

Conducting Finals

Information about Finals and Their Use in Competition

By Gary Anderson, DCME

Finals are changing the sport of Shooting so that it is becoming more and more like other Olympic sports where the best athletes finish sports contests together in head-to-head competitions in front of spectators and television audiences. This article discusses finals and the current status of finals in Shooting. It follows these discussions with instructions on how to conduct junior 3-position air rifle finals according to the new **2012-2014 National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules**.

A Short History of Shooting Finals

A “final” in a sports event is the last stage of competition where the best athletes from preliminary or qualification stages finish the competition in a head-to-head contest. Finals are meant to achieve maximum spectator, media and television impact. Finals were introduced in Shooting in 1986 and successfully brought the sport closer to most other Olympic sports that had used finals for decades. Events in those sports begin with qualifying or preliminary competitions that determine which athletes qualify for subsequent stages (quarterfinals, semifinals, etc.) and conclude with finals for the best athletes who advanced from the last preliminary stage.

For the first 90 years of its existence as an Olympic sport, Shooting was very different from other sports in the Games because Shooting fans could never find out who won until long after an event was over. Shooting competitors were spread out over long firing lines and

often fired in multiple relays so the best shooters never finished at the same time or in the same place. Shooting on paper targets made it impossible to know scores often until an hour or more after the event finished. After that there were long challenge periods before scores became final.

In the early 1980s, the ISSF (International Shooting Sport Federation) recognized that Shooting could not remain as an Olympic sport if it did not change these practices and become more spectator and media friendly. In 1986, the ISSF adopted Shooting’s first finals. By 1990, electronic targets were used in most international competitions to give Shooting instant scores that were not subject to long backroom evaluations.

In Shooting event finals, all athletes shot a regular course of fire as a “qualification” that is scored in whole numbers. The top eight finishers advanced to the final. In the original ISSF finals format, which is still used in 3-position air rifle, qualification scores were carried forward to the final. The eight finalists then fired ten additional shots, one-at-a-time, that are scored in tenth ring values. Finalists’ qualification and final scores were added together to determine rankings. LCD projectors and computer results software allowed scores to be



The London Olympic Games 10m Air Rifle Women’s Final. The London finals hall was set up as a brightly lit stage for 2,000 spectators, 200-300 media representatives and a worldwide TV audience. Note the electronic scoreboards above the finalists, the video cameras in front of them and the table for the Chief Range Officer and Jury Chairman at the lower right.

DEFINITIONS

EVENT. An “event” within a sport is a particular contest or competition that ends with rankings and awards. The High Jump is an event in Athletics, the 400m Freestyle is an event in Swimming and 10m Air Rifle is an event in Shooting. Competition events normally have preliminary and final stages.

QUALIFICATION. A preliminary stage within a competition event. The “qualification” in Shooting is the first stage where everyone entered in the event fires a prescribed course of fire while competing for rankings and a place in a final.

FINAL. The last stage in a competition event where medal winners are decided. The “final” in Shooting is the stage where the athletes with the best scores in the qualification complete the event to decide the medal winners.

Conducting Finals

Information about Finals and Their Use in Junior Competitions

displayed for spectators. When the last shot was fired, winners were known and recognized, just like other sports have been able to do for many decades.

Finals brought Shooting closer to other Olympic sports by allowing the best athletes to finish each event in a format that keeps fans involved and that facilitates television productions. ISSF video productions of all World Cup and World Championship finals are posted on **YouTube** at (https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ThPlab4nkzw). In 2012, these productions also were shown on national television networks in over 60 countries.

Starting in 2013, the ISSF will eliminate the last major difference it has with other Olympic sports. Olympic sports either have had or have recently adopted competition formats where each stage of competition is separate. Athletes in each stage start from zero and results from previous stages are not carried forward. Preliminary stages determine who advances to the next, but scores do not carry forward. ISSF finals rules for the new Olympic cycle will have finalists start from zero, eliminate the lowest ranking shooters during the last shots of each final and end with two-person duels for gold and silver medals. This new format will be used in all World Cups, World Championships and the 2016 Olympics. Since qualifying scores are longer carried forward, the number of shots in rifle and pistol finals is increased from ten to 20 shots in single position events and to 45 shots in 3-position finals. In the new 3-position finals, finalists shoot 15 shots in each position and the position order has been changed to kneeling-prone-standing (see illustration).



