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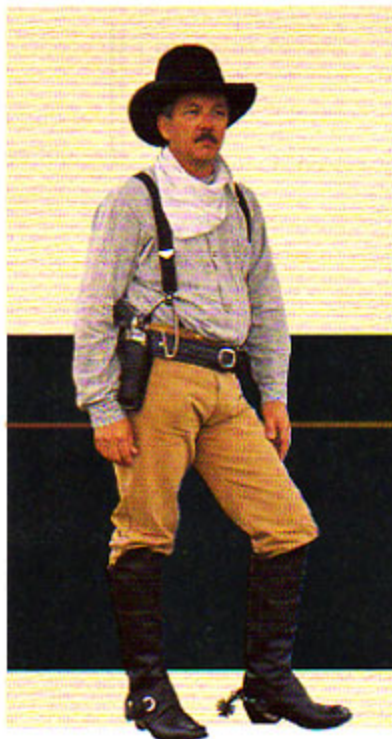
ALL ABOUT THE NEW **SASS/CAS** COMPETITION CATEGORY

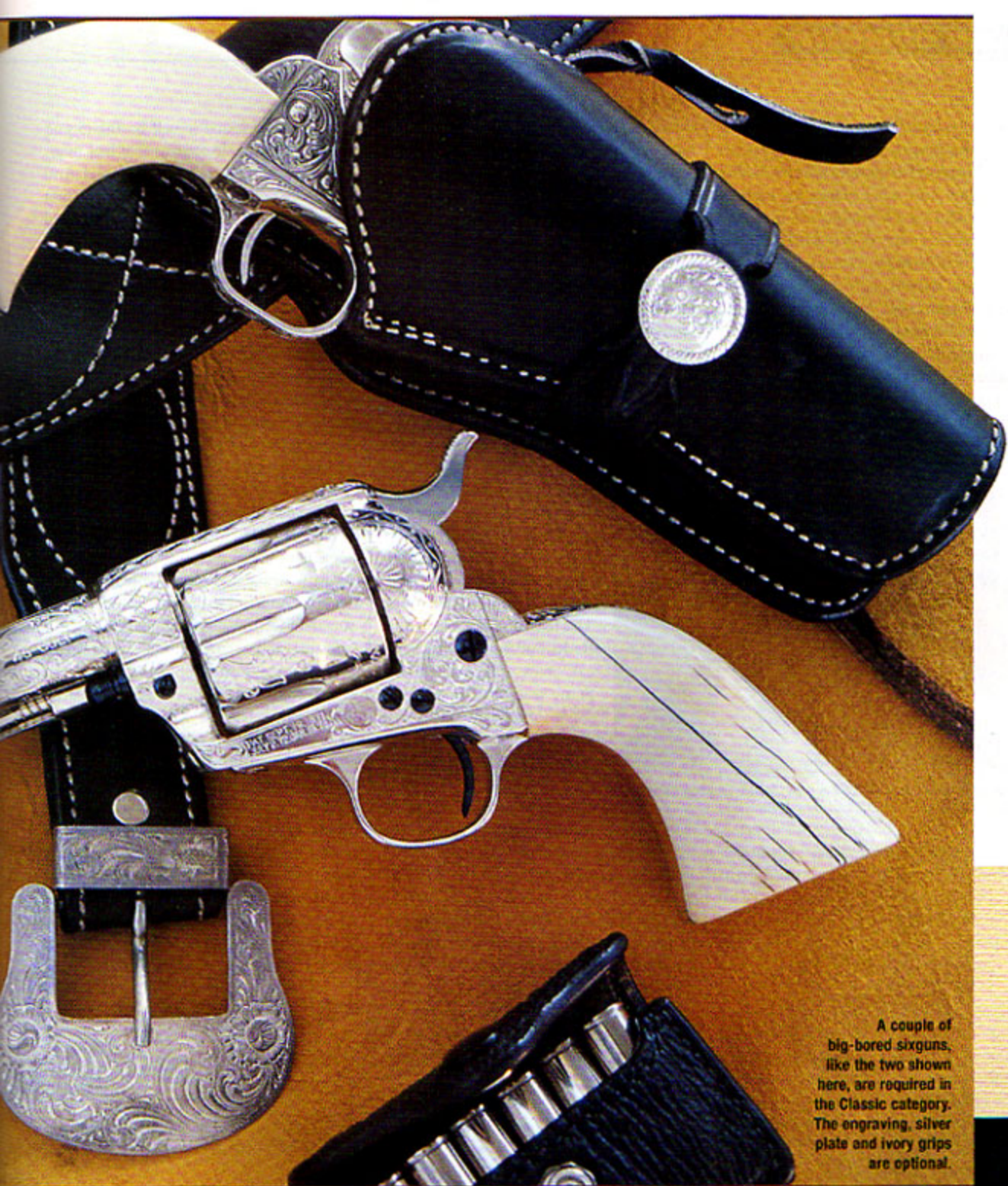
BY TODD LOFGREN

If you've been involved with or have followed the evolution of Cowboy Action Shooting

