

## Special Opportunities for Junior Shooting Programs

# Special Opportunities for Junior Shooting Programs

By Gary Anderson, DCM Emeritus

From time to time it is worthwhile to step back and consider the special opportunities that can augment junior shooting programs and how those particular programs can benefit junior athletes, coaches or parents. In this *On the Mark* article, we'll take a look at one new shooting discipline, **Target Sprint**; one very old program, the **Distinguished Badge Program**; one concern that should be a priority for junior leaders, **keeping juniors in shooting** after they age out of their current programs and a new professional development opportunity, **CMP Range Officer Training Courses**.

- **Target Sprint** is a new shooting discipline that is especially appealing to juniors and adults who take physical fitness seriously. Junior programs should consider organizing Target Sprint events as fun-oriented experiences for youth and adults in their communities.

- The 135-year-old **Distinguished Badge Program**, which began as a military awards program, today offers six prestigious government-authorized badges of distinction, including the Junior Distinguished Badge. Junior programs should promote this badge as a worthy goal for junior three-position air rifle athletes.

- In addition to their regular training and competition programs, junior programs should also introduce junior shooters to **lifetime shooting opportunities** to ensure that they have possibilities for continuing to shoot after they age out of their current junior programs.

- Completing a **Range Officer Training Course** can be a great professional development opportunity for junior leaders and parents who serve as volunteers in junior competition programs.

### Target Sprint

Target Sprint is a dynamic shooting sports discipline that combines air rifle standing position shooting with middle distance running. Target Sprint's closest relative is biathlon, a Winter Olympic sport. Biathlon competitions have a huge television following in Europe, mostly because

*This succession of photos depicts the different phases of a Target Sprint race that include the start (top), running, shooting and the finish (bottom). The athlete shown at the finish is Madlen Guggenmos of Germany who won the gold medal in the Junior Women event in the 2018 World Target Sprint Championship. Her total race time was 5:08.7.*



of the visual appeal of its knock-down targets. The IBU, the international governing body for biathlon, has a summer biathlon program that features smallbore rifle shooting and running but the IBU had no real interest in a shooting discipline involving air rifle shooting and running, so the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) embraced Target Sprint as an ISSF discipline. The ISSF wanted a shooting discipline with a unique fitness challenge.

**Target Sprint Events.** Successful Target Sprint athletes must be both good middle-distance runners (400-800m) and good shooters. Target Sprint competitors start by running a 400 m loop. When they come to the range, they must fire at and hit five targets from the standing position before running another 400 m loop and returning to the range for a second five-target shooting session. If targets are missed, competitors must continue shooting until all five targets are down. Since the time spent shooting counts in the total race time, competitors must be able to load and fire very quickly. After hitting all five targets a second time, competitors run a third 400 m loop to the finish. Total running and shooting times decide final rankings. The chart explains the Target Sprint competition format.

**Target Sprint Venues.** Target Sprint venues are normally set up outdoors. They have a 400-meter running course, an air rifle range and a grandstand for spectators that allows them to see starts, the range and finishes. The 400 m running course does not have to be an oval running track; many resemble cross-country running courses. Some of the best venues in Europe have been set up in the center of cities. The diagram on page 8 illustrates the Target Sprint venue layout concept.

**Target Sprint Targets.** Target Sprint biathlon-type targets have five 35mm openings, which are the same size as the four ring on the 10m air rifle target. Hitting that target may sound easy but don't reach any conclusions until you've tried doing that after running 400 m at full speed and then shooting as fast as possible. Target mechanisms have pull cords so Range Officers can reset the targets during races. The BT-100 target made by Devin Manufacturing (Arcade, NY, 585-496-5770, [www.devinmfg.com](http://www.devinmfg.com)), which sells for \$124.95, complies with ISSF Target Sprint Rules and is relatively inexpensive compared with similar units sold in Europe. To maintain targets, use white paint to cover pellet marks made by shots that do not hit the knock-down plates.

