



# Earning the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge

*By Major William J. Miller*

**T**he fundamentals of marksmanship are some of the most important skills a Soldier will learn. The competitive marksmanship program, a long-standing tradition, was instituted in the aftermath of the Civil War by the United States Army. In 1884, General Phillip H. Sheridan formalized it when he designated distinguished marksmen with General Order 12. Originally, Soldiers could earn the

Distinguished Marksmanship Badge with the rifle, pistol, or carbine. Eventually, the pistol competition separated itself from the rifle competition, and the first United States Army Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge was awarded in 1903. The United States Army Distinguished Rifleman Badge was created, and the Distinguished Marksmanship Badge was no longer awarded. The early badges, along with the Medal of Honor, were the only decorations authorized to be worn on the Army uniform. Although there are greater symbols of excellent marksmanship (such as the Distinguished International Shooter Badge or Olympic Medals), these distinguished badges can generally be earned by applying the fundamentals of marksmanship and remaining cool under pressure.



**Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge**

## **Excellence in Competition Points**

**S**oldiers earn the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge after earning 30 Excellence in Competition (EIC) points, also known as leg points or legs. These EIC points are earned through a series of specific marksmanship competitions held throughout the year and are cumulative in nature. After earning their first leg, Soldiers are awarded the Excellence in Competition Pistol Shot (Bronze) Marksmanship Badge, a permanent award accompanied by orders. It is only awarded from the commander of the Army Marksmanship Unit



## Primary Excellence in Competition Matches

### Installation, United States Army Reserve, or Army National Guard State Championships

#### Fort Benning Pistol/Rifle Competition (Fort Benning, Georgia)

Currently Fort Benning is the only installation to conduct this level of competition specifically for active duty Soldiers. State-run competitions by the Army National Guard and United States Army Reserve are too numerous to list. This entry-level combat marksmanship competition, held in February, requires that competitors be stationed at Fort Benning or be a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadet from Georgia or Alabama. There are several competitions conducted during this match. Only four EIC points are awarded for a leg regardless of gold, silver, or bronze placement. To earn the points, a Soldier must not have any pistol EIC points.

### United States Army Small Arms Championships

#### All-Army Pistol/Rifle Competition (Fort Benning, Georgia)

To compete in this competition, the shooter must be a member of the United States Army (Active, Reserve, or National Guard) or an Army cadet. This is a week-long combat pistol and rifle competition that is held in March. Pistol and rifle classes are taught by the AMU. There are several competitions conducted, one of which is the EIC match for rifle and pistol.

### Major Command Championships

#### Joint Special Operations Command Pistol/Rifle Competition (Fort Bragg, North Carolina)

This is a week-long combat pistol and bull's-eye marksmanship competition in April. It is run similarly to the All-Army Competition, but with the added benefit of shooting a national match course of fire. It is one of the few competitions where two pistol EIC and two rifle EIC matches are shot.

#### First Army Commander's Warrior Challenge (Camp Bullis, Texas)

This good, all-around pistol and rifle competition is held in May and consists of a train-the-trainer course, practice firing, some team matches, and a foreign weapons competition. There are several competitions conducted, one of which is the EIC match for rifle and pistol.

### Armed Forces Championships

#### Interservice Pistol Competition (Fort Benning, Georgia)

This combat and bull's-eye competition, held in June, is the best of the five Services' best, but any Service member is eligible. A 2700-type course is fired, with a Service pistol match and combat pistol match. The EIC match is a National Match 300-point bull's-eye match.

### National Trophy Matches

#### National Trophy Pistol Match (Camp Perry, Ohio)

The best-of-the-best shooters in the country compete here (civilian, law enforcement, and military), but anyone is eligible to compete. It is run by the Civilian Marksmanship Program, and it is the national championship of bull's-eye shooting. With more than 600 people shooting in the pistol match, there are a lot of legs awarded.

### National Guard Championships

#### Winston P. Wilson Pistol/Rifle Competition (Camp Robinson, Arkansas)

This competition is the National Guard Championship, but all branches can compete. The EIC matches are the combat pistol and rifle course of fire, and normally there are about 500 competitors. The competition is held in October.

- The second stage requires the Soldier to shoot a string of five rounds in 20 seconds two times with a controlled pause in between. On professional ranges, the targets will turn perpendicular to the shooter, but a pause can be instituted if range conditions don't allow for that.
- The third stage is the same as the second, except the strings are conducted in 10-second intervals.

