

# COWBOY CLAYS

## HANDBOOK



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# **SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY**

## **Cowboy Clays Handbook**

### **Forward**

This Cowboy Clays Handbook reflects a growing interest in Cowboy Clays shooting activities at monthly, annual, and sanctioned Cowboy Action and Wild Bunch matches. This Handbook provides the basic rules and recommendations for this here to for informal activity. As interest in this cowboy game increases, it is envisioned clubs dedicated to this discipline will be formed and SASS memberships for folks primarily interested in shotgun sports will be realized.

The Wild Bunch thanks Goatneck Clem for his enthusiasm and recommendation for this shooting discipline and his willingness to lead a Cowboy Clays Range Operations Committee (CCROC).

# SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY

## Cowboy Clays Handbook

### SECTION 1 – SASS & COWBOY CLAYS

The Single Action Shooting Society® is an international membership organization formed in 1987 to preserve and promote the sport of Cowboy Action Shooting™. SASS also serves as the governing and sanctioning body for Cowboy Clays, promulgating the rules to ensure safety and consistency in Clays competitions worldwide. SASS sanctions championship matches including State, Regional, Divisional, National, and the World Championship — all held annually across the nation and internationally.

#### JOINING SASS

Membership in SASS means different things to different people, and the reasonings behind each individual varies greatly. While there may be a simple, single reason to joining for some, most point to a combination of both tangible and intangible benefits that comprise the true value of their membership. SASS is one of the few shooting organizations that actively supports family participation and camaraderie above competition. SASS members are the very best folks you're likely to meet ... anywhere.

A membership in SASS ensures the organization can continue to provide a codified set of rules and regulations for the sport, provide exemplary member services, and remain vital to the longevity of Cowboy Clays as the internationally recognized sport we participate in today.

#### SASS MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Registered SASS number, alias, and badge.
- Travel, rental car, and hotel discounts.
- Prescription discount plan.
- Entry to SASS Sanctioned shooting events.
- Subscription to *The Cowboy Chronicle*.
- Full access to the SASS Wire Forum.
- Exclusive member pricing on merchandise.

#### SELECTING A SASS ALIAS

Your SASS Alias is exclusively yours. Every SASS member is required to select an alias that closely represents a character or profession from the Old West or western film genre. In the tradition of the Old West cattle brand registries, your alias may not in any way duplicate or be easily confused with any other member's alias. SASS Headquarters provides final approval of all aliases.

SASS affiliated clubs are required to respect the sanctity of SASS members' aliases and shooter numbers, using them in their articles for publication in *The Cowboy Chronicle* and giving them preference over local club members who are not SASS members and are using a duplicate alias.

General rules and guidelines for alias acceptance into the SASS registry:

- The alias must be "printable" before a wide audience (family friendly!).
- No duplications are permitted.
- If it SOUNDS the same, it is the same.
- Adding "II", "2", or "Too" is not accepted.

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- “Ranger” could become “Texas Ranger,” but not “The Ranger”. “John Henry Chisum” could be modified to “Jack Chisum,” but not “Jon Henry Chisum.”
- Historical names may not be modified to make them different. “Wyatt Earp” and “Marshal Wyatt Earp” are considered the same.

The SASS Alias registry changes daily. Please reach out to SASS Headquarters to confirm the availability of your alias choice.

## **COWBOY CLAYS**

Cowboy Clays is an amateur shooting sport in which contestants compete with shotguns typical of those used in the taming of the Old West: side by side double barreled, pre-1899 lever, Model ‘97, and Model ‘12 shotguns. “Blackpowder” propellants are allowed when range conditions permit.

Cowboy Clays matches are meant to be pure fun! As such, they should be designed so the targets may be effectively engaged with an 18" open choke shotgun. “Short windows” (less than three second viewing time) and long (over 45 yards) targets should be rare. All targets should be visible, hittable, and safe.

While informal games such as “wobble trap” are allowed and encouraged, most formal competitions are shot in conformance with established rules for trap, skeet, and sporting clays.

As in all SASS competitions, competitor costuming is required.

American history buffs and serious shooters alike agree the use of vintage firearms, costuming, and flying targets make Cowboy Clays one of the more interesting shooting sports for both spectator and contestant.

