

SASS Mounted Shooting™

Range Operations Basic Safety Course
MRO-I



**Compiled and Edited
By**

The Wild Bunch

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**SASS MOUNTED SHOOTING
MOUNTED RANGE OPERATIONS BASIC SAFETY COURSE – MRO-I**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The design and production of this course has evolved from many years of running matches and a need for match-to-match consistency. This course is the culmination of many dedicated SASS members' collaborative efforts. SASS owes a sincere thank you to all the match directors that have done so much in the past without the benefit of this Mounted Range Operations Safety Course. Mounted Shooters at all SASS matches will benefit greatly by the consistency this course provides.

SASS encourages the broadest dissemination of this material to its members as possible. For those SASS members who receive this Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course training taught by an instructor who has passed the Mounted Range Officers Training Course (signified by a white pin) and who subsequently pass the Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Test will be awarded a blue SASS pin as evidence of satisfactory course completion.

INTRODUCTION

Consistency is important—undefined rules and gray areas cause hard feelings, misunderstandings, and arguments.

The purpose of this course is to ensure safety and consistency at every SASS club match, no matter what size the match. Each SASS competitor who sets foot on the field is a Safety Officer, responsible for his own safety and the safety of those nearby. The intent is every SASS Mounted Shooting competitor have the knowledge to function as a Mounted Range Officer given appropriate coaching on the field by experienced personnel.

The Mounted Range Officer's role is to keep the match running efficiently, safely, and

consistently. It is the responsibility of club officials to determine the qualifications, experience, maturity, and judgment of its match officials and appoint appropriately trained individuals as Mounted Range Officers for their matches

The rules and disciplines described in this course will not impose any undue hardship or additional financial burden on any club. It will, however, train our members to be safe and consistently penalize any safety infractions. Shooters who travel to SASS matches will feel comfortable knowing the safety rules and procedural penalties are consistent with their home club. They will also feel comfortable knowing the scoring, guns, and equipment are consistent with the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook.

All SASS Mounted Range Officers must know and understand the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook, be informed, and understand any recent changes. It is recommended all range and match officials be trained in this Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course. One must keep in mind what firearms are designed to do, and remember they can be very dangerous and deadly unless great care is taken while handling and shooting them.

We must always treat every firearm as loaded and ready to fire!

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Good sportsmanship best defines “the Spirit of the Game.” When designing and running a match, every Match Director and Mounted Range Officer must keep in mind the event is solely for the safe enjoyment of the shooters. Mounted Range Officers must be professional, polite, and friendly. The SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook is to be followed in designing a match, and SASS rules enforced equally and consistently.

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These rules have been developed over time and provide our sport a high level of safety and consistency. This course was designed to provide a better understanding of the rules and how to apply them.

Completion of this basic safety course shows your commitment to SASS and demonstrates your willingness to jump in and help out where needed at a match or practice.

Because our goal is to provide a safe, fun shooting experience, any competitor or Mounted Range Official who uses foul language or becomes belligerent or threatening in manner will be disqualified from the event, and at the Match Director's discretion, may be required to leave the field.

Interpersonal conflicts will not be tolerated!

SAFETY RULES

(FIRST, LAST, AND ALWAYS)

All competitors are Safety Officers.

Our sport, by its very nature, has the potential to be dangerous, and a serious accident can occur. Every participant in a SASS match is expected to be a Safety Officer. Each shooter's first responsibility is for his or her safe conduct, and all shooters are expected to remain alert for unsafe actions by others.

Mounted Range Officers and shooters are expected to confront any participant observed in an unsafe situation, and it is expected the matter will quickly be corrected and not repeated. Do not take suggestions or directions personally, rather take responsibility to resolve the matter with safety in mind. Any argument concerning the correction of a safety related matter can be expected to result in the offending shooter's ejection from the field.

MATCH PROCEDURES AND TERMS

All match positions described below are Mounted Range Officers. This section describes each person's responsibility in a match.

Match Director

The Match Director is in charge of the overall match and is required to ensure qualified officials are in place in all tournament areas and an "order of go" is established and posted.

Mounted Range Master

The Mounted Range Master is the Chief Mounted Range Officer (MRO) during shooting stage operations. The Mounted Range Master is in charge of and oversees all stages and ensures qualified officials are in place on all stages. He reviews all stages and ensures they are designed and constructed to operate in a safe manner for horse, rider, target setters, and officials. The Mounted Range Master is responsible for final safety inspection of the arena, to confirm the stage is set correctly, and the arena is clear and safe. **The Mounted Range Master has final authority on all decisions made in the arena.**

The following match responsibilities may be conducted by the Mounted Range Master or he/she may delegate them to another qualified Mounted Range Officer during shooting stage operations.

- The Mounted Range Master is responsible for giving the rider the 'go' signal¹.
- The Mounted Range Master is responsible

¹ The MRO must use a flag or similar signal with the arm held straight out pointing in the direction of go. Never use across the body arm movements as this is often hard to see and can be confusing.

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for counting missed targets and indicating them to the timekeeper, either through hand signals or verbally.

