

THE DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL SHOOTER BADGE



The U. S. Government established the Distinguished Rifleman, Distinguished Pistol Shot and Distinguished International Shooter Badges as its highest awards for marksmanship excellence. The 1996 Federal Law that created the Civilian Marksmanship Program as a "federally-chartered" corporation authorized the CMP to promote "practice and safety in the use of firearms" through the conduct of matches and competitions and "the award to competitors of trophies, prizes, badges and other insignia." This authorization carried with it the responsibility to administer the Distinguished Badge program. Since 1996, the CMP has fulfilled this responsibility by conducting EIC matches, maintaining records of EIC credit points earned by shooters and by presenting badges to shooters who earn them. This article reports on the fascinating history of one of America's prestigious Distinguished Badges, the Distinguished International Shooter Badge.

Throughout its history, America has regarded itself as a "nation of riflemen." American marksmanship history, however, also bears witness to several periods when public concerns over declines in national marksmanship skills led to major initiatives to improve those capabilities. A perceived lack of marksmanship skills among Civil War soldiers was a leading contributor to the founding of the NRA in 1871. The winning of the West and the conquest of the frontier resulted in a decline in the use of the gun. That combined with inadequate shooting skills manifested by soldiers in the Spanish-American War and the 1902 loss of the International Palma Trophy Team Match led to the founding, in 1903, of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and the National Matches.

American marksmanship prestige reached its first pinnacle in the 1920s when U. S. shooters dominated the World Championships and Olympic Games of that era. Unfortunately, by the 1950s, Uncle Sam no longer enjoyed a preeminent position in the shooting world. U. S. teams had fallen behind many other countries. In the 1950s, the USSR achieved a dominant position in international shooting championships. That was an intolerable situation for America to be in during the height of the Cold War. National efforts to correct this situation began in March 1956 when President Eisenhower signed an executive order establishing the U. S. Army Marksmanship Unit and giving it a prime mission of training U. S. soldiers to win international competitions.

Another major initiative occurred in June 1962, when the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice (the NBPRP, the predecessor of today's CMP) proposed new measures directed at regaining America's lost marksmanship prestige. The NBPRP created the Distinguished International Shooter Badge with a goal of stimulating U. S. shooters not only to "participate in international shooting" at home, but to strive to win medals in international championships abroad. Accordingly, the Board approved a medal design and criterion for awarding the Badge. To earn the U. S. Distinguished

International Shooter Badge, a U. S. shooter had to win an individual gold, silver or bronze medal in the Olympic Games, World Shooting Championship or Pan American Games.

When the Badge was established in 1962, U. S. international shooters, including many who were trained by the U. S. Army Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning, had just returned from the 38th World Shooting Championship in Cairo where they had risen to second, behind the USSR, in the national medal count. A young U. S. shooter, Gary Anderson, dominated the individual rifle events by winning four World Championships and setting three world records. As a result, he was selected to receive the first Badge. President John F. Kennedy presented U. S. International Shooter Badge #1 one to Anderson in a White House oval office ceremony in April 1963.

The United States Distinguished International Shooter Badge consists of a gold top bar, 1.8 inches long, inscribed with the words, "United States." A shield of stars and stripes flanked by oak leaves is superimposed on the top bar. The pendant is a gold circle 1.5 inches in diameter, with a relief of the Western Hemisphere in the center. Laurel leaves inscribed with the words "Distinguished International Shooter" surround the globe.

The support and recognition that the NBPRP accorded America's international marksmanship efforts contributed significantly to a second zenith of American marksmanship when the United States was the world's leading shooting nation from the 1964 Olympic Games through the 1978 World Championship.

The NBPRP ultimately determined that the Badge could be awarded retroactively to any U. S. shooter who had won a gold, silver or bronze team or individual medal in prior Olympic, World Championship or Pan American Games competitions. When the Championship of the Americas was inaugurated in 1971, medals winners in that competition also became eligible. When Congress privatized the Civilian Marksmanship Program in 1996, the responsibility for administering the Distinguished Badge program was transferred to the new CMP. The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) instituted World Cups in 1986, but it was not until 1998 that Badge regulations were modified to recognize World Cup performances and establish the present point system that requires shooters to earn 30 points in major international competitions to receive the badge (see table below).



The first Distinguished International Shooter Badge (Serial #1) was presented to Gary Anderson, the present Director of Civilian Marksmanship, by President John F. Kennedy in an April 1963 White House ceremony.

Since the Badge was first awarded in 1963, 432 U. S. shooters, including 31 who received it retroactively, have earned Distinguished International Shooter Badges. Women earned 99 of those Badges. The Badge is especially significant because the United States Government instituted it and it has become one of the most highly coveted shooting awards in the United States today.

CURRENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To receive the U. S. Distinguished International Shooter Badge, a shooter must earn 30 credit points in accordance with this chart

	1 st Place Indiv.	2 nd Place Indiv.	3 rd Place Indiv.	4 th -8 th Place Indiv.	1 st Place Team	2 nd Place Team	3 rd Place Team
Olympic Games	30	30	30	20			
World Championship	30	30	30	15	20	15	10
World Clay Target Champ.	30	20	20	10	15	10	5
World Cup Final	30	20	20	10			
World Cups	20	10	10				
Pan American Games	20	10	5		10	5	5
Championship of Americas	20	10	5		10	5	5
World Junior Championship	10	5	5		5	5	5
Americas Jr. Championship	5	5	5		5	0	0