## **CLOTHING & ACCOUTREMENTS**

Cowboy Clays is a combination of historical reenactment and Saturday morning at the matinee. Participants may choose the style of costume they wish to wear, but all clothing must be typical of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a B-Western movie, or Western television series.

SASS puts a great deal of emphasis on costuming because it adds so much to the uniqueness of the game and helps to create a festive, informal atmosphere that supports the friendly, fraternal feeling we encourage in our competitors.

All shooters must be in costume, and we encourage invited guests and family also to be costumed. Shooters must remain in costume at all match events, including dinners, award ceremonies, dances, and other SASS related activities.

All clothing and equipment must be worn appropriately and how it was intended, or how it would have been in the Old West or as seen on B-Western movies and television.

The minimum costuming requirements are a cowboy hat and boots. Modern rancher attire is acceptable. (No tennis shoes or ball caps!)

## **EYE & EAR PROTECTION**

Hearing protection is highly recommended and eye protection is mandatory in and around the shooting areas. While small, period glasses may look great, full protection/high impact

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## Cowboy Clays Handbook

glasses are strongly recommended. Such protection is *recommended* for everyone when in the range area.

### OUTLAWED ITEMS

SASS wants our participants to be safe, have fun, develop their competitive shooting skills, and enjoy the rich traditions of the Old West. We ask you join us in the friendly spirit of competition and preservation of our heritage. The use or presence of any of the listed outlawed items will result in a Stage Disqualification penalty. Would that be a DQ for the station?

- Modern shooting gloves
- Short sleeve shirts (male competitors only)
- Short sleeve tee shirts, long sleeve tee shirts, and tank tops for all competitors. (Long sleeve Henley type shirts with buttons are acceptable.)
- Modern feathered cowboy hats (Shady Bradys)  
Straw hats of traditional design are acceptable (e.g., Stetson, Baily, Sombreros, etc.)
- Designer jeans are not allowed. Designer jeans include modern jeans that have slogans or logos embroidered, silk screened, and such, saying things like “PINK” or “BABY.” Jeans with fancy or flashy adornments are acceptable.
- Ball caps.
- All types of athletic shoes or combat boots, no matter the material from which they are constructed.
- Nylon, plastic, or Velcro accouterments.
- The displaying of any manufacturer’s, sponsor’s, or team logos on apparel. (Manufacturer’s labels on such apparel or equipment are acceptable)

### SASS AFFILIATED CLUBS

SASS Affiliated Clubs are the backbone of SASS and the sport of Cowboy Clays. SASS Clubs are numerous — located in every state in the nation as well as 15 foreign countries. These clubs are your local resource and facilitator of monthly and annual matches for Cowboy Clays. SASS Clubs foster the organized growth of the sport in a manner consistent with all SASS rules and regulations. SASS Affiliation ensures no matter where your travels take you, you know exactly what to expect in terms of safety and consistency in enjoying the sport. Finding a local SASS Club near you is the first step in your journey of exploring Cowboy Clays. You’ll meet amazing people, receive a warm welcome, and all the advice for which a new member and shooter could ask! To find a local club near you and to review their monthly shooting schedules, please visit our website at [www.sassnet.com](http://www.sassnet.com).

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### SECTION 2 – SHOOTING CATEGORIES

SASS recognizes shooting categories based upon age, gender, equipment, and/or propellant. The age for a competitor is determined by their age on the first day the match starts. All SASS categories may be subdivided by gender to establish categories for ladies. There are no men's categories. Competitors may compete within any category for which they qualify. Each category has a set of standard regulations the competitor must follow in order to "stay in category" during the match.

There are two main match divisions in Cowboy Clays: Cowboy and Wild Bunch. There are two basic categories in each division: Coach Gun and Hunter.

#### **Cowboy**

**Coach Gun** – Any side by side double barreled shotgun with or without ejectors, single or double trigger, any Model '97 pump action, or any pre-1900 lever action shotgun with barrels 23" or less. No shot larger than #7 ½ or smaller than #9 is allowed. No steel shot allowed. All gauges (and .410 caliber) are legal for main match competition. 20- through 12-gauge competitors compete as a group. 28-gauge competitors compete only against other 28-gauge competitors, and .410 caliber competitors compete only against other .410 caliber competitors.