- The Mounted Range Master is responsible for calling all penalties and procedures. He may consult with the Line Judge or Timer Operator if he deems it necessary. Always give the shooter any benefit of the doubt.
- The Mounted Range Master **ensures the rider understands** all penalties and procedural calls prior to his/her leaving the arena. (The competitor should always be aware of any misses or penalties as they are leaving the arena. The competitor has the right to know, since once they leave the arena, miss penalties should not be questioned.)
-
- The Mounted Range Master is responsible for ensuring all ammunition has been fired or unloaded prior to a shooter leaving the arena.
- The Mounted Range Master ensures all personnel other than the Line Judge and the shooter have left the arena prior to giving the “go” signal.
- When utilizing an enclosed arena, the Mounted Range Master ensures all gates are closed prior to giving the “go” signal.

Remember: The final responsibility rests with the competitor.

Timer Operator

The Timer Operator is responsible for letting the Mounted Range Master know when the timer has been reset and is ready for the next contestant. This is normally done with a thumbs-up, verbally, or with an indicating light.

- The Timer Operator is the Mounted Range Officer responsible for running the

timer. The Timer Operator may also be the Score Keeper in a match.

- The Timer Operator consults with the Mounted Range Master on questionable timer operations or malfunctions.
- The Timer Operator does not have the authority to override the Mounted Range Master.
- The Timer Operator **also counts** missed targets and watches the shooter for correct target engagement and stage procedures.
- The Timer Operator gives the raw time to the Announcer.
- The Timer Operator records raw time and the number of misses or procedurals indicated by the Mounted Range Master.

Score Keeper

- The Score Keeper is the MRO responsible for recording the times as called out by the Timer Operator.
- The Score Keeper is responsible for recording any procedures or penalties as indicated by the Mounted Range Master.
- The Score Keeper is responsible for providing the Match Director and Mounted Range Master with an “Order of Go.”
- The Score Keeper may also be the Timer Operator in a match.
- The penalties are recorded in a manner not confusing to the person inputting computer data. If there are five misses, for instance, don’t simply write “5,” since that can be confused as just a five second penalty. If there is one miss don’t write “5” thinking someone will assume it just means five seconds. They may read that as five misses and add on twenty-five seconds. It’s best to write 1/5, 2/10, or 3/15 for misses and 1/10 for a procedural. Add comments in the appropriate area on

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the score sheets to assist the person inputting the data.

Line Judge

- The Line Judge is the second Mounted Range Officer in the arena and is normally located at the opposite end of the arena from the Mounted Range Master. He is an extension of the Mounted Range Master's eyes and ears.
- The Line Judge counts missed targets and watches for procedural or penalties, but the Mounted Range Master has final authority.
- The Line Judge is responsible for controlling any riderless mount in the arena.
- The Line Judge protects the downed rider.
- The Line Judge assists the Mounted Range Master as needed or requested.
- The Line Judge checks to see if raking is needed around a barrel² or turning point or if any other unsafe conditions have arisen.
- The Line Judge may retrieve a dropped firearm and deliver it to the Mounted Range Master.

Announcer

The Announcer is an important, integral part in making the sport of Mounted Shooting an enjoyable event for both the competitor and the spectators.

- The Announcer is the MRO responsible for announcing the "order of go." As in other equestrian sports, the Announcer will normally announce "who is up," "who is on deck," "who's in the hole," and "who should be thinking about it." This keeps four contestants' alert and ready at all times.

² It is required all stage barrels be plastic, and they be closed at both ends.

- The Announcer reads individual competitors biographies, as requested.
- The Announcer reads sponsor's names, thanks balloon setters and event producers, and announces event details and items of interest as requested by the Match Director.
- The Announcer notifies the Mounted Range Master when the Timer Operator is ready, if requested to do so by the Timer Operator.
- The Announcer has no arena authority. Any questions from a shooter are directed to the Mounted Range Master.
- The Announcer does not coach or cajole a shooter.
- If the Timer Operator indicates a timer malfunction, the Announcer relays this fact loudly and clearly to the Mounted Range Master.
- An announcer alerts the Mounted Range Master of any unsafe conditions noted and otherwise communicates with arena officials as needed.

Armorer

- Armorers, are used at all SASS sanctioned events.
- An Armorer is responsible for loading and unloading contestant's guns. At smaller matches an Armorer may not be present and contestants will load and unload their own guns with match provided ammo at a Loading/Unloading Table.
- The Armorer is the MRO responsible for loading only the correct number of rounds in each revolver and ensuring no round is ever under the firing pin.
- The Loading Table is also a good place for the Armorer to observe the shooter's equipment for illegal modifications. A comment from the Armorer may save the

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competitor a possible disqualification from the match. Any illegal external modifications encountered at the loading table should be brought to the shooter's attention and corrected prior to shooting, if at all possible.

- These officers ensure safe muzzle direction is strictly observed and enforced when loading or unloading.
- At the Loading/Unloading Table, Armorers shall unload each of the firearms. The Armorer must visually inspect all chambers to ensure they are empty.
- Never allow a competitor to leave the Loading Table with a loaded firearm unless they are going to the arena.

