

A National Matches Summer of Adventure

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By Gary Anderson, DCM Emeritus



The CMP-USMC Junior Highpower Rifle Clinic is a three-day school that promotes junior service rifle shooting. U.S. Marine Corps Rifle Team members teach intermediate and advanced juniors service rifle techniques for 200-, 300- and 600-yard shooting. This is an instructional scene from the 2016 Marine Corps Clinic.

One of the greatest summer adventures a young shooter can have is to shoot in the National Matches. These historic shooting championships take place every summer at Camp Perry, Ohio and junior shooters are especially welcome. The Matches are a unique experience because no other rifle and pistol competition in America has so many participants, so much pageantry and tradition, so many outstanding training opportunities and so many championship competitions in different rifle and pistol events.

Many *On the Mark* readers already know about the National Matches. Many others are planning their first trip to the Matches this summer. For the many junior shooters, coaches and parents who have not yet been to Camp Perry, this article should help them recognize how the Matches really are a great summer shooting sports adventure that every young shooter should experience.

What are the National Matches?

At their most basic level, the National Matches are a five-week series of national-level pistol and rifle competitions sponsored by the CMP and NRA that take place at an Ohio National Guard installation on the shores

of Lake Erie named Camp Perry. More than 5,000 senior and junior shooters go there every summer to attend training schools, compete in the matches and enjoy the camaraderie of other shooters.

The National Matches are often described as the “world series of shooting,” but that is the wrong way to describe them. A world series is for the best of the best, where everyone else can only be a spectator. The National Matches, in contrast, are about participation by all rifle and pistol shooters. A key feature of these national championships is that they are open to all competitors regardless of their skill levels and accomplishments. There are some excellent spectator experiences at the Matches like the First Shot Ceremony and the President’s Rifle Match Final, but **the main objective of the National Matches is participation. The National Matches are a national festival of marksmanship for all Americans.**

National Matches History

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt and the U. S. Congress passed legislation to create the National Matches because they believed that encouraging Soldiers, Sailors and Marines to shoot in rifle competitions would teach them to use their weapons more effectively. To provide

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One of the greatest junior shooting victories in National Matches history occurred in 2009 when this California Grizzlies Junior Rifle Team won the open Infantry Trophy Team competition over all competing teams including the top military teams.



The National Trophy, often called the Dogs of War Trophy because of its central image, is awarded annually to the team that wins the National Trophy Rifle Team Match.

a prestigious incentive for competing teams, the U. S. Congress appropriated funds to commission a **National Trophy** to be presented annually to the best rifle team. The first National Matches were held at Sea Girt, New Jersey in 1903 with rifle teams from the Navy, Marine Corps, Infantry, Cavalry and National Guard competing. The New York National Guard Team won the new trophy.

NRA Matches that had been taking place at Creedmoor, New York and Sea Girt since 1873 became a part of the National Matches. Members of NRA-affiliated clubs were first invited to compete in 1904. The first junior rifle event was staged at Sea Girt in 1906. The first National Matches pistol events were also fired that year. In the ensuing years, the Matches expanded to include other highpower rifle, pistol and smallbore rifle competitions for civilian shooters as well as for more and more juniors.

By 1906, the National Matches were flourishing and looking for a permanent home. The Adjutant General of Ohio, General Ammon Critchfield, had selected a large area of swampland on the south shore of Lake Erie as a site for an Ohio National Guard range and named it after Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of the 1813 Battle of Lake Erie. By offering a large range and accompanying housing, Critchfield successfully proposed Camp Perry as the National Matches site. The National Matches were first held at Camp Perry in 1907 and have been organized in

89 of the 110 years since then.

From 1903 until 1996, the National Matches were a government-funded program. There were several years when the Matches

were not held due to wars or budget cuts. After World War II, two major changes occurred. Government funding was eliminated in 1968, but the NRA kept the matches alive by recruiting volunteers to run the ranges. In 1996 after many Congressional attempts to defund the Matches, Congress and President Clinton privatized the government program that supported the National Matches by creating the new Civilian Marksmanship Program. The CMP now funds the Matches with the proceeds from surplus military rifle sales. Today's National Match program features CMP National Trophy Pistol and Rifle Matches, As-Issued Military Rifle Matches, Rimfire Sporter Matches and Air Gun events as well as some NRA National Championships.

