

Thunder River World-Guardian

December, 2020

©Thunder River Renegades, Inc.

Vol. X, No 12

The **Premiere** 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 and Blue sign

► **Match this Saturday: November 28, 2020:** match of **6** stages.

Registration cut off **8:30** (Sunrise = 6:57 a.m.)

“Clean Matches, No Procedurals”

Oct 24:

Caledonia Red
Willie Cheatem
Nile City Slick
Shotgun Steve
Manco

Rusty Elder
cheyenne

Nov 7:

Tell Sackett
Crockett Texas

Osage Mike

San Juan Steve
Cowboy
Shotgun Steve
cheyenne

Top Ten Shooters

Oct 24:

Texas Scout
Dusty Bottoms
Caledonia Red
Cherokee Jones
Manassas Jack
Willie Cheatem
Bristlecone Jan

Fairplay John
Cowboy
Pappy Miles

Nov 7:

Tell Sackett
Crockett

Rooster

Osage Mike
Caledonia Red
San Juan Steve
Dusty Bottoms
Cowboy
Willie Cheatem
Shadow Doc

Top Lady Shooters

Oct 24:

Bristlecone Jan
Ellie Mae

Ruby Red Rider
Diamond♦Rose
Lady Doc

Nov 7:

none

Safety Glasses for those of us who wear prescription ones

I have tried a number of prescription safety glasses but they never are close enough to my regular lenses. After a few tries the costs add up and I go back to my 'normal' ones which are also made of the ballistic plastic but have gaps that have turned out to be too large to keep splatter from getting in. (See a previous article on why we sprang for 36 new KD shotgun targets— I'm the reason for the purchase)

Senior Deacon has located a pair that fit well around the everyday frames, have minimal openings around its frame and are very affordable. I give you the Northern Tool Bullhead Over the Glasses (OTG) Safety Glasses — Clear Lenses, Shiny Pearl Gray Frames, Model# BH291.



Cost is \$13 plus tax which is just like 'free' in this hobby. I shot the 11-7 match in them and must say I was very happy.

Only addition is to add sticky nose pads on them to raise them up *just* a hair.

Here is a link from NT:

https://www.northerntool.com/shop/tools/product_200765439_200765439



Black Powder 101 - Part 2 How to Load for Pistol Caliber Cartridges

OK, so you've read Part One of this treatise and you're thinking that maybe this black powder stuff sounds a little less intimidating. Maybe it wouldn't be too difficult to try loading some ammo to try at good old Thunder River. It sure would surprise some folks if you all of a sudden started belching fire and smoke from your guns wouldn't it? Hmmm.....could be interesting...

OK, so what the heck do you need to try this out? Really not much that you don't already have on hand.

- Some black powder=DUH!
- Some properly lubed bullets
- Normal reloading tools.
 - One question here is “Do you use some type of powder measure to throw you powder charge?” Most people do, and there are a couple of things you need to do to meter black powder safely. We’ll talk about that more later on.

[Continue to rest of article](#)



Cooler/Cold Weather Effects on Guns and Ammo: now that we are in our 2½ weeks of winter we’ll take a look at what this means to our “noise makers” and their results upon firing them.

Lower temperatures will have two major impacts: first, is the thickening of our lubricants we use to clean and protect guns. This congealing causes drag and can keep the hammer from hitting the primers with enough force for ignition. If your springs are right on the edge of being too light they can stop working when the mercury drops. Some shooters will remove most of the lubrication as well as go to a thinner oil. I’ve been known to raid **Violet’s** sewing machine for its oil container in the winter.

Another situation found in cold weather is the powder will have less force when set off. There are two ways that this is not good. While all we have to do is hit the steel with our rifle and pistols, we have to knock down the KD shotgun targets. If Old Man Winter has robbed us of some ‘oomph’ we can hit the KD but not knock it down. Frustrating to say the least.



For our long range and sharpshooters this can result in the bullet dropping more than it normally does in flight. Now that low hit becomes a miss in the dirt.

To summarize: keep excess lube off your guns and don't leave your ammo out in the elements longer than necessary. They do make chemical warmers that can be put in your ammo pouches if needed so then all you need to worry about is frostbite.



LSTR WORK DAY!!! With Thanksgiving in the way, we are moving our annual match day to Thursday, Dec 3. This is right up on the beginning of the match but time is but the essence.

There is some boardwalk to replace, water tank to fill and a number of smaller jobs around the range.

Osage and **Maverick** will be cutting anything that has grown. A few weed-whacking folks will always be welcome.

Hope to see a goodly number of our members helping out for this gala event

The Thunder River Mercantile

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

Wooden Fully Adjustable Bench Top Shooting Sticks

Made in the U.S.A.