Remember: The primary responsibility always rests with the competitor.

Shooters should always know the condition of their firearm and should never depend upon the Armorer to ensure their firearms are correctly loaded. The contestant is responsible to verify only five rounds have been loaded, the cylinder spins freely, and the revolver is indexed correctly.

A competitor may never blame the Armorer for an incorrectly loaded firearm, and at no time will this claim be considered grounds for dismissal of penalties.

THE MOUNTED RANGE MASTER

The purpose of trained club Mounted Range Officers is to provide the sport of Cowboy Mounted Shooting competent, firm, and fair officials in all levels of competition and allow Mounted Range Officers to perform any duty on the range.

The main objective of a Mounted Range Master is to **assist** the competitor **safely**

through a course of fire and be an authority in all areas of gun safety, any time, any place.

Mandatory Riders Safety Meeting

A mandatory riders meeting serves several purposes. A good rider's meeting can help competitors understand match guidelines, personnel infrastructure, and avoid gray areas with respect to policy, procedure, and protocol. The riders meeting should be held before any competition begins and be conducted by either the Match Director or the Mounted Range Master. This is not the place to skimp on time. A thorough and complete overview of the match, safety, and rules should be accomplished at this mandatory meeting. This meeting is the pathway to a successful match. A competitor is responsible to attend and to understand the information disseminated at this mandatory meeting.

IMPORTANT: ANNOUNCE THE MEETING START-TIME AND START THE MEETING ON TIME.

Make certain riders are advised of all Range Rules in APPENDIX A.

- The flag salute is accomplished at the riders meeting.
- Safety procedures, standards, and policies are explained.
- The Match Director shall declare a safe zone where handguns may be handled, inspected, and adjusted as needed and as area where the Armorers may load and unload handguns. Handguns will be holstered or otherwise secured at all other places to eliminate the possibility of sweeping the participants and/or other personnel.
- Stage design is explained. A range official may walk the course for a clearer definition of the stage requirements.
- Any questions regarding the SASS

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Mounted Handbook are addressed.

- Rules clarification pertinent to the match are discussed: For instance: Identify areas where horses may and may not be allowed, e.g., it is advisable to disallow horses at the Armorer station and the sign-up table.
- Advise where horses may be tied. It is advisable to disallow horses being tied to the arena and by the bit.
- Verbal instructions mandated at a rider's meeting take precedent over written rules but may not undermine standard safety rules.
- Certain rules may not be changed:
 - Safety issues,
 - Equipment rules, type of guns used, ammunition, etc.,
 - Tack as described in the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook,
 - Clothing as described in the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook. A competitor will not be allowed to compete unless they comply with the SASS dress requirements for Mounted Shooters. (Exceptions may be made for first year shooters who are in the process of getting started), and
 - Division move up requirements.
- Penalties and procedural rules,
- Rules' pertaining to re-rides,
- The Mounted Range Officials introduced,
- Time schedule of events explained, e.g., lunch breaks and team events,
- Other specific considerations such as corral cleanup, if required,
- Appeals procedures explained,
- Ask if there are any first time shooters. If so, time needs to be set aside for them to demonstrate they and their horse are ready for a competition. This is usually

accomplished by having the shooter walk, trot, or slow gallop the horse the length of the arena while shooting five targets. The decision of the Match Director or the Mounted Range Master will prevail. If the shooter or horse is not at a competition level, he/she should be encouraged to withdraw and watch the match, participate in setting targets by horseback, and attend a recommend Mounted Shooting training clinic or local club. Be encouraging and helpful.

Mounted Range Officer's Motto:

THE PURPOSE OF THE MOUNTED RANGE OFFICER IS TO *SAFELY* *ASSIST* THE MOUNTED SHOOTER THROUGH THE COURSE OF FIRE.

The two words in this statement paramount to why a Mounted Range Master is even necessary on the range are assist and safely. Let's look at these two words separately and how they affect one's actions and attitudes.

In this section of the course the term Mounted Range Officer will refer to the Chief Mounted Range Officer or Mounted Range Master.

Assist

As a Mounted Range Officer, you are there to assist the Mounted Shooter. You will notice the word "penalize" doesn't appear anywhere, but the word "assist" does. This is not to say you won't be called upon to assess penalties when they are appropriate, but it is NOT your first priority. You are there to prevent safety violations before they occur.

Mounted Range Officers are generally on horseback and positioned safely in the arena during competition. For example, one may be positioned in a corner near the start/finish line, announcer, and timer operator while the other is positioned at the opposite end corner of the arena.

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Assisting the shooter may take many forms. Some of the more important ways in which you can achieve this are:

1. **Information.** The best way to assist the Mounted Shooter is to give consistent, complete information about the stage, such as starting position, barrel turns, and mandatory order of targets. Most of the basic information will appear on the stage description, however, many of the smaller details will not. For example, the Mounted Shooter may know to get all white targets and in what order, but may not know they must be shot before rounding a barrel.

