

How to Conduct Competitions, Part III

An On the Mark Series by Gary Anderson, DCM

Competition Preparation and Planning

The successful conduct of any competition depends upon how well an important series of preparation and planning actions are carried out. This article describes how to organize and prepare a competition for junior shooters. It tells how to prepare a good match plan, produce a competition schedule and official program and obtain national organization sanctioning.

COMPETITION PLANNING

The first step in conducting a competition is to prepare a plan for the competition. The plan should begin with a “competition planning check-list.” Using the *Competition Planning Check-List* that is printed here will give you a good start in the planning process. For a major competition, step 1, initial planning, may take place as much as a year or more in advance. For a small competition, initial planning may take place only a few weeks before. After your initial meeting, schedule planning meetings for key competition officials at appropriate stages throughout the match organizing process to check on progress and identify special challenges that need attention.

MATCH SCHEDULE

When planning a shooting competition, the match schedule is one of the first and most critical planning elements to complete. No competition should be conducted without a schedule. The match schedule provides a detailed timetable for each activity that will take place on the day(s) of the competition. Normally, a schedule identifies and gives start and stop times for such things as check-in or registration, each relay of competitors who will fire, any finals that may be conducted and any concluding activities such as award ceremonies. Here are some guidelines to follow in developing your schedule:



Competitors in your match will be rewarded with a well-organized match if you based the conduct of your match on a carefully prepared schedule of events.

Competition Planning Check-List

1. Initial Planning	Assemble key leaders—make decision to conduct match. Appoint Match Director, Chief Range Officer and Results Officer for the match. Develop preliminary plan for the match.
2. Range Facilities	Schedule range. Make contractual arrangements for using the range and other facilities, if required. Is a certificate of insurance or other documentation required?
3. Schedule & Program	Draft, review and publish competition schedule. Draft, review and publish competition program. Make plans for special events, food service, etc.
4. Sanctioning	Submit applications to appropriate governing bodies to obtain official sanctioning and approvals.
5. Match Supplies	Order targets and other supplies required for the match. Confirm that all supplies needed to conduct the match are ordered or on hand.
6. Promote Participation	Obtain/review mailing and/or email lists of potential participants. Send out email notices with links to program or mail copies of program to mailing list.
7. Competition Staff	Recruit, train and organize competition staff (range officers, scorers, etc.) as required. As a general rule, there should be two scorers for each ten firing points. There should be one range officer for each ten firing points.
8. Publicity	Develop a publicity plan, especially if it is a major competition. Appoint a Publicity Chairman and develop press releases.
9. Entries	Set up a competitor database to record essential data on all competitors. Enter competitor data from entries as they are received. Acknowledge entries/keep participants informed. Determine how competitors will be squadded.
10. Results System	Set up results system. Will competitors and scores be tracked on an Excel file or similar database? Prepare to submit results to the match sanctioning organization.
11. Final Preparations	Move supplies into the range. Label and prepare targets. Prepare the range/check targets/clean the range. Set up check-in table/area. Set up official bulletin board. Set up areas for equipment storage & competitor rest area. Prepare and post start lists (relay & firing point squadding)
Activities on the Day(s) of the Match	
12. Confirm Entries	Greet and check competitors into the match. Collect entry fees as required. Issue squadding and targets, assist coaches and competitors as required.
13. Conduct Firing	Range Officer(s) conduct firing on range. Range Officer(s) conduct finals as required.
14. Scoring & Results	Collect and transport targets to scoring room. Score targets. Enter scores in results system. Post preliminary results lists. Conduct challenge periods. Post final results list.
15. Awards	Present awards at end of match (if possible).
Post-Competition Activities	
16. Competition Wrap-Up	Distribute awards not presented at the competition. Distribute final results bulletin. Send reports to sanctioning organization. Conduct evaluation of competition with match staff.

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- The scheduled start time for a relay is the time when firing starts. Preliminary steps like moving competitors to the firing line and conducting the initial preparation period should take place before the scheduled start time.

- Strive to start all events on time, according to the schedule. This is one of the primary marks of a well-run competition.

- Keep careful records (range officer log) on how long it takes to conduct a complete relay for the type of firing done in your competitions. For example, a 3x20 three-position air rifle event where paper targets are changed between relays usually takes 2 hours, 30 minutes, to complete. Plan your relay start times by using this data.

- Never change a schedule unless 100% prior notification can be given to all registered competitors who will be affected by the change.

- Try to schedule a coaches or team leaders meeting before a competition starts so that competition procedures and any schedule adjustments can be discussed. This is especially important if large numbers of new or inexperienced shooters are expected.

- Never start any scheduled activity before its published start time unless 100% notification is given to all affected competitors.

- Try to make your schedule work. If you are running behind schedule, strive to minimize delays to keep on schedule to the extent possible.

MATCH PROGRAM

As soon as the decision to conduct a match is made and a schedule is prepared, an "official match program" must be drafted, checked and made available to prospective participants. The rules of match sanctioning organizations like the CMP, NRA or USA Shooting all require that a match program be prepared for distribution to competitors and coaches and that a copy of the program be submitted with sanctioning applications. The purpose of a match program is to provide competitors and coaches with all of the detailed information they need to prepare for and participate in that competition.

Here is a checklist of the basic information items that should be included in a match program:

- **HEADER.** The program header should display the official name of the competition, the city and state where it is held and the dates. Use a club or match logo to give your match an enhanced visual image.

