

USPSA Amendments To The 2004 IPSC Rules

Area Director's Comments

January 22, 2004

As you know, IPSC adopted a new set of rules which took effect on January 1, 2004. Although several USPSA representatives served on the various rules committees, the final product was reviewed by the USPSA BOD in order to determine what, if any, changes might be necessary. This review process started in September 2003. The formal work began at the November 2003 BOD meeting and continued on-line through early January 2004. What with the demands of business travel and the expectations of our families during the holidays, the level of participation varied from AD to AD. I want to particularly thank Area 5 Director Gary Stevens for having shared many a late night with me in our effort to keep the process moving and find reasonable solutions to our mutual concerns.

For those of you who maintain an interest in the rules of our sport, please note that it is not my intent to address the differences between the new rules and our current 2001 USPSA rules in this document. I understand that a USPSA member is writing a comprehensive article on those differences for publication in Front Sight magazine. This document is only intended to clarify and explain the nature of the USPSA amendments to the 2004 IPSC rules version and the process which led us to the final decisions.

The effective date of the new USPSA rulebook has not yet been announced. The book has to be formatted and printed **and** the EzWinScore program has to be updated to reflect the rules changes in advance of the effective date. When that date is announced, it will be posted to the Area 8 main webpage. I expect that date to be sometime after the end of April, perhaps later.

As you read this and review the motions posted on the USPSA Members Area (scroll down to "On-line meeting minutes"), keep in mind that I may not have supported a motion which I made or seconded. Only my vote gives you that answer. Even if I did not support them, I felt certain issues were sufficiently important to the membership for a full vote rather than just to die from lack of a Second.

Another generic clarification – You may see some motions which seem to be either contradictory or redundant. These occurred due to the difficulties associated with e-mail/on-line deliberations and voting. It happened that a motion would begin the voting process only to have someone find a loop hole in it. You will see that on the motions concerning allowing local clubs to accept entries in multiple Divisions (yes, finally!), the scoring of separate strings in Standards, and one or two others.

There is one new IPSC rule which has received some member attention but was not addressed by the Board. The rule which limits penalty targets to a maximum of two penalties, regardless of the number of hits (Rule 9.4.2) was not modified. Although I don't particularly agree with it, it was not high on my priority list and it appears likewise for the rest of the Board. The change is only really significant in the case where a single no-shoot is bordered by two scoring targets. Otherwise, it appears to be mainly a "philosophical issue", although I wonder if it should invalidate established high hit factors for some existing Classifiers.

I will address the motions in an order somewhat reflective of the relative importance which I placed on them. These are my perceptions only and may differ from those of other members of the Board. Area 8 members may contact me if there are any questions. I will supplement this document as necessary to publish the answers to major questions.

Competition Divisions

It was determined from the start that our current USPSA Divisions would be maintained. It was also determined that certain Division requirements needed modification. The past financial equipment investment made by our members was a primary concern of the Board in any equipment configuration discussions.

Production and Limited-10 Divisions

The two primary items on my “fix” list were the elimination of the “first shot must be double action” from Production Division and the allowance for a shooter to use an 11-round magazine during *Load and Make Ready* for Limited-10 and Production Divisions. Both of those changes were accepted by the Board. Production shooters will now have the ability to cock the hammer or rack the slide after the Start Signal if they so choose. Note that this does not mean that you can use a single-action firearm – you must still comply with the Division equipment requirements and cannot start in “single-action” mode.

Production minimum trigger weights and changes to L-10 holster position were discussed and dropped.

USPSA will now be using an official list of approved Production guns (see the latest Front Sight). Basically, this list will reflect those guns on the IPSC list, plus any others determined to qualify. The most obvious example is that USPSA will allow the Springfield XD (which IPSC retroactively classified as a “single-action” gun and removed from its Production list). The Board was unanimous in its concern that rules changes should not affect a member’s major investment without compelling reason. NROI will manage the USPSA list of allowed guns under a BOD-approved process.

As concerns the XD, I can only describe it in this manner: IPSC has defined the various action types in great detail. The problem is that the evolution of technology makes it nearly impossible to place all the action types in clear little word boxes. This is particularly true of “double-action”. It is no longer as clear as in the past. The development of the Glock, the XD, and other striker-fired actions have muddled the definitions to the point where you require intimate knowledge of these guns to attempt to classify them. Even then, the differences between technical and legal definitions makes it even more difficult. In our discussions, I came to the conclusion that USPSA could take a somewhat different approach, one which recognized (admitted) the competitive advantage or disadvantage of certain actions. In the context of “competitiveness”, “single-action” is essentially the classic 1911 design and its clones and “double-action/selective-action” is just about anything else. If you accept that somewhat loose description, it makes reasonable sense that the XD is **not** competitive as a single-action gun. YMMV.

Revolver Division

Revolver Major Power Factor is no longer restricted to certain calibers. If it makes Major, it will now be legal.

Also, revolvers will now be able to play in Production Division. This should be especially welcome by those of you with eight-holers. (No, you cannot score Major PF with a revolver in Production.)