BE CONSISTENT in what you say and how you say it. Make sure only one Mounted Range Officer answers any questions for that stage. This way the same question is answered the same way every time. Every rider must hear the same information *the same way*. Always read the stage description word for word as it appears on the sheet, whether you have it memorized or not. These issues should be addressed at the riders meeting.

2. **Mounted Shooter Inventory.** Another good way to assist the Mounted Shooter is to visually inventory each shooter as he/she enters the arena and just before starting your range commands. This means you should inspect the Mounted Shooter to see if they have both revolvers and see if their tack is in place to complete the course of fire. For example, take a look at the horse's chin strap or tie down to see if anything is loose or broken.
3. **Assessment.** Assess the Mounted Shooter's condition. We have all seen a shooter who is suffering from a bad case of match nerves. Even though this person may have plenty of experience, adrenaline is a strong drug and has many adverse effects. It may be wise to suggest the

Mounted Shooter wait awhile longer before he shoots.

Do a visual assessment of the equipment on the horse. For example, assess the reins, cinch, tie down, and saddle, to see if anything is loose or broken. Do a visual assessment of a cart for broken axle, flat tire, and harness for any obvious equipment problems. Advise the shooter of such conditions and take necessary precautions. The shooter should leave the arena and may return when problems are corrected.

4. **Field check.** Before signaling the Mounted Shooter to begin the course of fire, the Mounted Range Master does a thorough field check. Be certain the line judge is in position; target setters are off the field; correct number and color of targets are set; barrels and all other stage design props are in place; any dangerous rocks or debris have been removed from field; spectators are a safe distance away from the rails; gates are closed; area around barrels is safe; and, timer is ready.
5. **Targets and Target Setting.** The standard targets in shooting competitions are helium quality balloons. When correctly inflated, a target (balloon) will measure six to nine inches in diameter. Care is taken to ensure the targets are of uniform size for all competitors.

The Mounted Range Officers should observe the targets that have been set and any that are not uniform in size should be brought to the Mounted Range Master's attention. The Mounted Range Master will change out targets at the competitor's request. Again note: the Mounted Range Officers ensure ten targets have been set, five each of differing colors, and they are placed correctly in the stage design.

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Remember: The primary responsibility always rests with the competitor.

Target setting prior to each competitor's ride is normally accomplished by riders on horseback or setters on foot. It has been found setting on foot is accomplished much faster versus setting on horseback. Many clubs network with the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, ROTC members, or 4H members to accomplish the target setting. If the target setters are minors, there should be adult supervision at all times.

Range officials should be aware that in most cases individuals that set balloons are not familiar with Mounted Shooting, horses, and firearms. Prior to the start of the match the target setters should be instructed in basic safety procedures. For example:

- Enter the arena only when told to do so by a designated range official.
 - Do not reenter the arena to reset a broken or fallen target unless told to do so by the designated range official.
 - In case of equipment malfunction, such as electricity, air compressor, or balloon table, the target setting staff should notify the Mounted Range Master or Match Director immediately.
6. **Target Setting on Horseback.** At smaller matches or one-day matches, target setting is often accomplished on horseback by the competitors themselves, non-competitors on horseback, or a combination of both. In either case, the normal procedure is:
- The Match Director or Mounted Range Master makes everyone aware of the procedure to be used for setting targets.
 - Target setters may be selected or volunteer for each stage. The options

are many. For example: Each contestant sets targets for one stage taking into consideration his/her position in the "order of go."

- When setting targets by horseback, the target setters may be allowed to remain in the arena during a "go."
- The number of horseback target setters will normally be four: two picking up target sticks on which the targets have been broken, and, two setting fresh targets, five of each color. The four target setters on horseback will normally be located at the end of the arena opposite the start/finish line with two at either corner to minimize distraction to the horse and shooter competing on that stage.
- To keep things moving quickly between riders, the two riders setting the targets should pick up five targets each prior to going to the end of the arena.

Remember: The primary responsibility always rests with the competitor.

7. **Anticipate.** With time and experience, you will be able to anticipate safety issues that may arise. If you have done a thorough shooter inventory, assessment, and field check, you may prevent a shooter from acquiring penalties or committing an unsafe act. You will be able to prevent a Mounted Shooter or onlookers from harmful situations. This is the mark of a truly good Mounted Range Officer.
8. **Coaching.** The Mounted Range Officer should coach only when someone looks momentarily confused or lost as to what to do next. Simply ask if the Mounted Shooter understands the course of fire. Assist as needed. The Mounted Shooter is responsible for understanding the basic

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stage design; however, reasonable coaching is appropriate.

9. **Go signal.** A Mounted Shooter must not begin the course of fire without a “go signal³” from the Mounted Range Master. Complete steps 2-6 above, for each rider.

Standard Range Commands are used in almost every established shooting sport. It is the most efficient way to run a match. Also, it allows shooters from all over the world to understand range procedures, even if they don't speak English fluently. We're not saying you have to say the range commands exactly word for word, but the closer the better. For instance, instead of “Are you ready” the term “Is the cowboy ready” is certainly acceptable. After all, the western flavor and spirit of our game allows for colorful individuality.

