

The Composite Cowboy: BOOT HILL Meets WILD WEST

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One problem with western role-playing games is that it's hard to find a game store that stocks them. Even when you find the games, their adventure supplements are next to impossible to locate. The store that has every dungeon module ever printed may very well have *no* western modules.

That's how I ended up mail-ordering TSR's *Mad Mesa*, a *Boot Hill* module, from the good people at Judges Guild. I was surprised when it arrived, for though it said *Boot Hill* in giant letters across the top, in small print it said "Wild West module". . . For a moment, I thought *Mad Mesa* might actually be compatible with both TSR's *Boot Hill* and FGU's *Wild West*. Unfortunately, that wasn't so.

According to the catalogues at my disposal, there are only four western modules: *Mad Mesa*, *Lost Conquistador Mine*, and *Shootout in Northfield and Other Famous Gunfights* from TSR for

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Boot Hill, and *Wild West Adventure 1 (Trouble on Widow's Peak)* from FGU for *Wild West*. That's a total of four supplements for two different games.

As for the games themselves, neither is markedly better than the other. *Boot Hill* is the best-written role-playing game put out by TSR, but it is pretty much a gunfight game with only a few rules for campaigning. *Wild West*, on the other hand, provides enough details (including character skills such as Wrangling and Dentistry) to launch a real campaign, but it has a cumbersome combat system. *Boot Hill* is easier to learn because of the examples and mini-adventures included in the rules. On the other hand, *Wild West* has a simpler game system and comes with a useful strategic map of the Old West.

What you end up with is two different but complementary games and four modules which are practically impossible to translate from one game system to the other. For the dedicated Old West gamer, the next step is obvious: Find a way to add *Wild West* and *Boot Hill* together, fitting a campaign system and a combat system into a hybrid game, and adapting player-characters so that they can work under *both* sets of rules — so that you can adventure in *Mad Mesa* on Wednesday and go after Widow's Peak on the weekend.

The first step is to create the new player-character, the Composite Cowboy.

Creating the Composite

A composite cowboy is surprisingly easy to make. The idea is to provide the character with a double set of attributes,

TABLE A: *Boot Hill* % to *Wild West* 3d6

%	3d6	63	10 (1-50)
26	3 (1-46)	64-72	11 (51-100)
	4 (47-100)	73	11
27	4 (1-85)	74-79	11 (1-50)
	5 (47-100)	80	12 (51-100)
28-29	5	81-88	12
30	5 (1-63)	89	12 (1-54)
	6 (64-100)	90-92	13 (55-100)
31-34	6	93	13
35	6 (1-26)	94-95	13 (1-80)
	7 (27-100)	96	14 (81-100)
36-40	7	97-98	14
41	7 (1-60)	99	14 (1-87)
	8 (61-100)	100	15 (88-100)
42-45	8		15
46	8 (1-46)		15 (1-37)
	9 (47-100)		16 (38-100)
47-52	9		16
53	9 (1-50)		16 (1-15)
	10 (51-100)		17 (16-100)
54-62	10		17 (1-54)
			18 (55-100)

one for *Wild West* and one for *Boot Hill*. If a character is a crack shot in *Boot Hill*, for instance, he should have the same level of marksmanship in *Wild West*. The following rules adapt the character comparatively; a characters will also translate into being one of the top 10% of all *Boot Hill* first-level player-characters. However, that doesn't mean his percentages to accomplish anything will match exactly in both games.

The first step is to roll up a regular *Boot Hill* player-character, adding the usual player modifications to the percentile die rolls. The percentile attributes rolled up are:

- Speed
- Gun Accuracy
- Throwing Accuracy
- Strength
- Bravery
- Experience

You can also go ahead and figure out the Hit Determination number, if you like.

