

Military Excellence-in-Competition Matches

Extracted From the Provisional Small Arms Firing Manual of 1909

By Dick Culver

During each alternate year, there will be four competitions, as follows:

- 1) The Departmental Rifle Competition;
- 2) The Army Rifle Competition;
- 3) The Departmental Revolver Competition;
- 4) The Army Revolver Competition.

Competitions were to be held at such places and times as may be designated in orders from the War Department.

Regulations for Rifle Leg Matches (1909)

Course of Fire for the Departmental and Army Rifle Competition					
Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
200	A	Slow	10	Standing	1 minute/shot
200	D	Rapid	10 fired in two separate strings of 5 shots	Standing <u>to</u> kneeling	20 seconds per 5 shot string
300	D	Rapid	10 fired in two separate strings of 5 shots	Choice of Kneeling <u>or</u> Sitting Position (the position was assumed <u>before</u> string of fire)	20 seconds per 5 shot string
500	B	Slow	2 sighting shots plus 10 rounds	Prone	1 minute/shot
500	D	Rapid	10 fired in two strings of 5 shots	Prone (assumed before string of fire)	30 seconds per 5 shot string
600	B	Slow	2 sighting shots plus 10 rounds	Prone	1 minute/shot
This course of fire was to be fired twice, on two separate days for the total aggregate score. This score plus the results of two individual runs through the Skirmish Course were added together to determine the medal (leg) winners who would receive credit toward the designation of " <i>Distinguished Marksman</i> ".					

Note: All Rapid Fire (including the skirmish course) was conducted using the M1903 Battle Sight (not adjustable, but supposedly set for 530 yards). Appropriate “hold off” (Kentucky Elevation) was used at all ranges for rapid fire!

The signal for the targets to appear from the Pits for a string of Rapid Fire was a “trumpet”, “whistle”, or “telephone”.

The Infantry and Coast Artillery troops were required to fire the 200-yard Rapid Fire stage of the qualification course with fixed bayonets! Fixed bayonets were not required at 300 or 500 yard Rapid, however, fixed bayonets were **NOT** required at any range during the “Leg Match.”

Skirmish Course of Fire for Competition					
Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
600	D	Rapid	5	Choice of prone, kneeling, or sitting	30
500			5		30
400			5		30
350			5		30
300			5		30
200			5		20

Use of the Battle Sight was required at all ranges except for 600 yards where the peep sight was permitted.

D Targets were mounted on “disappearing carriages (similar to modern day target carriers). Signal to the pits that the competitors were ready to proceed was a trumpet or telephone. Thirty seconds after receiving the signal from the firing line, the Pit Officer or NCO caused the targets to appear.

The competitors started just to the rear of the 600-yard line with the rifles loaded and locked. The competitors were “advanced” to the firing line and halted. Commands to fire the requisite five rounds were given. As soon as any portion of the target appeared, the competitor commenced firing. Firing continued as long as any portion of the target was still in sight or until all five rounds were fired. When the targets disappeared, the command or signal to cease-fire was given. The rifles were reloaded and locked and the advance immediately resumed. Movement between firing lines was conducted with the first half of the distance covered at quick time (120 steps per minute), with the second half covered at double time (180 steps per minute). While the instructions for firing the course are not specific on this point, it is assumed that the competitor was allowed to take the preferred firing position prior to the targets being raised. All reloading was accomplished from a full five round stripper clip.

Making the “Departmental Team”

Individuals placing in the Leg Match made up the “Departmental Team”... The “Team” was chosen on the basis of one member of the team for every five competitors, or essentially the top 20% of those firing in the match, with fractions not being considered. For example, if there were 75 rifle competitors, a “Team” of 15 would be chosen and presented Leg Medals. As far as the fractional non-consideration, the example given was a field of 100 competitors would yield a 20 man “Team”, but competitors 101 through 104 would not increase the number of

medal winners, however competitor number 105 would increase the “Team” (medal winners) to 21.

Unlike today’s Army Competition, gold, silver and bronze medals were presented to the competitors in the following ratio:

Number of medal winners (size of “Divisional Team”)	Gold Medals	Silver Medals	Bronze Medals
6 or less	1	1	One to each remaining member of the Team (leg winners)
7 to 9 inclusive	1	2	"
10 to 12 inclusive	1	3	"
13 to 15 inclusive	2	3	"
16 to 18 inclusive	2	4	"
19 to 21 inclusive	2	5	"
22 to 24 inclusive	2	6	"
25 to 27 inclusive	3	6	"
28 to 30 inclusive	3	7	"
31 to 33 inclusive	3	8	"
34 to 36 inclusive	3	9	"
37 to 39 inclusive	4	9	"
40 to 42 inclusive	4	10	"
43 to 45 inclusive	4	11	"
46 to 48 inclusive	4	12	"
49 to 51 inclusive	5	12	"
Additional Medal Winners were calculated using the above formula if there are more than 51 men on the Divisional Team			

