

"YOU CAN'T DO THAT YET!"

A GUIDE TO REACTIONS AND SHOOTOUTS

By Gerry Crowe

Johnny stood alone. Nothing moved, nothing stirred as he stared intently down the street, all his attention focused elsewhere. Beads of sweat, a product of the intense heat beating down from the noonday sun, were forming on his unprotected head. The soft breeze blowing down the street should have brought some comfort, but it was parched and dry and only seemed to make matters worse.

But Johnny was aware of none of this. In fact, he was conscious of only two things; the slow, regular movement of the clock, high above him in its wooden tower, and the man at the opposite end of the street.

He peered through the haze at the figure, his eyes slitted to avoid the intense sun and the grit and dust picked up by the breeze. The man stared back at him, watching, his fingers stroking the handles of a pair of Colt Peacemakers, seemingly unmoved by the situation. Not that Johnny was particularly nervous - he'd found himself in these circumstances many times before, and each time he'd walked away, leaving another customer for the ever present town undertaker.

"Damn fool", he thought to himself as he watched his opponent, all his senses tuned to the sound of the clock, waiting. "If I really was cheatin', you think you'd have known about it?"

The time was close now...very close. His fingertips rested gently on his pistols, his eyes flicked for an instance to the clock tower, then back to the figure...

CLUNK!

In a split second, Johnny's guns left their holster and fired, a flicker of flame and a puff of smoke appearing from each as they once again spat death. And in the split second that Johnny fired, a Peacemaker slug, approximately .45 inches in diameter, slammed into his chest, ploughing through bone and blood vessel, knocking him clean off his feet.

For several moments he lay there, unable to move, aware only of the sun on his face and the pounding in his ears. Gradually he began to notice his surroundings - the blood on his shirt, the growing pain in his chest, and the numbness creeping into his legs. He was dimly aware of the figure at the far end of the street, now lying in a crumpled heap, unmoving. It really didn't seem to matter anymore.

He knew he was going to die, and soon. Except...

In his travels, he had learned more than just how to handle a gun. He slowly, painfully reached a bloodstained hand into his pocket, and retrieved an ordinary pack of cards. Fighting back nausea, he knew he had just one last chance. The ritual that old huckster had taught him had saved his life once before, after he'd carelessly been bitten by a rattler out near Deadwood. And now, if he was quick, it would save him again.

He shuffled the cards, desperately trying to focus his mind on the ritual he needed to perform. Gradually he began to see a form taking shape, a small, malformed creature with an evil grin and a similar pack of cards. Slowly the street began to disappear, to be replaced by a bleak, unfamiliar landscape. Johnny began to deal his hand...

"Excuse me sir, but you can't do that yet."

The voice had a strange accent, possibly British, though he couldn't say for sure. But his concentration was gone, and with it the creature and the landscape. He looked up incredulously at the figure leaning over him.

"What'n hell do you mean I can't do this", he choked, blood beginning to catch in his throat.

"Well you see, the gentleman who runs Nasty Docs, Silas I believe his name is, gets first refusal over your body. And I'm afraid that other chap over there", he gestured with his hand, "wants to steal those nice boots of yours. You're going to have to wait before you start casting all that hocus pocus."

As Johnny slipped into unconsciousness, he could only wonder why he hadn't taken more interest in that game of lowball poker going on in the far corner of the saloon. He'd never realised it would be quite so important...

Probably the most complicated area of Doomtown, and certainly the one that generates the most questions, is that of Reactions, and particularly those played in Shootouts. To explain how Dave and I rule on these, and to generally try and make things a little clearer, I've written this (hopefully) definitive account of the order of a shootout, and the points at which each Reaction gets played.

Before I list the actual sequence, a few notes.

Pine Box

First off, a note about Pine Box. Due to the ambiguous way some of the Reactions in the original set were worded, it can be quite confusing, particularly for new players, to know exactly when each should be played. Some reactions will occur at exactly the same time but have completely different wording. The new Pine Box edition resolves a lot of these issues by standardising wording, so that a ruling on the timing of one card can easily be applied to other cards with common text.

Triggers

Next, a note about triggers. One of the most common reactions are those that react to a dude being aced. Regular subscribers to the mailing list will know that there are three possible times that you can react to the acing of that dude.

Just before the dude is aced (e.g. And Stay Down!)

When the dude is actually aced (e.g. Medicine)

After a dude has definitely been aced (e.g. Headsman's Axe)

There are very few reactions that occur before the trigger, but there are a few and it's important to the use of those cards that they occur before all the others. The bulk of reactions occur immediately upon their trigger. A few happen after the trigger, as they should not take effect unless the trigger has definitely happened (for example you can't go chopping off a dude's head with the Headsman's Axe unless the dude has definitely been aced and nothing has saved him).

Most other rulings also used this approach, including deeds being aced, dudes joining posses, etc.