Virtually all major junior 3-position air rifle championships now use finals to decide individual winners. This is a sporter class final in a recent JROTC National Championship. Junior competitions can attract spectators when finals are included.

The New ISSF 50m 3-Position Rifle Final

The 2013 ISSF final for the 50m 3x20 and 3x40 is a 3-position final that follows these steps:

- Finalists start from zero; scores are cumulative
- Kneeling preparation and sighting, 5 min.
- Presentation of finalists
- **Kneeling Record**, 3x5 shots, 200 sec. per series
- Prone changeover and sighting, 7 min.
- **Prone Record**, 3x5 shots, 150 sec. per series
- Standing changeover and sighting, 9 min.
- **Standing Record**, 2x5 shots, 250 sec. per series, followed by 5 single shots, 50 sec. per shot
- **Eliminations** during standing occur after 10 shots (2) and shots 41-42-43-44. The top two shooters remain to decide the gold medal on shot #45.

Why Have Finals In Junior Competitions?

When Shooting finals were first introduced 25 years ago, there was controversy over whether juniors should shoot finals. However, after trying finals in several major junior competitions, it was clear that junior shooters readily and enthusiastically adapted to finals. Juniors and their coaches want to shoot what world and national elites shoot. Finals make junior championships spectator events; this is especially appealing to parents. Finals showcase the skills of the best juniors. It is a big honor for juniors to “make the final” and have the experience of competing in front of an audience. Finals bring junior shooting closer to other youth sports. With finals, young shooters can experience the same thrills and excitement that young athletes experience in shooting a winning free throw or kicking the winning goal.

Almost all major junior 3-position air rifle championships now use finals to decide individual winners. Whether regional and local junior matches include finals depends upon how much time is available and how the matches are structured. Many junior matches have multiple relays where it is not possible for the best

Conducting Finals

Information about Finals and Their Use in Competition

shooters on early relays to wait for a final at the end of a long competition. When having a final end a competition is not practical, special rules make it possible to shoot min-finals for the top eight shooters at the end of each relay and then to count the finals scores only from the shooters who end up with the eight highest qualification scores.

Junior Shooting competitions should include finals when they can be worked into the schedule, both because juniors like them and because juniors who want to shoot in college or for positions on the national team need lots of finals experience.

Conducting Junior Finals on Paper Targets

Finals at national and international levels are now almost always fired on electronic scoring targets (EST) where instant, final scores and rankings are displayed. A few junior matches have access to ranges with ESTs, but finals in most junior matches must be shot on paper targets where special adaptations are necessary.

With paper targets, instant, official scores are not available after each shot. However, spotters behind each finalist with a spotting scope can look at each shot and call out estimated shot values to be displayed for coaches and spectators. Paper targets must be scored after the final. There are two scoring options. They can be scored by hand in whole numbers or an Orion Electronic Scoring System can be used to score all shots in tenth ring values (<http://www.orionscoringsystem.com/orion/Home.aspx>).

Finals spotters who are familiar with tenth ring scoring can estimate tenth ring values with reasonable accuracy. However, whether they call out scores in whole numbers or tenths, everyone at the final needs to understand that official scores will vary from estimated scores by a point or two when whole numbers are used or by a few tenths if Orion scoring is used.

With either paper target scoring method, estimated shot scores should be posted on a scoreboard or in a spreadsheet that can be projected on a wall or screen. Immediately after the final is finished and guns are cleared and grounded, targets must be retrieved and scored. It is important to do this quickly so scores can be displayed and winners recognized as soon as possible. Orion scoring can produce results in less than a minute, but the rules do call for a two-minute challenge period. Then official results can be announced.

Because of difficulties inherent in conducting shoot-offs, there are no tie-breaking shoot-offs when finals are

shot on paper targets. The higher final score decides ties in finals on paper targets.