at all, then you've got to be aware of the continuing controversy concerning the "gamer" versus...well, the "non-gamer." Not an issue of the *Cowboy Chronicle* (the official newsletter of the Single Action Shooting Society) goes by where this subject isn't discussed. It pretty much started with gun calibers then moved to holsters, dress, gun modifications, and, to some extent, "attitudes." Let's face it, if you 1) have a competition, and 2) use a timer and consider time a factor of performance, then those among us with that insatiable desire to win (isn't that what one strives to do in a "competition"?) will look for ways to "speed things up." In a perfect world (I'm not sure that "perfect" is the right word here), if we wanted to ensure that everyone was competing on a "leveled playing field," then this sport would require that we would all dress alike and compete with identical weaponry, firing ammunition from the same source. Only then could we accurately

The major-caliber handguns, traditional boots with spurs, the scarf worn loosely around his neck coupled with pocket watch and chain would qualify the author here to compete in the Classic Cowboy category, provided his rifle and shotgun were proper for this class.





A couple of big-bored sixguns, like the two shown here, are required in the Classic category. The engraving, silver plate and ivory grips are optional.



identify the true "top gun" or "champion" among us. But how boring would that be? What this sport encourages is individuality in costume and name. Once an identity from the Old West is established, then costume and weaponry is acquired that personifies that identity. The SASS Shooter's Handbook stresses authenticity in dress and armament and even one's registered shooting alias is exclusively awarded.

I guess I'm what a good many SASS members would call a "gamer." I come from an IPSC background and love the "run and gun" aspect of this shooting sport. In a four-year period, I went from



These boys would qualify for the new Classic Cowboy category.

shooting a single-stacked .45 to a single-stacked .38 Super to a wide-bodied high-cap .38 Super wearing a red dot sight—all to remain competitive in my sport. This equipment race got a little overwhelming but I must admit I loved every minute of it. I've been shooting my same custom Caspian/Tasco PDP3 equipped race pistol for about ten years now and still feel well equipped with it even though many new features and options have come into being since I had it built.

The same thing happened to me in Cowboy Action Shooting. My first pair of Cowboy pistols weren't really a pair. Oh, they were both Colt SAAs, but one fired the .44 Special round and the other the .45 Colt. I was shooting an original Winchester 92 carbine at the time in .44-40. Juggling those three different cartridges and ensuring each gun was fed the right round was quite a challenge, especially during the heat of competition. All went pretty well, but I must admit that I had a couple of really odd-looking empty cases

in my brass bag when I got home from a couple of matches.

I soon built a second .45 Colt SAA to match my first gun and this made keeping track of the right rounds much easier. Not knowing any better at the time, I dialed both of these pistols in with a pretty stout load consisting of a 255-grain hardcast lead slug over 8 grains of Unique. As this sport evolved, it dawned on many of us that it didn't take 400+ foot/pounds of energy to score a hit. Bullet weights got lighter and powder charges smaller. Like the .38 Super in IPSC, it soon became apparent that the .38 Special round could accomplish everything we needed to in CAS with a lot less noise and recoil.

My next acquisition consisted of a pair of nickel-plated Colt Single Action Armies chambered in .357 Magnum. The first one came easy in a trade, but finding an identical mate proved elusive. Some searching found me a 4-3/4-inch barrel and cylinder of proper length and caliber, and I had these fitted up to a nicked .45 Colt I already owned. I replaced my .44-40 Winchester 92 with a very similar, but of much more recent manufacture, Browning Model 92 .357 Magnum.

When I first started shooting Cowboy seriously (at least in the annual competitions held in my neck of the woods), I wore all the Cowboy accouterments I owned. Proudly fastened to the knee-high shotgun boots I wore were a pair of gorgeously blued and silver-inlaid spurs sporting some pretty large 2-inch "Mexican" rowels complete with jingle bobs that, due to the extreme drop of the shank, caused the rowels to drag the ground. This wasn't ordinarily too big a handicap, at least not until I shot an annual match at Blue Lake near Eureka, California. Here the ranges ran through an area overgrown with tall, reed-like grass. Between every

shooting bay I found myself having to pull and cut away a bale of grass that had managed to wind itself around each rowel. And that doesn't even take into account the first time I went into a kneeling position and managed to ram the rowel from my right spur up—well, you get the picture! The spurs came off that day and I have to admit I've never worn them since.

I also used to wear a pocket watch that ran on a chain from my left suspender across my midsection to the watch pocket of my pants. About the second time I caught the hammer of my right pistol in that chain while drawing, the watch came off and finished the match in the box on my gun cart.