- **MATCH LOCATION.** Describe the range to be used for the competition and give detailed directions on how to find it.

- **MATCH SPONSOR.** Identify the organization(s) that is sponsoring and conducting the competition.

- **RULES.** Identify the specific rules that will govern the competitions. For example, three-position air rifle events are usually governed by the *National Standard Three-Position Air Rifle Rules*, most international-style air rifle standing, smallbore position and pistol event are governed by *USA Shooting Official Rules* and other junior events such as BB gun and highpower rifle matches are governed by the appropriate NRA rulebook. All match sponsors are urged to recognize and use an established national rulebook and to avoid using non-standard local rules.

- **EVENTS.** Identify the specific competition events on the match schedule; describe the courses of fire that will be fired. Will there be more than one event in which competitors can participate? Will there be team events? If there are separate sporter and precision classes in three-position air rifle events, this must be explained in the program.

- **SCHEDULE.** The match schedule with start times for each of the competition's activities should be published as part of the program.

- **ELIGIBILITY.** Describe the groups of competitors who are eligible to compete in the competition. Are there any restrictions on who may participate? If the match is an invitation match for specific groups or for teams, clearly identify the group(s) eligible to enter. Give specifics on any competitor classes or categories that will be used.

- **MATCH PROCEDURES.** Describe how the match will be conducted, especially if there are any special conditions unique to your range or match with which competitors will be required to comply. For example, if all competitors are

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Advance planning, a carefully prepared schedule, a clear match program and national sanctioning will assure that coaches and competitors who check in for your match will have a great experience.

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required to wear shooting glasses on your range, this should be clearly stated in the program. Competitors and coaches should not be surprised by special conditions that they might encounter at your match.

- **AWARDS.** Describe the awards that will be presented. If there will be place, class, category or special awards, tell how those award winners will be selected.

- **ENTRY FEES.** List all entry and registrations fees that will be collected. Explain whether entry fees must be paid in advance or may be paid on the day of the competition. Is there a cancellation fee? Can entry fees be paid by check or credit card?

- **HOW TO ENTER.** A good match program makes it easy to enter your competition. The best way to do this is to provide an entry form with clear instructions for completing the entry. List the name, mailing address and other pertinent information such as phone and fax numbers and email address for the person who will receive entries.

- **ACCOMMODATIONS.** If competitors are coming from some distance away and will be expected to remain overnight before or after the match, they would appreciate information about nearby motels and restaurants where they can obtain accommodations.

- **FURTHER INFORMATION.** Be sure to provide the name of the person to contact if anyone has questions or wants additional information about the match. Provide email addresses and phone numbers.

MATCH SANCTIONING

After the match plan, competition schedule and official program are ready, the next planning step is to apply for match sanctioning by the national organization that governs the type of competition being conducted. Match sanctioning offers a “seal of approval” to potential participants that your competition will be conducted according to high standards with nationally recognized rules.

The CMP sanctions Three-Position Air Rifle matches on behalf of the National Three-Position Air Rifle Council. Contact: CMP Competitions, P. O. Box 576, Port Clinton, OH 43452; competitions@odcmp.com; 419-635-2141, ext. 1101. The cost of sanctioning a three-position air rifle match is \$10 or \$20, depending upon the type of competition; there are no other competitor fees.

USA Shooting sanctions all types of international-style events including standing air rifle, smallbore rifle 3-position and prone and pistol. Contact: USA Shooting Competitions Department, <http://www.usashooting.org>.

The NRA sanctions many different types of competition events that are offered to junior shooters including BB gun, air rifle and smallbore rifle. Contact: NRA Competitions Division, Tournament Operations, <https://www.nrahq.org/compete/dept-tourn-ops.asp>.

Sanctioning matches offers several benefits, both for the sponsoring organization and for the coaches and shooters who will participate:

- **Quality Assurance for Competitors.** Sanctioned match sponsors agree to use standard, nationally recognized rules and to follow established procedures for conducting their matches. As a result, participants in sanctioned matches can expect well-run matches.

- **Match Promotion.** The CMP, NRA and USA Shooting all provide printed or Internet-based listings of upcoming matches that can help promote attendance. For example, three-position air rifle matches sanctioned by the CMP are posted on the CMP website at <http://clubs.odcmp.com/cgi-bin/matchUpcomingSearch.cgi?designation=AIR>. These listings give shooters, coaches and parents who are searching for matches to attend information about dates, match locations and contact persons.

- **National Award and Classification Systems.** Three-position air rifle matches sanctioned by the CMP make Achievement Pin as well as “excellence-in-competition” and the prestigious Junior Distinguished Badges available to participants. Matches sanctioned by both the NRA and USA Shooting offer registered participants opportunities to be part of national competitor classification systems that are used in many matches to provide awards based on shooters’ levels of ability

- **National Records.** Only scores fired in officially sanctioned matches can be recognized as national records by the national organization governing that type of competition.

To sanction your match, obtain the necessary application forms and instructions from the CMP, NRA or USA Shooting, fill them out and submit them, preferably several months in advance. The sanctioning organizations will also require the submission of post match reports and, in some cases, competitor fees. Plan your match completion operations so that any post-match reports can be filed as soon as possible after the match.

If you make it a priority to carefully plan your match in advance, work out a detailed schedule of events and match program and sanction your match through the CMP, NRA or USA Shooting, you will have taken a series of essential steps towards having a successful competition.