

THE DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL SHOOTER BADGE

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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 summarizes the fascinating history of one of America's prestigious Distinguished Badges, the Distinguished International Shooter Badge.

Through much of its history, the USA 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 lack of marksmanship skills among Civil War soldiers was a major reason for the founding of the NRA in 1871. The conquest of the frontier and the winning of the West was followed by a decline in the skilled use of guns. 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 by the U. S. Congress and President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1903, of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and the National Matches.

American marksmanship prestige reached its first zenith in the 1920s when U. S. shooters dominated the World Championships and Olympic Games of that era. Unfortunately, by the 1950s, the USA no longer enjoyed a preeminent position in the international 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 to today's CMP) proposed new measures directed at regaining America's lost marksmanship

prestige. The NBPRP recommended the creation of a Distinguished International Shooter Badge with a goal of stimulating U. S. citizens not only to "participate in international shooting" at home, but to strive to win medals in international championships abroad. After the Defense Department approved this recommendation, the NBPRP 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. The support and recognition that the NBPRP accorded America's international marksmanship efforts contributed significantly to a second great era of American international marksmanship success when the United States reigned as the world's leading shooting nation during the 1964 Olympic Games and retained that position through the 1978 World Championship.

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. In recognition of this achievement, he was selected to receive the first Badge. President John F. Kennedy presented U. S. International Distinguished Badge number one to Anderson in a White House oval office ceremony in April 1963.



President John F. Kennedy presented the first Distinguished International Shooter Badge (Serial #1) to Gary Anderson, by in an April 1963 White House ceremony. Mr. Anderson was the CMP Director of Civilian Marksmanship from 1999 through 2009 and is now the Director of Civilian Marksmanship Emeritus.

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 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. With the advent of the Championship of the Americas in 1973 and

ISSF World Cups in 1986, award criteria for the International Distinguished Badge were modified to establish the current 30-point requirement that awards different point values for medals won in championships governed by the International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF).

In 2013, the International Distinguished program was expanded to include medal-winning performances in competitions governed by World Shooting Para Sport (WSPS is the world governing body for Paralympic shooting). U. S. athletes who win medals in the Paralympic Games, WSPS World Championships and WSPS World Cups are eligible to win International Distinguished Badges. The first International Distinguished Badge (badge no. 485) earned by a Paralympian was presented to Roger Withrow, who won a gold medal in the 1984 Paralympic Games.

Current badge criteria also award extra credit points for establishing or equaling a new World Record or for earning an Olympic Games quota place (10 points). The most recent changes to badge criteria award credit points to U. S. juniors who win medals in ISSF Junior World Championships. The "International Distinguished Badge Credit Points" table at the end of this article provides detailed information about how credit points may be earned in accordance with place finishes in international championships governed by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) or World Shooting Para Sport (WSPS).

When Congress privatized the Civilian Marksmanship Program in 1996, the responsibility for administering the Distinguished Badge program was transferred to the new CMP. Regulations for the award of the International Distinguished Badge are published in the **CMP Smallbore Rifle Competition Rules** or the **CMP Air Rifle and Air Pistol Competition Rules** that can be downloaded from the CMP website. Since the Badge was first awarded in 1963, 514 U. S. shooters have earned Distinguished International Shooter Badges. Women have earned 130 of those Badges. Five badges have been awarded to Paralympian athletes.

The U. S. Distinguished International Shooter 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. The Distinguished International Shooters Badge is arguably the most difficult of the Distinguished Badges to earn because International Distinguished shooters must not only qualify for a U. S. National Team but must then produce medal winning performances in international championships where the best shooters in the world are competing.

Detailed records of all USA competitors who have earned this badge are listed in the Distinguished Shooter roster that is maintained by the CMP on its Competition Tracker website at: https://ct.thecmp.org/app/v1/index.php?do=reportDistinguishedShootersByCriteria&filter=distinguished_type.

Distinguished International Shooter Badge Credit Points

ISSF Championships							
Individual Olympic Events					Olympic Mixed Team Events		
CHAMPIONSHIP	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH - 8 TH	1 ST	2 ND	3 rd
Olympic Games	30	30	30	15	30/2	30/2	30/2
World Championship, (Olympic events only)	15	15	15	10	20/2	20/2	10/2
Pan American Games (Olympic events only)	10	5	5		10/2		
World Cups (Olympic events only)	10	5	5		10/2	10/2	10/2
Championship of the Americas	10	5	0		10/2		
Individual Non-Olympic Events							
World Championship, Non-Olympic Events	10	5	5				
ISSF Junior Championships							
Junior World Championship (Olympic events only)	10	5	5	5	10/2	10/2	10/2
WSPS Championships							
Individual Paralympic Events							
CHAMPIONSHIP	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH - 8 TH			
Paralympic Games	30	30	30	15			
World Championship	15	15	15	10			
WSPS Regional Championship	10	5	5	5			
Para Pan American Games Shooting	10	5	5				