

Thunder River World-Guardian

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The Oldest *Cowboy Action Shooting Club in Grimes County, Texas*

⁹/₁₀ of a mile north of the Texas Renaissance Festival Main Entrance—look for the **RED**, **WHITE** & **BLUE** sign

► **Match this Saturday: March 27, 2021:** match of **6** stages.

Registration cut off **8:30**

TRR RO Classes for 2021: we had an even dozen take the SASS RO classes the first weekend of March. **TJD** was the instructor, host and even provided lunch for the groups. While some of the folks were getting recertified the majority were there for the first time. Thanks to **Jack** and these members for taking that 'extra step' for the club. In alphabetical order there are:



Texas Jack Daniels

RO-I

Hopalong♠Ace

Lady Doc

Miss Hoppy

Nile City Slick

Nostrum Damus

Odessa

Ranger Bill

RO-II

Colonel Mackenzie

Lady Doc

Nile City Slick

Osage Mike

cheyenne

It should be noted that all the students paid for the class(es) out of their own pockets, not to mention the time involved.

We did get to meet **TJD's** dogs one of which spent the better part of an hour sitting on my foot--



◀ RO I badge with year chevron

RO II badge ▶





. . . And Speaking of Great Ideas from the RO II Class: during one of the breaks there was discussion of the current primer shortage. We decided to do a *Blue Sky Thinking* exercise (brainstorming with no limits).

After about 30 minutes the best idea we came up with is for TRR to buy primer making machinery and make our own. We would just do Large and Small Pistol primers. Extra production could be sold to other cowboy clubs.

TJD figured the cost of the federal, state and local permits would be 'chump change' compared to the cost of the machinery needed. His best estimate is \$4.3 million, give or take a \$100,000.

To show our support for this idea the entire class made the first of what we hope will be many donations. So far we have \$38.13 in the kitty and are challenging the rest of the club to make up the difference.

And by the way . . . first day of April is not that far off.



Clean Matches for the Year Compilation: the drawing for the yearly prizes was finally held at the Feb 27 match. The winners of the free entry to LSTR-21 (\$50 value each) were **Frio Kid** and **Hopalong♠Ace**. I was lucky enough to win the \$50 Midway gift certificate.

Remember the 2022 clean match winners is well on its way with 26 clean shooters total for the first 4 matches of the year.

Just remember this simple phrase, "Front Sight, Front Sight."



Club Officer Elections this Saturday: we will be holding elections for two officer positions.

- ▶ Vice-President: Duties are handling the electronic scoring and keeps all buildings in good repair. New structures are also part of the job.

- ▶ Secretary: Keeps lines of communication open between the members and the board. Also handles club paperwork

- ▶ Both are heavily involved with Last Stand at Thunder River as well as all major decisions within the club.

- ▶ These are unpaid positions and there is no reductions in dues or match registrations.

- ▶ As you remember we had a March 15 deadline for filing for either of these offices. Here are the members who have indicated they are running:
 - V-President: **Willie Cheatem** (incumbent)
 - Secretary and newsletter editor: **cheyenne** (incumbent)

Guess the election is not going to be going down to the wire to see who will be the winners.

Black Powder 101 - Part 4 How to Load for Long Range Rifle

by [BlackPowder Burn](#), TRR Life Member



Yee Haw! Now you're shooting cowboy matches and making smoke with the best of them. You just never knew how much fun it is to hear the big rolling BOOM and make a fog bank – *Where is that dang target, I know it's out there somewhere!* And your spouse has become sorta used to you coming home speckled with soot (why do you think we wear so much black clothing?!) and smelling of sulfur and charcoal. But surely there is even more fun to be had with black powder? You're darn tootin' there is – long range rifle! This is where you can really test your skill hitting those targets out to 600 yards on the Thunder Hole range. And even further – out to 1,000+ yards in some competitions. And once you get into long range shooting with Sharps, High Walls, Rolling Blocks, etc. you'll sneer at the little weenies that need scope sighted rifles to hit anything at a mere 100 yards! [Continued . . .](#)

If you're not after the *Keys to the Cadillac* and are short of Primers: I know a lot of us are beginning to have major shortages but still want to **Shoot at Stuff™**. So what is out "there" to help stretch you supplies?



One method is to shoot less rounds than the scenarios call for. Load just 5 rifle or use just one pistol on the stages. Doing both would save you 60 cartridges over the course of one of our matches

Now the targets that aren't engaged would still count as misses but you would get to blast away and be back in the Old West for a few hours

Since this approach is now allowed there would be no penalty other than the misses. And let's face it . . . most of us don't have room for an Escalade anyway.