There is no reason Safety, Efficiency, and Having Fun can't all co-exist! Remember, SPEAK UP! Many competitors are wearing ear protection, and crowd distractions may affect hearing.

- The Mounted Range Master, in a loud and clear voice, should ask the shooter, “Are you ready?”
- A negative response requires additional explanation. Answer any shooter's question in a clear and consistent manner. Remember: never make a shooter feel as though he/she is being rushed.
- After the shooter has indicated they are ready, the Range Master should then say in a loud and clear voice, “You may start on my signal.”
- When ready, the signal is given by pointing with the arm and a flag or similar signal in the direction of go.

³ The MRO must use a flag or similar signal with the arm held straight out pointing in the direction of go. Never use across the body arm movements as this is often hard to see and can be confusing.

Never use across the body arm movements as this is often hard to see and can be confusing.

Remember: A contestant is determined to have engaged the course once they have crossed the plane of the start/finish line or is on the clock. At that point, they accept the stage as it is. Thereafter, any shot fired or mechanical malfunctions of firearm or gear, including the horse, will not constitute a re-ride. If the horse and rider accidentally break the start timer during warm-up and before the Range Master gives the “go-signal” the contestant will incur no penalty and the timer shall be reset. The rider will be given a warning for that stage, and the scorekeeper informed. A second breakage of the timer will result in a 99.99 second penalty, a stage DQ.

10. **Attitude.** The best Mounted Range Officers have the best attitude. If you can do your job well *and* have fun too, then you will find the Mounted Shooters generally have a good time. You will additionally find you are less likely to have any serious confrontations, and the Mounted Shooters as a whole will work more efficiently. Remember, it's *your* attitude that sets the mood for the entire match.
11. **Down horse and/or rider.** In the event a rider becomes un-mounted or a horse falls and both horse and rider go down, approach the situation with extreme caution. Visually assess the physical condition of both horse and rider before attempting to move or reposition either. Each occurrence will be different. The Mounted Range Officer will assist the rider, and the line judge will lead the horse a safe distance away. The ride is over. Procure assistance as needed—collect firearms and escort shooter and

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horse off the field. In case of serious injuries, immediately seek the assistance of qualified medical personnel. Never attempt to move or reposition a person with spinal injuries.

Safety

Safety, as it applies here, has nothing to do with the rules per se. When we talk about assisting the Mounted Shooter through a course of fire safely, we mean “without incident.” An accident or incident has the potential for injury and is of grave concern to all who are exposed to the danger, which naturally includes the Range Staff. Therefore, it is critical to do what is necessary to avoid or prevent such incidents from occurring. How is this accomplished?

SASS has provided a comprehensive Mounted Shooting Course of Fire book. While the stages are not required for use, they are strongly recommended for safety and consistency.

1. **Course Design.** Some course designs are unsafe and should be avoided or changed. Example: Targets are set in a fashion whereby a Mounted Shooter is aiming toward the fence and sweeping the crowd with a gun. Solution: Set the targets further into the center of the arena or design the course so the Mounted Shooter approaches the targets from another direction.

Assess stage design prior to the match. Don't be afraid to refuse to allow an unsafe stage to be shot by the Mounted Shooters. Inform the Match Director of your suggestions for the stage to be made safe before proceeding. If there is no corrective action, protest with your feet.

2. **Anticipate.** Again, if you can anticipate what the rider may do, you may be able to prevent an unsafe situation. Perform a

walk through of the stage before the first Mounted Shooter begins the course of fire to determine any potentially unsafe angles of target placement. Make necessary adjustments.

3. **Watch the Mounted Shooter.** Avoid distractions from outside the arena! Watch the Mounted Shooter. It is important to observe the shooter's gun handling. You can identify where the gun is pointing and what target the shooter is engaging. Be sure the muzzle of the gun is pointing down field and toward the center of the arena. This is critical if you have to make a call pertaining to correct target engagement.

Pay close attention to the path the horse and rider are taking. This is critical if you have to make a call pertaining to the correct path according to the stage design.

The Mounted Range Officer can stop the shooter if there is a problem with the horse, timer, or an unsafe condition arises during the stage run.

4. **Stopping the Stage.** In order to stop an unsafe act or in the event the stage must be stopped, it must be accomplished safely. The announcer may attempt to get the attention of the rider. The Mounted Range Officer and/or Line Judge should ride onto the field as needed. The Mounted Range Officer should communicate clearly with the Mounted Shooter. The field should then be cleared and the match resumed safely and appropriately as directed by the Mounted Range Master.

5. **Always be alert!** After you have run several competitors through a stage, you may get tired or lazy about being alert to all that is necessary to stay up with the Mounted Shooters. If a Mounted Shooter

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commits an unsafe act, you may not be in a position to react accordingly.

If you are getting tired, or do not feel completely alert, do not hesitate to pass off the duty to another Mounted Range Officer!

SCORING

SASS Mounted matches are scored by the fastest adjusted time. Adjusted time is defined as time plus penalties and procedural. The stage disqualification score is 99.99 seconds. The maximum score on any stage is 99.99 seconds.