The second step is to roll up those *Wild West* 3d6 attributes which have no counterparts in the *Boot Hill* rules. These are:

- (Primary) Constitution
- Intelligence
- Common Sense
- Perception
- Charisma
- Luck
- (Secondary) Leadership
- Right/Left Handed

Now comes the hard part – translating the already-rolled *Boot Hill* attributes into *Wild West* stats. To simplify things,

we give one of the attributes (Bravery) no counterpart. The others translate as:

<i>Boot Hill</i>	<i>Wild West</i>
Speed	Agility
Strength	Physique
Gun Accuracy	Accuracy
Throwing Accuracy	Accuracy
Experience	Marksmanship, Pistol experience
Experience	Marksmanship, Rifle experience

To translate the first two pairs, go to Table A of this article. On the left of the table are listed the *Boot Hill* percentile values, with their *Wild West* equivalents on the right. To complicate things, some *Boot Hill* scores can translate into more than one *Wild West* score. When this occurs on the chart, each of the possible values is followed by a die roll range. Roll percentile dice to determine which value to use.

Example: A character with a Boot Hill speed percentile value of 35 can, in Wild West, be either a 6 or a 7. Rolling a 22 on percentile dice would mean that the 6 is used.

Table A will translate Speed into Agility, and Strength into Physique.

Gun Accuracy and Throwing Accuracy from *Boot Hill* must now be combined to form a single *Wild West* accuracy. To do this, add the percentile values for the two *Boot Hill* attributes together and refer to Table B to find their *Wild West* equivalent.

Example: A Gun Accuracy of 29 and a Throwing Accuracy of 51 combine to form a total of 80. Looking up 80 on Table B provides a Wild West accuracy score of 6.

TABLE B: Two *Boot Hill* %s to *Wild West* 3d6

% sum	3d6
52-60	3
61-69	4
70-77	5
78-86	6
87-95	7
96-106	8
107-117	9
118-126	10
127-136	11
137-146	12
147-158	13
159-168	14
169-177	15
178-186	16
187-192	17
193-200	18

Lastly, the generic Experience from *Boot Hill* must be translated into the specific experience for Marksmanship, Pistol and Marksmanship, Rifle skills in *Wild West*. To do this, look up the Experience percentile value on Table C. There will probably be several possible values with a percentile range given. Roll percentile dice to discover the skill values.

Example: A character has a Boot Hill experience of 79. Five possibilities are given on Table C for Wild West equiva-

TABLE C: One *Boot Hill* % to Two *Wild West* 1d3

%	die roll	Pistol	Rifle				
26-28		20	20		51-67	80	60
29-34	1-50	20	40		68-83	100	40
	51-100	40	20		84-100	120	20
35-41	1-33	20	60	69-79	1-20	40	120
	34-67	40	40		21-40	60	100
	68-100	60	20		41-60	80	80
42-46	1-25	20	80		61-80	100	60
	26-50	40	60		81-100	120	40
	51-75	60	40	80-88	1-25	60	120
	76-100	80	20		26-50	80	100
47-57	1-20	20	100		51-75	100	80
	21-40	40	80		76-100	120	60
	41-60	60	60	89-93	1-33	80	120
	61-80	80	40		34-67	100	100
	81-100	100	20		68-100	120	80
58-68	1-17	20	120	94-97	1-50	100	120
	18-33	40	100		51-100	120	100
	34-50	60	80	98-100		120	120

lents. Rolling a 45 on percentile dice would indicate that the character has 80 experience in both skills.

The final step in getting the character stats figured is to figure out the *Wild West* secondary attributes derived from the attributes just translated, namely:

Height
Weight
Ratio
Strength
Wind

Damage Factor

Lifting and Carrying

When choosing skills, both Marksmanship: Pistol and Marksmanship: Rifle must be taken as primary skills.

Equivalents must also be figured for two vital pieces of equipment: guns and horses.

There's no good way to translate the guns because they work so differently from one system to another. A derringer (a concealable pistol) in *Boot Hill* can shoot twice as far (20 yards) as either type of derringer in *Wild West*. *Boot Hill* guns are generic — fast-draw revolver, army rifle, etc. — with stats for ranges (short, medium, long and extreme), rate of fire, time to reload, and (most importantly) their effect on Speed. In *Wild West*, by contrast, specific guns are listed — Smith & Wesson 32 (1861), Springfield Rifle (1865) — with information on range (short, medium and long), damage (one to three dice, either 10- or 20-sided) and time to reload.