Scoring occurs between each stage. A total of 300 points is possible. For this reason, the match is also called a "300 match." To earn a leg, Soldiers generally need to score above

260 points—this can vary considerably based on the skill level of the competitors. The targets are National Rifle Association (NRA) type B6 (50 yards) and B8 (25 yards) targets. Scoring rings consist of a bull's-eye or "X" ring, a ten ring to a five ring.

### Sanctioned Matches

There are only certain sanctioned matches that Soldiers can compete in to earn their legs each year. These matches can either be bull's-eye or combat pistol, but must be classified as an EIC match. A Soldier can only shoot in four rifle and

four pistol EIC matches a year, regardless if it is an Army or alternative match. Visit <[www.usaac.army.mil/amu](http://www.usaac.army.mil/amu)> to view upcoming Army EIC matches on the AMU website.

*Primary Matches.* The table on page 70 lists the primary matches where Soldiers can earn EIC points.

*Secondary Matches.* Every branch of the military, the United States Coast Guard, and civilians, through the Civilian Marksmanship Program, have their own competitive marksmanship program with their distinctive awards program. Because of this, there are several secondary matches for Soldiers to earn EIC points; however, Soldiers can only earn 20 EIC points from non-Army competitions. If Major Army Command (Joint Special Operations Command or 1st Army), All-Army, or Interservice Championships are missed, alternate matches can be authorized in advance through the AMU on a one-for-one basis after missing one of the primary matches. This procedure is an exception and must be coordinated with the AMU, otherwise hard-earned legs from non-Army matches may not count toward the Soldier's Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge. Only two alternative matches can be shot per year, of which only one can be a civilian match. Some of the more popular alternative matches that Soldiers can compete in for pistol EIC points are:

- Atlantic Fleet Forces Command Pistol Matches (Virginia Beach, Virginia)
- Pacific Fleet Forces Command Pistol Matches (Camp Pendleton, California)
- All-Navy (East Coast) Pistol Championships (Virginia Beach, Virginia)
- All-Navy (West Coast) Pistol Competition (Camp Pendleton, California)
- Civilian Matches certified by the Civilian Marksmanship Program


All of the marksmanship badges are worn in the same manner as other standard Army marksmanship badges. The reference for wearing these badges can be found in Army Regulation 670-1, *Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*, paragraph 29-16. Army Regulation 350-66, *Army-Wide Small Arms Competitive Marksmanship*, governs EIC points and procedures.

## Summary

Visit <[www.odcmp.com](http://www.odcmp.com)> to view all civilian and most military EIC matches available to compete in; Navy Marksmanship Team information can be found at <<http://www.usnst.org>>.

Earning your Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge is a rare occurrence and a very high honor. The process can be accomplished quickly with the Soldier scoring gold legs in three competitions or can take as long as a full career. As of 5 March 2008, there were 1,709 Distinguished Pistol Shot Badges awarded to Army personnel since 1903, with

375 “double” distinguished in both weapons and 14 “triple” distinguished (rifle, pistol, and international).<sup>2</sup>

The highest-ranking Soldier to wear the badge is General John J. Pershing, who earned the Distinguished Marksmanship Badge with the rifle and pistol before the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge was created. General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, who later became the Chief of Staff of the Army, earned the Distinguished Marksmanship Badge (Rifle). Brigadier General Claudius Easley earned his Distinguished Marksmanship Badge (Rifle), and later as the Assistant Division Commander of the 96th Infantry Division declared the division the “Deadeyes” because of their proficiency with the rifle. A known distance rifle range at Fort Benning is also named in General Easley’s honor. The highest-ranking engineer to wear the Distinguished Pistol Shot Badge was Major General Hugh J. Casey, General Douglas MacArthur’s chief engineer; he also earned his Distinguished Marksmanship Badge (Rifle). One engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Rhonda Bright, earned her triple designation (pistol, rifle, and international) in 2006. She is the second woman in the Army to achieve this honor and one of 14 in the Army to ever reach this goal. 

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from Nancy Pool, the United States Army’s Excellence in Competition (EIC) awards program manager and a member of the United States Army Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning, Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> Pool.

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## References

Army Regulation 350-66, *Army-Wide Small Arms Competitive Marksmanship*, 17 July 2003.

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