Solid Oak, wood sealed for long life, heavy duty construction, leather strips on uprights to protect rifle, pinned-easy height adjustment, fully adjustable to match shooting bench height and shooter, collapses for easy transportation.

If anyone is interested in owning one of these bench top shooting sticks built by one of your fellow TRR members

please contact Cartwright at gauth1965@gmail.com. Currently have 7 shooting sticks ready for delivery.

Close-Out - \$60 Thanks, **Cartwright**



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



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



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

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 2020

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 (continued)

Now, any pistol caliber cartridge can be loaded with black powder.

However, you'll notice that all of the pistol caliber rifles of the period we play in were chambered for bottleneck cartridges (25-20, 3220, 38-40 and 44-40), and these cartridges have thin walls. **Not one** rifle was chambered for the 45 Colt or other straight cases. There's a reason for this. These bottleneck cartridge cases seal the chamber quite well and don't let powder fouling back past the brass and into the action of the rifle. I bet if you take a look at the rifles (chambered for one of these cartridges) being shot by one of our club BP shooters, you'll find their action has a lot less fouling than those being used by smokeless shooters using straight walled pistol cartridges like the 38 Special, 45 Colt, etc.

Now, this isn't to say that you can't successfully use straight walled cartridges with black powder. You certainly can, just expect a little more rifle cleanup afterward. Certainly the revolvers of the day started out with straight walled cartridges (44 Russian, 44 Colt, 45 Colt, 38 Colt, etc.). By the late 1870's though, the revolver manufacturers had added the bottleneck cartridges to their chamberings to allow the use of the same cartridge in both firearms. This is arguably the best route to take if you want to get serious about BP in the long term, but there are still lots of folks

that shoot straight walled cartridges in both with excellent results. The worst case is that you simply need a little more Moose Milk (see Part 1) to clean the rifle's action. There are a couple of things you can do improve the performance of straight-walled cases in rifles.

1. Load a heavy powder charge. This increases the pressure and helps the straight-walled case seal the chamber better. Also adds to the "fire and smoke" style points!
2. Anneal the mouth of your brass. This makes it softer and again, allows it to expand and seal the chamber better. Reports I've seen say the annealing almost completely eliminates the blowback.

What are the mechanics of loading a black powder pistol caliber cartridge? Not really much different than loading a smokeless powder cartridge.

- Deprime and clean the brass
- Resize and bell the mouth
- Charge with black powder
- Seat a bullet and crimp

Cleaning Your Brass

Brass used in black powder ammo will definitely be dirtier than with smokeless, but will clean up just as shiny. Many folks like to put the brass in a container with a little dish soap, Simple Green, etc. after each stage to let it presoak before cleaning. I started out doing that, but found that it really isn't necessary. I'm all about application of the K.I.S.S. principle. Now I just throw it in a brass bag and clean when I get home – and that may end up being a week or two after shooting it.

What I've found best for cleaning is a wet tumbler using stainless steel pins or ceramic media. Throw it in the tumbler, fill with water, dish soap (I like Dawn Platinum) and some LemiShine powder (citric acid). Let it tumble until it comes out nice and shiny. I generally let it tumble a couple of hours, drain and refill the water, and tumble until shiny. Below are a couple of photos of my brass before and after cleaning.



What Powder Charge?

As to what constitutes the proper powder charge for BP, it's really pretty simple. The short answer is to fill the case such that there is no air space after seating a bullet. Then seat and crimp the bullet. You can use either FFFg or Ffg granulation powder with the pistol caliber cartridges. The rule of thumb is to use FFFg (finer granulation) for cartridges less than 44 caliber, and Ffg (coarser granulation) for the larger cartridges. In actuality, the only difference will be slightly higher velocities with the FFFg powder. The reason you don't want to leave air space in a black powder cartridge is that pressures can get erratic and cause issues.

All BP from a given manufacturer is the same chemically. While formulations vary somewhat between manufacturers, the basic ratio is 75% potassium nitrate, 15% charcoal and 10% sulfur. Potassium nitrate is the oxidizer required to support combustion, while the charcoal and sulfur are the "fuel" that is burned.

Of some interest to the trivia buff is that fact that black powder is not a single specific molecule with a fixed formula. It is actually a simple physical mixture of the three ingredients. Each is ground extremely fine, then mixed together. This mixture is then wetted with water and allowed to dry into a "cake". The cake is crushed and the resulting particles sifted through sieves.