Summary of Three-Position Finals Rules

The new **9th Edition 2012-2014 National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules** released this past September contain some changes in how 3-position air rifle finals are conducted. Previous rules were modeled after previous ISSF finals rules that were in effect since 1986. Rules for finals in the new 3-position air rifle rules combined those rules with some changes to make finals more suitable for junior shooting. The National Three-Position Air Rifle Council discussed the new ISSF finals format for 2013 that has finalists start from zero, but the Council decided that since the ISSF final would not be implemented until 2013, it would continue to use the older, traditional final.

Basic steps for conducting finals according to 3-position air rifle rules are:

Schedule. Finals are scheduled to start at a specific time. The finals start time is when commands for the first record shot start. Finalists must report to the Chief Range Officer at least 20 minutes before the start time.

Control. A Chief Range Officer (CRO) is responsible for conducting the final. A separate Announcer may be used to introduce finalists and comment on their scores or the CRO may do this.

Targets. If the final is shot on paper targets, eight volunteers should be recruited to spot and call estimated shot values. If the final is shot on EST, one or two Range Officers may be needed to confirm when finalists fire their shots.

Squadding. Each finalist is assigned to one of eight firing points according to qualification scores, starting with the highest-ranking qualifier on the left.

Firing Position. Finals are shot in the standing position.

Scoring. Finals must be scored in tenth ring scores if EST or Orion scoring is available.



The Chief Range Officer is the key official who is responsible for the conduct of the final. The CRO controls the pace and flow of every final and must always work from a script.

Conducting Finals

Information about Finals and Their Use in Junior Competitions

Call to the Line. Finalists must be called to their firing points 12 to 15 minutes before the start time. Finalists must then ground or bench their rifles and turn to face spectators.

Presentation. The finalists must be introduced by announcing their names, club or team names and qualification scores. Introductions start with the finalist on the right in eighth place and end with the finalist in first place.

Preparation and Sighting. After the presentation, the CRO commands finalists to take their positions. After a short pause, the CRO will give commands to start an eight (8) minute combined preparation and sighting stage. During this stage, finalists must finish preparing their positions and fire unlimited sighters.

30 Second Pause. After the **STOP** command at the end of the sighting stage, there is a 30 second pause. When ESTs are used, targets must be reset for record firing.

Record Firing Procedure. For each record shot, the CRO gives a **LOAD** command, pauses 10 seconds, and then commands **START**. There is no longer any countdown, but there must be a 10 second pause to give the athletes time to load and assume their positions.

10 Second Warning. After 35 seconds, the CRO will give an audible signal to warn finalists that 10 seconds remain or the CRO may command **10 SECONDS**.

STOP and Commentary. After 45 seconds or after all eight finalists fire, the CRO commands **STOP**. The announcer should then give 15-20 seconds of commentary on the scores and ranking (EST) or announce the scores (paper target score estimates).

Final Continuation. The CRO and Announcer continue this record firing procedure and commentary until all ten shots are fired.

Paper Target Conclusion. The CRO must clear the line and have targets retrieved and scored. As soon as scoring is finished, the Announcer must give the scores and recognize winners.

EST Conclusion. Immediately after the tenth shot, any ties for the first three places only must be shot off. When all final rankings are decided, the Announcer must recognize medal winners.

Tips to Prepare For Finals

There are several measures match sponsors can take to ensure excellent finals.

CRO Script. The *National Standard Rules* now provide a detailed finals script for CROs to use in calling the line. The script begins on page 57 of the rulebook. It includes both formal commands and an explanation of specific rules to apply at each step in the final. Anyone who will work as a finals CRO really must prepare a copy of this script and follow it precisely.

Finals Range. Designate eight adjacent firing points for the final. Select points with sufficient space behind them for spectator chairs or bleachers. Place firing point designations "1" through "8" on those points.

Finals Attendance. Encourage all shooters in the competition as well as their parents and friends to attend the final.

