



## Mounted Shooting Holsters 101

### Overview / General

Holsters are an essential component of Mounted Shooting. The type you will prefer (after some experience in Mounted Shooting) will largely be a matter of personal choice. The regulations in the sport generally stipulate that they be leather. The configuration you choose, should consider your chest & waist size, height and your riding style. One other consideration, is your saddle design and particularly, horn design & height (Example if you have a large waist/chest or are short and have a high saddle horn, you might consider either pommel holster(s) and /or hip holster(s).

In choosing the type holsters, you will want a setup that provides you flexibility and freedom of body movement needed in mounted shooting riding, a configuration that works best for you in drawing and replacing the guns, and holsters that hold the guns securely, but allow gun insertion and removal without undue difficulty

Finding what works best for you, is usually not done in one step. Typically, a process of trying different configurations. Most Mounted Shooters will be glad to let you try their rigs and offer their preferences and recommendations. But always be mindful that as in any sport, ask the same question of 10 different people and you will likely get 10 different answers. So it really gets down to determining what works best for you.

Before you spend \$500+ for a fancy custom rig, you should know what works best for you. One way to proceed is to purchase a relatively inexpensive basic and simple setup such as a Pommel Holster, double or single with a hip holster and use these. Then where the opportunity presents itself, try other types of configurations (rigs) to gain the feel of what your preference is. Then resell the initial setup at probably 75% of what you paid for them.

Also, depending on your riding & shooting capabilities, a fancy set of holsters isn't likely going to be your highest priority in the Mounted Shooting Learning Curve. If you are new to competition riding, your first priority will be performance riding horse skills (Est. 60% of the equation), then gun handling & shooting skills (20%) and course management (20%). The point at which you will want to buy a custom (Fancy) rig varies widely. Probably after some significant practice or competition, and certainly after you are riding the patterns in a smooth and coordinated and shooting 95% "Clean" and your times are within the upper half of your class. When starting Mounted Shooting and still trying to get it together with the horse, shooting & course navigation, the type of holsters are not likely to be a major factor in your results. So, 1. Get your "Game together", 2. Try before you buy, 3. Look at all the different versions - designs & adornments (Bling) and decide on something you really like before you spend "Big -Bucks"!

## Waist Rig

The waist “**Dual Front Holster**” rig is the most prevalent in use for Mounted Shooting. The most frequent reason cited, is that “by wearing the guns on your body, you have an intuitive feel for the exact location of the holsters and guns, during the dynamic motions of riding”. But if the rig constrains you (For whatever reason) from riding in the manner that you ride & shoot best, then cool looks aside, you may want to consider the other setups. Typically the waist rig consists of a wide belt with a back support and single or double buckles. Some holster rigs will offer a choice of holster angle cant (possibly different between gun 1 & gun 2) & positioning on the belt. There are endless options for the Customization of the rig, including belt & holster inlays (such as Cow, Gator, Ostrich, and other exotic hides or materials), painting or coloring tooling, (Carved or laser) stitching, beads & conchos and so on. The fancier you make it, the more it costs. So make sure it’s right for you before spending \$500 - \$750. Probably the most important technical point is to be sure the holsters fit your guns and likely will include some kind of non-slip lining and that the opening lip is formed and reinforced with some flair to help the gun enter the holster correctly for fast re-holstering and especially not having to look down to re-holster (detrimental habit and hard to break!)

Also if you are short waisted and using a saddle with a high horn, be especially mindful of the possibility of conflict between the holsters/guns with the saddle horn & reins in dynamic maneuvers. Knowing exactly where the guns are during dynamic competition riding isn’t a plus if you have interference and limitations on your movements and agility as needed for competition.

Waist Rig Cost - \$275 Basic to \$500+ Custom

## Double Pommel Holster

The “**Double Pommel Holster**” rig is attached to the saddle, usually with a strap through the gullet & swell opening or a flap attaching to the saddle horn. The choice will usually depend on the type of Swell of the saddle. Strap for wide swells and flap for A-fork type swells. The double design holds two guns one above the other. Usually the upper holster has a larger & higher opening and the gun locates deeper in the holster. The upper section of the bottom holster is lower cut, exposing more of the gun Grip and fits the gun tighter to hold the gun more securely.

Riding with a double pommel, start with the upper gun first. The wide & deep holster enables the first gun to be re-holstered quickly (virtually dropping it into the wide opening) and then reaching several inches down to “pull” the second gun. This works great, as you typically start the run with the first gun already in-hand and you don’t have to re-holster the second gun until after you have completed the run.

One consideration regarding the double Pommel Holster setup, is some horses might interpret your weight shift as a command cue and possibly slow down or change gate. When just starting, this is not a problem, but might become a factor when you become more competitive. But as probably one of the most inexpensive ways to get started, a pommel holster is a good way to start. Then later resell the rig or keep it for your friends or newcomers to ride.

This is the Least Expensive setup (\$150)

## Single Pommel & Hip Holster

For a rider who has some experience with mounted shooting, especially for riders who find a waist rig constraining, The “**Single Pommel Holster**” combined with a “**Hip Holster**” is a probably the best choice. The Pommel holster is big and deep allowing the first gun to literally be “Tossed” back into the holster and then in a natural motion, move the gun hand up the leg to pull the second gun from the hip holster. This technique produces gun changes that are as fast as any other Holster configuration and in the case of weight shift sensitive horses minimizes the effects of weight shift on the horse.

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> least expensive setup (\$175.)

## Double Hip Rig

The double hip (Left & Right) configuration is great for those who do not prefer a waist rig, but feel that knowing (feeling) where their guns/holsters are located on their body is helpful. Usually the rig consists of a 2 inch wide belt with the holsters positioned on each hip. One gun grip facing to the rear and the other gun grip facing forward. The decision of which are the number one & number two guns is up to the rider (whatever is preferred!)

Cost - \$180- \$250

## Other Configurations

There are several other unique setups that riders use, such as a Hip Holster and a Shoulder Holster, on the upper chest or worn on the side under the arm. Unless you have a Law Enforcement background, these setups are not typically utilized by new mounted shooters. But with some experience in mounted shooting, may be the optimum setup for you. Worth a try before deciding on your rig.

## Summary

1. Don't rush to buy expensive custom holsters just because they look great! Buy either some basic (No Bling) lower cost holsters to start with and find out what works best for you. “Try before you buy”!
2. If you like a particular style, but still don't have a precise idea of what works best for you, then look for a used set, that you can buy and probably resell at minimal \$ difference
3. Remember that a “Fancy set of Holsters” is not the key to winning. It's becoming a team with your horse, and riding smooth & coordinated and then fine-tuning the components to win, then spend your winnings on a “Special Set of really Cool Holsters”!

The Holsters highlighted (“**Bold**”) are available from Mounted Shooting Supplies. Also the product listings have additional descriptions.

**MountedShootingSupplies.com**