Penalty Overview

A “miss” is defined as the failure to hit the engaged target. Engaging a target is defined as attempting to fire a round at the target.

Two target rule: If a contestant hits two or more balloons of the same color with one shot, the remaining round may be used to pick up a target of that same color that may have been missed while maintaining the designated course of fire.

5-Second Penalties

- Each missed target.
- Dropped gun (plus unfired rounds, if any).
- Failure to re-holster the first revolver used.
- Knocked over barrel.
- Failure to engage a target broken by nature (engage is defined as attempting to fire a round at the broken target).

10-Second Penalties

Only one ten-second procedural penalty may be given per stage

- Failure rider to follow course pattern.
- Rider engaging the stage in an order other

than as required by stage descriptions.

- Knocking over rails, panels, structures, or other devices intended for controlling rider and horse as stipulated by the Mounted Range Master.

Exceptions are always allowed for those unable to comply with specific stage procedures due to physical limitations, with no procedural penalties assessed (for example, a stage that requires mounting or dismounting from your horse).

Re-Rides

At all SASS Sanctioned Annual, State, Regional, National, and World Championship matches, **no re-rides** will be given after the rider has broken the timer beam or the plane of the start/finish line, **except for:**

- Prop or match equipment failure.
- A Range Officer impeding the progress of the shooter.
- Timer failure or unrecorded time.

... as determined by the Mounted Range Master. In this case, the shooter starts over with no misses or penalties.

Stage Disqualification

- Rider that becomes dismounted
- An accidental discharge of a round outside the arena before or after a run will be a 99.99 second score for the stage they were loaded for. If the competitor reloads and shoots the pattern he or she shall be disqualified from the match.
- Rider crossing the start/finish line prior to finishing the course.
- Carrying more than five rounds of ammunition in his/her gun.
- Knowingly uses more than one horse in competition.
- The use or presence of any outlawed clothing item as described in the SASS

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Mounted Shooting Handbook

Match Disqualification

- Belligerent attitude/unsportsmanlike-like conduct.
- Contestant shooting under the influence of alcohol, prescription, or other medication that may impair the shooter's physical or mental abilities.
- Shooting ammunition other than match provided ammunition.
- Mistreating or abusing a horse.
- Carrying more than five rounds in his/her gun.
- After an accidental discharge of a round outside the arena before or after a run will be a 99.99 second score for the stage they were loaded for. If the competitor reloads and shoots the pattern he or she shall be disqualified from the match.
- Carrying live ammunition on his/her person or mount.
- Knowingly uses more than one horse in competition.

The MRO makes the call for all penalties. It is vitally important to make the call as he sees it. Don't be a "over-zealous," but be clear and firm. If there is any question regarding the call, the first order is to check with the other arena officials (did it happen and what is the rule ...). If the rider has earned a penalty, it should be assessed ... otherwise the riders who played the game fair are being penalized. Do not allow yourself to be badgered by the rider, his club-mates, or anyone else.

Appeals Procedure

It is expected the Mounted Range Officers will have the primary responsibility for observing and resolving all safety related matters occurring in and around the arena area. The Mounted Range Master will make

the final determination of penalties and scores. Due care and diligence for the shooter will be taken into consideration when determining whether or not a penalty is valid. The benefit of the doubt goes to the shooter.

In the event a competitor doesn't agree with a Mounted Range Master's final penalty or assessment, the competitor has the right to "politely" request the Match Director review the call. The Mounted Range Master's call can be overruled only in the case of a rule or policy interpretation.

It is recommended the Match Director utilize a number of Mounted Range Masters or Territorial Governors to hear the shooter's complaint and make a judgment. Three are suggested (three break a tie).

The Match Director administers the hearing. The Match Director has no vote. At the hearing the Mounted Range Master's presentation and the shooter's presentation will be heard. Input to the hearing may include observations by the Line Judge, Announcer, Timer Operator, and Score Keeper.

Fees are often charged to file a protest, preventing frivolous protests. The fees are normally returned if the protest is upheld. Experience has shown protests rarely occur on well designed and thought out stages.

THE MOUNTED RANGE OFFICER ATTITUDE

- Be courteous and considerate of your fellow competitors. Never be over zealous in your duties.
- Always be firm, but fair.
- When penalizing a contestant, do not allow yourself to be intimidated by the competitor. Stand your ground, but do so in a professional manner.

