

SASS MOUNTED SHOOTING™

Range Officer Training Course Level II



Compiled and Edited
By
The Wild Bunch
Version 2.0
February 2005

COPYRIGHT 2003–2005 SINGLE SHOOTING SOCIETY, INC.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Table of Contents

SETUP	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
BEFORE THE MATCH	1
Medical Assistance Plan	1
Safety Evacuation Plan	1
Non-Shooter Safety	1
Appeals Procedure	1
Range Safety Rules	2
MOUNTED RANGE OFFICER DUTIES	2
Rider Evaluation	2
Impairments	2
Firearms	2
Leather	2
Clothing	2
Tack	2
Stage Inspection	2
The Course of Fire	2
Incidents	3
Prop Failure	3
Tripping or Falling	3
Timer Malfunction	3
CART DIVISION	3
Stage Design	3
Categories	4
SAFETY	4
STAGE DESIGN	4
Stage Instructions	4
General Guide Lines	5
Tools	5
STAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES	6
Timer Placement	6
Mounting/Dismounting	6
Jumping	6
Pole Bending	6
Luck of the draw	6
Other	6
Movement	6
Time and Balance	7
Targets	7
Props	7
Materials	8
Target Stands	8
Be Prepared	8
Target Angles	8
SUMMARY	8

Mounted Range Officer II - Setup

SETUP

Acknowledgements

The design and production of this course has evolved from the national implementation of the SASS® Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course. This course is the culmination of the dedicated collaborative efforts of Johnnie Concho, Wildcat Kate, Buck Cantrel, and Chiz.

Registration

Students interested in taking the SASS® Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II:

- " Must be a SASS® Member
- " Must have completed SASS® Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course.

A Mounted Range Officer Instructor must have participated in Cowboy Mounted Shooting matches for at least six months. A Mounted Range Master must have more than a year of competition status or sufficient experience as deemed by the Match Director or Mounted Range Officer Instructor.

Students are required to register with the SASS® Range Officer Instructor at least 10 days prior to the class by submitting the Range Officer Training Registration Form. Each registration must be submitted to SASS® at least seven days prior to the class for SASS® membership and Range Operations Safety Course status verification. SASS® Range Officer Instructors are required to verify minimum length of time the student has been an active Cowboy Mounted Shooter.

Training Fees

The SASS® Range Office Training Course is \$25, and students must pay on the day of the

class. Advance registration payments are not required.

Official Certification of Completion

Upon receipt of registration fees, completed test, and trainer confirmation, SASS® will issue an official certification of completion certificate and pin directly to the member. As of December 7, 2005 this course is required for a person to hold the position of Territorial Governor for a SASS® affiliated Mounted Shooting club. Persons holding this position as of December 7, 2004 have a one-year grace period to complete the course in order to continue as a Territorial Governor.

Part I of the SASS® Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II requires a classroom setting. The classroom includes seating and writing areas for all students. SASS® Mounted Range Officer Instructors will supply all course materials and are encouraged to create an atmosphere conducive to effective training. Visual aids such as photography, chalkboard, and props are recommended. Pencils and other writing tools are recommended.

Part II is the practical field-training portion of the course. This may be accomplished in a shooting arena where match conditions can be simulated, or can be held in a classroom with visual aids and handout materials. The practical field-training portion of the course consists of real time situations and incidents that can occur in a Cowboy Mounted Shooting Match and will require the use of props, targets, loading and unloading stations, firearms, ammunition, and empty shells. Examples of damaged targets, stage design equipment, firearms, appropriate and inappropriate clothing, leather, and other items will be discussed.

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

INTRODUCTION

The SASS® Mounted Range Officer Training Course is a risk management program for SASS® Cowboy Mounted Shooting Matches. It is designed to eliminate personal injury, strengthen SASS®' safety record, and ensure integrity and consistency of the SASS® Mounted Shooting Program.

