

# FAST DRAW

Grandview Gunslingers bring the Old West to Central Virginia



Kevin “Long Ranger” Wills fires his gun during the Grandview Gunslingers Cowboy Fast Draw Tournament in Bedford. The gunslingers are a sanctioned club for the Cowboy Fast Draw Association with headquarters in Fallon, Nevada.

By Shannon Keith  
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BEDFORD

Gunslingers — with names like the “Cheyenne Shooter,” “Kopperhead Kid,” “Grim,” “Big Ugly” and “Gun Doc” — gathered in Bedford last week to see who could claim the title of fastest gun in the West. Or at least the fastest in Central Virginia.

“Five years ago, if I had gone around playing cowboy I would have been locked up,” Rocky Bilbrey — who goes by the alias “Judge and Jury” — said during the March 10 Cowboy Fast Draw competition off Fancy Farm Road. “But now it’s just part of a normal Sunday afternoon for me.”

Bilbrey and about two dozen other gunfighters shot it out that day at the home of the Grandview Gunslingers, part of the Cowboy Fast Draw Association (CFDA), which has more than 70 affiliated clubs across the United States and in several other countries.

“There are clubs in Sweden and even one in Japan,” said Kenneth “Shenandoah” Hurt, who founded the Bedford club in 2015. “The CFDA is the largest organization in the world devoted to the sport of Fast Draw.”

Fast draw, also known as quick draw, is a sport where participants are timed on how fast they can draw their handgun and fire it accurately. It is a sanctioned sport with a long history.



ONLINE

To see video of fast draw practice, go to [newsadvance.com](https://newsadvance.com).



Pam “Calamity Pam” Stuart shares a laugh with Rocky “Judge and Jury” Bilbrey during the fast draw tournament. Participants dress in clothing resembling what would have been worn during the 1870s.

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“Our fastest guys are the ones that miss the most.” — Kenneth “Shenandoah” Hurt

# Lawsuit heads to Supreme Court

Virginia’s long-running racial gerrymandering case heads to high court for one more battle

By Graham Moomaw  
Richmond Times-Dispatch

RICHMOND — After years of legal maneuvering and about \$4.5 million spent by Republican leaders in the House of Delegates, Virginia’s long-running lawsuit over racial gerrymandering is heading to the U.S. Supreme Court for what could be the final battle.

On Monday morning, the high court will hear oral arguments in the case that has forced Virginia to adopt a redrawn House map that already has reshaped the political landscape heading into a high-stakes election year.

“What’s at stake is the future of who controls the General Assembly.”

— Carl Tobias, University of Richmond School of Law professor

“What’s at stake is the future of who controls the General Assembly,” said Carl Tobias, a professor at the University of Richmond School of Law who has followed the case.

House Republicans — who vigorously have defended the constitutionality of the redistricting plan they passed in 2011, despite multiple legal defeats — will ask the Supreme Court to overrule a lower court opinion that found 11 House districts unconstitutional. As of December, the House GOP had paid its lawyers \$4.46 million in public money to defend the map, a bill likely to rise with all the legal work associated with Monday’s hearing.

Democratic-aligned lawyers will ask the Supreme Court to let the ruling stand, saying Virginia voters deserve to have new, constitutional districts in place this fall for the last General Assembly election cycle of the decade.

If they stand, the new districts — drawn by California political science professor Bernard Grofman — would make it harder for House

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Weather, A12

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During a recent practice, Brad “Gun Doc” Turner scored a hit with a time of .331 seconds.



Rocky “Judge and Jury” Bilbrey custom-makes all of his cowboy gear, including his jacket and hat.



Mack “Saddle Tramp” Dunnivant poses for a portrait during the Grandview Gunslingers Cowboy Fast Draw Tournament.

# Gunslingers

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is the ability to quickly draw a pistol and fire it accurately on a target. This skill was made popular by romanticized depictions of gunslingers in the Western genre, which in turn were inspired by famous historical gunfights in the Old West.

Western-style clothing is an essential part of the atmosphere the group creates during fast draw contests; participants dress in clothing resembling what would have been worn during the 1870s. Bilbrey — who was dressed in what he called “mountain man” attire last week, including a buckskin jacket and fox hat — has several different outfits he wears to the events.

“I actually make them myself,” Bilbrey said. “Since I’m known as ‘Judge and Jury’ I have a judge’s outfit, a gambler’s outfit and the one I’m wearing today because it is a little cooler out.”

The aliases participants use are a big part of the sport.

“It’s a cowboy thing,” Charlie “Cheyenne Shooter” Boswell said. “A lot of the guys grew up watching westerns and will take their name from a movie or TV show they liked when they were a kid.”

Hurt said the aliases can get confusing for new members of the group.

“We only refer to each other by our shooting names when we are together,” Hurt said. “Sometimes it takes a month or two before a new shooter learns someone’s real name.”

Contestants use .45-caliber single-action revolvers — which fire wax bullets — with a minimum barrel length of 4.5 inches during the match; holsters must be of a design that was used before 1900, Hurt said.

“That keeps it authentic and consistent among shooters,” Hurt said. “It’s pretty much the closest you can get to a real gunfight.”