Dillon Aftermarket Parts

by Rawhide



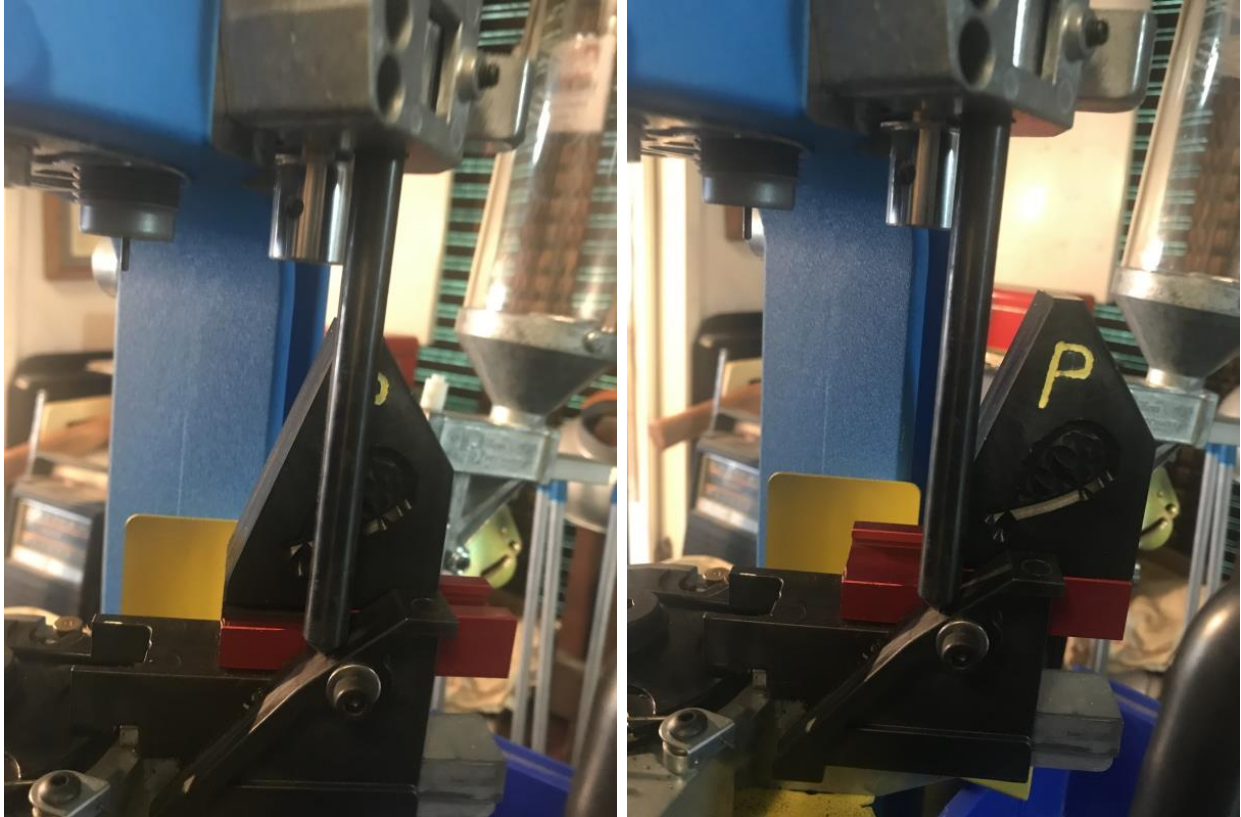
I added a couple of upgrades to my Dillon 750 a few months ago.

The first is a quick disconnect for the powder measure. It's spring loaded and all you do is pull the tab and lift up on the powder measure. I empty it after each loading session back into the canister and got tired of having to use the wrench each time. One is an Armanov brand and the other is Unique Tec. The first is a little smoother and the second has a longer tab to grip. I'm happy with both and I don't need wrenches to empty or swap powder measures.



The second upgrade was a doohickey that let me stop the brass feeder. It's the red aluminum piece with black plastic on top. Slide it forward and brass will feed the machine. Slide it back and no more brass drops. It has a

detent ball to hold it in place. I can continue with the other rounds already on the shellplate and finish them while dropping no more brass. It has been more convenient than I originally thought it would be. The “P” on it is for pistol rounds. It flips around to use for rifle brass.



