

Range war 2018

In celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Range War, **RJ Law** offered a prize of a paid entry to Range War for one lucky winner who had not previously been to Range War. I was that lucky winner.

When I was initially contacted, I had a lot of questions. **Cosmopolitan Christine** was my contact. She had plenty to keep her busy with Range War planning but she found time to answer a million questions from me. She directed me to the Wolverine Ranger's web site for registration. The registration form can be printed out and mailed or registration can be done online.

After **RJ Law** announced the prize winner, I was contacted by **Outrider Outlaw**. **Outrider Outlaw** asked if I would consider writing an article about my experience for the **Epitaph**. I readily agreed, and thought it might be a good primer for others who might consider attending in the future.

## **WHERE TO STAY**

After registering, my first challenge was to find a place to stay. Camping is available on the premises at the **Blue Water Sportsman's Club**

Not being a camper, I started down the list of hotels. The **Baymont Inn** is the closest hotel to the range and a sponsor of **Range War**. I strongly believe in supporting our sponsors and they were my first call. A room was available and a friendly staff member quickly took my reservation.

### **SARGE'S TIPS:**

- If you are a camper, stay on site. You are close to the range and golf carts are available for rental.
- If you stay at the **Baymont Inn**, consider asking for a ground level room as they don't have an elevator.

## **WHAT TO PACK**

My next consideration was what to pack. The week before, I broke one of my main match pistols, my main match rifle and my gun cart. Yes it was one of those days with so many train wrecks the entire transportation system in southeast Michigan was in danger. A lesson learned. You have a lot of opportunity to break stuff at Range War.

In addition to my match rifle, two match shotguns (normally shoot a 97, but put a SXS on my cart for some stages) and a pair of main match pistols, I also packed a backup 97, a backup match rifle, a backup pistol, a Winchester 94 for the big bore rifle and a Springfield for the long range match. A portable cleaning kit and Windex <sup>TM</sup> to clean up holy black made the trip. I keep a tool kit in my range box.

Although there are popup canopies at each stage, an umbrella that attaches to my gun cart came in handy during a morning rain. A small folding stool lets me take pressure off my back and legs.

The Range War flyer suggests bringing 120 pistol rounds, 120 rifle rounds and 60 shotgun shells for the Main match. If you take part in side matches and Mini matches, I would at least double that amount. A minimum of eight rounds for each long range event you want to shoot (BP single shot, smokeless single shot, BP big bore lever gun, smokeless big bore lever gun) and extra shotgun shells for Cowboy trap.

I wore an outfit to the range on Friday, packed one outfit for Saturday and two for Sunday (a separate outfit for the banquet). This worked out perfect.

#### **SARGE'S TIPS:**

- If you think you might possibly need it once in a hundred years, bring it.
- If your category requires particular props, check twice to make sure they are packed.
- Take care of your feet. Extra socks and dry boots can be very important.
- Check the advanced weather forecast before you select your outfits for the weekend.

#### **CHECK IN**

Match check in begins on Thursday, with an RO1 class held that afternoon. Check in continues Friday which also offers a full calendar of events. **Cosmopolitan Christine** was handling check in when I arrived Friday morning. She handed out a packet that included a copy of the Shooter's Handbook.

If you haven't made a request to shoot with particular posse members, you will be assigned a posse. You will start on the same stage as your posse number on Saturday.

#### **SARGE'S TIPS:**

- Don't print the Shooter's Handbook, you will get a copy at Check in.
- If you haven't been to RO School I urge you to take this opportunity to attend.
- Write your Posse number down on you Shooter's Handbook.
- Signup for at least one of the Mini-matches to be held on Friday.

#### **FRIDAY**

Friday is a full day of events. You can sign up for a variety of matches on Friday including Wild Bunch and Plainsmen. An RO2 class is held in the afternoon.

Two Mini matches are held. One in the morning and the second in the afternoon. Each Mini match consists of four stages.

Speed events and long range side matches take place Friday. You can run rifle, pistol and shotgun side matches as many times as you want as long as no one is waiting. Each stage with

rifle and pistol is ten rounds. Each stage with shotgun is four rounds. After speed rifle, pistol and shotgun, I managed to get to the derringer/pocket pistol, but only had a couple of chances to shoot the derringer. If you don't have your own, no worries, they have one you can borrow.

**Doc Noper** and his crew did a great job staging the long range events. Two steel targets are placed at 175 yards. One is a large square plate. The second one is a smaller silhouette plate. The competitor must first engage and hit the larger plate. Once the large plate is hit, the competitor engages the smaller silhouette. The event counts both time and hits. First time through the course counts. Shooter gets three warmup rounds and five rounds for score. I used an old Winchester 94 that belonged to my grandfather and my Springfield .45-70. If you see me, ask me the story about the Winchester.

Don't worry about food for lunch on Friday. Free pizza is served near the gates to the range at noon.

In addition to the shooting events, there is a vendor and swap and sell area set up. Bring cash. You will find everything from match guns to outfits to reloading equipment for sale.

You are on your own for dinner. We ate at **Theo's Family Restaurant** which is near the entrance to the **Baymont Inn**. Theo's is reasonably priced. I can vouch for their prime rib dinner.