This course requires the student to have a thorough working knowledge of the SASS® Mounted Shooters Handbook and Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course and is not intended to be a teaching course of rules and regulations for conducting a match.

This is a four-hour course designed to train SASS® Mounted Range Officers.

Utilizing a classroom environment and written test followed by practical field training in a controlled environment, the student will be trained in the areas of safety and safe Mounted Shooting practices. This course expands on the premises found in the Mounted Range Operations Basic Safety Course.

Upon completion of this course, a SASS® Mounted Range Officer will be knowledgeable of all aspects necessary to safely assist competitors and ensure safety practices, provide necessary leadership and assistance in the event of an accident, and enforce the rules and regulations in accordance with the SASS® Mounted Shooter's Handbook.

BEFORE THE MATCH

Prior to each and every match, a briefing shall be conducted by the club's Match Director, Range Master, or designated club official with all Mounted Range Officers. The briefing shall encompass the following areas:

Medical Assistance Plan

A plan to assist any injured rider, spectator, or animal must be in place in the event of an emergency. Each Mounted Range Officer shall be informed of the event's emergency procedures. These procedures shall also be posted or published to facilitate a timely response. These plans shall include emergency medical assistance, veterinarian, location of first aid equipment, and who is the assigned Medical Information Officer. All Mounted Range Officers shall have the telephone number and know the physical location of the nearest trauma center. In some areas, 911 is not necessarily the most appropriate number to call.

Safety Evacuation Plan

A well thought out emergency evacuation plan shall be in place. Timely evacuation of an injured rider or spectator is paramount. The event's Medical Information Officer shall be responsible for maintaining and implementing the Safety Evacuation Plan.

Non-Shooter Safety

All Mounted Range Officers shall be informed of the plan for non-shooting participant's control and safety. This shall include a line of demarcation for non-shooters, areas of required eye and ear protection, and directions for non-shooters to available eye and ear protection on the range (either free or for a nominal fee) when required.

Appeals Procedure

Each Mounted Range Officer shall be briefed regarding the appeals procedure. In the event a call is challenged, the Mounted Range Officer must know the chain of command for directing the shooter to the next higher authority to settle the dispute. It is just as important to observe an appropriate chain of command for a match as in any

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

other organization. Remember, attitudes effect perception, and poor attitudes and shooting sports don't mix well.

Range Safety Rules

Each Mounted Range Officer shall be informed of all local range safety policies that may differ from the rules printed in the SASS® Mounted Shooters Handbook. Each Mounted Range Officer is responsible for understanding and implementing all remaining rules and guidelines contained in the SASS® Mounted Shooters Handbook. Any question(s) pertaining to local or SASS® rules shall be clarified at this point.

MOUNTED RANGE OFFICER DUTIES

Rider Evaluation

As each rider approaches the start/finish line, the Mounted Range Master shall conduct a visual inspection. This inspection shall include the following:

Impairments

Does the rider appear to be physically and mentally capable of safely navigating the requirements of the stage?

Firearms

Without physical inspection, are the firearms in place and do they appear to be SASS® legal?

Leather

Does the rider's leather (gun belt, holster) conform to SASS® rules and safety guidelines?

Clothing

Does the rider's clothing conform to SASS® rules?

Note: New shooter may be exempted for minor clothing infractions

Tack

Does the rider's tack appear to be in place and secure, and does it conform to SASS® rules?

In the event the rider is found to have illegal equipment or to be unprepared to begin the course of fire, the Mounted Range Officer shall allow the rider to leave the arena and make the necessary correction prior to returning to the arena.

Stage Inspection

Mounted Range Officers shall brief the riders regarding the operation of each course of fire. Each stage instruction shall be read and explained for clarity. All questions concerning the operation of each stage shall be addressed.

All stages shall be visually inspected for safety. Potential problem areas shall be discussed and any safety issues resolved at this time.

