

COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™

Match Director's Guide



Match Administration

Compiled and Edited

by

The Wild Bunch and Friends

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INTRODUCTION

Organizing a match is a monumental undertaking. No successful major match has been completely organized and administered by a single individual (although a few have come close). One of the early chores is to determine all the jobs that must be accomplished, decide who is responsible for each of the jobs, and invite the key people to become part of the team. Plans, assignments, schedules, and frequent reports are critical. It is vital to give the key people the necessary authority and hold them accountable.

The purpose of this course is to assist Match Directors in their preparation and organization processes. SASS' intent is to encourage an increased level of consistency in match administration by establishing guidelines and standards for all to use.

MATCH PURPOSE

Why do we have matches? The answer to this question is paramount in the scope of this course. The most important thing for Match Directors and designers to keep in mind is we are ultimately in the *entertainment* business. The result of your labors must result in a safe, fun, promotional atmosphere for all participants. Participants come in all forms—shooters, families, vendors, spectators, celebrities, media, and many others. All major matches are encouraged to positively promote shooting related activities by assisting charitable organizations during the event. The ultimate goal is to please as many folks as possible while promoting an activity considered inherently dangerous by many outsiders that do not understand what it's all about. While all participants cannot be totally pleased, the ninety-percent rule is a good rule of thumb. In the end, the participants will form a lasting opinion of the match that will have a huge effect on the continued success of the event.

ADMINISTRATION

Budgeting

How do you determine what to charge? Estimated income should be based primarily on shooter's fees, however, vendor fees, sponsor money, public gate fees, camping fees, and conventioner fees are also potential sources of income. Consider the following:

- How many shooters can be accommodated safely?
- How many vendors can be accommodated safely?
- Can the public safely be accommodated, and will there be a gate fee?
- Will there be a fee to use the range facilities and grounds?
- Will additional insurance be necessary?
- How many people will be needed to run the event?
- Will these people be volunteers or will there be a charge for their services?
- Will there be a need for tents, tables, chairs, and toilets?
- Are there any plans to provide meals on site?
- Are any new props or targets needed? (Remember to have extras.)
- Will there be a need and charges for security on site?
- Will all shooters receive a free prize? If so, will there be a need to buy any prizes?
- What type of and how many awards will be needed?
- Will there be any fees for entertainment?
- How much advertising will be done?
- Will any special equipment need to be rented, such as sound systems, transportation vehicles, and radios?
- Will there be a banquet evening? If so, what fees for the meals and entertainment are appropriate?
- Will there be any lodging or travel costs?
- Will there be any promotional/souvenir items?

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- Can food and concessions be available on site?
- Mailing/postage and registration costs?

This is just a reference list of items that will affect the total event cost. Each of these questions represents a potential cost. Other items specific to each match will result in additional possible costs. By using this kind of questionnaire, the total event cost can be calculated for use in determining the match fee structure. Unless you have concrete contractual agreements with vendors and sponsors, the shooter fees alone should cover the entire cost of the event. These are the participants of the match and are the ones that will always be in attendance.

Match Business

Your annual match is a business. You will be required to open a checking account to process income derived from shooters, vendors, and sponsors. You will certainly be writing a number of checks. The IRS will also want to know about your successful venture and as any successful business can attest, you will likely need to file tax returns.

Some matches have become corporations and dbas. Do your homework and establish your match like a business. Check with your city's business department to learn how to do business in your city.

Advertising & Public Relations

Your advertising materials will be what the participants see the most. Always promote the activities of the match, shooting related or not, in a positive manner. Be creative in advertising the event by possibly involving a movie or historical theme in the title. This is a fantasy sport, and folks participate to fulfill a part of that fantasy. Be sure to promote any entertainers that will be part of the event. Most of them will provide biographical information as well as advertising materials.

Advertise early. It's easier to make plans if the registration process begins well in ad-

vance of the match. Participants from a previous event will usually appreciate an application ahead of any general advertising to the public. An advance mailing to these folks is a good idea.

