

# Run a Better Match

## Build a Better Club



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First let me say that I sure missed seeing you all at this year's Nationals. Since the birth of our daughter in August and Lisa's return to work for the same week, I thought it best I stay home with the family. I will be at next year's, God willing. Congratulations to Teddy and staff for a great match! By all accounts, Teddy did just as I expected and made this year's Nationals better than the ones that preceded it. That is the goal and I knew Ted was the man for the job. Good job, Teddy!!

There are several rules to follow for a successful match. The first 10 are:

### **Rule #1: Follow the rules.**

There is a rule book, follow the rules in it! If you are not prepared to follow them all, do not think you can run a match. I know this sounds goofy, but think about it. How many times you have seen guys that would just overlook some rule they didn't agree with or ignore someone's infraction for whatever reason. Every time this is allowed, someone else gets the idea that it is ok. A new shooter that comes in for the first time and later reads the rule book wonders, "What the Hell"? The guy that travels all over to shoot sees yet another club doing it to suit themselves. This has to stop. When you run a match, it is your obligation to make sure you follow the rules. Do it for yourself, do it for the shooters, do it for the sport, hell I don't care, just do it!

### **Rule #2: Always remember that this is entertainment.**

While some of the competitors are there because their livelihood

requires it, most are there to enjoy the experience. Everyone wants to compete, but rank and file just want to have a good time. After the scores are long forgotten, the good times and good friends will remain. Yes, it is about challenging shooting skills, but it is also a show. I used to always look at the CoFs after they were first drawn to make sure there was some of the "show" clear enough for all to see. The more realistic and detailed the props, the better the show will be. Make sure the shooting is good enough that is it not lost in the show, but make sure it has some flash to make it work.

### **Rule #3: The CoF has to make sense.**

It has to be clear what to do after the buzzer goes off. We have all shot CoFs that made no sense. Early on, I figured out that everyone not only shot better, but had a better time if they could make their way through after the buzzer. I once shot a stage that seemed more like a math test than a stage of fire. We used to laugh that it required a calculator to do well. Some like to vary the number of hits required on targets in a single CoF. That's fine if there is a clear reason for the difference. Keep those to a minimum. I have seen some that started 2 round per, changed to 3, then back to 2, only to change again to 4 rounds per target. I was lost and knew that others were as well. What do you think would happen to a new shooter? The use of threat identifiers is good, but they must be clear and easily understood. One thing that our sport holds as a standard in CoFs is that it must be something that could happen. I

have used the news, stories from Law Enforcement and personal experiences to get ideas for courses of fire.

### **Rule #4: Gimmicks must be kept to a minimum.**

The more complicated you make it the more likely it is to fail. As a guy who has spent most of his career running matches with some kind of a mover, I know from experience. Make sure it works! Test it over and over again. There is no such thing as over-tested. I am not sure what the limit of gimmicks to a match is, but the more you put in the more headaches you will have. I have heard of entire matches made up of movers and actuated targets. As I recall, they worked most of the time, but I like to have a good time too. I don't think, after all these years, I could sleep if I had an entire match of gimmicks. Make sure you have far more extra parts than you think you will need to fix anything that can break. I used to have a guy whose job was to keep that stuff working (Thanks Glen). Find one of those if you can!

### **Rule #5: Do not let the standards over power your match.**

In my humble opinion, there should be a standards CoF in a sanctioned match. It serves several purposes, but most importantly, it is a test. A series of drills to test the shooter's ability to perform tasks related to our sport. It is a great way to test manipulation skills and accuracy in a compressed form. Some say that it tends to level the playing field; I can say from experience that a great shooter will shoot great no matter the CoF. Do not make the round count so high that it overpowers the match. Find

a balance that works and stay with it. It offers you a place to add to the number of rounds in a match and, if done properly, can be very efficient. Make sure you have enough staff and they are experienced enough to do a good job. Some are so good that is all they do!

**Rule #6: Think it all through!**

Make sure that all of it works together. Do the different bays work efficiently and not create more problems that they should? Make sure that your staff knows what to expect. Make it clear what will be expected of them and give them everything they need to accomplish the task you have given them. Pick the correct staff for the CoFs that best fit them and their abilities. Make sure you have support staff adequate to keep everyone supplied with all their needs. I once worked a match where we (the staff) had to access to any refreshment we wanted as long as we bought it or brought it with us. I used to carry tape and batteries with me everywhere I went. I learned this the hard way. Make sure you supply the match staff with all that they need! Make sure your staff knows they have your support. If they make a bad call you are obligated to correct the problem. Use this as an opportunity to correct a misunderstanding of the rules. If they will not follow your lead, get rid of them. Your success or failure will be in the details.

**Rule #7: Fill out the score card.**

Make sure everyone understands the importance of recording the scores correctly and completely. There is one thing worse than having a stage that does not work well; having to constantly do it again because someone forgot to write something down. Some of the best Safety Officers I have ever seen are the worst at little details like writ-

ing down the time. Identify these weaknesses and make sure they have guys who will write down the scores. Some are better suited to run shooters, others to keeping score. Find this out and make it happen. Great thing to remember, as competitors we shoot for accuracy, as safety officers we should strive for perfection. Or at least, just write down the scores.

**Rule #8: FTDR and disqualifications have their place.**

I have never met anyone who enjoyed giving either. I broke some new ground in both in my career. Sometimes, it becomes necessary to take these actions to penalize a competitor for infractions of the rules and sometimes even unsportsmanlike behavior calls for one or both of these to be used. As the match director or safety officer, you might find yourself in the place where this becomes necessary. Make sure you explain to everyone involved why you are taking this action. Most everyone, myself included, who have had to use these methods of penalty gave it a great deal of thought before and after taking the action. Sometimes, you just have to do the right thing even if it is difficult to do. We have rules and they must be followed.

**Rule #9: Remember to have some fun.**

I have enjoyed most all of the matches I have attended. Some because I shot well, some because I was working a fun stage and all because I got to spend time with old friends and made some new friends as well. Everyone at a match should have some fun. We used to, as safety officers, enjoy the squad change and adding our own brand of humor to preparing them to shoot our CoF.

I've seen some guys who lived to work matches as a group because they had so much fun together. The Nationals Standards crew is a good example. Curtis and those guys continue to request to work together to enjoy the friendship they have developed and are very good at making sure the standards go well year after year.

**Rule #10: Remember you are representing IDPA.**

While a competitor, safety officer or match director, you are representing this sport. I have always tried to keep in mind that when others watched my conduct on the range, they saw me, my club, my sport and shooting sports in general. I like others have always had a good time shooting and during matches, I always kept in mind what others were seeing. When you represent IDPA and your club you should be polite, courteous, fair, and try to be as efficient as you can be in getting them through the CoF. They are there to compete and have a good time and you should do your part in making sure that happens. Make sure they are welcome and at least tell them to have a nice day when they leave. Remind others to do the same.

Till next time:

Stay safe, shoot well, have fun, and always watch six!



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