National Matches Competitions for Juniors

Juniors are eligible to compete in every National Matches competition and virtually all events have High

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NATIONAL MATCHES JUNIOR TROPHIES



Top (l. to r.) Deneke, Freedom's Fire and Golden Eagle Trophies; Bottom: Minuteman, Riding the High Places and Junior Infantry Team Trophies

Junior awards. Many competitions like the National Trophy Junior Team Match are junior only events. Here is a run-down of junior competition opportunities at the National Matches:



Col. Bill Deneke Trophy honors are presented to the best six juniors in the National Trophy Rifle Matches. Also honored in this 2016 National Matches award ceremony were the coach and captain of the California Grizzlies Team Shilen that won the National Trophy Junior Team Match. On the far right, DCM Emeritus Gary Anderson is presenting a match grade AR rifle to the National Trophy Junior Service Rifle Champion, Forrest Greenwood, from Ceres, CA.

RIMFIRE PISTOL. The 2017 NM program offers junior pistol shooters who compete with 22 Rimfire Pistols two full days of CMP pistol events. Those events include a 22 Rimfire Pistol EIC Match, the junior phases of the President's Pistol Match and National Trophy Individual Match and the Junior National Trophy Team Match. The latter event is a two-person team match where the **Flying the High Places Trophy** is awarded. Juniors can also shoot the Air Pistol Championship while they are at Camp Perry (see below).

HIGHPOWER RIFLE. The Highpower Rifle National Trophy Matches are the most popular National Matches events. The President's Rifle Match attracts the highest participation with 1,200 competitors. The Rifle National Trophy Individual Match is nearly as large with 1,100. One-fourth of these competitors are juniors.

National Trophy Rifle Matches are fired with service rifles. This tradition has successively encompassed the U.S. Krag, M1903 Springfield, M1 Garand, M14 and today's service rifle, the M16. The change to M16/AR-Type rifles and their light-recoil 5.56m cartridges, which began in the 1990s, dramatically altered service rifle shooting by making it more attractive to women and juniors.

There are many special programs that make the National Trophy Rifle Matches especially appealing to juniors:

- **State Junior Highpower Teams** sponsored by CMP affiliated state associations and clubs offer programs to train and equip junior teams that travel to the Nationals.

- The **CMP Junior Highpower Support Program** provides funding support for juniors who are making their first or second trips to the Nationals.

- The **CMP-USMC Junior Highpower Clinic**, taught by Marine Corps Rifle Team members, is the premier training program for teaching juniors highpower rifle skills.

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- The **Top 20 Juniors** in the President's Rifle Match receive special President's Match awards.
- The **Golden Eagle Trophy** is presented to the High Junior in the National Trophy Individual Rifle Match.
- The **Minuteman Trophy** is presented to the High Junior team in the National Trophy Team Match.
- The **Freedom's Fire Trophy** is presented to the High Junior Team in the National Trophy Junior Team Match.
- **Col. Bill Deneke Trophy** recognition is given to the top six juniors with combined scores in all National Trophy Rifle Matches.
- The **Junior Infantry Team Trophy** is presented to the High Junior Team in the National Trophy Infantry Team Match.

RIMFIRE SPORTER RIFLE. The National Rimfire Sporter Match attracts 400 entries each year and is the largest smallbore rifle championship in the USA. Rimfire Sporter has grown rapidly because it allows competitors to use ordinary, commonly available .22 cal. sporter rifles and prohibits the use of shooting jackets and other expensive gear. The 60-shot course of fire involves slow and rapid-fire stages in the prone and sitting positions (fired at 50 yards) and standing position (fired at 25 yards). Rimfire sporter is popular with youth and junior clubs because it is accessible and affordable. Several 4-H Shooting Sports Clubs now make summer adventure trips for junior members and their families to the National Rimfire Sporter Championship.

This Championship features three separate competitions in T-Class (scoped rifles), O-Class (open sighted rifles) and a Tactical-Class (for AR clones). With multiple relays, competitors can shoot in one, two or all three classes. New Rimfire Sporter shooters can attend a Rimfire Sporter Clinic on the day before that explains the rules, course of fire, firing positions and shooting techniques.

NATIONAL MATCH AIR GUN EVENTS. The Gary Anderson CMP Competition Center at Camp Perry is one of the premier 10m air gun ranges in the world. During the National Matches, this state-of-the-art range hosts National Match Air Gun events for air pistols, precision air rifles, sporter air rifles and AR-type air rifles throughout the five weeks of the Matches. Competitors can bring their own air guns or, they can use loaner guns available at the range. Some shooters come to Camp Perry just to shoot the air gun matches, but for most air gun competitors, these matches are additional shooting opportunities they can enjoy in the afternoons or evenings after they finish their other matches.



Sam Payne from Kingston, Georgia, was the Junior Champion in the 2016 National Rimfire Sporter Championship O- and T-Class competitions. Payne was the T-Class National Champion in 2015.