The different ranges of particle size are then separated into the different granulations of powder that are sold. The different granulations (Fg, 1,5Fg, Ffg, FFFg and FFFFg) denote the coarseness of the grains (Fg being the coarsest and FFFFg the finest). Larger powder grains are generally for larger calibers and smaller granules for smaller calibers. The smaller granules burn faster, thus providing a little more pressure and higher velocities. For simplicity sake, I find Ffg works fine for basically everything I shoot (pistol caliber and shotgun). The one exception is the little 32-20 cartridge, I do use FFFg for that.

Unless you really want to build a maximum power load, just enough powder to fill the case with no air space will more than suffice for cowboy ammo. It's certainly a major step up from the "mouse fart" smokeless loads that many of our compadres use- and I **GUARANTEE** the knockdowns will fall!

However, what if you want a different power level load, either more or less powerful than the basic "full case" load? There are several options.

- For a less powerful load,
 - Choose another cartridge of less capacity that will chamber in your gun (most practical for revolvers). For example, 44 Russian in 44 Special or 44 Magnum guns; 45 Schofield in 45 Colt guns, 38 Short or 38 Long Colt in 38 Special or 357 Magnum guns.
 - Load a lighter charge in your existing brass and then use a filler, such as Cream of Wheat, to make up the rest of the volume.
- For a more powerful load, black powder can be compressed. For instance, depending on the particular bullet used, a 44-40 or 45 Colt cartridge will require between 30 and 32 grains of Ffg powder for a "full case" load. You can compress the powder and load 35 to 38 grains for that true "Wart Hog" load.

The simple pistol caliber ammo is normally compressed the required amount by just seating the bullet. However, if you are going for a maximum load you can end up deforming these softer bullets by the pressure used in

seating and compressing the powder. Be careful that you don't end up doing that, as it can cause issues chambering the round, as well as giving poor accuracy with the deformed bullet. If you really want a maximum load, you are best advised in using a powder compression die. We'll talk more about those in the long range rifle ammo section.

BP Measuring and Safety

Black powder is an explosive, so must be handled respectfully. The largest concern in handling it is to prevent a spark from igniting it. Using powder measures to throw charges is typically the biggest concern, as many of them have steel components that could conceivably generate a spark sliding against each other. Another source of concern is static electricity. That being said, there's also another school of thought that says the sensitivity of BP to ignition by static electricity is greatly overblown. For example, take a look at the photos below showing black powder in the presence of electric arcs.



Black powder is coated in graphite, which is electrically conductive. This does aid in conducting the electric charge to ground before enough heat is generated to ignite the powder. So what is the truth? I'm not expert enough to know for sure. Consequently, I approach it from the more conservative standpoint, and assume that while it's not just waiting for a tiny spark to go off on me, there's no sense taking unnecessary chances.

There are several ways you can approach handling charging your cases with black powder that are safe enough to satisfy me. Of course, you do have to take into consideration that I am a card carrying Aggie! You have to make your own decisions.

1. Take a manual scoop (Lee makes a nice set of dippers that work well) and charge each cartridge case. While a slow process, there are no metal parts to potentially spark this way.
2. Lyman makes an excellent black powder measure (Lyman Classic 55). It comes with an aluminum powder hopper and brass drum to prevent sparking.
3. I use a Dillon 650 press with their powder measure. I was fortunate to have access to people that took large diameter aluminum tubing and machined it into a replacement powder hopper. I then ran a ground wire from the hopper to earth ground. This makes sure no static or sparking occur.
4. I've had a well known area gunsmith that's probably been shooting black powder since I was in diapers tell me all that is needed is to take a strip of clothes dryer static sheet (Bounce, etc.) and hang it down the inside of any plastic powder hopper such that it contacts the powder. And he's still alive and making smoke.....

Any of these methods should work for you. At any rate, I've been shooting black powder for over 10 years now, and never had any kind of incident.

Cap'n Ball

OK, we discussed loading for pistol caliber cartridges. But, what do you do if you want to shoot front stuffers instead of a gun that uses suppositories? There are entire treatises that deal with how to properly set up and tune modern cap'n ball reproductions to shoot reliably – and gunsmiths that make a large chunk of their living doing so. We all love the looks of the Colt cap'n ball revolvers – they're some of the prettiest revolvers ever made. But, the modern reproductions do take some gunsmith work to perform reliably with constant use. It's not a fault of the gun's design, just some of the replicas coming out of a certain country that is known for pasta. Of the replica Colts, I will say that Pietta is acknowledged as making the much superior copy, and doesn't need too much work.

If you are really lucky and can come across a set of Ruger Old Army revolvers with **fixed sights**, that you can afford, **BUY THEM!** These cap guns are indestructible and dead reliable. Nothing else comes close. Unfortunately, SASS in their wisdom says adjustable sights are illegal – and the majority of Old Army’s were built with adjustable sights.