**Hunter** – Same as Coach Gun except with barrel length longer than 23".

#### **Wild Bunch**

Same rules as above except shotguns *must* be Model '12 or Model '97 shotguns *only*.

The basic categories may be subdivided by age, gender, and/or propellant as warranted. When subdividing by age, three age brackets are recognized: Juniors, 17 years old and younger; Open, 18 to 64 years old; and Senior, 65 years old and over.

Sub-gauge side matches may be offered for 28-gauge and .410 caliber shotguns. The 28-gauge shotguns compete against only other 28-gauge shotguns. .410 caliber shotguns compete against only other .410 shotguns. Sub-gauge competitors shoot on the same course or portion of the same course as 12- and 20-gauge competitors as determined by the Match Director/course designer, however, they will shoot from different positions and/or engage the targets in a different order. If range equipment and time permit, they may shoot an entirely different course.

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## Cowboy Clays Handbook

### SECTION 3 – PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

#### PARTICIPANT CONDUCT

##### Safety

Our sport, by its very nature, has the potential to be dangerous and a serious accident may occur. Every participant in a SASS match is expected to be a safety officer. Each shooter's first responsibility is for his or her own safe conduct. All shooters are expected to remain alert for actions by others that are unsafe. Any Range Officer or shooter may confront any participant about an observed, unsafe situation. It is expected the matter will quickly be corrected and not repeated. Any argument concerning the correction of a safety related matter will result in that shooter being ejected from the range. Please refer to the Safety Rules section of this handbook for all Safety Rules. Participants must also:

- Treat and respect every firearm as if it were loaded.
- Safe firearm handling is the shooters responsibility. Refer to the Safety section for all firearm handling safety rules.
- All shooters must demonstrate rudimentary familiarity and proficiency with the firearms being used. Shooters are expected to perform within their capabilities at all times.
- SASS matches are not the forums in which to learn basic firearms handling.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the range area for all shooters, guests, range officers, and others, until all shooting is done for the day. No shooter may consume any alcoholic beverage until he or she has completed all of their shooting for the day and stored their firearms.
- No shooter may ingest any substance that will affect his or her ability to participate with a maximum state of awareness and in a completely safe manner. Both prescription and non-prescription pharmaceuticals that may cause drowsiness or any other physical or mental impairment must be avoided.

##### Personal

In addition to the safety rules mentioned above, participants are expected to follow these rules of conduct:

- The Shooter must obey all range commands given by the Chief Range Officer.
- Any shooter, guest, or match official who uses foul language, is disrespectful, offensive, rude, or becomes belligerent or threatening in any manner will be disqualified from the event and, at the discretion of the Match Director, may be required to leave the property.
- Interpersonal conflicts will not be tolerated.
- Good Sportsmanship best defines "The Spirit of the Game." Be a good sport. Have fun.



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### SECTION 4 – RANGE OPERATIONS & SAFETY RULES

#### RANGE COMMANDS

Standard Range Commands are the most efficient way to run a shooting line and are used in almost every established shooting sport. As a matter of safety, all shooters are required to obey all range commands given.

#### RANGE RULES

- Show Pairs – The squad is shown the birds for the 1<sup>st</sup> shooter only. The first shooter is expected to rotate through the squad on each succeeding stand.
- The squad shall not “leap frog” from station to station unless directed to do so by a match official.
- In the event there is a range equipment failure (e.g., broken target, target fails to launch, etc.) on the second shot the pair will be shot over.
- For both range equipment failure and shooter equipment failure, the following applies:
  - For report pairs, both birds will be reshot, however the first bird is established.
  - For a true pair, both birds will be reshot, however, nothing is established.
- Three shooter equipment malfunctions are permitted. For subsequent malfunctions, targets not engaged will be scored as misses.
- If Cowboy and Wild Bunch competitors are shooting the same course, the order OR type of pair shall be different for each Division.