Advertise within the area from which most participants will come. This audience may be local, within the state, within the region, nationally, or world wide, depending upon the size of the event. Be careful to choose publications that will reach the desired audience. ALL SASS members receive *The Cowboy Chronicle* on a monthly basis. Use this publication to the advantage of the event. Don't forget about any local or regional newsletters that may be available as well.

Be sure to list all the important information, such as dates, times, locations, fees, and contact information in the advertising materials. These are important items sometimes overlooked and create considerable additional work for everyone involved when missing.

Prominently display any match sponsor names and logos in your advertising materials. These folks should get the most "bang" for their bucks. It is a good idea to send each sponsor a copy of the advertising materials so they can see the event organizer's efforts.

Use alternative advertising methods such as the Internet to showcase the event. Be sure to list the World Wide Web address (URL) as well as any appropriate e-mail addresses on all advertising materials. Contact other clubs, organizations, vendors, and sponsors regarding establishing links from other web sites to the event web site.

Don't forget the public. Whether or not fees are to be charged to visitors, major matches are a great place to showcase our sport and recruit new members. If your event can draw spectators from outside the local area, that often means additional revenue for local businesses, and shooting sports can use all the community support it can muster. By the way, security requirements are in-

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creased dramatically when the public is on site.

Public Relations: The art of writing a press release and sending it to the right people is not brain surgery. In fact, in the world of COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™, there is a vast media pool that lends itself to our interests. For instance, since COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™ is as much a lifestyle pastime as it is a shooting sport, lifestyle editors and community interest media are as appropriate as a sports editor. A stack of clippings in your sponsorship proposal goes a long way. Devise a media list. Call your local and regional newspapers, TV, and radio outlets and find out who the appropriate editors and contacts are. Send them a press release and include an interesting photo if you have one. Most importantly, call and follow up. Many times a phone call is all it takes to prod an editor to assign a story.

Club or Facility Rules and Policies

Publicize any differences that might exist between local club rules and SASS rules. These can easily be included in any confirmation information sent back to the participants so they are aware well in advance of the event. For instance, if the shooting facility hosting the event has a shot size maximum rule for shotguns of 7-1/2 shot, be sure to advertise that fact. In this case, it would probably be a good idea to have ammunition meeting these requirements for sale at the match. Other differences, like rounds over any berm rules, should also be specified. In spite of minor differences such as those listed above, each event must endeavor to use ALL SASS rules as published in the current Shooter's Handbook to promote uniformity. Any deviation from the rules can create questions, problems, and ill will from the participants. Each match can and should have something unique without moving outside the rules.

Be specific about all penalties that can be assessed to the shooters. If SASS recom-

mended penalties as listed in the Shooter's Handbook will be enforced, no statement is required. However, if some other penalty process will be used, such as 10 seconds for a miss, or total time instead of rank points, then say so. "No surprises" is a good rule. Cowboys can be flexible if they simply have a little time to consider the local ground rules. If they know in advance and can't be happy, they can exercise their right not to attend.

Shooter Applications

Give plenty of thought as to exactly how many shooters can be safely accommodated. Don't try to take on more than the organizing committee can handle. Think about range facility space and time limitations. Be thoughtful of the time necessary for folks to attend all of the events planned. Many folks may travel great distances to attend, so be aware time away from jobs, lodging, and meal fees factor into the participant's decision making process to attend.

It is a good policy to send out registrations to participants from previous events prior to the printing in *The Cowboy Chronicle*, which goes to ALL SASS members. This will entice and reward those folks as well as giving them a little extra time to register for events that often fill up quickly. Also, advertise the event in publications that will cover the geographic area of the event.

Try to include everything necessary on the application. All of the data elements listed in the following Registration Process description should be on the application. List each shooting category that will be offered, as well as any special requirements for any of the categories. An example of this is the requirement for a minimum number of participants before awards are given in a category.

A contact name, address, phone number, and/or e-mail address should also appear on the application. Remember, the more information that can be collected from the registration form the better.

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The ultimate goal is for everyone to have a fun, entertaining, safe event that will encourage repeat registrations in the future.