**Target Sprint Air Rifles.** In countries where Target Sprint is practiced, precision 5-shot repeater air rifles originally designed for summer biathlon are the norm. In Target Sprint, rifles must be single loaded, and magazines



*Shooting in Target Sprint is done in the standing position. The athlete in the photo is Jason Spaude, a University of Kentucky student who was the lone USA entry in the 2018 World Target Sprint Championship.*

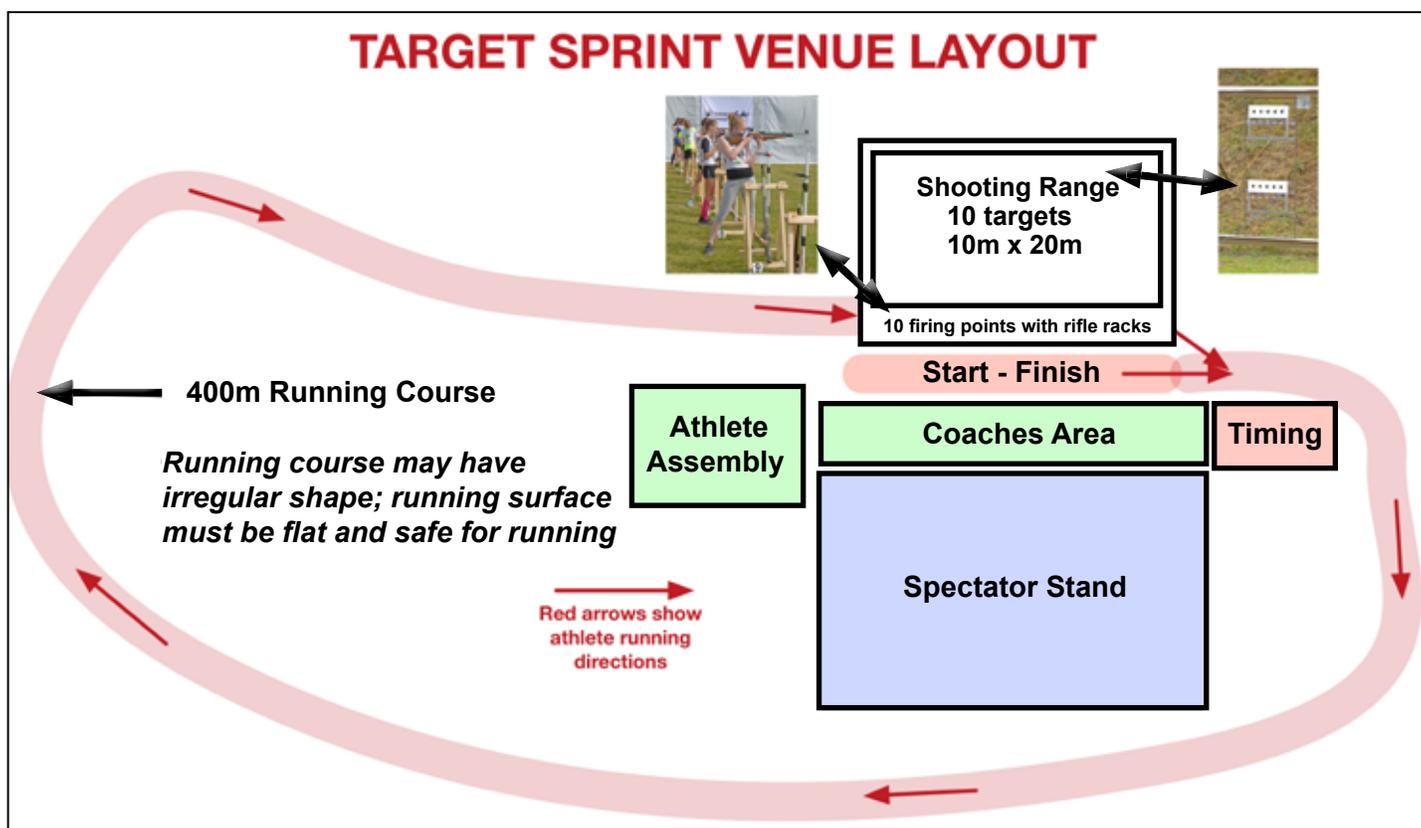
cannot be used, but competitors usually place pellet holders on their rifles to make loading as quick and efficient as possible. Precision repeater air rifles used for summer biathlon or Target Sprint in Europe are not commonly available in the USA and are far too costly to attract new participants here. Target Sprint events in this country should start with sporter class air rifles like the Crosman Challenger, Daisy M888/887/599 or Champions Choice T200 (ISSF TS Rule 6.1).

