

INTERPRETING RULES AND THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME

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As the Director of CFDA it falls to me to make rule interpretations from time to time. Please allow me this opportunity to explain how I and my advisors look at the rules and how they pertain to the game that we play. There are four basic tests that a rule must withstand to exist in the CFDA.

Test #1 - Safety

Safety is of course, first, last and always. So we must first always look at every rule from a standpoint of Safety. The chances are remote of anyone ever being injured from a shooting accident if we all follow the safety rules. Even though we have NRA Liability Insurance in place to cover the slight chance, but we must always be vigilant when it comes to safe gun handling practices. A major benefit of our sport is that we educate all of our members and their families in the safe and proper use of firearms, and this knowledge goes well beyond participation in organized shooting sports.

We must endeavor to find a balance between keeping our sport safe and having fun, and of course Safety is Always First, but there is no reason that this virtue should ever be in conflict with having fun. We must accept our roles as good stewards of firearm safety, because we all compete in the public spectrum and are advocates and representatives of not only firearm safety, but the Cowboy Way.

Test #2 - Necessity

The second test of any rule, is the necessity of the rule itself. We could have a rulebook that is a foot thick, I've seen them and had to deal with them in other shooting sports. Yes, we do need a set of solid rules that govern, define and provide parameters for our sport. But if we don't need a rule, let's not have one to enforce. The targets and distances we shoot at in Cowboy Fast Draw tend to self-regulate many things. The only real fact is that you have to hit your target faster than your opponent 3 times to win a round. As long as you are using legal equipment and standing behind the firing line and following the few very simple basic rules that we have, you will win the shot, no questions asked. We try to keep our rules free of arbitrary judgment calls for officials to make.

There is a reason behind every safety, organizational or competition rule that we have, if a rule doesn't have a reason to exist, it simply should not exist; and common sense should prevail. We are committed to keeping our rules simple, to the point and effective. That is a big reason why Cowboy Fast Draw is so fun.

Test #3 – Spirit and Integrity of the Game

The third test of rule interpretation is the Spirit of the Game. Our guns, holsters, clothing, as well as some of our competition and conduct rules are based upon the romance and legends of the old west. "John Wayne could do no wrong", "The Cowboy Way" and "The Code of the West", are phrases that come to mind. Fair Play, handshakes, camaraderie and your word is your bond is the competitive spirit we strive for.

Our equipment is based on period correct guns and general holster designs that were common place in the American Old West. Of course, we will always have many wonderful oxymoron; fancy computerized timing equipment, air conditioned automobiles or comfortable motels didn't exist in the real Old West. They had Boot Hill instead of X's and stables to spend the night in, if they were lucky. But we strive not to cross the line too far and ruin the atmosphere that we all enjoy and the Spirit and Integrity of the Game we pursue and play.

Test #4 – Enforceability

The fourth test of a rule is how difficult a rule may be to enforce by contest officials. In the 60+ year history of the general sport of Fast Draw we've seen rules that were almost impossible to judge with the naked eye or without some sort of a gauge on the line. We've also seen rules that require constant judgment and interpretation by contest officials. These types of rules can become very subjective, arbitrary and often cause controversy, arguments and folks just plain leaving the contest upset or feeling that they were somehow cheated. When this happens, it is a fundamental failure of the sport itself and should be avoided whenever possible.

Conclusion

This is how I have come to look at our rules after 48 years of competitive shooting; and organizational and administrative experience and leaving my mark in four different major shooting sports. Well-meaning folks often suggest a rule or two that they think we need for one reason or another. Being approachable and listening to different viewpoints is important, because not only do I like people (especially shooters), but one can never know where the next great idea might come from. I may not see it your way, you may not see it mine, but at least you now know what my thought process is and where it comes from when called upon to create, enforce and define the rules. All sides of any rule should be considered along with the intent of the rule itself.

We can not write a rule to cover every situation, nor should we attempt it. Just apply common sense and apply the four tests above and you just may come to the same conclusions that are within the rules I have written. And, I do my best to write them in plain English, and not beat around the bush.

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and Hit'em Fast,