Any changes necessary to make the stages safer shall be completed at this time – prior to any of the participants shooting the stage. Stage design plays a major part in the safety of a match. Poor stage design can lead to rider confusion and safety problems, and unsafe stage design can lead to injuries. All Mounted Range Officers are mounted officials. It is necessary SASS® Mounted Range Officers understand stage design so safety issues are avoided.

The Course of Fire

Once the Mounted Range Master has completed the evaluation of the rider, he or she shall prepare to supervise the rider and stage as follows:

Prepare the rider to begin by declaring **“Is the rider ready?”** (*Never ask “Does the rider understand the course of fire ... first it is inappropriate, because he may think he does, but does not ... so nothing is gained. Secondly, he may opt to recite the stage to*

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

you, verifying he really does understand the course of fire and consume minutes of precious match time. The rider is obligated to understand the course of fire ... the only appropriate query is, "Are you ready?") The Mounted Range Master shall give a short pause and declare, "You may start on my signal." Once the signal arm is extended, finger pointing down field, the rider may engage the stage.

Once the rider engages the stage, the Mounted Range Master shall watch the muzzles of the guns for correct target engagement, potential squibs, and ensure there is no sweeping or other unsafe practices.

After the rider has completed the course of fire, the Mounted Range Master shall declare the stage raw time to the rider, and then instruct him to holster all revolvers. The Mounted Range Master shall ensure the rider has fired all rounds, and instruct the rider to exit the arena and unload the revolvers in an appropriate area.

The Mounted Range Master shall determine any misses by polling the assigned Mounted Range Officer and communicate the misses and any procedural or penalties to the person recording the score as well as to the rider.

Incidents

As each rider engages a course of fire, the Mounted Range Master shall be prepared for any or all of the following incidents to occur and be expeditious in corrective action. The Mounted Range Master shall be decisive with calls. If a command given by the Mounted Range Master is determined to be errant, the rider will automatically receive a re-ride.

Prop Failure

In the event of a prop failure, the Mounted Range Master shall be prepared to make a

determination of whether or not the rider shall continue the course of fire or cease-fire immediately. In any event, the rider shall not be penalized as the result of prop failure. Broken or deflated balloon targets are not considered a prop failure. The rider must engage the targets.

Tripping or Falling

In the event a rider's horse accidentally trips or falls during a course of fire and the rider is not dismounted, the Mounted Range Master shall make an assessment of the riders condition and give a "Cease Fire" command only if horse or rider appears injured. Otherwise the rider will be allowed to regroup and continue with the course of fire. If the Mounted Range Master gives a "Cease-Fire" command for whatever reason and the rider had not become dismounted, he will be granted a re-ride.

If the rider becomes dismounted for whatever reason, the course of fire is over.

Timer Malfunction

A timer failure or malfunction is considered a prop failure, and the rider shall be granted a re-ride.

When the horse and rider cross the timer beam to begin the course of fire, the activation is not considered a malfunction; and a re-ride is not granted.

CART DIVISION

Stage Design

In matches having a Cart Division, the stage design will remain the same as the mounted categories, but may be engaged differently due to limitations of the cart and the shooter. The Mounted Range Master shall meet with a cart representative who has been selected by the Match Director prior to the start of the match. These individuals shall agree on

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

the routing of the cart through each stage, with safety being the foremost criteria. All carts will engage the course in the method agreed upon.

Categories

There are two categories in the Cart Division:

- " Shotgun – The passenger does the shooting and a driver drives the cart
- " Pioneer – The single rider does both the driving and the shooting

In both categories the shooter must always shoot off the side of the cart opposite the driver. No off hand or across the body shots are allowed.

In the Pioneer category, the driver/shooter may use either the right or left hand. In any case the two categories will engage the course the same.

Broken cart parts such as wheels, axles, wagon tongues, or broken harness will be considered the same as a dismounted rider. The course of fire will be stopped, and a 99.99 second time given.