However, competitors do not fire bullets at each other during the match. The contestants — who line up beside one another — shoot at 17-inch-by-15-inch circular targets 15 feet away.

The match between two shooters goes to the first gunslinger to score three points. If one gunman hits the target and their oppo-



ABOVE: Cowboys fire their guns during the tournament. BELOW: Details of a club member’s gun belt are pictured.



nent misses, the point is awarded to the contestant that hit the target; if both contestants hit the target, the point is awarded to the shooter that registers the fastest time. Line judges (called hand judges) stand behind each contestant to make sure they do not draw or touch the gun’s trigger guard before a light on the target signals when they can begin.

The hand judges also ensure that a shooter is observing the strict safety protocols adopted by the CFDA.

“Our motto is ‘safety first, fun second and competition third,’” Hurt said. “We take the safety of this sport very seriously.”

During a recent practice, Brad “Gun Doc” Turner scored a hit with a time of .331 seconds. Hurt pointed out that was just under a third of a second.

“That time is from when the light on the target goes on, drawing the gun, cocking it, aiming it,

pulling the trigger and the bullet hitting the target,” Hurt said. “It generally takes about a third of a second for your brain to react to the light so you can see how fast the whole process moves.”

Turner said since the gun generally is fired from the hip, a shooter has to “practice a whole lot” to hit the target consistently.

“The target is 15 feet away,” Turner said. “If you move the barrel an inch down here that moves the shot three feet to the left or right downrange.”

Hurt said shooters have to find the right balance between speed and accuracy.

“Our fastest guys are the ones that miss the most,” Hurt said.

Jeremy “Jeremiah Johnson” Stanley, of Powhatan — who came to Bedford last week to compete — said proficiency in Cowboy Fast Draw comes through “a lot of trial and error” and “a whole lot of practice.”

“Everyone has their own style,” Stanley said. “Sometimes it takes new shooters months to find something that works. But with enough practice you settle into something that works for you.”

Stanley added the more proficient a shooter gets in Cowboy Fast Draw, the more addicting the sport becomes.

“When new people start, they are shooting about 1.5 seconds if they are hitting the target at all,” he said. “Before too long they break that 1-second barrier and you can see that they are hooked.”

Bilbrey said veterans in the sport try to help new competitors find a technique that works for them.

“You basically have two schools of thought on this,” Bilbrey said. “Some guys will tell new shooters to pull as fast as they can and eventually you will be able to hit the target. Others will say to concentrate on aiming and the speed will eventually come. And to tell you the truth, that’s about the only thing you will ever hear anyone here arguing about.”

Chris “Grim” Duncan said although Cowboy Fast Draw is very competitive, the camaraderie amongst the gunslingers “is just unreal.”

“Everyone helps each other to improve,” Duncan said. “They see what you could do to be faster and are always giving you pointers. They want to beat you, but they want to beat you at

your best.” Pam “Calamity Pam” Stuart agreed.

“This is the one competition where everyone helps each other and roots for each other,” Stuart said. “This is the greatest group of people you ever want to meet.”

Hurt said there always is room for a few more with the Grandview Gunslingers.

“We are always looking for new members,” Hurt said. “The people here are great and I’ve found that no matter where you go across the country to do Cowboy Fast Draw, the people are just as nice and welcoming.”

And it is not just a sport for men, as Stuart and Linda “Miss Shotwell” Hurt demonstrated during the March 10 competition. The two not only could draw just as fast as their male counterparts, but often they were more accurate as well. “You never want to come second in a gunfight,” Linda Hurt said, laughing. “So I would say that accuracy certainly counts. It’s a lot fun beating the guys, too.”

The club also has youth shooters as well. Children ages 8 and older can compete in CFDA, Hurt said.

“We say 8 through 80 can shoot,” Hurt said. “It’s a great way to teach young people about safety and responsibility with firearms.”

Hurt said the Grandview Gunslingers currently have about 35 active members, including Bryant “Kopperhead Kid” Jackson, of Nellysford — who holds the current CFDA World Record of .281 seconds.

The 28-year-old Jackson set the record in October 2018 at the Fastest Gun Alive competition in Fallon, Nevada.

“It was definitely an ‘oh my God’ moment,” Jackson said. “It was an amazing feeling.”

Jackson said he had trained for several months prior to the competition in Nevada with his friend Scott “Big Ugly” Malone, of Moneta, who also is a member of the Grandview Gunslingers.

“Big Ugly helped me train for about three months,” Jackson said. “I was actually shooting against him when I set the world record. That made it even more amazing that I was shooting against my friend who helped me get ready for that competition.

“But that is what this sport is really all about,” Jackson said. “It’s really about the friendships.”



ABOVE: Between rounds, cowboys routinely clean their firearms. They use .45-caliber single-action revolvers — which fire wax bullets — with a minimum barrel length of 4.5 inches during a match.

LEFT: Linda “Miss Shotwell” Hurt can draw just as fast as her male counterparts. “You never want to come second in a gunfight,” Hurt said. “So I would say that accuracy certainly counts. It’s a lot fun beating the guys, too.”