Registration Process

Computers have become an important tool in match administration. Set up a database using any of the many simple programs available today. There is no need to be elaborate, but there is a need to include several pieces of information that will or can be used before the event is over. Incidentally, the SASS Scoring Program also doubles as a Match Administration Program, offering many helpful administrative aids including the ability to e-mail confirmations and posse assignments well before the match.

Here is an example of data elements needed:

- Name
- Address
- City
- State
- Postal Code
- Phone Number
- Shooting Category (including Mounted)
- Alias
- SASS Number
- Home Club Affiliation
- "Posse with" Information
- Fees Paid
- Method of Payment
- Payment Reference Number
- Registration Date
- Number of Dinners Purchased
- Side Matches Purchased
- Camping Fee
- Special Assistance Needed?
- Confirmation Processed Date
- Deposit Date
- Late Fee

Capturing this information, along with any other that might be pertinent to the event, will assist in processing confirmations, printing any necessary labels (such as shooter's packets), preparing posse assignments, and planning for meals.

Once at the match, all participants should be required to pick up their packets prior to the official start of the event. The shooter packets should contain materials such as an event program, some type of identification as a competitor (such as a badge or pin), any special rules or regulations, additional contest material (such as ballots for voting, if applicable), and meal tickets. All participants should be encouraged to read their event program and plan their days wisely based upon the information contained in it. The shooter packets should be arranged in an order that will facilitate finding them, such as SASS number or alias. (Last names can, of course, be used as well, but in SASS, we like to leave our "real" names at home.)

Each participant should be required to sign a legal waiver form prior to receiving his or her packet. Match officials should retain these waiver forms in case of an accident.

It is recommended a cutoff date prior to your match be established, after which shooters may not change their category. However, the match director may have a shooter change categories if there is insufficient participation in a category.

Shooter Confirmations

IMPORTANT: Each registrant should receive a confirmation back in a timely manner. Establish a process for preparing the confirmations. It is recommended they be returned immediately after processing the application, but certainly batch them for periods no longer than weekly. The confirmation should list all the information the participant will need until they pick up their shooter's packet in the registration area. Don't leave any potential participant questions unanswered.

Here are some examples of information that should be in the confirmation package:

Lodging Information

Names, phone numbers, rates, and any special confirmation references or contact persons for each hotel, motel, or camping area.

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Location of the Range

Make it easy for those competitors who are traveling great distances and have never been to your range to actually find the range! Driving instructions, GPS coordinates, or even a map are all helpful.

Appropriate Gate Passes

Any passes necessary to get the participant to where they need to park when they arrive. Think about printing different colored passes for different groups of participants in order to facilitate parking and traffic flow. Remember to take into consideration handicapped folks, members of the press, and any VIP's that may need special passes.

Match Ammo Requirements

Most shooters want to have an idea of how many rounds to bring to the match. Be sure to separate main match ammo requirements from side matches. Remind the shooters the information count is only an estimate, and they should be prepared. If any ammunition will be available for purchase, this is a good place to mention it.

Tentative Schedule of Events

Give the participants a tentative idea of what to expect. Be sure to stress the information is only tentative. This schedule should emphasize any mandatory meetings or briefings the participants must attend. If instructional classes or Territorial Governor meetings are planned, list these as well.

Local Rules and Policies

Spell out any special, non-SASS standard rules, conventions, or practices to be used in the match.

A complete confirmation package will lessen the number of phone calls from the participants and will ensure they get started in a positive manner.

Vendor/Sponsor Coordination

Cowboy Action Shooters like to shop almost as much as they like to shoot!

Vendors and sponsors help pull shooters to a match and are a huge asset. Vendors provide something for competitors to do during down times, and a busy competitor is a happy competitor.

Place vendors and sponsors in an area normally traveled by shooters and is easily accessible to all participants. The area should have good drainage and be somewhat level. Take care of your vendors and sponsors, and they will take care of you.