RO facts:

How to get a **Match DQ in one Stage**

- ▶ Carry your rifle from the loading table to the firing line with the hammer at cocked or half-cocked and a LIVE round under the firing pin = SDQ
- ▶ Staging a rifle with the hammer at cocked or half-cocked and a LIVE round under the firing pin (rifle leaves your hands) = SDQ
- ▶▶ 2 SDQs = **Match Disqualification**

“Clean Matches, No Procedurals”

Feb 27:

Cowboy
Texas Rooster
Cherokee Jones
Nile City Slick

Kurten Kid
cheyenne

March 6:

Manassas Jack

Willie Cheatem
Fast Tracker
Hopalong Ace
cheyenne

Top Ten Shooters

Feb 27:

Oklahoma Dee
GW Ketchum
Tell Sackett
TJD
Doc O'Bay
Manassas Jack
Cowboy

Dusty Bottoms
Popcorn Kelly
Rooster

March 6:

Shotshell
GW Ketchum
Oklahoma Dee

Tell Sackett
Doc O'Bay
Dealin Lead
No Limit
Manassas Jack
TJD
Dusty Bottoms

Top Lady Shooters

Feb 27:

Ellie Mae
Horseless Gnat

March 6:

Ellie Mae

Angels
Miss Hoppy
Lady Doc

The Thunder River Mercantile



Down South Leather, Custom Leather Goods for the Cowboy Life Style by **Rusty Reb** is proud to announce the opening of its Houston branch. Contact **Rusty** and discuss your needs and wants; he's only an email or phone call away: RustyReb49@yahoo.com or 346-261-9620

<p>Osage Mike Custom Leather for Cowboy Shooters MIKE GREEN SASS 49,044 JAYEMGEE@MSN.COM 281 785 2397</p>

Osage Mike's: I'm a one man shop building custom leather goods for cowboy action shooters. I build holsters, cartridge belts, shotgun belts and cowboy shooter accessories one at a time. TRR member **Osage Mike**, jayemgee@msn.com Phone: 281.785.2397

Off-Cowboy but still a lot of fun: Did you know that **Crockett** is a Class 3 FFL? This means he can handle **suppressor (silencer)** sales. From the talk round the pavilion this sound like a lot of fun and while not cheap still is within the price range of many of us.

For more details contact him at: trentffl@gmail.com




Everyone has been noticing all the wonderful signs appearing around the range. We have **Suzie Q** and **GW Ketchum** to thank for them.



Their son commercially makes


them up in Willis so if you're in the market for some custom made ones of your own give them a call (936.827.2560) or catch them on FaceBook: [click on their name] [Fallow Fabrications](#)

R3LCo.
Ruby Red Raw Lead Co.



50 Pounds Raw Lead
 Recycled from Indoor Range
 \$45.00 each
 \$40.00 (3 or more)

rubyredrider.cas@gmail.com



John Powers, Gunsmith



Powers Metal Works
 228 Colorado Rd.
 Duson, LA 70529

Phone number for Texas
 281.513.3438 Cell
 281.254.7881 Fax
 NEW LA number: 337.940.9400

**Shooting once a month not enough?
 Oakwood Outlaws**

2nd Sat. & Sun. every month and the Monday following the 2nd
 weekend. www.oakwoodoutlaws.org/

Willow Hole Cowboys 3rd Weekend of the month
<http://www.willowholecowboys.com/>

TRR Officers 2021

El Jefe: **Crash**

president@thunderriverrenegades.com

Vice-Pres: **Willie Cheatem**

vicepresident@thunderriverrenegades.com

Secretary: **cheyenne**

secretary@thunderriverrenegades.com

Treasurer: **Osage Mike**

treasurer@thunderriverrenegades.com

Range Master: **Texas Jack Daniels**

RangeMaster@thunderriverrenegades.com

TG: **Texas Jack Daniels (TJD)**

RangeMaster@thunderriverrenegades.com

Black Powder (cont) OK, so here's where we get into the college level black powder loading courses. But don't worry, it ain't rocket science and even Aggies can do it. Heck, I are one – and I ain't blowed myself up yet! So let's get started.....



32-40 Win



38-55 Win



40-65 Win



45-70 Govt



Cartridge Comparison



50-140

Shown above are a very few of the rifle cartridges available back in the peak of the black powder era.