SAFETY

Range safety is top priority for the entire range staff. While setting up the range, pay careful attention to the distances cones and barrels are set from the perimeters of the arena. Barrels shall not be closer than 15 feet to the arena side rails and 25 feet to the end rail, and balloons shall be a safe distance from the spectators. Courses of fire are designed so contestants shoot towards the center of the arena when at the side and end of the arena. A safe and reasonable shut down field area shall be designed for use by the horse and rider upon completion of each stage.

An inspection of the range shall be accomplished. Large rocks or other debris should be removed. All poles, cones, barrels

and props should be inspected for potential hazards. Timing equipment should be set in a safe, secure position on the field. A marker such as a cone shall mark the timer placement during the match to ensure safe visual guidance to the Range Officers and riders. Strong, sturdy equipment is vital to prevent malfunctions during an event. Accidents can and will happen. It is the responsibility of the event staff to minimize the opportunity for such occurrences and be prepared to handle them without creating havoc when they happen. Final inspection of the arena shall be done by the Mounted Range Master.

STAGE DESIGN

The primary purpose of a stage is to provide a scoring grid that is fair for all contestants. Well thought out stages make the field as equal as possible. Basic designs utilize the full arena. It is suggested a match have stage designs that test controlled horsemanship skills, such as reining, lead changes, and barrel turns, while others demonstrate speed with control, quick gun changes, as well as shooting skill. A good variety will make a good match. Stage designs are created by a variety of distances, placement on the field, and heights of ten balloon targets. Target order consistency within a stage will avoid procedural and spotting problems while promoting safety. A good stage promotes action and challenging target engagement, while letting skill make the difference.

Stage Instructions

Stage instructions should be specific in addressing each step in the sequence: gates, across the body shots, right or left barrel – don't be vague. Concise written stage descriptions are suggested to convey your instructions to the riders. Try and imagine every interpretation of your instructions – many riders will look for alternatives within

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

the limits of the description that may give them an advantage. It is your responsibility to ensure the instructions are specific. There are instances where riders have options as to how they will run a stage. Let skill make the difference, not interpretation of stage instructions.

General Guide Lines

1. Avoid designing a stage that brings “luck of the draw” into the outcome. Setting balloon targets close together is an excellent scenario, but should not attach a particular benefit for one rider over another by the outcome. For example, targets set close together tests the rider’s duelist skills and is acceptable, but a shooter that gets two or three targets with one shot is “luck of the draw.” This can be avoided by varying height of poles and angle of targets.
2. Design your stages for ALL SASS® Mounted Divisions. Don’t forget you are dealing with many levels of expertise. If there is any question whether or not the stage will be understood, include any needed special instructions.
3. Do not design stages that require riders to perform out of the ordinary athletic feats. The riding and shooting skill of the competitor should be the deciding factors not their overall athletic ability.
4. Design stages that offer an opportunity to exhibit both horsemanship and gun skills.
5. The responsibility of the Mounted Range Officer is to watch the rider at all times, insuring safety on the field. Keep the chance for procedurals to a minimum.
6. Be careful to avoid designs that take riders to the edge of safe firearm

handling and horse maneuvering. You, the designer, can eliminate many problems with a little more thought. Be careful of designs that find riders firing close to the side and end rails of the arena.

7. Be careful of a stage that requires the riders engage targets set in very high or very low positions.
8. Getting off a horse may be do-able (but time consuming) under, the clock, but getting on is discouraged.
9. Pistol loading (or reloading) should not be used in big matches. Loading and unloading firearms while on horseback is not acceptable.
10. The Mounted Range Master and Mounted Range Officer should inspect barrels and other turning points at regular intervals and rake or level as required.
11. All stage designs should be reviewed with the 15’, 25’, and 40’ rules in mind.
12. Make the match as interesting, safe, and fun as possible.

Tools

If you design your own stages, graphics programs are effective. Integrating verbal descriptions and graphics is easy and greatly expands your ability to create a complete picture for the competitors. A standard page set-up is a great reminder of the requirements for every stage description. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Create icons for the timer, all balloon targets, cones, barrels, rails, or other arena props.
2. Use a different color icon for each set of five balloons.

