

# 1913 Military Excellence-in-Competition Matches<sup>1</sup>©2002

By Dick Culver

While researching the material for the 1913 Matches, I found myself lacking a “pure” copy of the 1913 Army Small Arms Firing Manual. I was able to find one that had been corrected to 1917, but other references indicated the courses of fire had changed between 1913 and the Army Manual with revisions for 1917. My copy of the “*Marine Corps’ Rifleman’s Instructor Booklet*” (dated 1913), was definitely different. Lacking a pure “uncorrected” Army Small Arms Firing Manual of 1913, I am took my data for 1913 from the “Marine Corps Rifleman’s Instructor Booklet” from 1913 which listed the Army Courses of Fire, the Course of Fire for the National Trophy Matches, and the updated Skirmisher’s Course to be fired at Camp Perry, complete with the new Skirmisher’s Target.

Several notes are apropos here. Note is made in the 1913 USMC Booklet that the Army Courses of fire no longer listed a Skirmisher’s Course by 1913, but the Skirmisher’s course was still being used as a part of the National Match Course (E-I-C matches) fired at Camp Perry. The Army Qualification Course IS listed, as most Military Excellence-in-Competition Matches until at least 1917, were very closely related (if not identical) to the Army Qualification Course. Hence the course listed below as the (probable) leg match course is interpolated between the 1913 Small Arms Firing Manual, corrected to 1917 and remarks made in the 1913 Marine Corps publication.

## ***(Interpolated) Regulations for the Rifle Leg Matches (1913)***

<b><i>Course of Fire for the Department Rifle Competition</i></b>					
Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
200	D	Rapid	10	Kneeling <u>from</u> Standing	1 Minute
300	A	Slow	10	Sitting <u>or</u> Kneeling	No time limit specified
300	D	Rapid	10 with reload from stripper clip	Prone <u>from</u> Standing	70 seconds
500	B	Slow	10	Prone	No time limit specified
500	D	Rapid	10 with reload from stripper clip	Prone assumed <u>before</u> string of fire	80 seconds
600	B	Slow	2 sighting shots plus 10 rounds	Prone w/sandbag rest	No time limit specified

Drawing from past and future Army leg matches, this course would have been fired a total of twice for an aggregate score. Rapid fire stages were shot using the Battle Sight as specified in the 1909 Manual. Rapid Fire strings were now a total of 10-rounds with a reload during the string of fire. Infantry and Ordnance were beginning to understand the capabilities of their new rifle. All reloads for rapid fire strings were from the cartridge belt.

Note that the Army regulations now had recognized the ability to load the M1903 during rapid fire by using the clip slot. It is interesting to note that neither the Army Requalification Course, Military E-I-C Matches nor the National Trophy Match had any stages of fire that required the standing or offhand position, as had been called for in 1909.

The following course *WAS* the official National Trophy Match fired in 1913 at Camp Perry. It included two stages of fire that would never be fired again – The Surprise Fire Stage and the Skirmish Run. Neither would be missed. Note that the NMC is devoid of a rapid fire stage, with the exception of that utilized during the Skirmishers Course.

The “new” Dog Target had replaced the older version used in 1909 having the outline of the old Skirmisher’s Silhouette. The new target was of a more symmetrical design (*see the new Dog Target illustration at the end of the article*), and did away with the outline of an opponent in the prone position. Since the Skirmishers target was supposed to simulate an enemy soldier, the 1913 Skirmisher’s Target outline was retained to reflect the intent of the course of fire, but necessitated the use of a separate target.

***The National Match Course Listed for 1913 was:***

<b><i>National Trophy Individual Match 1913 (Camp Perry)</i></b>					
Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
200	A	Surprise	10	“Standing Ready” To any desired position.	Target exposed for 3 seconds Exercise continued for 10 shots.
600	B	Slow	2 sighting shots plus 10 rounds	Prone w/sandbag rest	1 minute per shot
1000	C	Slow	2 sighting shots plus 10 rounds	Prone w/sandbag rest	1 minute per shot

Surprise Fire was a new course for the 1913 National Trophy Individual Match. It was fired as follows: The Competitor stood holding the rifle at roughly the balance of the piece in a modified “trail arms” stance. Once the targets made the first movement out of the pits, the competitor could assume any position he wished and fire as long as the target remained in the air (3 seconds). If you add the amount of time necessary to raise and lower the target from and into the pits, the shooter had just a bit over the magic 3 seconds to fire his round. Any position was allowed for firing the round during Surprise Fire, but most competitors chose prone. This stage of fire proved to be very unpopular and was used as a part of the National Match Course *only* in 1913. The 1914 Nationals eliminated both the “Surprise Fire” and the “Skirmishers Course” stages of fire from the “leg match”. It is rumored that the competitors were happy to see both stages of fire disappear in the mists of history.