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TARGET SPRINT COMPETITION FORMAT		
Stage	Activity	Description
0	Preparation Time (5 minutes)	When a competition relay is called, competitors go to their designated firing points to fire sighting shots or finish warming up on the running course.
0	Start	After 5 minutes, competitors are called to the start line and given the <b>START</b> signal.
1	Running	Competitors run 400m on the running course.
2	Shooting	Competitors go to their firing points, take their rifles from rifle racks and shoot at their targets. When all targets are hit, competitors place their rifles in rifle racks and resume running.
3	Running	Competitors run 400m on the running course.
4	Shooting	Competitors return to their firing points and shoot at their targets. When all targets are hit, they resume running.
5	Running	Competitors run 400m on the running course to the finish line.
Note	If a competitor does not hit all five targets in 15 shots, the competitor must place his/her rifle in the rack, go to a penalty box, wait 15 seconds, and then resume running.	

**Target Sprint Events in the USA.** ISSF Target Sprint Rules, which can be downloaded at [https://www.issf-sports.org/getfile.aspx?mod=docf&pane=1&inst=290&file=2019\\_ISSF\\_RULES\\_Target\\_Sprint.pdf](https://www.issf-sports.org/getfile.aspx?mod=docf&pane=1&inst=290&file=2019_ISSF_RULES_Target_Sprint.pdf), should be used as a basis for conducting Target Sprint events in the USA. To introduce Target Sprint in an area where no one has ever tried it, it is necessary to use these rules as a starting point, and also to innovate and adapt them to what is possible in a particular area. Here are some adaptations to consider:

- **Emphasize Participation and Fun.** The first Target Sprint events in any community should emphasize participation. Promote the idea of trying something new and how much fun it can be. Participants should be timed and ranked according to times and age groups but keep competitions low key. Everyone who completes a Target Sprint course of fire should receive some kind of recognition.



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- **Start Small—Start with Two or Three Targets.** A group or club that wants to try Target Sprint doesn't have to acquire a full range of ten or 12 targets. Think about acquiring two or three targets at first. A Target Sprint relay takes less than ten minutes so even with two or three targets, 12 to 18 participants per hour can be cycled through an event. If there is additional interest, more targets can be acquired.

- **New Competitors.** Invite runners and fitness enthusiasts who have no shooting experience to try Target Sprint. Offer a brief shooting clinic before the race starts and let inexperienced shooters shoot off of rifle rests (see illustration).

- **Age Groups.** One of the best ways to encourage younger and older shooters to participate in Target Sprint is to have age groups. Possible age groups are: Sub-Junior - 14 & under; Mid-Junior - 15-17; Junior - 18-20; Senior I - 21-45; Senior II - 46-55 and Senior III - 56+.

- **Women.** Every category used in a competition should have both a men's category and a women's category.

- **Try Target Sprint Alone.** When Target Sprint is done with air rifles, it is easy for someone interested in trying it to acquire a single target mechanism and to set up the target and a running course at home or in a nearby open area. The running course does not have to be 400 m; it can be whatever is challenging to you. Recording course times and competing against yourself can make Target Sprint runs especially interesting.

- **Offer Training Opportunities.** If Target Sprint targets and a running course can be left set up at a range complex, allow interested persons to bring their own air rifles and running shoes and try running Target Sprint courses on their own.



This Target Sprint target mechanism shows two hit targets on the left and three targets remaining to be hit. This unit is produced by Devin Manufacturing ([www.devinmfg.com](http://www.devinmfg.com)).



**Allow new shooters to shoot off of rifle rests.**

**Require both hands to be behind the rifle rest.**

Let competitors with no shooting experience shoot off of adjustable rifle rests in a separate novice class. New competitors need to be able to get hits when they shoot, or they won't come back.