Tactical Rifle Division

The BOD approved the addition of Tactical Rifle and a Tactical Aggregate. This decision reflects the growing interest in these particular rifles (essentially a Limited rifle with one - only one - optic).

The new Division and Aggregate should be popular with shooters who normally shoot “limited” handguns and shotguns, but prefer (or need) optics for their rifle.

Rifle Power Factors

PF was reduced slightly to reflect the fact that today’s shorter-barrelled ARs do not make Minor reliably using common commercial ammo.

Main Body of Rules

IPSC 2004 Rules

The BOD first needed to vote whether or not to accept the IPSC rules as written. Although a common global rulebook would be beneficial, there were simply too many problem areas in those rules for me to vote to accept them as is. Once we voted to decline the 2004 IPSC rules, we could move on to address the specific amendments we felt were worthy of consideration.

Multiple match entries

Our current rules (and the 2004 IPSC) restrict additional entries in a match as “for no score”. Many clubs depend on these re-entries for their financial well-being and wanted shooters to shoot for match placement and awards. The BOD approved re-entries for Local (now known as Level I) matches.

When you read the minutes, you will note that there appears to be several motions on this subject. This was a result of continuing discussion, which created new motions. The only one that matters (and which was passed) is the one titled “US 6.2.4.1 Level I reentries”.

Warnings

IPSC introduced a new concept of “warnings” in the new rules. The idea is that certain violations fall short of procedurals and can be addressed at a lower level. Although a process could be established for major matches, I felt quite strongly that this concept would be both ignored and unmanageable at local matches. It would require a tracking and scoring process which simply rarely exists at local matches. Some warnings progressed to procedurals for subsequent violations, while one went directly to a DQ. Some warnings applied to acts which a competent RO can/should prevent. Lastly, some warnings applied to “off-stage” offenses and it was undetermined where/when subsequent offenses would be penalized – last stage? next stage? Conclusion: Warnings will not apply in USPSA.

The removal of warnings required that several rules be amended to remove that verbiage. In some cases the opportunity was taken to also clarify the affected rule.

Sight Pictures

Another case of unnecessary shooter restriction. Sight pictures are not a safety concern, neither do they slow down matches. If a gun goes “BANG!” during a sight picture, rules already exist to cover such an event. The application of penalties for sight picture violations waste more match time than the sight pictures themselves. Also, these restrictions would be ignored at local matches, so shooter habits would not change. This would result in shooters being penalized at major matches (and some of you know how unpleasant that is for both the shooter and the RO). Sight pictures will be allowed in USPSA, just keep it brief and don’t try going through the stage while doing it (see new Rule 8.3.1.1)

Junior Age

Ever since 2001, we have been working with a Junior age limit of 21. Most of us find this unrealistic and detrimental to the recognition of “real” Juniors. The BOD voted to set *USPSA Junior* to under the age of 18 on the first day of the match. Please note that this applies to USPSA matches only. Matches operating under IPSC rules will still recognize the higher number. This means that a USPSA-sponsored World Shoot Junior Team would necessarily use the higher limit for the selection of that team.

Popper Calibration

The BOD voted to amend the popper calibration procedures. My reasoning was that the IPSC procedure is too demanding, would result in unnecessary reshoots, and would slow down matches. The gist of the amendment is: 1) a calibration shot which hits anywhere and fails to drop the popper = reshoot; 2) hits high (whether or not the popper drops) = reshoot; 3) hits low and drops the popper = no reshoot (scored a Miss).

Metal Targets

This generated quite a lot of discussion. My first concern was that the new IPSC version allows for “RO judgment” as to the “quality of a hit” on a plate. This is a significant step backwards from the current standard that a hit on a scoring plate which does not fall is always Range Equipment Failure (REF). Further, the IPSC version treated penalty plates differently than scoring plates (and for that matter, differently than paper targets and poppers). The USPA amendment restores REF for scoring plates which do not drop, clarifies the conditions which result in REF, and applies no-shoot penalties to penalty plates which do not fall (same as poppers).

Popper Calibration Location

Two related motions failed. I mention them only to explain why I introduced and/or supported them. I disagree with the IPSC calibration positions because they can, in one case, penalize a shooter while in another case, allow a shooter to take an extreme angle shot on a popper and be “rewarded” with a reshoot when it fails a calibration challenge from that position. I’m not convinced that all the “No” votes truly appreciated the impact of the IPSC version. Time to work this out was short. Had we had more time to further refine the wording, I believe the intent of these motions would have passed. Can’t win them all.

Law Gear

Our current rules empower the MD to allow Military and Law Enforcement personnel to use their “duty rigs”. The new IPSC rules continue that allowance, only subject to the Range Master’s judgment as to safety and suitability. I consider this rule a good recruiting tool which offers Military and Law shooters an opportunity to try our sport with no equipment investment. The problem is that some shooters have been using the rule as a way to circumvent the equipment requirements which apply to every other shooter in a major match. I expect that by the time a Law/Military shooter decides to compete at Section or Area matches, the recruitment effort has been successful and the use of this rule to gain a competitive advantage must be prohibited. I introduced this motion to restrict the use of that equipment to Level I matches only. The motion passed.

