaquero with an action job by Frank Dean of Cranky Frank's Gunsmithing and a Jerry Croft gun rig.

Mark Garret, a professional world champion bronc rider, tried his hand at competitive shooting using Shane's Ruger Vaquero and a Jerry Croft rig.

Dan Dobkin, competing for the first time in a shooting competition, shot a Dakota and used a David Entzel gun rig.


Bill Corbin, aka Warbuck, started shooting in 1959 and was there at the beginning of world fast draw. He was Top Gun in Oregon and placed 11th at the World Championships. He shoots either a 1st or 2nd Generation Colt tuned by himself. He makes the gun rigs for both his wife and himself and still manages to find time to make gun rigs for his customers. He and his wife also compete in archery, and he makes his own bows and arrows.

Shane Croft, Jerry's son, competed in his first shooting competition. With Jerry as his mentor, he has been shooting the .30-30 willed to him by his grandfather. He shot a Ruger Vaquero that he did the gunsmithing on himself. He has just started his own gun shop and gunsmithing business, Crazy Custom Productions, and naturally uses a Jerry Croft gun rig.

Ted Simpson, a World Fast Draw competitor for the last three years, used a 3rd Generation Colt with an action job by Bob James and a gun rig made by his brother. He took 3rd place at a cowboy-style fast draw contest at the Wild West Arts Conference and is a writer for SHOOT! MAGAZINE.

Ron Martinez has been shooting WFD since 1995. He won the "A" class in Montana State in 2002 and placed 3rd in the 2003 World Thumbing Championship in Arizona. Ron uses a Colt 3rd Generation with a gun rig by Victor Perez and has silver rattlesnake grips on his sixgun similar to the one Clint Eastwood used. He is the owner of Spaghetti Western Replicas, featuring costumes of Clint Eastwood's characters. He carries the vests, ponchos, spurs, hat, hatbands, scarf,

and the silver rattlesnake designed for easy mounting that you can put on grips.

Brad Hemmah, President of the CFDA, also competed while managing and emceeing the event, which is a really tough task. 

Contact Info:
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Cowboy Fast Draw's Master Gunfighter Championship 2003

Men's Division

1st place	Greg Danielson - Sturgis, SD
2nd place	Tom Blanchard - Layton, UT
3rd place	Shane Croft - Deadwood, SD
4th place	J. J. Croft - Deadwood, SD
5th place	Ron Martinez - Malta, MT
6th place	Gary Adrian - Marysville, KS
7th place	Frank Dean, "Cranky Frank" - Sunset, UT
8th place	Bob Graham, TX
9th place	Bill Corbin, "Warbuck" - Ogden, UT (oldest shooter at 76 years old)
10th place	Mark Garret - Belle Fourche, SD (fastest shot of the contest with .42 sec.)
11th place	Brad Hemmah - Deadwood, SD
12th place	Mark Latza, "Diego Kid" - Sturgis, SD
13th place	Richard Whitcomb, "Slippery Richard" - San Diego, CA
14th place	Andy Fink, "Chucky" - Boise, ID
15th place	Michael Lloyd - Deadwood, SD

Women's Division

1st place	Lynn Corbin, "Cowpatty" - Ogden, UT
2nd place	Darcy Seymanski - Rapid City, SD
3rd place	Shannon Croft - Deadwood, SD
4th place	Dr. Karen Tjaden - Lead, SD
5th place	Duffy Croft - Deadwood, SD

There were 32 shooters from the states of SD, MT, WY, UT, ID, CA, TX, KS, WI, MN, and IL.





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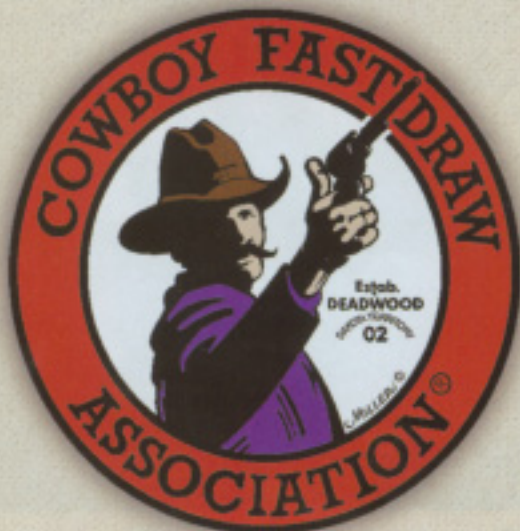
April 30th & MAY 1st - CFDA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
Held in Boise, ID - \$10,000 + Cash and Prizes
Sponsored by Shoot! Magazine

JUNE 19th & 20th - CFDA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
Held in Deadwood, SD - \$10,000 + Cash and Prizes
Sponsored by City of Deadwood & Shoot! Magazine

JULY 16th & 17th - CFDA MISSOURI STATE CHAMPIONSHIP
Held in Fayette, MO - \$5,000 + Cash and Prizes
Sponsored by Circle Bar T & Shoot! Magazine

AUG 21st & 22nd - CFDA SOUTH DAKOTA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP
Held in Mitchell, SD - \$5,000 + Cash and Prizes

For contact information and more details about the above listed shoots as well as shoots taking place in your area check out www.CowboyFastDraw.com.



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