**Skirmish Course of Fire for the National Trophy Competition  
Camp Perry, Ohio 1913**

Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
600	D Skirmisher's Target	Rapid	2	Choice of prone, kneeling, or sitting	30
500			2		30
400			3		30
350			3		30
300			5		30
200			5		20

Use of the Battle Sight was required at all ranges except 600 yards where the peep sight was permitted.

D Targets were mounted on “disappearing carriages (similar to modern day target carriers). The signal to the pits that the competitors were ready to proceed was a trumpet or telephone. Thirty seconds after receiving the signal from the firing line, the Pit Officer or NCO caused the targets to appear.

The competitors started just to the rear of the 600-yard line with the rifles loaded and locked. The competitors were “advanced” to the firing line and halted. Commands to fire the requisite two rounds were given. As soon as any portion of the target appeared, the competitor commenced firing. Firing continued as long as any portion of the target was still in sight or until both rounds were fired. When the targets disappeared, the command or signal to cease-fire was given. The rifles were locked and the advance immediately resumed. Movement between firing lines was conducted with the first half of the distance covered at quick time (120 steps per minute) and the second half covered at double time (180 steps per minute). While the instructions for firing the course are not specific on this point, it is assumed that the competitor was allowed to take the preferred firing position prior to the targets being raised. All reloading was accomplished from a full five round stripper clip.

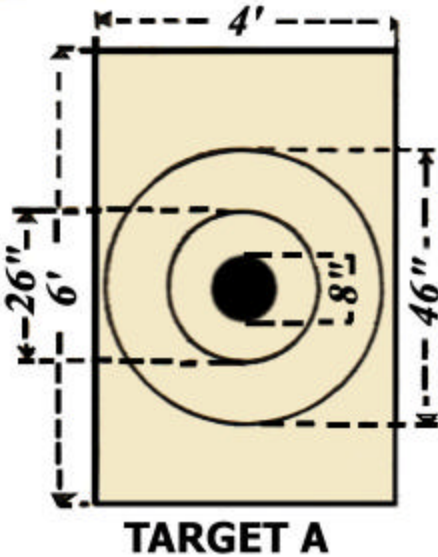
At 400-yards, there would be only one round remaining in the magazine. Once the remaining round had been fired, the magazine would be recharged with a full five round stripper clip. The shooter would then fire the additional two rounds, and put his rifle on “safe”. The remaining three rounds would be fired at 350 yards. A full five shot stripper would then be loaded into the magazine, and the advance to the 300-yard line continued as above. The final five rounds would then be fired at 200-yards in a 20-second time limit.

Any round out of the four ring of the Skirmisher's Target counted as a miss. Hits in the black counted five, and those below the black counted four. A possible over the Skirmisher's course was 100 points.

Two Skirmish Runs were required for each shooter in addition to the National Match Course and were added together for an aggregate for qualification for a rifle leg medal.

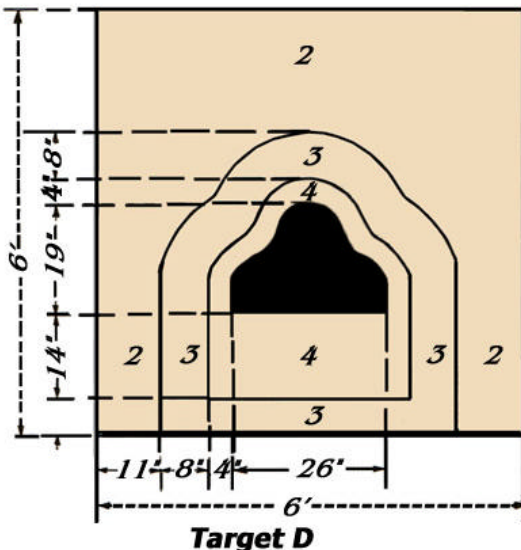
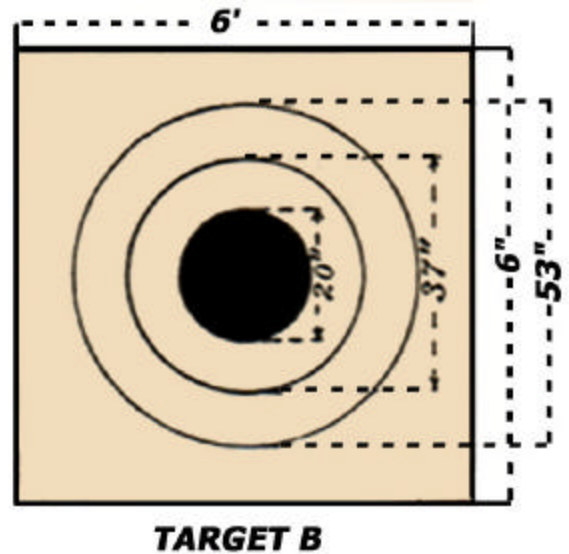
1913 was the last year the Skirmisher's Course was a part of the National Trophy (E-I-C) Matches.