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

3. Number each balloon target 1 – 10.
4. Insert a dotted line indicating the horse's designated path on the field for that stage.
5. Insert arrows to indicate direction of travel, which way to round a barrel, and the like.
6. Use a consistent method for indicating placement of timer.
7. Color in your graphics can be effective in helping to get your message across.

STAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Timer Placement

Designate the position of the timer beam. Position of timer beam can be across the arena or in an alley position on the field. Make sure the rider understands the start/stop placement before beginning the course of fire. Make sure the rider understands the course of fire. Leave nothing to interpretation.

Mounting/Dismounting

Stages that require mounting or dismounting should be reviewed with contestants, juniors, and handicapped. Not all contestants are physically able to accomplish mounting and dismounting under competition conditions.

If dismounting is required it is well to put it at the completion of a stage, so remounting is not required, and as an option, an alternate course not requiring a dismount might be provided that does not consume more time. It is advisable to restrict mounting and dismounting to fun day stages.

Jumping

Not all contestants and their mounts are able to negotiate a jump successfully or safely.

Jumping should be avoided. If used, an alternate route should be provided that does not require more time.

Pole Bending

Pole bending is a useful test of a horse's reining and lead changing abilities. However, shooting while pole bending is not wise. It is recommended pole bending be done before or after firing at the balloons.

Luck of the draw

Targets that are released into the air are luck of the draw (e.g., helium filled balloons) and should be avoided in SASS® sanctioned matches. However, they are great for fun shoots and exhibitions.

Other

Stage design where two targets might be broken with one round should be avoided by differing the heights of the poles.

Stage designs that call for a subjective call by the Range Master should be avoided. For Example: Is the rider required to be at a certain spot that is not clearly marked before engaging the target? Or, was the horse's body past a certain line before the balloon was broken?

Movement

1. Whenever possible, design the stage "ambidextrous" – that is to allow movement right to left or left to right depending upon whether the rider is left handed or right handed.
2. Stage design should utilize the fullest extent of the field. Many competition areas, for example, are longer than they are wide. Design stages and arrange targets in a manner that will take complete advantage of the ground a horse can cover.

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

3. The competitor should be prepared to demonstrate horsemanship and shooting skill. A stage may be designed whereby rating down is necessary, followed by quick acceleration, lead changes, and right and left barrel turns to demonstrate horsemanship. Targets set close together and quick gun changes demonstrate gun skills. A stage should be designed to test these skills. Design stages that have a few or all of these elements in them. Variety makes for a fun competition.
3. When inflated correctly, a target balloon will measure six to nine inches in diameter. Care is taken to make sure targets are of uniform size for all competitors.
4. Design stages that promote action and challenging target engagement. Mix distances, placement on the field, and heights of targets.
5. Targets should be set whereby the rider must shoot to the interior of the arena, away from the side and end rails of the field. The stage designer needs to be mindful of safety and there are balloon setters, announcer, and spectators nearby. The targets shall be set 15 feet from the side rails and 25 feet from the end rail. Stay away from complex target engagement sequences. Basic designs utilizing the full field, on and off hand shots, barrel turns, lead changes, and so forth are advisable. Target order consistency within a stage will ease procedural and spotting problems. Varying target order from stage to stage is acceptable, will add to the personality of each stage, and still demands the competitor pay attention and think about what he/she is doing.

Time and Balance

1. Start the match on time. This is vital in order for all elements of the match to run smoothly.
2. When reviewing the stages for time balance (all stages should each take about the same time for the average rider to complete), consider set-up time between riders. It will be necessary to calculate the following in the total elapsed time estimate: resetting balloons, raking barrel, re-set timer, announcements, and Mounted Range Master safety check. One minute per rider is a good average for large matches. A well timed stage and a match that moves efficiently helps contestants stay alert and safe.