There is a line I won't cross, though. My guns have all been tuned but none have been re-engineered to gain an advantage. My boots have their original leather soles and I always wear my neckerchief knotted around my neck. And, unless the stage calls for it, my 10-gallon Stetson always remains in place.

Some of us are not so restrained. Extremes I've heard about that have been undertaken in the hopes of a higher placed finish have included the use of the .32 S&W short cartridge in .32 H&R Magnum chambered pistols or specifically designed speed holsters that position both pistols on the belly line within inches of each other. There are rumors (actually, it's not a rumor, as I've seen the modified parts) that with re-engineered linkage, a Winchester 73's lever throw can be shortened so it can be worked without the hand leaving the pistol grip. I've seen shotgun belts so designed that the rounds practically lie



This pair of Colt SAAs, housed in the gorgeous holster rig from Walter Ostin, together with the Cimarron F.A. Co. replica 73 and the external-hammered Bounty Hunter II shotgun from European American Armory would be perfect for use in Classic Cowboy.

perpendicular to the shooter's body for a quick grasp. So as not to sound too hypocritical here, let me state that were I a "contender" for something like a world championship title, I would employ every advantage that the rules would allow to beat my competition. With that said, let's get to the heart of this article.

Newest Cowboy Category

This long dissertational entry to this article (it didn't start off to be this long) is my way of introducing you to the Single Action Shooting Society's newest Cowboy category. Designed to deal with some of the issues detailed above, this new category is called "Classic" Cowboy. According to the April 2003 *SASS Shooter's Handbook* (available only online at this point), to compete in the "Classic" Cowboy category your handguns must be of the "traditional" type (i.e., have non-adjustable traditional notched-type sights). However, whereas you can shoot revolvers chambered as small

what it was intended to accomplish.

One's scattergun, in keeping with the "spirit" of this new category, must be either an external-hammered double or of the lever action type like the Model 1887 or 1901 Winchester.

In order to keep our Classic Cowboy competitors adequately and appropriately dressed, their costuming must include at least three of the following listed items and these must be worn for the duration of the entire match, including the awards ceremony: chaps, spurs, cuffs, a scarf worn loosely around the neck or with scarf slide, tie, vest, pocket watch with full-length chain and/or jacket. No straw hats are allowed.

For the ladies, in addition to the above, they may also choose from the below listed items to compete in this category: period watch, split riding skirt, bustle, hoops, corset, Victorian-style hat (straw allowed), period jewelry, period hair ornaments, snood (what's a snood?), reticule (period handbag), period lace-up shoes, camisole,

"When actually shooting one's pistols in Classic Cowboy, they must be shot as described in the requirements of the Duelist category."

as the .32 caliber in other categories, in Classic, they must have a bore size of at least .40 of an inch or better. This would include rounds like the .38-40 (whose actual bore size is .401 of an inch), the .44 Special, .44 Russian, .44 Magnum, .44-40, .45 Schofield, and .45 Colt. For those shooting a percussion revolver, these must be of .36 caliber or larger. This caliber restriction should serve to appease those who pooh-pooh the smaller bored speedsters.

For ammo in the Classic category, only SASS legal ammo, whether employing a smokeless or black powder propellant, is acceptable. Ammunition for short guns must have a velocity not to exceed 1000 feet per second (fps).

Rifles in the Classic category are limited to those originally produced in 1873 or earlier. This would include the 1866 and 1873 Winchesters and the Henry rifle or replicas thereof. To my knowledge, the "improved" linkage for these rifles that has been developed and is in use hasn't been addressed, although in my opinion it should be, especially when dealing with this category and

bloomers, fishnet stockings, feathered boa, or cape.

When actually shooting one's pistols in Classic Cowboy, they must be shot as described in the requirements of the Duelist category. That is, the pistols must be cocked and fired one-handed, unsupported. The revolver, hand, or shooting arm must not be touched by the off-hand except when resolving a malfunctioning pistol problem.

No Buscadero or drop loop holster rigs are allowed. Boots must be of the traditional design with non-grip enhancing soles. One's hat must be worn for the entire match.

Well, there you have it. The new Classic Cowboy category has pretty well addressed those issues that have been most complained about by a good many shooters. I know, first hand, that most of the requirements cited in this new category will slow down the speediest of us a little should we decide to shoot in this class. I like my smaller bored SAAs and Winchester 97 pump gun so I don't think I'll switch categories just yet. But, those amongst us who

want to shoot their big boomer and look their "cowboiest" whilst doing so will probably want to compete in this newest of Cowboy categories.

Final Notes

The latest edition to the *SASS Shooter's Handbook* can be found online at www.sassnet.com. I'm sure that one can find an appropriate category that fits one's personality, temperament, and speed to compete in. If you haven't given Cowboy Action Shooting a try and you're looking for a shooting sport that will satisfy that inner child that belongs to all of us, do yourself a favor and check out Cowboy Action Shooting. ☺

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