When setting fees for vendors and sponsors, decide how many your match can support. You may want to include multiple levels of sponsorship. Base your fee structure around the fact you will most likely get more in the way of product than money from vendors and sponsors. This will help feed your prize pool. Make sure all sponsors are advertised in all your flyers, applications, and web pages.

Parking

For large matches, parking control is a must. There are many different kinds of participants, and all potentially have different parking needs. The match must accommodate the day shooters, campers, vendors and sponsors, VIPs and media, event staff, and the public. Designated areas and polite enforcement are required. Make sure the participants can get to where they need to be upon initial entry to the venue (see Confirmation Package).

Entertainment Arrangements

Entertainment can turn a shooting match into an event. Entertainment can be as simple as a mobile jukebox for the banquet to scheduled live entertainment throughout the day. Live entertainment cost can run the spectrum, but need not be expensive. Some up and coming singers may only cost you dinner and a hotel room. But, for some up and coming acts, you may need to pro-

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vide a sound system. If any entertainment is planned for a banquet, try to find a sponsor to help defray the costs. Make sure the cost of the entertainment is figured into the cost of the ticket when setting fees for the event.

Prize Processing

While it is not a requirement for anyone to receive prizes, it has become a tradition in SASS COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™ annual matches to give door prizes to all who participate. The following outline provides you with a recommended tracking system for collecting and distributing prizes.

The recommendations are simple: prizes are awarded by some form of random drawing. Competitors are rewarded for participating, not how well they shoot. It is recommended the winners be given no more than a plaque or trophy – this is the best way to ensure COWBOY ACTION SHOOTING™ remains a fun, amateur sport for the whole family.

It is very important sponsors understand their prizes have been given to the competitors, and it's very nice when it is clear the competitors appreciate their prizes. It is also strongly advised to not use any structured part of your program, such as the Saturday night party, to distribute the prizes. As much as they are appreciated, these distribution ceremonies have proven to be deadly boring for your participants

Special prizes, of course, can be held and presented in public, especially if the sponsor/donor is present.

One successful technique for accomplishing efficient prize distribution that has been used successfully by several of the larger matches is described below.

Once a donation has been received from a sponsor, it is cataloged and given a sequential number. A spreadsheet is a convenient tool for recording every receipt. Each individual line should include the following: Prize #, Sponsor, Prize Description, Spon-

sor Contact Name, Sponsor Company, Sponsor Address, Phone, and Fax. This ensures an easy process for labeling the “Thank You” cards to be returned to every donating sponsor.

Once all donations have been received, print two sets of labels from the spreadsheet. One label includes the Sponsor name, Prize Description, and Prize Number. The other label includes the Sponsor Contact Name, Company, and Address. Purchase pre-paid postage postcards from the post office. Place the address label on the postage side of the card and the prize description on the other side, leaving room for a personal note and “thank you.”

These cards now become your prize drawing cards. They should all be placed in a non-see-through container from which the shooters will draw.

We suggest you set aside a four-hour period on Saturday, such as 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., for all shooters to draw and pick up their prize. All shooters must present their score cards, which you will hole-punch before they can draw. This system will prevent any mis-interpretation of the rules.

The shooter will exchange the card for the prize, and within five business days, all post cards should be deposited in a post box for delivery by your trusted postal service, completing the cycle back to the sponsors.

Handicap Policies

When designing stages and preparing for vendor and spectator arrangements, bear in mind many participants potentially have a wide variety of handicaps. These participants need and expect to be accommodated as much as possible. They should be made to feel welcome by accommodating their special needs in as many of the areas as feasible. There may be a need for extra room for special equipment, such as motorized carts or wheelchairs. Handicap accessible parking and restroom facilities are a must. If the match cannot accommodate handicap

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facilities, then, by all means, publicize that in the shooter registration and/or confirmation package. It is perfectly acceptable to ask for valid handicap permits as are required by most states in order to qualify for handicap status. In most instances, any situations that might need special attention will be fairly obvious. Be cautious and courteous toward the feelings and dignities of anyone involved. Everyone wants to have a fun, safe time at the match.