No matter what cap’n ball revolver you choose to shoot, however, one thing you should definitely do is buy a set of Slix Shot nipples to replace the factory ones. They greatly increase ignition reliability and are much more durable.

Once you have your cap gun, there are a couple of approaches to feeding it.

- The traditional, and most common way, is to use round balls.
- You can also use a fairly conventional bullet instead. While not as common, this was also done “in the day”.

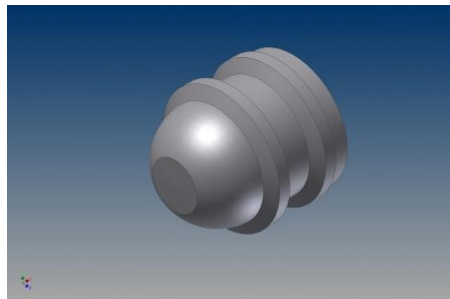
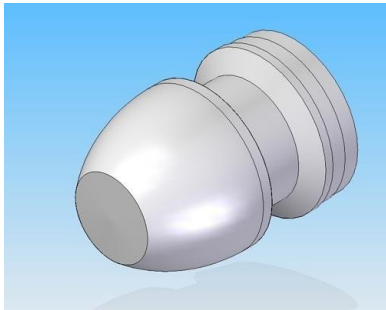
Loading the Round Ball

Even here, there’s more than one way to skin the cat. The method most people think of is to charge with powder, seat a ball, and then smear some type of lube over the top of the bullet. It certainly works, but is messy and irritating (at least to me).

I much prefer to charge with powder, insert a lubed felt wad (commercially available), then seat the bullet on top of that. The lubed wad provides the required bore lube without all the mess and fuss. The wads are available from any number of retailers (MidwayUSA, The Possible Shop, Track of the Wolf or Eastern Maine Shooting Supplies). Eastern Maine Shooting Supplies actually manufactures most of the wads sold, and you can buy direct from them in quantities from 100 to 1,000 per package (emshootingsupplies.com).

Loading Conical Bullets

There are bullets specifically designed for use in cap'n ball revolvers. They're frequently very light for caliber, but not always. These bullets will have a rebate at the base of the bullet to allow setting it in the mouth of the chamber, so it starts straight when being seated. A couple of the typical designs are shown below. These molds are sold by Dick Dastardly (biglube.com) along with a complete line of bullets designed for all black powder shooting. These are also cast and sold commercially by Mark Whyte of Whyte Leatherworks (whyteleatherworks.com).



When using bullets such as these, you will size and lube them with a black powder lube such as SPG. Then simply charge your chamber with powder and seat the bullet. No wad is required as the lube on the bullet provides everything necessary. Considering elimination of the wad, the cost of shooting these is comparable to, or maybe slightly less than, that of round balls.

Ancillary Requirements

Regardless of whether you use round balls or conical bullets, you will need to charge with powder, seat the bullet and cap the chambers. By far the best powder flask I've found is the type shown below. It has interchangeable powder spouts available in any desired charge weight of powder. You simply put on the appropriate spout, invert it, push in the plunger to allow powder into the spout, release the plunger and pour the powder into the chamber. Even with my hefty 35 grain charges in my Old Army's, I can get 4 stages from each flask. These are also available from all the normal retailers.



Now you need to cap the chambers. The two best products out there (in my not so humble opinion) are the Ted Cash Snail Capper (far right below) and the Polish Capper (they really are made and shipped from Poland – www.polishcapper.com). By far, the Polish Capper is the most reliable and robust. It works with any BP revolver (Remington's won't work the the Ted Cash Snail Capper).



Now, how do you carry all this crap around with you and load during a match? What a PITA! I struggled with it all initially, like most folks do that try this. There are lots of different solutions people have come up with that suits their needs and preferences. You'll have to find what works best for you. I've come up with something that is simple and easy to use for me, and a few photos are below.



As you can see, it is an easy to carry box that provides room for all my supplies as well as a built-in stand to make loading easy. It is built from a scrap cedar fence picket a couple of brass hinges and a carry handle - cheap, easy and convenient. I grab it, go to an empty table on the next stage and have my guns reloaded by the time two or three shooters go through the stage. I get back in plenty of time to help with posse work.

This has been a very quick, high-level look at what is needed to load pistol caliber black powder ammunition. If you have any questions, please look me up at the next match, or email me to discuss them.

Next time, we'll talk about loading for black powder shotgun ammunition.

I love the smell of sulfur in the morning!

[Return to Main Article](#) *Burn*