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## Target Sprint at Camp Perry

*The CMP plans conduct a Target Sprint event on 16 July, during the 2019 National Matches. Anyone who is interested in trying Target Sprint who will be at Camp Perry in mid-July is invited to participate.*

*Plans for this event are still being made as this is written, but sporter class air rifles will be available for anyone who wants to try Target Sprint.*

*Details will be posted on the CMP National Matches webpage and in CMP Shooting News as soon as they are available.*

## The Distinguished Badge Program

The Junior Distinguished Badge is a prized icon of excellence among junior rifle shooters. The badge has been presented to 1,400 outstanding junior three-position air rifle competitors since the first badge was awarded in 2001. The badge is part of a national Distinguished Badge Program that was initiated by the U. S. Government and now features six different Distinguished Badges that are presented to the best shooting competitors in the USA.

Junior leaders should educate new junior shooters about the badge and encourage them to make earning the badge a personal goal. To do this effectively, junior leaders need to understand how the Junior Distinguished Badge fits into the overall Distinguished Badge Program and how to explain its significance to juniors and parents.

U. S. Army leaders inaugurated the Distinguished Badge as a special award to distinguish the best rifle marksmen. The first gold Distinguished Marksman Badges were awarded in 1884. This program began as a military awards program, but it ultimately became an esteemed awards program for all U. S. citizens. Distinguished Badges promote marksmanship skill development among U. S. citizens, affirm our country's respect for great marksmanship and officially recognize shooters who consistently place at the top in the most important competitions.

In 1891, the program expanded to offer separate Distinguished Rifleman and Distinguished Pistol Shot Badges. The first U. S. Distinguished International Shooter Badges were awarded in 1963 at the height of the Cold War when Department of Defense officials sought ways to encourage U. S. international shooters to challenge Soviet Union (USSR) shooters who dominated Olympic and World Championship competitions at the time.



Left: The Junior Distinguished Badge is awarded annually to outstanding junior three-position air rifle athletes who distinguish themselves by achieving multiple high place finishes in designated competitions.

Right: President John F. Kennedy presented the first International Distinguished Badge to the author, Gary Anderson, in April 1963, after he won four World Championship gold medals in the 1962 World Championship.

The original criteria for receiving the International Distinguished Badge was to win a gold, silver or bronze medal in an Olympic, World Championship or Pan American Games individual or team event. With the advent of the Championship of the Americas in 1973 and ISSF World Cups in 1986, award criteria were modified to establish the current 30-point requirement that assigns different point values for medals won in championships governed by the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF). A junior athlete, then 18-year-old Virginia Thrasher, earned International Distinguished Badge #510 with her gold medal victory in the 2016 Olympics.

In 2013, the International Distinguished program was expanded to include medal-winning performances in competitions governed by World Shooting Para Sport (WSPS). That change made U. S. athletes who win medals in the Paralympic Games, WSPS World Championships and WSPS World Cups eligible to earn International Distinguished Badges. The first International Distinguished Badge earned by a Paralympian was presented to Roger Withrow, who won a gold medal in the 1984 Paralympic Games.

A recent change to badge criteria also awards credit points to U. S. juniors who win medals in ISSF Junior World Championships or Junior World Cups. Two athletes, skeet shooter Katarina Jacob and rifle shooter Morgan Phillips, recently earned International Distinguished Badges while competing in 2017 and 2018 ISSF Junior Championships.

The Department the Army administered the Distinguished Badge program for many decades but when Congress and President Bill Clinton enacted legislation to privatize the Civilian Marksmanship Program in 1996, legal authority to administer this program was transferred to the CMP. The CMP subsequently added three new badges to the program, the Junior Distinguished Badge in 2001, the 22 Rimfire Pistol Badge in 2015 and the Distinguished Marksman Badge in 2019. The latter badge will be awarded to competitors with disabilities who earn EIC credit points in national competitions. The first Junior Distinguished Badge was presented to Army JROTC Cadet Brandon Green in 2001. SFC Green is now a member of the U. S. Army Service Rifle Team. He holds National Match records for the Presidents Rifle Match (400-20X) and the National Trophy Individual Rifle Match (499-30X).