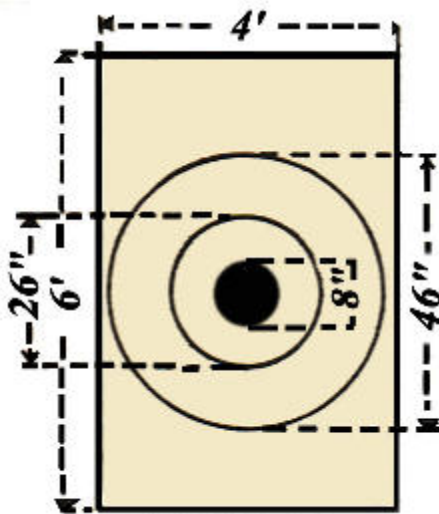
As was pointed out, the legs were awarded on the basis of 20% of the non-Distinguished Competitors, as opposed to today’s 10%. Then as now however, a “Distinguished Marksman” did not count against the non-Distinguished shooters.

In order for a previously Distinguished Shooter to “make the Departmental Team” and be eligible to fire in the Army Competition, he had to make an overall score exceeding the last “medal winner” by 5%. In order for a Commissioned Officer to win a bronze leg medal, he was required to exceed the score of the lowest scoring enlisted (bronze) leg winner by 5%. An officer could win a silver leg medal by exceeding the lowest scoring enlisted silver leg winner by 5%, etc.

The Army Match was fired with the competitors comprising the Departmental Teams from each Department. The course of fire was identical to that fired for the Departmental Match.

Regardless of the total number of competitors participating in the Army Match, the total Army Rifle Team (Army Competition Leg Winners) was composed of only 12 shooters. The first four members of the team (by score) received a gold medal, the remaining eight members received silver medals. Medal winners in the Army Match received credit towards the Distinguished Marksman award.

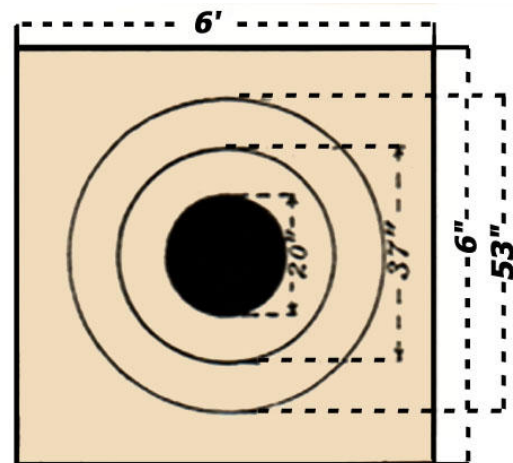
Targets Utilized in 1909



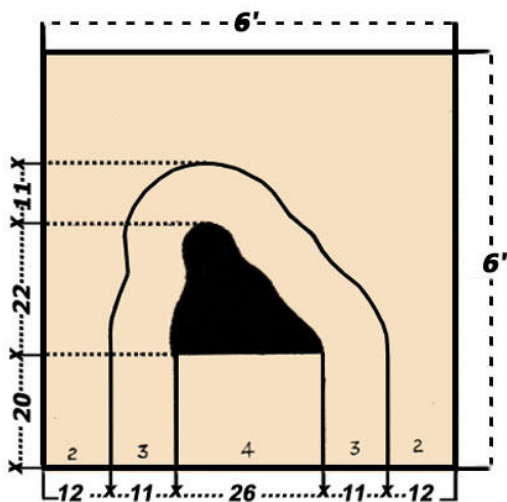
TARGET A

The "A" Target was used for 200-yard standing slow fire and remained essentially unchanged from the initial 200-yard target utilized for the first Excellence-in-Competition Match held in 1881. The only break in this routine was the adoption of the elliptical bullseye in 1885 and lasting until 1903. By 1904 the 8" A Target was back in place until 1920 when it was replaced with a 10" target.

The "B" Target was used for 500 and 600 yard slow fire. The 20" bullseye without the tie-breaking "V-Ring" was replaced in 1922 with identical dimensions, but having a 12" "V-Ring" designed to break ties in the event of two individuals shooting identical scores. The version using the 12" "V-Ring" remained the standard 500 and 600-yard target until the introduction of the "Decimal Target" in 1967.



TARGET B



Target D

The "D" Target in 1909 was used for both rapid fire stages and the Skirmish Course of fire. This replaced (but was somewhat similar to) the earlier pair of Skirmish Targets commonly called the "Squaw" and "Papoose" targets. The "D Target" retained the format of the earlier "Papoose" target (the smaller of the two), but had the utility to be used on a target carrier instead of simply placed on top of the 600-yard butts. The 1909 version of the "D" Target cut down on the number of targets necessary to conduct requalification or match firing. During the conduct of the Skirmish run, only shots in the black or in the four ring immediately below the black counted as hits.