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- Don't be a "hard-ass."
- Be helpful to the competitor—learn to identify the seasoned Mounted Shooters from the newer Mounted Shooters—you can usually tell by their manner and confidence. If seasoned Mounted Shooters need to know something, they'll usually ask. If newer Mounted Shooters need help or coaching, give them all they need. Pay closer attention to newer Mounted Shooters—from beginning to the end of the match.
- **Always refer to the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook when stating the rules.** It is advisable to carry a copy of this book with you on the range at all times. Don't quote memory; you may be wrong. Enforce the rules as written, not what you think they mean. The Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course and the Mounted Range Officer Training Course offer interpretations to the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook that will be helpful in making the correct call.
- If you are unsure of a call, tell the competitor, "I am going to check the rules before I make the call, please leave the arena," then check your Handbook, confer with the Line Judge, another certified MRO, Mounted Range Master, or the Match Director as needed. Do not be pressured to hurry a call if you are unsure. Do what is necessary to avoid hard feelings that occur from making bad calls. Keep the match moving and the contestants competing. Advise the scorekeeper of the status and make the call when prepared to do so.
- Make the call, and call them the way you see them! There are checks and balances in place. In cases of rule and policy interpretation, you may be overruled. If you are overruled, don't take it personally. Be glad for the competitor if it goes in his/her favor.
- Never allow a competitor to badger, abuse, or argue with you or any other match official. Be firm and fair, but if they persist, don't argue with them. This is a gun sport, not a tennis match! Heated words between folks wearing firearms are not acceptable. Bring this type of behavior immediately to the attention of the Mounted Range Master or Match Director.
- Always read the Handbook from the contestant's viewpoint.
- Always give the contestant the benefit of doubt.

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“APPENDIX A”

Range Rules

All participants are safety officers; however, it is the ultimate responsibility of the **Mounted Range Officers to assure the safety rules are consistently followed.** The following outlines certain safety violations but is not limited to all safety considerations. These may result in safety warning or stage or match disqualification.

Remember: The primary responsibility rests with the competitor to have knowledge of the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook and to comply with the rules.

- Every firearm must be treated with respect. Covering or sweeping an individual or group with the muzzle of an empty gun is not allowed and is a minor safety violation
- All shooters must demonstrate rudimentary familiarity and proficiency with the firearms being used. While monthly club matches and practices are certainly an excellent training ground, SASS matches are not the forum in which to learn basic firearms handling. Basic firearms safety and rudimentary proficiency training are more appropriately learned under non-match conditions. SASS matches can then be used to mature the learned skills.
- Handling guns outside the arena should be avoided. But if necessary, should be limited to safe areas.
- No firearm should be left unsupervised in a pommel holster rig or at any other time whether mounted or dismounted.
- All firearms will remain unloaded except when preparing to enter the arena.
- Never load guns while on horseback.
- Revolvers are always loaded with only five rounds and the hammer lowered and resting on the empty chamber.
- Loading more than five rounds will result in a match disqualification.
- Comply with “no horse zones.” (For example, no horses in town, no horses at Armorer station, and no horses tied to the arena, no horses at the sign-up table.)
- No cocked revolver may ever leave a shooter’s hand. This also means from one hand to the other.
- Handguns are returned to leather (re-holstered) with the hammer down on a spent case or empty chamber at the conclusion of the gun’s immediate use, unless the stage description specifically directs otherwise.
- No “spinning” of handguns is allowed.
- Any unsafe gun handling in the course of a draw from the holster or any “fanning” is a stage disqualification. NOTE: “Slip-hammering” is not the same as fanning, and is legal.
- A gun dropped prior to starting the course will be picked up by the Mounted Range Master and inspected for blockage or debris propellants in the barrel. The shooter may leave the arena to clean the revolver and return to the order of go at a later time.
- A dropped gun after crossing the finish line does not affect the shooter’s score. The Mounted Range Master will retrieve and inspect the gun for blockage or debris.
- Running starts into the arena are not allowed.
- A competitor must use the same horse through the entire match. Exception: A backup horse may be used if the primary horse is physically unfit to continue the match. The backup horse must be ridden to complete the match.

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- Eye and hearing protection should be worn by all competitors when in the arena.
- Only registered competitors may wear firearms.
- No competitor may ingest any substance that may 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. **A violation of this rule will result in a Match Disqualification and ejection from the range.**
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the arena for all competitors, range officers, and range officials until all shooting is over for the day and firearms have been stored. You must also take into consideration the rules of the specific range in this matter and respect those rules. **A violation of this rule will result in a Match Disqualification.**
- All contestants are responsible that the correct amount of ammunition is loaded in each gun, to check primers, cylinder rotation, correct indexing, or any other condition that may inhibit their ability to complete the course.
- All contestants are responsible to supervise their firearms in pommel holsters or at any other time whether mounted or dismounted.
- All contestants are responsible that targets are set appropriately, regarding color, size, and placement on the course.
- All contestants are responsible for final field check, i.e., the arena is clear of personnel and safe before engaging the course.
- All contestants are responsible to adhere to the Safety Guidelines and Rules outlined in the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook and the Range Rules in the MRO-I Course.
- All contestants assume all responsibility for participation in these events.
- All contestants are responsible to take immediate action to remedy any unsafe condition or confront anyone whose conduct is unsafe.
- A competitor is responsible to attend and understand the information disseminated at a mandatory riders meeting.
- All contestants are responsible for knowledge of the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook and the MRO Safety Courses.

“APPENDIX B”

Contestant’s Responsibility

At all SASS sanctioned Mounted Shooting matches, no matter what size, the contestants have a responsibility to ensure safety and consistency through their own conduct. All contestants are safety officers. The following describes, but is not limited to, rules and disciplines for all contestants at a SASS sanctioned match:

- All contestants are responsible for their own safety and the safety of their mount.
- All contestants are responsible for the working condition of their equipment, including firearms, saddles, and tack.

