

Pistol Etiquette

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In all sports there are written and unwritten rules. I would like to discuss some of the unwritten rules or points of etiquette which are applicable to conventional bullseye competition.

The first point of etiquette involves scoring. Scoring should be done efficiently, quickly, and accurately. To accomplish this, each competitor should score the other competitor's target first before looking at his/her own. The scoring is best accomplished by first counting the number of shots to verify the required number (10), writing each shot value on the score card, and then adding the values to get the total score. The totaling is most easily done by adding together the lost points (because these numbers will be the smallest) and then subtracting their total from the possible perfect score of 100. The scorer should write the score on the competitor's target. Only after doing that should the shooter feel free to review his own target and return to the firing line.

A shooter who records his score in a score book should keep the fired target with the score written on it until he has time to transfer the score to his score book. Alternatively, he can write his score on the stub of the score card and keep that for the later transfer to the score book. A shooter should try to avoid being the last one back to the firing line. And he should make all of his preparations (e.g., loading magazines) for the next stage of shooting before the range officer calls shooters to the line for that string. In the scoring, it is the scorer's responsibility to score the target as accurately as he can, and it is the shooter's option to accept the score or contest it with arbitration from the range officer, referee, or scoring jury. In arbitration of a contested score, the scorer is not involved. Each competitor has the responsibility of knowing the rules and exceptions as listed in the program, and of abiding by them. Particularly, he needs to know the rules about alibis, skidders, plugging shots, and challenges.

The second point of etiquette is about behavior of shooters after they have finished shooting. For example, in slow fire a shooter has ten minutes for ten shots. Most shooters finish their ten shots in from three to seven minutes. When they have finished, they should not begin socializing, because talking behind the line is both distracting and impolite. A shooter should have the same consideration for someone who is still shooting as he got: after all, no one was distracting him with talking while he was shooting. This courtesy applies as well to range officers as to shooters.

The third point of etiquette is about picking up brass. Everyone picks up expended cartridges after shooting their large caliber pistols. But this should be done in a way which will not disturb shooters still in their string of shooting. It is most distracting to have someone reaching between your legs or bumping your feet while you are trying to concentrate on a shot. Incidentally, shooters should mark their brass. Then, a shooter can

pick up all the brass in his area and sort it out (his, mine, hers) to minimize confusion and save time.

Now, some advice for shooting better. When there is time to talk, it natural to talk about the shooting you have just done. It is better if you talk about the good shots rather than the bad ones. Lanny Bassham, in his tapes about mental management (shooting is largely a sport of mental discipline), tells the story of shooting wild 8's; he kept a record of each shot. After a while, he said that he got real good at shooting these 8's because he was imprinting them on his subconscious mind. So, it's a good reason why you should talk about your good, not bad, shots.

Eventually, a shooter will realize that he is shooting more against himself than against anyone else in any match. Remember, the actual competition (time when shooters rank against one another) doesn't start until all the scores are in and have been totaled. A good shooter has learned that he performs better when he can shut out all distractions. And since this is easier to do when the distraction are the fewest, don't be hurt if a fellow shooter seems to be ignoring you. He is just trying to improve his concentration by shutting out you and everything that is irrelevant to his shooting.