Shooting Schedules

There are several different ways to establish a shooting schedule. Once the basic requirements are understood, the creative process can begin. Handling large numbers of shooters for multiple days is no trivial task. Poor scenarios, faulty props, inadequate match officials, inexperienced (or cantankerous) posses, widely separated shooting bays, and so forth can all destroy a shooting schedule, causing many unhappy competitors to still be shooting when the sun goes down. This is not a pleasant situation for any Match Director. A little thoughtful planning can go a long way toward preventing these kinds of disasters.

Basic Requirements

- 1) Number of shooters expected
- 2) Number of stages to be shot
- 3) Number of main match shooting days
- 4) Number of hours you wish to shoot each day (and are all days the same?)
- 5) Layout of the range
- 6) How many desired “shooting breaks”

Once the above are established, it's a matter of fitting the shooters into a schedule based upon the number of seconds allowed for each shooter on each stage.

Hypothetical match parameters

- 1) 240 shooters
- 2) 12 stages
- 3) Two days
- 4) Maximum six hours of shooting ... 9AM-3PM

This scenario equates to 20 shooters per posse. If you expect each shooter to shoot six stages per day you have 360 minutes (6 hrs. x 60 min.) each day to get all of the shooters through half of the stages. Each posse therefore has one hour to complete each of their scheduled six stages. In order to accommodate a break in the shooting day (e.g., lunch), only 50 minutes per stage will be available (See Appendix). Using 50 minutes per stage as the baseline available time, approximately 10 minutes per stage should be sufficient to accommodate travel time, assembly, and briefing of all shooters as to stage requirements. Each shooter will therefore have two minutes beep to beep to complete the course of fire. This two minutes includes time for staging of guns, resetting props, and actual shooting procedures.

Posse sizes are determined by dividing the number of shooters by the number of stages, or shooting time slots, (if there are times figured for posses on and off the range.) Based on our hypothetical match, 240 shooters divided into 12 stages will leave posses of 20 shooters. These posses can be subdivided if necessary, for team events or to have one posse run the stage while the other shoots.

If there is a LONG WALK from Stage 12 back to Stage 1, one might consider organizing 13 posses and allowing a break after shooting Stage 12. Similar strategies should be invoked to accommodate other range geometries – such as two widely dispersed sets of six stages each, or three sets of four stages.

Experience has shown “beep to beep” times for all stages should be approximately the same duration in order to avoid stage bottlenecks (i.e., a “slow” stage). Raw times of 25-45 seconds for the average shooter, work pretty well in most matches. Longer stages can easily “bog-down,” and shooters don't feel like they're getting their money's worth if the stages are shorter.

New posses tend to take a couple of stages to figure out how to work together. Who is

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to run the timer, who the spotters are, who's shooting next, and so forth. This is a given. As suggested above, you can adjust your shooting schedule to allow additional time for the first stage for each posse. Based on this hypothetical match, the scheduling is pretty easy to accomplish. As the number of shooters increases to 300, 400, 500, or more, it becomes increasingly difficult to schedule the shooting and stay on plan. *The section regarding stage design in this manual will help design your match to fit your schedule.*

Plug your stages, scheduled shooting times, and posses into an Excel spread sheet, and hope the shooters can follow the choreographed plan.

The most thoughtful planning will lead to the best-run match. Shooters will do just about anything asked of them, but as a Match Director, you must do your homework. Once the first shot has been fired, a match will pretty much run itself (for better or worse).

Posse Assignments

One of the most difficult tasks of a big match is assigning shooters to posses. Despite all best efforts, there will be some shooters that won't be happy with their assignment. Try to lessen this by asking on the registration form for special "posse with" requests. Remember, many folks travel great distances to attend matches and may plan to share gun carts and/or guns. Many shooters are perfectly comfortable with meeting new folks, but others, for whatever their reasons, prefer to shoot with folks with whom they are acquainted. Also, be careful to assign any Junior category shooters and family members together. Be prepared for these kinds of requests and group folks as much as possible. Be prepared to accommodate changes at the last minute. The shooters affected will have a much better time, and therefore the match will be much more successful. The SASS Scoring Program provides an extremely convenient way for draft posse as-

signments to be e-mailed to every competitor well before the match. It's far easier adjusting posse assignments weeks before the match than 30 minutes before the first rounds go down range!