The program offers 60-shot air pistol and air rifle championship events that competitors can fire only once. There are 30-shot Air Pistol Re-Entry Matches and 20-shot Air Rifle Re-Entry Matches plus Top Center Shot Matches that competitors can shoot as many times as they wish. Air rifle matches can be shot with sporter, precision or AR-type air rifles. The best center shots are entered in Top Center Shot Matches where hundreds of dollars in cash prizes are awarded. Two special matches are a 30-shot Air Rifle Re-Entry Bench Match and an AiR-15 Challenge Match that is fired with AR-type air rifles and concludes with a Super Final for the shooters with the best 20-shot re-entry scores.

CMP GAMES MILITARY RIFLE MATCHES.

The second largest National Matches event is the John C. Garand Match, which attracts 1,100 shooters. Competitors in this 30-shot 200-yard match compete with as-issued M1 Garand rifles. These matches are popular with older, recreation-oriented shooters, but there are also many

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Juniors who participate in the National Matches can plan to shoot four 22 Rimfire Pistol events, a 60-shot air pistol championship and additional air pistol re-entry matches.

juniors who compete in them because of their interest in historic military rifles and unique competition events. The 2017 As-Issued Matches offer matches for M1 Carbines, Modern Military Rifles, M1 Garands, M1A rifles, 1903 Springfields and Vintage Military Rifles.

Schools and Clinics for Juniors

One of the best reasons juniors and their coaches go to the Nationals is because they are a great place to learn how to shoot better. The schedule includes several different pistol and rifle schools and clinics.

CMP-NRANATIONAL JUNIOR RIFLE CAMP.

This traditional junior school has been a National Matches fixture for decades and always fills to capacity. This school is co-sponsored by the CMP and NRA. The 2017 National Junior Rifle Camp offers intermediate level instruction with three days dedicated to smallbore rifle position shooting on an outdoor 50 and 100-yard range followed by three days

of air rifle standing shooting on electronic targets in the CMP Competition Center.

PISTOL SMALL ARMS FIRING SCHOOL.

The Pistol Small Arms Firing School (SAFS) is a school for beginning and intermediate pistol shooters that welcomes juniors. The Army Marksmanship Unit Pistol Team teaches this school with assistance from other military pistol shooters. It divides students into two groups, one for beginning and intermediate shooters and one for advanced shooters. Firing is done with M9 9mm Service Pistols. This school could be an interesting adventure for juniors who are interested in learning pistol shooting.

RIFLE SMALL ARMS FIRING SCHOOL.

The Rifle SAFS takes place on the days just before the National Trophy Rifle Matches. It follows the same instructional format as the Pistol SAFS. Firing is done at 200 yards with AR-Type rifles provided by the CMP. The Rifle SAFS is a great way for rifle newcomers to learn service rifle competition skills. Both schools conclude with Special EIC Matches where the top 10 percent of competitors who have not earned any Excellence-In-Competition credit points can earn four EIC credit points and start on a path towards earning a prestigious Distinguished Badge.

CMP-USMC JUNIOR HIGHPOWER RIFLE

CLINIC. This clinic, which is taught by Marine Corps Rifle Team instructors, has been a training ground for hundreds of highpower rifle shooters who now compete as members of military or civilian club or state association teams. USMC Clinic instruction covers the full National Match Course with firing at 200, 300 and 600 yards.

CMP ADVANCED HIGHPOWER RIFLE

CLINIC. This 2 ½ day clinic, conducted by the members of Team CMP, is designed to help advanced shooters who are already successful highpower rifle shooters become even better.

CMP RANGE OFFICER TRAINING

COURSES. These new courses are being offered for the first time in 2017. They are not for juniors, but they could be very helpful for junior leaders and parents who want to learn more about how to conduct competitions correctly. They are one-day courses for students who enroll in the CMP Range Officer Training Course (<http://thecmp.org/training-tech/range-officer-training-course/>). The 2017 schedule includes four Range Officer Courses, two for Highpower Rifle, one for Pistol and one for Rimfire Sporter.

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Special National Matches Opportunities

One reason the National Matches are special is because the Camp Perry experience does not end when shooting is over for the day. There are lots of things competitors can do after they leave the firing line. Many competitors head for the Competition Center where they shoot air gun re-entry matches and socialize with other competitors. Here are some other special National Matches opportunities:

FIRST SHOT CEREMONY. For anyone present for the first day of the Matches, the traditional First Shot Ceremony can be a memorable experience. The ceremonies are attended by large groups of dignitaries that include members of Congress, elected state officials, local government officials and Ohio National Guard leaders. Ceremonies include military reenactments, a “first shot speech” given by an invited VIP guest and the ceremonial firing of the Matches first shot by the first shot speaker. The 2016 First Shot Ceremony featured a concert by the 122nd Army Band and fly-overs by a WWII Navy TBM Avenger, a B-25 bomber and a B-17 bomber.