Standards – Standards 2

Again, a case of two successive overlapping motions, with only the final one accepted for its improved wording. The IPSC rules changed the scoring of Standards so that the targets must be

scored after each string. It was felt that this process would essentially kill the use of multi-string stages due to the match delays which would result. The avoidance of those types of stages would also effectively reduce the number of useable Classifiers for our clubs. It would also invalidate the established high hit factors for our multi-string Classifiers. The motion which passed re-instates the scoring to the completion of all strings and clarifies the definition of stacking.

Creeping

This was a case of improving a loosely worded IPSC rule and taking the opportunity to reflect what usually really happens at matches. It is widely considered harsh to penalize a shooter who flinches and returns to the correct starting position prior to the start signal. The new USPSA version recognizes that fact and gives the RO some leeway in the application of a penalty.

Interpretations

This motion establishes that NROI rules interpretations will apply to future matches and will be published on the USPSA website. They will also form the basis for future rules updates.

Load and Make Ready – LAMR 2

Another case of dual motions. The first motion (passed) just removed the warning as contained in the IPSC rule. The second motion (failed) was simply offered to give the option of applying a penalty to an offense. I agreed with the opinion that this a stage management issue. A competent RO should be in control of his stage and the shooter should not come close to a violation in the first place.

Hammer - Mag

Another warning removal. The USPSA version now also specifies that the gun must be checked in the same way we have been informally doing it all these years.

All Rules

Establishes that all Handgun rules amendments will also apply to the appropriate sections of the Rifle, Shotgun, and Tournament rules. (see Match Levels below)

Encroachment

Removes the warning from the IPSC rule and clarifies the potential penalty for competitors who willfully encroach on a stage.

Law– Military Categories

IPSC removed Law and Military Categories from the rules. Although I have always personally felt that “special recognition” of only certain professions was not proper, I seconded the motion to re-instate them to USPSA. I felt it was an important enough issue that the BOD should vote on it openly versus simply ignoring it. The motion failed. Law and Military Categories are gone. What does remain is the Matt Rierson Award which recognizes the highest Military competitor in Open and Limited Divisions at the USPSA Nationals.

Classic only

The new IPSC rules prohibit paper targets from being placed at greater than 90-degrees from vertical. The motion would have limited that restriction to Classic targets only (since it is not obvious which way is up) and allowed Metric targets to be placed upside down. I voted against this

motion only because I did not see this as a significant enough issue to create another US amendment. The motion failed.

Match Levels

The term “Tournament” will no longer be used to describe a USPSA major match. It is now the definition of two or more firearm specific matches (e.g. a handgun match and a shotgun match, or a handgun match, a rifle match and a shotgun match). The new rules will introduce the use of IPSC-like match “Levels” to define USPSA matches. Although we will have to expand on the IPSC definitions due to the greater variety of matches we offer, you can expect (unofficially at this point) Local matches to be Level I, Section matches to be Level II, and Area/Major matches to be Level III.

Concurrent Categories

Another IPSC change to Categories was to limit competitors to only one Category entry in a match. With the removal of Law and Military, this only now affected our Lady and “age” Categories. I voted against the motion simply because the only beneficiary of multiple entries would have been Lady shooters who could then also sign up in an “age” Category. As with Law/Mil, I felt there was insufficient reason for another USPSA amendment. The motion failed.

Round Count

The IPSC rules changed the maximum rounds required per shooting position from eight to nine. This motion would re-instate the USPSA maximum of eight rounds. I voted to retain that number but the motion failed.

Evidence

This motion specifies that photos, audio and/or video recordings will not be accepted as evidence in arbitrations. Membership opinion seem to be split fairly evenly on this subject. I voted against the motion primarily due to my experience working major matches. In my roles as CRO or RM, I have come to believe that the potential benefits of allowing external evidence are more than outweighed by the difficulties and inconsistencies which are introduced. The motion passed.

Eyes and Ears

This motion is a clarification of the IPSC version. There are (again) two separate motions, each of which passed. This is an administrative oversight and will be resolved. The motions are identical with the exception of one word. The first motion (US Eyes and Ears DQ) says a DQ **may** be applied. The second motion (George’s 5.4.5) mandates a DQ for willful removal of the protection to gain a reshoot. At this point, it is my expectation that the second motion will be accepted.

Ammo on Rifle

IPSC rules prohibit the carriage of ammunition *on* a long gun. This seems very impractical and would lead to match delays when shooters have to restock their bandoleers or other ammo carriers after Load and Make Ready. This motion removes that rule thereby allowing the carriage of ammunition on long guns, just as we have been doing. Motion passed.

Miscellaneous

Several other motions dealing with relatively minor wording changes were offered and failed.

George Jones -- USPSA Area 8 Director