Targets

1. It is recommended target balloons be helium quality.
2. Two distinctly different colors of balloons should be used. One color for the first set of five targets to be shot with pistol one; another color for the second set of five targets to be shot with the second pistol.

Props

1. If you use props in your stages, such as a mailbox or a money bag, position these to avoid causing a hazard for the horse or rider.
2. Always have extra props at the stages where they are used. Make sure someone knows where these are located and can access them quickly if they need to be replaced. Avoid special mechanical targets, where only one is available. If it can break, it will.

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

3. Position all props safely in the stage. Do not set props in the vicinity close to announcers, balloon setters, and spectators who are always nearby. The props should be set 15 feet or more from the arena side and 25 feet or more from the end rail. A suggestion is to use caution tape on poles to protect the prop as well as horse and rider set at a distance of five to eight feet from the prop.
4. Targets set with or near a prop should be set so the shots will be toward the interior of the arena, away from the side and end rails of the field.
5. Props come in all shapes, sizes, and design. Not all are conceived with safety in mind. It is important to ensure props are safely set, especially when movement is required.

Materials

Balloon targets are a costly item for a club. Give some thought to how much you can afford. If possible, buy balloons in large quantities. They can be stored for a long time if kept in a cool place. It is a good idea to get together with another club to purchase balloons for the season's needs and for large matches. Network with other clubs for resources and shop for price.

Target Stands

Target stands should be made of a flexible material like PVC or polyethylene pipe no larger than 3/4 inch in diameter. Standard target poles should be 48 to 60 inches high to increase the variety possible within each stage. A simple 1 1/2 inch vertical hacksaw cut in the top of the pipe provides an excellent way to fasten balloons to the target pole. Tie off the neck of the balloon, stretch it, and slip it into the saw cut. A traffic cone can be the base for securing the target pole.

Keep the base light-weight for ease when changing stage design and storing.

Be Prepared

It is a good practice to have extra balloons and target stands available at a match. This is especially true for large matches where running out of targets and broken equipment can create a huge backup of riders.

Target Angles

Be cautious of angles at which targets are placed, again due to the fact balloon setters, announcers and spectators are nearby. A barrel shall not be closer than 15 feet to the arena side rails and 25 feet to the end rail, and targets should be set accordingly.

SAFETY FIRST.

Targets should be set so it is difficult to hit more than one balloon with one shot. Avoid setting targets too close to a barrel. If the instruction is to hit the target before turning the barrel, set the target so the rider cannot be turning the barrel and still hit the target at the same time. The point is to have the targets set in a way the competitor will engage the course the way you intended it to be accomplished.

Pay careful attention to targets that move to unsafe target angles during shooting. For example: moving targets, swinging arms, and helium balloons.

SUMMARY

Remember, there are points of bad stage design that cause the rider or non-shooter to be at risk.

If a stage is found to have severe and hazardous safety flaws, the Mounted Range Officer shall politely confront the Match Director with the potential for problems. If no safe and timely remedy is implemented, the Mounted Range Officer must quietly dismiss him or herself from the event.

Voting with one's feet is the ultimate way of

SASS Mounted Range Officer Training Course Level II

communicating with an unresponsive organization.

The Bottom Line for stage design is keep it safe, interesting, and have some action. A good stage is a balance of action, horsemanship, and shooting while keeping the required experience level well within the range of all shooting categories. Design stages with the average rider in mind – the top riders will be competing at another level, so don't try to design the perfect stage that makes the average rider equal to the legends

of the game. It takes greater skill to design a simple, challenging stage than a complicated one. Complicated and highly “choreographed” stages are not fun for most average riders, and being complicated can lead to unsafe situations for some. Most of us are just average folks, so never turn your stages into an intelligence test – you shouldn't have to have a photographic memory to enjoy SASS® Mounted Shooting! And, after all, that's what we're here for – to be safe and have a good time