NATIONAL MATCHES AWARD CEREMONIES. CMP Pistol and Rifle Award Ceremonies that take place in Camp Perry’s historic Hough Theater (Bob Hope once performed there) culminate the pistol and highpower rifle phases of the Matches. Priceless CMP trophies that date back as early as 1874 are displayed on the theater stage. The rifle ceremony is often a standing room only affair. A highlight of both ceremonies is the presentation of



The President’s Rifle Match Final for the Top 20 shooters in the President’s Match is a great opportunity to see champion shooters in action. Water cooler showers like this have celebrated several President’s Match victories.



Distinguished Badges to shooters who have “gone Distinguished” during the past year. New Distinguished shooters always get a standing ovation after they receive their badges and come off of the stage. Competitors who won championships titles and trophies are honored during the ceremonies, which conclude with the presentation of the winning National Trophy Team Match teams.

The firing of “the first shot” during the First Shot Ceremony officially opens each National Matches. Former CMP Board Member and New Mexico Police Commissioner Mahlon Love fired the first shot in 2016.

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The Camp Perry huts are austere, but many competitors still stay in them during the National Matches.

CAMP PERRY HOUSING. The Camp Perry huts offer unique housing accommodations that are actually prized by many competitors. They began life as housing for WWII German and Italian prisoners of war. After the war they continued to be used as low cost housing for competitors. The huts are small, have four cots and are linked to a latrine and shower at the end of each row of huts. These accommodations are austere, but cheap, and many competitors still speak with pride about staying in Camp Perry huts. The Ohio National Guard has upgraded the huts in recent years and housing in them is still available. Barracks and motel-type accommodations are also available. Information regarding Camp Perry housing must be obtained from the Ohio National Guard.

COMMERCIAL ROW. Camp Perry's Commercial Row is a row of long buildings that house retail displays of shooting equipment and target guns. All of the largest shooting equipment manufacturers lease Commercial Row buildings and are open for business during the Matches.

Many competitors regard these retail operations as the best place anywhere to buy target equipment and supplies.

CMP NORTH STORE AND MEMORABILIA SHOP. The CMP North Store at Camp Perry is a year around sales operation that features surplus military rifles and other products sold by the CMP. The Store gives potential rifle buyers a chance to inspect and check rifles that they might be interested in buying. The CMP also operates a Memorabilia Shop in the Welcome Center in CMP Headquarters. This shop sells clothing and souvenir items with CMP and National Matches logos.

FOOD SERVICE VENDORS AND MESS HALL. Camp Perry has a Mess Hall that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner meals at affordable prices as a service for those who live in Camp Perry housing as well as those who don't want to go off-post to get meals. During daytime hours, several food service vendors also offer snack, food and beverage selections.

Preparing for a National Matches Adventure

If you have decided to go to the National Matches, it is very important to plan and prepare your trip carefully. Here are steps to follow:

STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT THE MATCHES.

Before you start planning your trip, you must decide which events to fire and when you want to be at Camp Perry. The CMP National Matches webpage at <http://thecmp.org/competitions/cmp-national-matches/> is the best place to start. Be sure to download the National Matches Calendar so you can identify the dates of the competitions you want to enter. Use the links on the webpage to learn as much as you can about the schedule and program for the events that interest you or your shooting group. There are more than 30 links on that page that give details for virtually all National Matches programs. If you have shooting friends who have been to Camp Perry, talk to them and get their advice.

STEP 2: ORGANIZE A TRAVEL GROUP.

A great way to make a Camp Perry trip easier and more memorable is to travel with shooting friends or as a club trip. Travel groups that go to the Nationals every year include state junior teams that compete in the Highpower Rifle Matches, shooting club teams that fire in the pistol or highpower events, 4-H Shooting Sports Clubs that compete in the Rimfire Sporter Championship and junior club and school teams that shoot in the National Matches Air Gun Events.