If the number of shooters for the match is large enough, split the posse groups by assigning two posses per shooting time per stage. That is, posses 1 and 2 on Stage 1 at the same time, and so on. This process allows one posse to work the stage while the other shoots, and vice-versa. (Note, the other reason to break the squads into multiple posses on a stage at one time is to designate smaller posses that will be competing as a "team" in the posse shoots on the final day.)

Balance out the number of shooters so there is an equal number on each posse. The total number of shooters divided into the total shooting time available will determine how much time is allowable for each shooter and each posse. Balanced posses will take roughly the same amount of time to complete their shooting assignments.

Assign a Posse Marshal and a Deputy in advance, if possible, to each posse. One of their jobs is to ensure the posses work efficiently, move smoothly through the shooting schedule, and avoid creating any backups during the match.

Assignment of Range Officials

Each match must have certain officials assigned to ensure the success and safety of the event. Be careful when making these assignments. This staff will make or break the event. Think of these positions as a few Chiefs and a whole lot of Indians. Remember the Level I Range Operations Course has been and is available to everyone. It is a good policy to require ALL range officials to have completed the course.

Here is a potential list of positions:

- Match Director
- Range Master
- Range Officers
- Berm/Stage Marshals

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- Posse Marshals
- Entertainment Coordinator
- Waddie Czar
- Press/VIP Coordinator
- Side Match Coordinator
- Parking/Transportation/Emergency Coordinator
- Scoring Official(s)
- Vendor Coordinator
- Prize Coordinator
- Range Equipment Coordinator

The need for more or less positions will vary based on the size of the event, and one person may be capable of handling several positions. These folks have a direct effect on the event's success.

Special Equipment

Most large matches will require special equipment, things not normally needed for monthly match activities and can usually be rented for short periods of time. Use the talents of the match staff for what they do best. Don't hesitate to out-source any special jobs—especially if additional special equipment is necessary to get them done. This is particularly important for things like putting up and maintaining big tents and porta-potties. Be sure to get a certificate of insurance or insurance bond from any outside contractors in order to cover event legalities.

Here is a list of possible equipment needs:

- Tents, tables, and chairs – plan for all participants and vendors
- Toilets – have plenty, including handicap accessible units and have them serviced daily
- Sound system(s) – stationary and/or portable units
- Gun racks on every stage (especially important for those without gun carts)
- Radios – hand held units for the range staff
- Vehicles – golf carts, tractors, trailers, ATVs

Remember to include any cost of equipment in the event's budget. Some of these items

can run into a substantial amount of money, but can make a definite difference in the quality and success of the overall experience.

Scoring Procedures

Once again, in the arena of scoring, computers are wonderful things. There are several computerized scoring programs used in Cowboy Action Shooting™. Each event should endeavor to find a scoring program that works with their particular setup. Computerized scoring systems make the process of scoring much easier than if done by hand.

The more automated the process, the more precise the scoring outcome will become. It is much more efficient to use a system that facilitates the printing of posse score sheets for each stage. The process should also facilitate the entry of scores into the computer by printing the shooters in the same order as they appear on the data entry screen. The ability to enter misses, procedural penalties, minor safety penalties, DNFs, and disqualifications by simply entering a number, thereby allowing the scoring system to do all calculations, eliminates the need for manual mathematical calculations by the scoring personnel. It is much easier to train folks to enter the raw time as it appears on the timer, the number of misses, the number of bonuses, and the number of procedure penalties than to rely on their ability to add, subtract, and multiply.

By printing one score sheet per stage per posse, the scoring personnel can pick up each score sheet after completion of each stage and enter scores into the computer without having to wait until the end of the shooting day.

The SASS Scoring Program is ideal for this task ... but is certainly not the only effective program for this purpose.