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### SECTION 5 – FIREARM COVENANTS

Original and replicas may be used in competition provided they are in good, safe working order. In each of the respective sections, allowed modifications are listed. Just because a manufacturer designs a part or firearm for this sport or just because a firearm is available, does not necessarily mean it is legal for competition. Only the modifications referenced here as allowed are approved. All others are illegal.

As any firearm related sport can be inherently dangerous, SASS does not recommend or suggest the modification of any firearm or the removal of any safety device. Participants in this sport accept responsibility for the use and/or modifications of their firearms and do not depend upon SASS or any of its affiliated clubs or members to make that judgement for them. Please consult with the firearm manufacturer prior to making any firearm modifications. Firearms must operate as intended by the original pre-1900 designs they depict. Firearms must function in a safe manner.

SASS recognizes the desire to enhance firearm performance. Firearm manufacturers, importers, gunsmiths, and the membership as a whole must use caution in any quest to develop mechanisms designed to enhance the operation of firearms for Cowboy Action Shooting™. **Any firearm modification not specifically referenced in this Handbook is prohibited.** Parties interested in having modifications, parts, or firearms considered for approval and inclusion in the SASS accepted modification text can request a Firearms Modification Consideration application from SASS Headquarters. Written receipt of acceptance from SASS will be the only source of approval. Unless referenced within these Covenants, any modifications, parts, or firearms used without this approval are illegal.

The use of a non-SASS legal firearm results in a Stage Disqualification (SDQ) for each stage the illegal firearm is used. Penalties for illegal equipment/items and firearms are not awarded in arrears, but should be corrected before the competitor shoots the next stage.

#### ALL FIREARMS

- All firearms must be designed to fire by use of an impact mechanism such as required by center-fire primers. All other firing mechanisms are illegal.
- Internal modifications not referenced here that cannot be seen while the firearm is at rest (action closed) are allowed provided they do not affect the external operation or directly conflict with one of the modifications listed here.
- Modifying the firing, cocking, chambering, or levering mechanism in any way that changes the process from an entirely manual operation to any other style operation (e.g., blowback operation, gas operation, or recoil operation) is expressly prohibited.
- All firearms may be repaired and/or restored to their original condition.
- Replacement parts may be made from materials other than the original unless such material is specifically prohibited.
- All parts may be smoothed, re-profiled, polished, de-burred, or replaced provided they are not prohibited in these Covenants.
- Slings are allowed on shotguns.

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### Barrels

- Barrels or chambers may be re-bored, lined, or sleeved to any of the approved gauges for that particular firearm provided industry safe limits are maintained.
- Original barrels may be replaced with new barrels of correct styles for that type of firearm.
- Barrels may be altered to accept period style sights as described within the Sights Section.
- Shotgun barrels must maintain a length of at least 18 inches.
- Shotgun barrels may have internal choke tubes installed provided they do not extend beyond the muzzle.
- Barrels must be made of steel or iron only.
- Visible counter-weighting devices are not allowed.
- Compensating ports are not allowed.

### Triggers and Trigger Guards

- Triggers may be profiled.
- Trigger position may be adjusted.
- Trigger stops may be added.
- Shotgun trigger guards may be wrapped with leather or other natural material.
- Bending the trigger guard on side by sides so triggers are more exposed is not allowed.

### Stocks and Grips

- The length or style of stock may be altered or replaced
- Checkering, carving, or laser engraving is allowed on fore-stocks and buttstocks.
- A permanently fitted, non-adjustable, lace on, or slip on recoil pad is allowed on the buttstock of shotguns.
- Butt-plates may be changed to a butt-plate style that was generally available from the original manufacturer.
- A piece of leather or similar natural material may be attached to the butt-plate or butt-stock. This includes the “wrist”/grip portion of the buttstock.
- Stocks of simulated or natural materials are acceptable provided they retain a wood-like appearance. They must be of the same basic shape as stocks found on original firearms.
- A slide on leather cover to protect the offhand from barrel heat or as a repair is allowed on side by side and single shot shotguns.
- Leather on the grip surface of the fore end of a pump shotgun is not allowed.
- Adjustable combs and modern adjustable butt plates are not allowed.

## SIGHTS

### Shotgun Sights

- Front sights may be bead or simple post types.