The chart on this page identifies the six Distinguished Badges that are now part of this program. Detailed regulations for awarding all badges are found in CMP Rulebooks. To earn the Junior Distinguished Badge, juniors must acquire 30 EIC (Excellence-In-Competition) points in designated three-position air rifle competitions. In CMP Cup Matches and State Championships, EIC points are earned by shooting minimum scores. EIC points in national level Championships are awarded according to where juniors place. Detailed information about the Junior Distinguished Badge, including lists of juniors with EIC points earned, are found on the CMP website at <http://thecmp.org/air/junior-distinguished-badge/>.

## Introducing Juniors to Lifetime Shooting Opportunities

One of the real shortcomings of junior shooting programs in the USA is that while many different national organizations sponsor junior shooting, these programs have maximum ages, and few have any links to programs offering opportunities to continue shooting. BB Gun participants are too old to shoot at age 16. 3-position air rifle shooters are too old at age 19.



CMP staff member Katie Harrington, who earned Junior Distinguished Badge #63 in 2004, is pinning the badge on new Junior Distinguished athletes during the 2019 National JROTC Championship. Distinguished Badges are awarded during special presentation ceremonies.

U.S. DISTINGUISHED MARKSMAN BADGES			
Badge	Awarded For	First Awarded	Photo
<b>U.S. Distinguished International Shooters' Badge</b>	Excellence in ISSF or WSPS Championships	1963	
<b>Distinguished Rifleman Badge</b>	Excellence in Service Rifle EIC, National Trophy or military command Matches	1884	
<b>Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge</b>	Excellence in Service Pistol EIC National Trophy or military command Matches	1891	
<b>Junior Distinguished Badge</b>	Excellence in National and Regional Championships sponsored by members of the National Three-Position Air Rifle Council	2001	
<b>Distinguished .22 Rimfire Pistol Badge</b>	Excellence in Rimfire Pistol EIC or National Trophy Matches	2015	
<b>Distinguished Marksman Badge</b>	Excellence by persons with disabilities in Service Rifle or Pistol	2019	

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College rifle team members become too old to continue at age 22 or 23. Juniors who age out of their programs are left on their own and most drop out of shooting.

Junior shooting programs do a great job of introducing youth to gun safety training and teaching target shooting skills needed to continue shooting, but the big question is where do these youth go to find those opportunities. Coaches, instructors, junior program leaders and parents have responsibilities to give juniors contacts and special experiences that introduce lifetime shooting opportunities to them. Here are some programs to consider:

- **Rimfire Sporter Rifle.** Junior shooters with experience in BB Gun or 3-position air rifle are well prepared to compete in Rimfire Sporter Matches because competitors in this discipline also shoot in ordinary clothing, not supportive precision rifle clothing. Rimfire Sporter Rifle is the most accessible and least costly target discipline because legal rifles are easily obtained and there are minimal requirements for other equipment. To learn more about this discipline, download the **CMP Guide to Rimfire Sporter** (<http://thecmp.org/wp-content/uploads/Rimfire.pdf?ver=20180406>). Rimfire Sporter Matches are offered at CMP Travel Games as well as at many local shooting clubs. The biggest smallbore rifle match in the country, the National Rimfire Sporter Rifle Championship, takes place annually during the National Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio. This year there is a new



Several 4-H Shooting Sports Clubs and shooting club teams make annual treks to Camp Perry to shoot in the National Rimfire Sporter Championship. Competitors shoot smallbore rifles with telescopic or open sights (separate categories). In Rimfire Sporter, the middle position is usually sitting, and coaching is permitted.



Three-fourths of the competitors in the 2018 CMP National Smallbore Position Championship were juniors. With the appeal and special programs offered by the CMP, the number of juniors is expected to increase even more in 2019.

shooter clinic on 20 July and a full day of competition on 21 July (find detailed information at <http://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-national-matches/>).

- **Smallbore Rifle.** A goal of many junior 3-position air rifle shooters is to obtain a scholarship to shoot on a college rifle team. To be considered, however, it is necessary to be active in both air rifle and 3-position smallbore shooting and to own a smallbore rifle. During this summer's National Matches, junior air rifle athletes will have a unique opportunity to be introduced to smallbore rifle shooting. Athletes who qualify for the CMP and Junior Olympic National Three-Position Precision Air Rifle Championship at Camp Perry on 13-15 July, have been invited to remain at Camp Perry and participate in the CMP National Smallbore Rifle Championships. The Army Marksmanship Unit International Rifle Team will conduct a special Small Arms Firing School on 16 July where the emphasis will be on introducing these juniors to smallbore rifle shooting. The CMP Smallbore Championships begin on 17 July.