If you want a shoulder mounted (and bruising) howitzer, the 50-140 is your choice! Just think of a 600+ grain bullet over 140 grains of black powder.....I've fired one and I'll pass unless I'm trying to take down King Kong. More realistically, the majority of long range shooters use cartridges between the 38-55 and the 45-90, with by far the most popular being the 45-70. Which cartridge you choose depends, of course, on the type of shooting you intend to do. If you want to try a regulation NRA blackpowder silhouette match you need a cartridge that will topple the life sized Ram silhouette (and I don't mean my pickup!) at 500 meters. The strong consensus here is that the 40-65 Winchester is the smallest of the group that will reliably do that. If all you want to do is shoot a "gong" match (such as we do at Thunder Hole), then any cartridge that will reach out to 600 yards will work – all you have to do is hit the target. In that case, the 38-55, or even the 32-40, would work and are very mild cartridges with low recoil. By far the most common cartridges are the 40-65 and 45-70. Either will do both types of matches well, and have brass easily available through Starline. A close 3rd in popularity is the 38-55 for gong matches. It's easily available (brass from Starline) and chambered in both Winchester (lever and High Wall) and Marlin (lever) rifles.

Now, when we say "long range" we are generically referring to rifle caliber cartridges. We offer a class at Thunder Hole (as do most other local clubs) for lever rifles that goes out to typically 300 yards, while the single shots will go to 500 or 600 yards. Loading for the two types of rifles is considerably different, so we'll address them separately.

Single Shot Black Powder Rifle Loading

While there were (and are) other brands/types of single shot rifles available, the most common in the period, and still today, are the Sharps (who hasn't heard of these legendary rifles?), the Winchester High Wall and the Remington Rolling Block. See photos below.



Model 1874 Sharps



Winchester High Wall



Remington Rolling Block

All of these rifles have their advantages and disadvantages, but each of them will drill tiny groups with the proper ammunition. All of them are currently being manufactured and are easily available. Configurations range from lightweight sporter versions to heavy target versions. For typical long range competition, the heavier rifles and long/heavy barrels are normally preferred, as they better absorb recoil and the barrel is stiffer, both of which contribute to long range accuracy. You'll normally see these rifles weighing 10 to 12 pounds with barrels 28-30 inches long.

And now here's my plug for "Buy American". There are two great American companies located in Big Timber, Montana – C Sharps Arms and Shiloh Rifle Company. Between them you can have built beautiful 1874 Sharps, 1875 Sharps, 1877 Sharps, and High Walls. And the prices are pretty

competitive with the Italian reproductions, with much better quality in my biased opinion.



C Sharps Arms



Shiloh Rifle

OK, so how do you go about loading for long range rifles with black powder? It's very similar, overall, to loading your pistol caliber ammunition, except that you have to pay much more attention to consistency with powder charge weight, bullet weight, bullet diameter, bullet lubrication and cartridge length. At a high level, this is the loading process:

- Start with clean brass, including primer pockets
- Since the brass is used in only one rifle, I do not resize it before reloading. It is fireformed and already fits the chamber perfectly, so why mess with it?
- Prime cases
- Charge with powder. Most sources will tell you that a variance of plus or minus 1 grain in charge weight in rifle cases will have no significant impact on accuracy, so they recommend to just use your powder measure to throw the charges.
 - I tend to be somewhat obsessive in this area and will throw my charges a little light and then use a powder trickler and digital scale to bring them to the exact weight I want.
- Insert an over powder wad to keep bullet lube from contaminating the powder, as well as protect the base of the bullet from hot powder gases. Both fiber and polyethylene wads are available, but most people tend to use 0.030" or 0.060" fiber wads.

- Compress the powder charge so that when the bullet is seated on top of it, you have the proper overall length for the cartridge.
- Seat the bullet.
- Crimp the cartridge just enough to take out any mouth bell required for seating and grip the bullet sufficiently that it won't fall out of the case when handling.

As you can see, the mechanics of loading the black powder rifle cartridge are simple. The trick is in coming up with the proper "formula" for the recipe. As mentioned in previous articles, you don't want any air space in the loaded cartridge. In addition, most rifles perform best with the bullet seated near the rifling, or even slightly engaging the rifling. This means you'll have a minimum powder charge you start with for your ammunition that fills the case to the base of the bullet without compression. Then you incrementally increase the charge to the point you optimize your accuracy. This is probably somewhere in the range of 5% more powder than the "full, no compression" charge. However – "your mileage may vary!"