# **SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY**

## **Cowboy Clays Handbook**

### **COSMETIC EMBELLISHMENT**

- Period style tacks, carving, engraving, checkering, inlays, and other such embellishments are allowed on stocks and grips provided they do not constitute any kind of radical or target type grip enhancement.
- Receiver, frame, or barrel engraving is permitted provided it does not constitute a grip enhancement.
- No portion of the grip frame may be checkered, stippled, serrated or otherwise modified to constitute a grip enhancement.
- A light bead blasted finish may be applied to the exterior of any SASS firearm.
- Metal surfaces may retain their natural color or be blued, browned, plated (such as nickel, gold, or silver), blacked, color case hardened, aged to a patina type finish, or jeweled.

### **SCREWS**

- Factory screws may be replaced with socket head cap or other type screws.

### **FRAMES AND RECEIVERS**

- The dimensions of the ejection port on a slide action shotgun may not be altered.

### **LEVERS**

- Levers may be wrapped or padded with leather or other natural material.
- Filler “blocks” or other such mechanisms designed to prevent all or drastically limit movement of the fingers within the lever loop are not allowed.
- The lever may be cut and welded provided the basic exterior contour and size is not changed.

### **FEED / LOADING MECHANISMS**

- A “two-shot” drop type system for lever action shotguns may be added.

### **FIRING PINS**

- The length of the firing pin may be extended.

### **RECOIL REDUCERS**

- Internal recoil reducing devices may be added.

### **SHOTGUNS**

#### **Shotgun Requirements**

Any side-by-side or single shot shotgun typical of the period from approximately 1860 until 1899 with or without external hammers, having single or double triggers is allowed. Lever action, tubular feed, exposed hammer shotguns of the period are allowed, whether original or replicas. The only slide action shotgun allowed is the Model 1897 Winchester shotgun, whether original or replica. Military configurations are allowed (i.e., trench guns). Model ‘12 Winchester Shotguns are allowed for Wild Bunch competitions.

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### Shotgun Gauges

- Side-by-side, single shot, pump, and lever action shotguns must be centerfire of at least .410 caliber and no larger than 12 gauge.

### Shotgun Break Action

- Internal mechanisms to guarantee break action shotguns do not close accidentally may be added or modified.
- The open angle for break action shotguns may be increased.
- The top opening lever on break action shotguns may be bent (re-profiled) by no more than ½" from the center of the tang to the outside edge of the lever.

**ANY EXTERNAL MODIFICATION TO ANY FIREARM NOT SPECIFICALLY REFERENCED IN THIS HANDBOOK IS EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED**

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### SECTION 6 – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**170° Safety Rule** - means the muzzle of the firearm must always be pointed down range +/- 85 degrees in any direction.

**Action Closed (lever & pump action long guns)** – BOLT in “full battery” ( e.g. unable to further close by manipulation of the lever or pump mechanism).

**Action Closed – (SxS & single-shot firearms)** functional firearm that requires manipulation of the opening mechanism (e.g., top/side lever/button) to open the action.

**Action Open (lever & pump action long guns)** – BOLT not closed completely.

**Action Open– (SxS & single-shot firearms)** – functional firearm that opens without manipulation of the release mechanism (e.g., top/side lever/button)

**Apparel** – Articles of clothing including: shirts, pants, dresses, vests, jackets, coats, dusters, chaps/chinks, leggings, boots, and hats. Not to include: Gun leather, ammo belts, garters/arm bands, wrist cuffs, or bandanas.

**Down range** – 180 degrees from the shooter toward the targets of a stage.

**Equipment** – any non-apparel item taken to the firing line.

**Loaded Firearm** – Any firearm with unfired round(s) in the action/chamber/magazine.

**Logo** – distinctive graphic design, stylized name, unique symbol, or other device for identifying an organization. This includes those of **SASS**, individual clubs/ranges, match commemorative and those of any subgroups within the Cowboy Action Shooting community. **Exceptions:** Badges, pins, belt buckles, scarf slides, military unit/rank insignia of a standard size.

**Malfunction** – Failure of a gun or ammunition to function as designed or fire satisfactorily.

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