After scores are entered into the computer, a score verification report should be printed and posted for shooter review. Incremental scores should be posted no less than once a

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day. It is a good idea to publicize when and where the scores will be available for verification, how long the shooters have to declare any errors, what documents will be needed to make a change, and where to report the errors.

Most importantly, make sure the scoring area is off limits to all shooters, and any shooter entering this area without appropriate authorization will be penalized.

Whatever method of scoring is chosen, make sure it is efficient, timely, and accurate. Be sure to have backup equipment and procedures in place just in case Murphy decides to rear his ugly head.

Appeal Process

A shooter appealing a ruling is something all matches hope to avoid, but despite the best-laid plans, it will eventually happen. Therefore, each match should have a plan in place to accommodate an appeal. Don't approach an appeal as something negative. This is a competitive sport, differences of opinion are inevitable, and heated discussions will only yield long-lasting problems. Be sure to document in the event program how, when, and to whom an appeal should be handled as well as any time frames to which the competitor must adhere.

One process that works well is to appoint an appeal jury to hear and decide all cases. This jury should be made up of at least three persons familiar with SASS rules and any local rules that may be in effect. Territorial Governors and Regulators are generally good folks to fill these juries, but other experienced participants are also capable. Make sure all members of the jury are not related to the shooter and not familiar with the incident in question.

The Match Director and Range Master should also serve on the appeal jury, but only in a non-voting, administrative role to ensure all match procedures are correctly followed. The jury members should hear from the shooter and any other pertinent parties. Then the voting members should

decide the case based on the information heard and their knowledge of the rules.

It is perfectly acceptable to require the shooter to post a nominal bond (\$25 – \$100) before filing an appeal. In the event the ruling is upheld, the appeal bond is forfeited. Otherwise, the shooter should receive a refund of the appeal bond.

It is a good idea to require the appeal to be filed with the Range Master prior to leaving the stage where the incident occurs. All appeals should be heard, and the shooter notified of the results, the same day.

An appeal is not a personal attack on anyone. It is just a difference of opinion or misunderstanding and should be treated as such. The attitude of the jury and match officials should be of the highest regard for the shooter as well as the sport as a whole. A common statement attached to the appeal process is: "Remember, the attitude brought to the table will directly affect the result of the decision taken from it."

Shooter Follow Up

One of the best ways to say "Thank You" to the participants of an event is to follow up shortly after the match with a "care package." This package should contain a short thank you letter, statistics of the match, information about contributions to the charities supported, and most of all, the final scores and winners. Many participants appreciate the posting of the scores, winners, and statistics on a web page, if available. Shooters will also appreciate a timely response back to them, especially since travel schedules sometimes dictate having to leave prior to the announcement of winners or posting of scores.

Sending out early registrations for the next match to those participants from a previous event is another good way to add a special touch.

Vendor/Sponsor Appreciation

Seize every opportunity to tell your vendors and sponsors "Thank You." Opening cere-

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monies, awards banquet, and closing ceremonies are must times for saying “Thank You.” Also, arranging for a Vendor/Sponsor dinner or some sort of get-together is advisable. It not only lets you spend one-on-one time with your vendors and sponsors, but also helps them become more comfortable with you and your committee. This is also a good time to start a dialog about next year’s match.

Always follow up the match with a vendor and sponsor thank you letter. This letter should include any facts about the match you wish to publicize such as number of shooters, number of states represented, total rounds sent down range, and charity donation totals. You might also include a match program with their listing in it and other souvenirs, such as a pin or item with your logo.

Chronicle Match Reports

Each major annual event should be reported in *The Cowboy Chronicle*. Recognize this need early and ensure individuals are designated to write the story and take the photographs. Exhaustive stage descriptions are ultimately boring and represent only a portion of what made the match memorable. Action photos with descriptive captions and enthusiastic text make the entire experience come alive for readers around the world and entice them to participate the following year. Reports are due to *The Cowboy Chronicle* two weeks following the event. Please note—the SASS Match Scoring Program (by CD Tom) contains a special winner’s report that spits out alias, shooter number, category, and home state—just exactly what *The Cowboy Chronicle* needs, and it all comes out with the touch of a single button!

