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## Bear Claw Becky is cool under fire

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FAIRBANKS — Bear Claw Becky wasn't sweating bullets when she participated Saturday in the Single Action Shooting Society Alaska State Tournament in Chatinika.

However, Bear Claw Becky — whose real name is Becky Julian — tried to keep from sweating in the mid 70-degree weather, as she wore a wide-brimmed hat and a cool collar on the opening day of the two-day event at the Old F.E. Gold Camp.



“This is so hot for me. I'm not used to the heat,” said the elementary school teacher from Anchorage, who is joined by “Tombstone Kenny,” who is also known as her husband, Ken.



Two accessories among her Old West attire showed that Becky Julian, 49, can be cool under fire with a revolver, rifle and shotgun — the weapons used by each of the 34 entries Saturday in the state tournament that is conducted by the Golden Heart Shootist Society.

The front of her belt proudly shows the silver buckle she earned for taking the ladies overall title in last year's state tournament in Chatinika. The back of her belt held the buckle for winning the same title last week at the SASS Territorial (Regional) Tournament in Birchwood.

A sixth-place finish in the Winter Range in Arizona, which includes national and international entries, is among her history in the competition, which involves participants shooting at targets in scenarios that are adapted from scenes in movies or novels related to the Old West.

Mental management training, said Julian, was one of the reasons she went home with the ladies' top honor in the 2010 state tournament.

“For me, that's being able to stay focused, stay positive, and just forget about what's going on behind me,” she said. “Before, I used to worry about if everyone's watching, how I shoot and I'm a lady ... I just had to do away with all

of that and just be positive in what I'm shooting in. Physically, I can do it and shoot like I mean it."

It meant a lot Saturday for 79-year-old Wind Drifter (also known as Fairbanks resident Gaylen Searles) to see the state tournament grow.

Searles is the oldest participant this weekend and he was among the seven participants — all men — in the first SASS state tournament 15 years ago on Fort Wainwright. The nearly three dozen entries in this year's tournament range from ages 13-79 and come from around Alaska and the Seattle suburb of Kent, Wash.

"We worked diligently to make it grow," Searles recalled. "We went to gun shows, swap meets; we went anyplace that we could get a table, talk to people about it and show them what we were doing. And there was the fact that this was a shooting sport geared toward having fun."

One of the most fun aspects of the state tournament is the participants wearing attire from the Old West while they compete with single-action revolvers, old-style shotguns and lever-action rifles.

Don Reed, a veteran of 12 state tournaments, is competing in the persona of Colonel Reed, an Army calvary officer from the 1870s.

This weekend, the 54-year-old Caterpillar equipment salesman from Two Rivers is wearing a replica of a calvary officer's hat and a jacket made of elk skin while he wears ear protection and shooting safety goggles in the competition.

"Growing up watching the Westerns, I really enjoy the cowboy genre and I really like the historical aspect," he said. "I really like the old guns, they're more interesting to me, and that whole period in American history."

Reed saw a similarity Saturday between selling Caterpillar equipment and trying to hit all 26 targets (10 revolver, 10 rifle and six shotgun) in the Josey Wales stage, which was based on a scene from the 1976 Clint Eastwood movie, "The Outlaw Josey Wales."

"They're both equally fun in their own way and they both require a lot of attention to detail," said Reed, who also served 25 years in the Air Force and Army.

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