#### **SARGE'S TIPS:**

- Participate in at least one of the Mini matches. They give you some experience with the more interesting parts of the Main Match.
- Try the Speed events. They provide you with an idea of how you compare to other shooters and are great warm up drills for the Main match.

## **SATURDAY**

The Main match starts on Saturday morning at the gated entrance to the range. An opening ceremony and shooters safety meeting is held promptly at 8:30 am.

This is probably a good time to bring up mentors. So important in our sport when you are first starting out, but also helpful having someone show you the ropes at your first big match. In my case, **Outrider Outlaw** and **Longshot Lillian** took me under their wings, asking me to shoot with them on their relay. Before the match, they answered my many question and informed me about some of the nuances of the match such as signing the score card and picking up dessert at the banquet with your meal. Whoddathunk.

The range was divided in half with stages 1-5 on the north side and stages 6-10 on the south side. Poses 1-5 rotate through stages 1-5 on Saturday and moves over to 6-10 on Sunday. Poses 6-10 were on the opposite side.

Each Posse had a Posse Marshall, a Deputy Posse Marshall, and a couple more Timing Operators. Match Director **Deuce Stevens** did an excellent job selecting the Posse Marshall and Deputy. **Sauk Valley Stubby** was our PM and **DK Tracker** was Deputy Posse Marshall. **Sauk Trail Mike** and **Smokin Iron** assisted as TOs. I found these folks to be very knowledgeable and eager to help each participant. On one occasion, I asked for a rule clarification on my own equipment and on another I asked him to provide specific coaching on my final stage. He willingly provided accurate information and coaching. The coaching probably saved me from a dreaded procedural and saved my clean match (on my last set of targets on my last stage).

Our Posse had two official scorers. One entered the times and penalties into the score book, which the participant was required to sign. The second scorekeeper entered the data into a tablet. I didn't catch the names of these two ladies, but they seemed to enjoy the match and were a pleasure to be around. These volunteers deserve a big thank you from all the competitors.

In the evening, there are several Cowboy Trap side events. I didn't take part, but those who did seemed to enjoy themselves.

Lassiter put on a quick draw demonstration before dinner. The demonstration included a wee bit of humor. Those of us in attendance enjoyed Lassiter's show and the knowledge that he shared.

Saturday night there is an optional dinner served at the Clubhouse. Reservations were in advance and cost of tickets was very reasonable. Food was excellent and there was plenty of it. After dinner, a camp fire and sing along takes place in the campground. Bring your guitar if you play.

#### **SARGE'S TIPS:**

- On your first day, and especially the first stage or two, step back and observe. This is your first time at a major match. It's OK to have jitters and take a breath. After the first stage, jitters were gone and it was easier to work into Posse job rotations,
- Don't be afraid to ask for coaching or rule clarification from the PM. In a discussion with **Sauk Valley Stubby**, he told me as a TO, he feels it is part of his job to provide coaching, especially when asked.
- I noticed the stages were written a bit differently than I was used to seeing. Pay attention during explanation of the stages. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Bring something to eat to the range. There was a food truck, but it was almost impossible to get near it.

#### **SUNDAY**

Cowboy Church is at 8:00 am. The Main match starts promptly at 9:00.

Sunday morning the Posses meet at 9:00 am at their first scheduled stage. I found everything seemed to go much smoother on Sunday. The Posse work rotation became more natural. The stages progressed much faster. The only issue on Sunday really seemed to be the weather. We enjoyed a bit of steady rain for the first stage of the day. Fortunately, **Silent Cal** came prepared with eyeglass wipes and towels. He readily shared his supplies with the entire Posse.

After the last stage of the match, each Posse fires a shotgun volley. The shotgun volley honors our service members past, present and future who have given of themselves to help make us free.

After the Main Match ends you will have several hours of free time. If you camped, you can go back to your camper and kick back for a bit. If you were at a hotel, you had to check out (unless you paid for an extra night). After cooling down a bit, I made use of a temporary shower at the clubhouse, and changed clothes for the banquet.

The banquet doors open promptly at 5:00 pm. Our banquet was held at Alexanders, a nearby Banquet Hall. Food was excellent. Staff was outstanding.

There are literally hundreds of awards handed out for all of the side matches, categories, Cowboy Trap events, and clean matches. A number of raffle prizes are handed out. Throughout the evening, **RJ Law** keeps things running smoothly.

**SARGE'S TIPS:**

- Set a personal goal for yourself. You can compete, but understand this match brings in some of the best shooters from across the country.
- Take advantage of shooting next to these top shooters. Watch them. Approach them and talk with them. Everybody is extremely friendly and willing to share.
- If your significant other is a non-shooter and they don't want to sit at the range all day, there are plenty of things to do in Port Huron. My wife spent time at Lakeport State Park and beach, Thomas Edison Museum, Fort Gratiot Light house, The Bluewater Riverwalk and shopping. Port Huron also boasts the Carnegie Center and Huron Lightship museums. The Gateway Casino is available just across the Bluewater Bridge in Point Edward, Ontario.
- At the banquet, you will see people wearing everything from blue jeans and banded collar shirt to period correct evening wear.
- Pick up dessert when you pick up your meal at the banquet.
- **HAVE FUN!!!!!!!!!!**

See you next year.

**Sarge**  
**SASS# 99895**