Side Matches

The following is a list of considerations to be addressed as side matches are planned. Side matches are often provided as a prelude to the main match, but it is not uncommon for at least some to be maintained

during the main match event and/or as a filler for the last day.

Reasons for Side Matches

Side Matches should be part of every annual or above match. Side matches provide extra entertainment for the shooters. They can be a revenue source for the host club or a selected charity. They provide a nice warmup for the main event and can allow two shooters the chance for a grudge match. Side Matches can simply be a reason to give out another award.

Warmup “mini-matches” have proven to be very popular. These four to six stage events can be shot on main match stages using scenarios different than those used in the main match.

Plainsman and Wild Bunch side matches have also been held as a prelude to main match competition, and like Warmup mini-matches are multi-stage shooting events.

Special Considerations

Besides the normal stage set-up is there anything extra that needs to be provided? If this is going to be a “sponsored” side match, does a banner or sign need to be visible? Does the sponsor’s product have to be used? How is the product to be delivered and stored before the match? How many shooters are expected, and how much of the sponsor’s material will be needed?

If this is a large Regional match and the side match is a popular one, will there be an audience? Do you need to provide seating or a P.A. system? Is a visible scoring system needed so the public can follow what is happening? Will the media want access to the side match? Will there be any special material needed for the match, such as extra safety equipment?

The Site

Designate the bay or area to be used for side matches as early as possible, as this facilitates the planning process. It might be convenient to use targets and props from the stage that is sharing the bay with the side

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match. It's much easier if you don't have to tote steel very far. Make sure what needs to be hauled in or out is understood by the range help.

When will the site for the side match be available—before or after the main match?

Schedule enough time to set up the side match before the shooters start showing up. The time, place, and equipment/ammo needed should all be described in the shooter's packet. It is also important the ROs have read and understand the side match particulars, and then operate the side match accordingly.

You will need to schedule personnel to run the side match and also include relief for those folks. You should also include a spare timer and all scoring materials in your list of needed items.

The Match Itself

Be sure clear instructions are posted or available. When the side match is designed, make sure there is no clear advantage given to any shooter or shooting style. For example, try and equal out anything that might give a '97 shooter an advantage over someone shooting a side by side. Also, consider there are some 30 shooting categories—don't force the Duelists to compete against the "open-style" competitors, or the Frontiersmen against the Cowboy shooters, otherwise the side match quickly becomes restricted to the "hot-dog" age-based competitors.

Make sure the average shooter can participate in the side match. It should not be overly physical, overly complicated, or require a degree of shooting skill possessed by only a few. Penalties need to be spelled out clearly, and also post the conditions for a reshoot.

Score the side match clearly so there is no doubt of the placings. Make the match offi-

cial's job easy by providing a clear winner on the sheets you turn in, and be sure the awards are ready to go at the awards ceremony.

Have fun with the side matches, and you will have many happy shooters.

Recognition

When everything is over, take a step back, look around, and think about all the things it took to make the match a success. Take the time to thank and recognize everybody that helped out. In most instances, a thank you and a handshake is all they will receive for their efforts.

Make a list of the vendors, sponsors, VIPs, entertainers, and special guests so the event emcee can recognize each one of them publicly.

Make a list of individuals and groups that took the time to play a part in the success of the event so the event emcee can recognize them as well. The staff that put the event together deserves some extra special recognition. Local club members, visiting club members, volunteer organizations, and any others that pitched in to the process deserve recognition and a pat on the back. And, don't forget the wives. Plan to get pictures of key individuals and groups so these can be used in follow-up articles about the event.

Be sure to get pictures of the winners for future publications. Watch for any "special" winners such as members of the same family. These kinds of things make for great stories in publications and help to promote the family environment of the sport. Don't forget about any non-shooting winners. They were a part of the event and need to be recognized as such.

Above all else, remember all the folks that were there to help out will be needed again when the next event comes around!