New Finalists. When finalists report, ask if any of them have never shot a final before. Give all new finals shooters a short briefing to explain how they will be called and introduced, the preparation and sighting period and the shot-by-shot firing procedure.

COMMANDS FOR CONDUCTING A FINAL

COMMANDS AND INSTRUCTIONS	NOTES (Range Officer actions are in bold)
FOR THE FIRST COMPETITION SHOT, LOAD... (10 second pause)... START	After the command LOAD for each shot, there is a ten (10) second pause to give finalists time to load their rifles and get into their firing positions.
After 35 seconds	The time limit of 45 seconds begins when the command START is given. An audible signal should be given to let finalists know 10 seconds remain in the time limit.
After 45 seconds:	
STOP	The Range Officer must command STOP .
SCORES FOR THE FIRST SHOT: (Family name of 1st Finalist), (score). (Family name of 2nd Finalist), (score). This continues until all eight scores are announced.	The Range Officer or Announcer can announce scores immediately after the STOP command. After announcing scores, short comments about the rankings and any changes in rankings can be made.
FOR THE NEXT COMPETITION SHOT, LOAD... (10 second pause)... START	Commands for the next Final Round shot begin immediately after the scores and comments.
After 35 seconds	An audible signal/warning should be given.
After 45 Seconds, the STOP command is given. The announcement of scores and comments and commands for succeeding shots continue until ten Final Round shots are fired. No scores are announced after the tenth shot.	
After the 10th shot (electronic targets, with no ties for places 1-3).	

A page from the finals script, "Commands for Conducting a Final," that is found in the 2012-2014 National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules. CROs who conduct finals should always work with a script.

Conducting Finals

Information about Finals and Their Use in Competition

Finalist Behavior. Encourage all finalists to acknowledge spectators when they are introduced before the final or recognized at the end of the final. Interaction between athletes and spectators is part of what makes finals interesting.

Spectator Behavior. If the final is new to spectators, provide a brief explanation to them before it starts. Make sure they understand that clapping and cheering for the finalists is desired.

The Future of Finals in the USA

Most coaches and junior shooters are quite satisfied with how finals are conducted under the present 3-position air rifle rules, that is, with 3x10 or 3x20 scores being carried forward and finals scores added to them to produce official score totals and rankings. On the other hand, ISSF finals with qualifiers starting at zero, eliminations and two-person duels at the end are here to stay. They will be used in all future ISSF Championships including Americas Championships, World Cups, World Championship and the Olympics. That means they will also be used in high-level national competitions. Many juniors will want to shoot what national and international elite shooters shoot so we can expect some future junior championships to begin experimenting with the newest finals format.



Niccò Campriani, Italy, acknowledges spectators and a worldwide TV audience when he is introduced before the 2012 Olympic Games 50m 3-position rifle final. He went on to win the gold medal. Building sympathetic relationships between athletes and fans is part of making finals interesting.

About the Author

Gary Anderson, Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus, retired as the full-time CMP Director at the close of 2009. He continues to work with CMP as the senior marksmanship instructor. He won two Olympic gold medals, seven World Championships and 16 National Championships during his competition career. He is a Vice President of the International Shooting Sports Federation, the President of USA Shooting, a former Nebraska State Senator and was one of the two Olympic Games Technical Delegates for Shooting during the 2012 Olympic Games in London. In June, 2012, the International Olympic Committee awarded

Gary Anderson the IOC's highest honor, the Olympic Order "for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement."



USA Shooting President and Two-Time Olympic Gold Medalist Gary Anderson Receives IOC's Olympic Order

International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) President and IOC member Olegario Vazquez Raña had the honor to award the IOC Olympic Order to Anderson during ISSF Meetings taking place in Alcapulco, Mexico, on behalf of IOC President Jacques Rogge. The Olympic Order is the highest award of the IOC and was created in May 1975 as a successor to the Olympic Certificate. The Olympic Order is awarded to individuals for distinguished contributions to the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Order insignia resembles a collar with the five Olympic rings framed by olive branches. Read the complete article at <http://www.odcmp.org/1112/default.asp?page=OLYMPICORDER>.

Photo courtesy of the ISSF.