There are also quite a few different bullet designs, and your rifle may show a distinct preference for one over the others. One thing you really don't want is a wide flat point bullet as they are much less aerodynamically efficient. There is also the traditional grease groove bullet and the paper patched bullet. While a significant number of top competitors like the paper patched bullet, that gets into "graduate level" reloading and we won't deal with that here. They aren't necessary and you can explore that later on your own if you like. Below are a couple of photos showing the two bullet types.

In addition to bullet design, you must consider consistency in the weight of the bullet and the type and amount of lubricant used. Most competitors think you need to keep the bullet weights within + or – 1 grain within a batch of ammunition for best accuracy. As well, you need the bullet to carry enough lube (remember – black powder lube, not the colored crayon stuff used commercially for cast bullets intended for use with smokeless powder) to leave a "lube star" on the muzzle of the rifle. This indicates the

bullet has enough lube to keep the fouling moist in the entire bore of the rifle.

There are some companies (Montana Bullet Works, Buffalo Arms, etc.) that sell bullets that meet these specifications, and they are a good source for you to start your journey with. However, the need for weight consistency, adequate lube capacity, cost, etc. are the reason many folks involved in long range ultimately start casting their own bullets. Don't let this idea scare you, though – casting is really not difficult.



Grease Groove Bullet



Paper Patched Bullet

The powder itself has a major influence on accuracy. As we're all aware, black powder comes in multiple grain sizes, ranging from Cannon, to 1Fg, 1.5Fg, FFG, FFFg and FFFFg. The more "F's", the finer the granulation of the powder. In addition, the quality of the various powder brands varies. The different brands of powders use different kinds of wood to make their charcoal, which has an effect. The less expensive brands also tend to have more "fines" (or dust) in the powder, which adds inconsistency. The best performing powders tend to use low density wood for their charcoal (Alder, etc.) and better sieve the powder for much better overall consistency of grain size (no fines). All that being said, consensus opinion is that the two best powders for long range accuracy are Swiss and Goex Olde Eynsford. You can get by with using the cheapest powder for normal cowboy matches, but for long range you must use the good stuff.

In general, the smaller calibers use finer grain powder, and the larger calibers use coarser powders.

- FFFg powder is used up to the 40 caliber cartridges

- FFG is used from the 40 caliber up
- 1.5Fg is popular from 45 caliber up. My new 45-70 rifle is showing a preference for 1.5Fg powder.

Primers are another factor that can affect accuracy. While it may seem that would be trivial, I've seen too much data that showed simply changing a primer brand, regular versus magnum, etc. has made a significant difference. Again, it doesn't take much change to make a big difference at 500 to 1,000 yards!

So, in summary, beyond the bare mechanics of loading, which are quite simple, you will experiment with the following to obtain your best load.

REMEMBER – only change one thing at a time! If you change two or more factors you'll never know which of them caused the different results. In fact, one of them may have improved group size, while the other(s) caused it to get worse.

- Bullet style and weight. Heavier bullets tend to be more stable at longer ranges
- Cartridge overall length
- Powder charge weight and amount of compression.
- Powder granulation
- Primer type

A good single shot rifle of modern manufacture is very capable of sub-MOA accuracy. It's really rewarding to learn what a good rifle with vernier sights is capable of. Who needs a stinkin' scoped rifle?!

Lever Action Rifles

Almost everything discussed above also applies to lever action rifles. The major differences are:

- Lever action rifles require a flat point bullet due to the magazine.
- Bullets must be seated to fit within the length requirements of the rifles action. Thus, you won't be able to seat them out to contact the

rifling, you'll seat them to the depth required for the crimp groove in the bullet.

If you want lever rifles of modern design and manufacture, two excellent choices are the Marlin 336 (in 30-30 and 38-55), Marlin 1895 (in 45-70), the Winchester 1894 (in 30-30 and 38-55) and the Winchester 1886 (in 45-70). The Italian companies make a modern reproduction of the Winchester 1876 in calibers like the 40-60, 45-60, and 50-110.

With in these constraints, you will still experiment with

- bullet weight and consistency
- powder granulation
- powder charge and compression
- primer

A good lever rifle can get near MOA accuracy. I have two Marlin's (a 38-55 and a 45-70) that will shoot at or under 1.5 MOA. Don't let anyone tell you that lever guns are not accurate!

So.....as the saying goes – “Try it, you'll like it!” Come on out to a Thunder Hole match and we'll put one of these smoke poles in your hands. You'll be hitting the 500 and 600 yard targets very shortly. On the way home you'll be working on your justification to your spouse on why you need that new Sharps or High Wall – and that you **really** need to go to Montana to properly spec on out!

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