

Butterfield Gulch Gang — ready to fire

by Tiffany Roney • Reflector-Chronicle



photo by Submitted photo.

April 30, 2015

His cowboy boots spin in the dust as he pivots toward his next bull's-eye. Between the general store and the jail, he eyes a target.

Boom.

Though he wears a button-up shirt with suspenders, cowboy boots and a stiffed-brim hat from the late 1800s, he's a 21st century man.

The game — Cowboy Action Shooting.

The goal — shoot each target accurately, in the order prescribed for the Old West scenario of the day, as quickly as possible.

More than 50 shooters have signed up for this weekend's match at the home base of Butterfield Gulch Gang, headquartered near Chapman. The match is drawing single-action pistol and level-action rifle shooters from Florida, Colorado, Nebraska and all around Kansas.

"We've been trying to get more people educated about this game we play," club president Jeff Collie says. "A lot of people — even locals right there in Abilene and in Chapman — have no idea that it even exists."

Most participants have no idea Jeff exists. Instead, they know him as Flint Hills Dog, since all the shooters go by aliases. It's part of the Old West thrill.

Not re-enacting

Whenever Jeff, of Solomon, mentions Cowboy Action Shooting to area residents, nine out of 10 people think of the re-enactments portrayed at Old Abilene Town, but Jeff says Cowboy Action Shooting is different.

While re-enactors shoot blanks with black powder, Action Shooting participants "shoot real bullets at real targets for time," Jeff explains.

The event offers numerous categories in which to compete, including age-based divisions, clothing-based categories and the style category, "where you're shooting dual-style or gunslinger — both pistols out at one time."

The various categories give more participants the chance to shine, and they flesh out the game from something a few men might want to do on a Saturday afternoon to a collection of societies with more than 90,000 members.

Old West-style props and staging contribute to the western theme. At some events, a portion of the course may be set in a bank, where a contestant is required to shoot through a teller window, retrieve a stack of "gold" from a safe and carry it in one hand while shooting with the other. Another scenario may require the participant to rescue a "baby," symbolized by a doll, and carry it through the rest of the course while shooting at targets.

"There's a whole lot of different things going on within this game that makes it interesting," Jeff says.

After a full day of shooting, participants at each of the "big shoots" across the U.S. attend an awards banquet. The local banquet will be held at the Abilene Elk's Club.

The fancy clothes attendees wear at the banquet may be a welcome relief after a dusty day of perfecting their aims while carrying guns in the sometimes hot springtime sun.

"That's where everyone gets all gussied up, like going to a big ball back in the day," Jeff explains.

The next day, the players will return to the range south of Chapman to go back at it. Sunday's shoot will be followed

by an award presentation before players return to their regular lives, with modern-day clothing and guns out-of-sight.

Jeff says of the shooting events, "It's just a good reason for somebody to get to dress up and play cowboys and Indians."

If you go

What: Cowboy Action Shooting

When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 2 and Sunday, May 3

Where: Club range of the Butterfield Gulch Gang

Directions: Drive 5 miles south of Chapman on Rain Road. Turn east on 2200 Avenue. Drive 1 mile. Turn left on Sage Rd. Drive one-eighth mile.

Cost to watch: Free

Bring: Eye protection (sunglasses will do) and earplugs

Rules

- Eye and ear protection is required, even for spectators.
- Western-themed clothing is strongly encouraged. Baseball caps, T-shirts and tennis shoes are not allowed.
- For every incorrect shot, a player is penalized 10 seconds. This penalty is referred to as a procedural.
- For every time a player misses a target, five seconds is added to the player's "raw" time.
- Participants are scored by "ranked points," meaning if there are 125 shooters, the fastest shooter for a target will earn 1 point, the slowest will receive 125 and everyone in between will receive their respective ranked point. The points are added up at the end. The local gang uses ranked points instead of total time because the point system ""makes it a level playing field, kind of like scratch

golf," club president Jeff Collie says.

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Gunning at the Gulch



photo by Tiffany Roney • Reflector-Chronicle.

May 04, 2015

A Cowboy Action Shooting participant reloads at the Sunday morning shoot in the Butterfield Gulch, south of Chapman. More than 50 enthusiasts — some from out of state, with family members in tow — played their sanctioned version of "cowboys and Indians" at the rural Dickinson County "gulch" on Saturday and Sunday.



photo by Tiffany Roney • Reflector-Chronicle.

The Butterfield Gulch Gang, led by Solomon resident Jeff Collie, is a member of the Single Action Shooting Society.