Juniors who have their own smallbore match rifles already have the equipment they need to participate in this program. For juniors who do not have smallbore rifles, the CMP has acquired 50 match grade smallbore rifles that it plans to loan to junior smallbore championship competitors. Details regarding this great opportunity to get started in smallbore rifle shooting are available at <https://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-national-matches/smallbore-matches/>.

## National Matches Junior Camp

*This junior rifle camp, which offers intermediate to advanced instruction in both smallbore and air rifle, also takes place at Camp Perry during the National Matches. 2019 dates are 17-22 July. This camp is another excellent opportunity for juniors to receive smallbore rifle training. Details can be found on the CMP website at <http://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-national-matches/cmpnmjrcamp/>.*

- **State Junior Service Rifle Teams.** Service Rifle shooting is done outdoors with M16/AR-type rifles at distances of 200 to 600 yards. Juniors who have done well in three-position air or smallbore rifle shooting have many of the skills needed to shoot service rifle. They already have good standing and prone skills and can quickly learn the sitting position. Many state shooting associations and a few shooting clubs sponsor junior service rifle teams that they equip, train and take to the National Matches. Most of these programs have service rifles available for juniors who make their teams. These teams also receive financial support from the CMP through its Junior Highpower Support Program. At the National Matches most teams receive advanced training during the USMC Junior Highpower Clinic and then compete in National Matches highpower rifle events that include three prestigious junior trophy team events. For example, 15 states entered 51 different junior service rifle teams in the 2018 National Trophy Junior Team Match. The top ten teams represented the states of Washington, Arizona, California, Wisconsin, California, Pennsylvania, Texas, Wisconsin, Illinois and Pennsylvania. Junior shooters who are interested in trying highpower rifle shooting should contact their state shooting association to find out if there is a state junior service rifle team in their state (use the listing at <https://thecmp.org/clubs/state-associations/state-association-listing/>).

## Range Officer Training Courses

One of the attributes of junior programs that consistently produce winning teams and athletes who receive college scholarships or win places on national teams is their competition programs. They conduct matches and they cooperate with other programs in their areas to conduct matches. And to conduct excellent competitions, it is essential to have a well-trained cadre of volunteers who know and follow the rules. The CMP

## Range Officer Training Courses

*Full details about the CMP Range Officer Training Course can be found on the CMP website at <http://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-rangeofficer-program/>.*

developed its Range Officer Training Courses to be sure there are plenty of match officials who know and follow the rules. Junior programs that sponsor matches should encourage the parents and supporters who volunteer to serve as match officials in their competitions to obtain their certification through the CMP Range Officer Training Course.

Everyone who signs up for Range Officer training starts with Phase I training that provides students with a home study manual, ***Becoming a Range Officer***. After completing an on-line test on the contents of the manual, students become eligible to attend Phase II courses in the discipline of their choice, Highpower Rifle, Bulls-Eye Pistol or Smallbore and Rimfire Sporter Rifle. All of these Phase II courses will be available this summer during the National Matches.

## About the Author

Gary Anderson, Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus, retired as the full-time CMP Director at the end of 2009. He continues to work with the CMP as the senior marksmanship instructor. During his remarkable career, he won two Olympic gold medals, seven World Championships and 16 National Championships. He served as a Vice President of the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) from 1990 through 2018. He is a former Nebraska State Senator and Past President of USA Shooting. He served as a Technical Delegate for Shooting during the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games as well as for the 2014 and 2018 World Shooting Championships.

In 2012, the International Olympic Committee awarded Gary Anderson with the Olympic Order, its highest honor "for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement."

In 2014, the CMP expanded its world-class air gun center at Camp Perry and renamed the facility the Gary Anderson CMP Competition Center, in honor of Anderson's contributions to the organization and the marksmanship community.