| CMP Cup Week | CMP Pistol | NRA/CMP Jr. Rifle Camp | NRA Pistol | CMP Rifle | CMP Rimfire | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | | | | | June 24 CMP Volunteers Arise |
| June 25 F Range Officer Course | June 26 CMP 4-Man Team Match | June 27 CMP Cup 800 Aggregate | June 28 CMP Cup 800 Aggregate | June 29 CMP Cup 800 Aggregate | June 30 CMP EIC Service Rifle Match CMP Range Officer Course CMP-USAMU S&P Reg | July 1 CMP-USAMU S&P CMP M&V/C Match CMP EIC Pistol Match CMP '22 Rimfire Pistol EIC Glock (G03F) Match |
| July 2 F President's 100 F NTI F Shooter Reception F Pistol Awards Ceremony | July 3 | July 4 | July 5 | July 6 | July 7 | July 8 |
| July 9 F Pistol Registration Station and Training | July 10 NRA Harry Reeves NRA Dist. Revolver NRA Pre-Team Match | July 11 NRA .22 Championship .22 Team Match | July 12 NRA CF Championship CF Team Match Mynigh Cup Match | July 13 NRA .45 Championship .45 Team Match | July 14 CMP-USAMU S&P Rifle Reg. CMP/USAC Jr. HP Reg. & Clinic ISAM JPRM Registration and Clinic (RIF) or (S&P) | July 15 CMP/USAMU S&P Rifle CMP/USAC Jr. HP Rifle Clinic |
| July 16 F USAMC Jr. HP Clinic F USAMU Rifle S&P EIC Match at Hazard Perry Match | July 17 CMP President's 100 Rifle Match | July 18 CMP National Trophy Individual Rifle Match | July 19 CMP Jr. Team Match CMP Heart Doubles Match | July 20 National Carbine Match National Trophy Team Match | July 21 CMP National Trophy Infantry Team Match CMP Modern Military Match CMP Shooter's Reception CMP Awards Ceremony | July 22 CMP Grand Match Springfield M&A Match |
| July 23 F Springfield/Vintage Rifle Match | July 24 CMP Vintage Sniper Match | July 25 Reverend Commemorative Match CMP Closing Ceremony | July 26 | July 27 | July 28 Rimfire Check-In/Clinic | July 29 Rimfire Sporter Match |

A key item to download when planning a National Matches trip is the National Matches Calendar, which identifies when the Matches' events and programs take place. A calendar can be found on the CMP website at <http://thecmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017NMCalendar.pdf>.

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STEP 3: MAKE A PLAN. Once you have identified the events in which you or your travel group wish to participate, make a plan for traveling to Camp Perry, shooting the matches and returning home. Plan to arrive a day early. Many programs require registration on the day before.

STEP 4: ARRANGE HOUSING EARLY. Camp Perry housing fills to capacity during much of the Matches so it is wise to request housing as soon as applications are accepted. Making reservations in advance at Port Clinton area motels is also important because this is a popular resort area in the summer.

STEP 5: MAKE ADVANCE ENTRIES. Some National Match schools and events fill to capacity so as soon as you know you are going to Camp Perry and entries are open (the CMP opens entries around the 1st of April), get your entries in. This can be done on-line.

STEP 6: PRE-NATIONAL MATCHES. The Nationals should be the culmination of a shooting season when competitors are at their peaks. This requires shooting in preparatory matches before the Nationals to test shooting skills, fine-tune performances and work out problems.

STEP 7: PREPARE EQUIPMENT AND AMMUNITION. An important preparation phase for the Nationals is making sure the rifles or pistols that will be used are in prime condition and are matched to the best available ammunition. Highpower Rifle competitors often choose to load their own ammunition. Make a detailed equipment and ammunition checklist and go over it more than once before departing for Camp Perry.

STEP 8: PRACTICE AT HOME. Wise National Match competitors arrive at Camp Perry after having practiced the courses of fire they will shoot as many times as possible. If trips to the range are not possible, a dry fire program at home can also provide lots of positive repetitions. Camp Perry daytime temperatures are normally in the 80s and 90s with moderate humidity so it is important to be in good physical condition and prepared for long, hot days in the sun. Perhaps even more important is that outdoor shooting at Camp Perry is often done in strong winds. Practicing or dry firing in windy conditions can yield real benefits for shooting at Camp Perry.

Your National Matches Adventure

Junior shooters, coaches and parents who have been to Camp Perry know how enjoyable, rewarding

and memorable a trip to the National Matches can be. If you have never been to Camp Perry, give serious consideration to going to the Nationals this year or next year to be able to enjoy those same experiences. There are so many unique opportunities and experiences available there and for almost everyone who goes to the Nationals, it will not be their last trip to Camp Perry.



One of the greatest summer adventures a young shooter can have is to shoot in the National Matches.

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. During his remarkable career, he won two Olympic gold medals, seven World Championships and 16 National Championships. 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."

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