Dave and I decided it was best if we were consistent across the board with this, and used this system with all the cards. As I started to write this article, it occurred to me that some current rulings did not follow this formula, particularly Cheatin' cards. Cheatin' cards occur "when an illegal hand is revealed", whereas almost all other reactions happen **after** Draw Hands are revealed. Existing rulings ignore this distinction, but for consistency it should be applied. The main impact of this is that Cheatin' cards are

now played before Ace In The Hole, so it's no longer possible to use that card to adjust your hand to avoid Cheatin'.

The Shootout Sequence

Now, onto a shootout. This same sequence applies whether the shootout occurs as a result of calling out, or whether it's triggered by a Job.

Example reactions to a step are listed in red.

1. Declare action. This is either Calling a dude out as a Noon action, using a card effect to call a dude out or start a shootout, or declare a job

Gettin' Outta Hand, The Ghost, Sheriff's Watchin'

2. If the Target dude is being Called Out , he may Chicken Out, going home booted. The shootout ends now.

Yellow Belly

3. Dealer declares his posse

Head 'Em Off At The Pass, Shadow Walk

- Dealer boots his dudes that must move to join his posse, and then moves them. If the shootout is taking place on Private land owned by the Target's player, all dudes joining his posse become Wanted

Diversion, Giddyup!, Texas Rangers Outfit

4. Target declares his posse

Head 'Em Off At The Pass, Shadow Walk

- Target boots his dudes that must move to join his posse, and then moves them. If the shootout is taking place on Private land owned by the Dealer's player, all dudes joining his posse become Wanted

Diversion, Giddyup!, Texas Rangers Outfit

5. Step 1 of Shootout sequence begins. If the Clocktower is in play, its Controller may play one shootout action now. Then each player with one or more dudes in the shootout may play one shootout action in turn, starting with the Winner unless modified by a card effect (Experienced Black Jack, Hideout). If the Winner has no Dudes in the shootout, start with the Target instead.

Wrath

Some notes regarding Shootout actions

- For a dude to use a Shootout action on his own card or a card attached to him, he must either be in the shootout, or be using the action to join the shootout
- If a dude is protected by an effect that says he "cannot be aced in a shootout unless beaten by X ranks", he cannot be aced at this time. He can **only** be aced by comparing hand ranks
- Any dudes joining a posse at this point will immediately become Wanted if the

shootout is on the opposing player's Private property.

- If an action is used on a ready Weapon, that weapon must remain ready for the duration of the shootout.

6. Declare Shooters

7. Calculate Stud & Draw bonuses

8. Draw hand

9. Reveal Draw Hands

Immediately before hands are revealed, Luck Of The Draw

When hands are revealed, all Cheatin' Cards (which can be reacted to with Swapped Deck and Yer Cheatin Too)

After hands are revealed, Ace In The Hole, Bluff, Hot Lead Flyin' and many others

10. Declare value of Jokers

- Death's Head Joker aces opposing dude with lowest value. Reactions to that aching take place.

Up to this point, if at any time there are no dudes in one or other of the posses, the shootout ends immediately. The results of the Draw Hands are not compared, and no dudes are aced due to the difference in hand ranks. Dudes aced up to this point for any other reason remain aced.

11. Compare Draw Hands, adjusted by effects (e.g. Quick Draw Holster).

Quickdraw

12. Declare the Winner of this round of the shootout.

Fanning The Hammer, Stray Lead (clarification)

13. Both sides simultaneously ace dudes

Before a dude is aced, And Stay Down, Crippled

When a dude is aced, Medicine, Miracle Elixir, Jail.

After a dude is aced, Headsman's Axe, Mimic. Also at this point, although they are not reactions, players receive ghostrock from the Graveyard and the Undertakers.

14. Harrowed Pulls take place at this point, after all other reactions to the Dude being aced.

15. After all reactions to a dude being aced are played, the dude is sent to Boot Hill

16. Discard Draw Hands

17. Starting with the Dealer, each side declares whether they will Chicken Out or remain

Nowhere to Run

18. If there is still at least one dude in both posses, Return to Step 5

19. If one side has no dudes remaining the shootout ends. At this point, if the shootout was the result of a Job, the results of the Job are applied. Further reactions may take place depending on the outcome of the job (e.g. Bucket Brigade can be played following a successful Arson).

20. Post-shootout effects occur

e.g. a dude affected by **Refuse To Fall** is now aced.

One final note about shootouts. Control is continually recalculated throughout the duration of a shootout. Whenever dudes enter or leave the shootout, control can change. When dudes are aced, continue to include their influence for determining who controls a deed until they are sent to Boot Hill (i.e. Step 14).

As an example, if you have Black Jack in a shootout at Nasty Docs facing Jim McNeil, and Black Jack is aced, you still control the Docs for the purposes of using its reaction. Only after all reactions to Jack being aced have been played does he go to Boot Hill, at which point you'll lose control. Not that it matters as you should now have a Harrowed Black Jack...ouch!