The 10 “Commandments”

- Safety first.
- Keep it fun.
- Use common sense.
- The benefit of the doubt goes to the shooter.

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- Treat everyone as you would like to be treated.
- Treat everyone equally (Sam Colt made us that way).
- Keep the stage moving (if a problem arises, take it out of and away from the arena).
- Make sure all the assignments are covered.
- Coach when needed.
- Keep it simple.

Summary

The purpose of trained club Mounted Range Officers is to provide the sport of SASS Mounted Shooting competent, firm, and fair officials in all levels of competition and allow Mounted Range Masters to perform any duty on the range. The Mounted Range Master can make or break a mounted match.

The SASS goal is to provide a safe and fun shooting experience. The Mounted Range Officer's role is to keep the match running efficiently, safely, and consistently. The main objective of a Mounted Range Master is to assist the competitor safely through a course of fire, and be an authority in all areas of safety, any time, any place.

BE SAFE, HAVE FUN, BE SAFE!

Revolver Modifications and Restrictions

Originals and approved replicas of single action revolvers manufactured during the period from approximately 1860 until 1899 are the only revolvers approved for use in SASS Mounted match competition.

Regardless of the model or approved type, revolvers shall be maintained in as original exterior condition as possible, and must look

period. The only allowed exceptions are listed below:

Pistol Calibers

- Must be center fire cartridge of .45 caliber (no exceptions).

Stocks or Grips

- Contemporary rubber grips, modern target grips, and grip tape are not allowed. Replacement grips of wood, ivory, pearl, stag horn, bone, and the like are acceptable so long as they are not severely customized to constitute a “target” grip. That is, they must be of original profile and scale.

Acceptable Exterior Gun Modifications

- Changing barrel lengths on six-guns.
- Bullseye or crescent ejector rod heads on six-guns.
- 1860 Colt grip frames on 1873 Colts or clones.
- Engraving as a decorative embellishment.
- Bird'shead grips.
- Shortened cylinder pins.
- Modifying pistol sights by filing to shoot point of aim, so long as ‘period’ appearing sights are retained with a minimum of 3/16 inches. Includes replacing percussion post front sights on conversions with higher, period blade sights.
- Hammer knurling.
- Turned down hammers as long as there is no lateral addition or welded add-ons and the hammers are manufactured as described in the SASS Mounted Handbook.

Un-acceptable Exterior Gun Modifications

- Removal of front sight.
- Removal of the ejector rod.

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- Adjustable front sights.
- Rubber grips.
- “Slip Hammer” triggers must be operational.
- “One-of-a-kind,” custom-made grip frames. The side profile for grip frames cannot be altered

Illegal Items

- Colored sights (such as day-glow orange or red paint).
- Ammunition other than match provided ammunition.
- Spandex or other modern body-hugging material, fitted tops.
- Modern shooting gloves.
- Short sleeve shirts (Male competitors only). Women, see dress requirements for women in the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook.
- Modern feathered cowboy hats. (See exceptions in the SASS Mounted Shooters Handbook.)
- Hip-hugger or Designer jeans.
- Ball caps.
- Tank tops.
- Athletic shoes or combat boots.
- Clothing displaying manufacturer’s or sponsor’s logos. **Manufacturer’s labels are “OK.”**
- Nylon, plastic, or Velcro accouterments except for splint boots, cinches, bell boots, and other horse protective devices.
- Non-leather saddles.

Interchangeability of Parts Rule

You may interchange any part from one revolver to another revolver from the same manufacturer if the part or parts can be exchanged without major modifications. Modifications allowed would have to be

accomplished with simple hand tools (hacksaw, files, etc.) and not by machining, welding, grinding, or major recontouring or external shaping of any parts. Some examples of this rule are: the exchange of a Single Action Army grip frame with an 1860 Army frame and vice versa, the exchange of a Ruger Bisley Grip frame assembly and hammer on a Vaquero, and the exchange of a Ruger Super Blackhawk hammer with a standard Ruger Blackhawk hammer.

PHYSICALLY DISADVANTAGED SHOOTERS MAY MAKE MODIFICATIONS TO THEIR FIREARMS THAT WILL ALLOW THEM TO OPERATE THEIR FIREARM SAFELY THROUGH THE FULL RANGE OF MOTIONS NECESSARY TO COMPETE IN A COWBOY MOUNTED SHOOTING MATCH. THESE MODIFICATIONS MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE MOUNTED RANGE MASTER AND MATCH DIRECTOR.

NO FIREARM MAY BE USED IN MAIN, TEAM, OR SIDE MATCHES THAT CONFLICT WITH ANY OF THE RULES LISTED IN THIS SUBSECTION. NO MODIFICATIONS OR ALTERATIONS OTHER THAN THOSE LISTED MAY BE INCORPORATED ON FIREARMS USED IN MAIN, TEAM, OR SIDE MATCHES.