The best thing to do is to select a gun from the *Wild West* charts, and then find the *Boot Hill* stats for the category of gun. Matching the harder-to-figure guns, we have:

<i>Boot Hill</i>	<i>Wild West</i>
Buffalo Rifle	Sharps Rifle
Army Rifle	Springfield or Peabody Rifle
Other Rifles	All guns in Section 1 not listed above

Wild West beats *Boot Hill* hands down when it comes to horses. To translate a horse, first roll it up in *Wild West* fashion (skills, attributes, etc.) and then use Table D to convert its Damage Factor into *Boot Hill* strength.

Playing the Composite

When playing a composite character, there are two things to worry about: experience and wounds.

A composite cowboy receives two kinds of experience: General (*Boot Hill*)

and Specific (*Wild West*). He receives both kinds of experience from each and every encounter, regardless of whether *Boot Hill* or *Wild West* or a mixture of rules was used.

Let's say that a composite cowboy takes on the *Lost Conquistador Mine* module and gets into a gunfight. If he survives the gunfight, he receives one further notch on his Previous Number of Gunfights score (derived from *Boot Hill* experience points for each successful shot at long range with a rifle).

Experience modifies only the attributes based on the same system. *Boot Hill* experience, for instance, also raises Bravery and Speed values. The increase in Speed, however, has no effect on its *Wild West* counterpart, Agility.

Wounds are a more ticklish question. Let's say that your composite cowboy, wounded at Widow's Peak, now intends to go to Northfield or another famous gunfight without healing first. Assuming that Widow's Peak was played with *Wild West* combat rules and that Northfield will be under *Boot Hill* combat rules, a translation must be made between current *Wild West* damage factor and *Boot Hill* strength.

It is better to simply require a character to heal before converting between combat systems, since wounds are so different from game to game. However, here's a method for moving from *Wild West* to *Boot Hill*:

- 0-25% damage in one location: no strength loss
- 26-63% damage in one location: light wound (-3 strength)
- 64-100% damage in one location: serious wound (-7 strength)

TABLE D: *Wild West* horse damage factor to *Boot Hill* strength

<i>Wild West</i> damage factor	<i>Boot Hill</i> strength
90-202	20
203-232	21
233-247	22
248-262	23
263-277	25
278-292	26
293-307	28
308-322	31
323-337	33
338-352	34
353-367	36
368-382	37
383-397	38
398-427	39
428-540	40

Going from *Boot Hill* to *Wild West* requires that the player keep records on the specific wounds received. These then translate as:

Light wound in one location: 45% loss of damage factors in that area

Serious wound in one location: 82% loss of damage factors in that area

Shoulder wounds in *Boot Hill* become Chest wounds in *Wild West*.

This system is only approximate. Note that a composite cowboy translating between *Wild West* and *Boot Hill* might very well die in the attempt. Here we must punt and cite GM's Option for what will happen to a cowboy so unfortunate.

Mixing the Rules

Once you have the composite player-characters, everything else is easy. Now our composite cowboys can continue through all of the printed modules and adventures for either game. Also, the Game Master may now mix and match rules as he likes. Only one combat system can be in use during any single battle (or else confusion will reign), but it is possible to use the system most suited for a given battle: *Wild West* for, say, a tense stalk after a pair of bandits through an abandoned mine, and *Boot Hill* for a large-scale cavalry-vs-Indians free-for-all.

Now, horses, which in *Boot Hill* can only stop bullets and run, using *Wild West* rules can swim rivers, leap obstacles and even rescue their master by biting through his ropes. Player-characters also gain useful auxiliary skills such as Demolitions and Locksmithy — details which add new dimensions to play.

In such a combined game, therefore, a *Boot Hill* gunfight might be going on when suddenly a player-character realizes he is out of ammo and the bad guy is going to ride past him down Main Street and away. What does he do?

He takes out his lariat. "I want to rope him," says the player.

"There aren't any rules for roping in *Boot Hill*," says the referee. "You want me to treat it as throwing a knife at him? I'd have to give you a penalty on it, though."

"*Wild West* rules," says the player. "My character's got Roping skill."

"All right," says the referee.

Composite player-characters provide both expanded access to ready-to-play adventures and greater freedom to use the best rules from each game. And for an example of an adventure to test the mettle of the best of composite cowboys, simply look to the right-hand page. . .