## Targets Utilized in 1913<sup>2</sup>



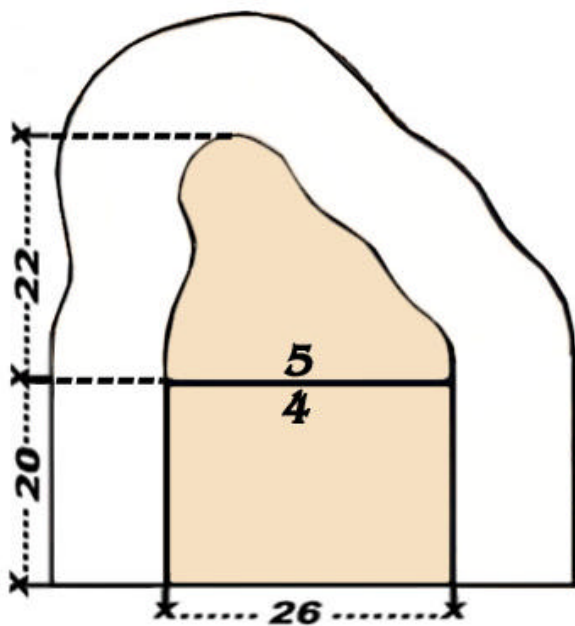
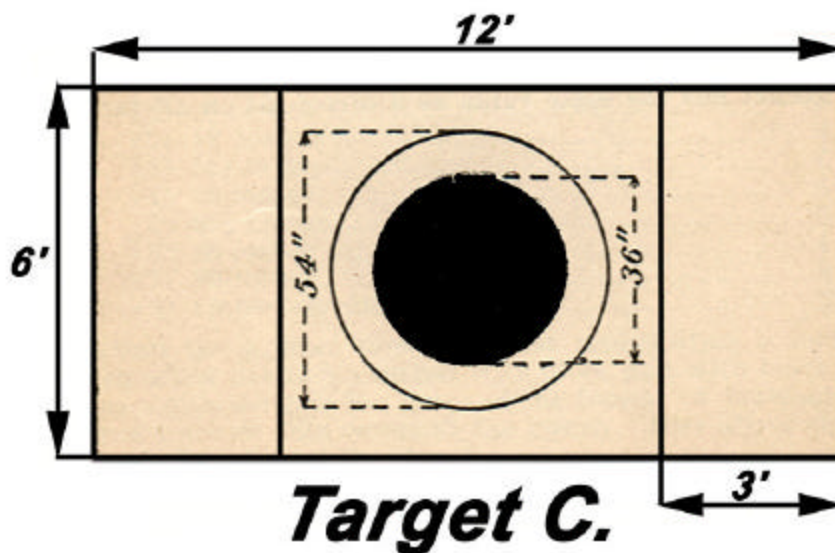
The “A” Target was used for the 300-yard slow fire stage to be fired using the shooter’s choice of either the sitting or kneeling position. This was the same “A” Target utilized in the past for various stages of fire from either the 200 or 300-yard line and would continue to be used in this form until the 1920 shooting season when the bull’s-eye was changed to 10”. The “A” Target was also used in the National Match Course at Camp Perry in 1913 for the VERY unpopular “Surprise Fire” stage at 200-yards. Both the Surprise Fire stage and the Skirmisher’s course were fired for the last time at Camp Perry during the 1913 Nationals

The “B” target was the traditional mid-range target utilized at both 500 and 600-yards. In 1913, 10 shots were fired slow fire on the “B” target in the prone position at 500-yards with an additional 10 shots prone slow fire fired from 600-yards using a sandbag rest. The 20” bull’s-eye would continue to be standard for the “B” Target until the addition of a tie-breaking 12” V-Ring was added in 1922.



The “D” Target was changed somewhat from the one used in 1909 and has the same form still used today on the Marine Corps Qualification Course. The earlier “D” Target had been an adaptation of the original Squaw and Papoose Targets utilized to fire the Skirmisher’s Course with a form vaguely reminiscent of a man’s silhouette firing from the prone position. This outline made it difficult to utilize a constant aiming point on the target. The “new” version of the “D” Target utilized the same idea but was changed to give a constant silhouette of a man’s body exposed from the armpits upward. This was a great aid to aiming in a day and time when the rules required the shooter to utilize his battle sights to fire the rapid fire stages.

The “C” Target was the long range target utilized for 800, 900 and 1000-yards. The additional “wings” on the targets counted 2 points and hence were called “Duce Wings”. These “Duce Wings” were a great aid to shooters not having access to a 1000-yard range and who had to use a scientific wild +ss guess (SWAG) when trying to get on paper at the extreme ranges. When the extended targets were placed in the target carriers, the “Wings” were so close to each other on adjoining targets they were almost touching. The appearance of the line of targets from the firing line gave the impression of one continuous target with multiple bull’s-eyes stretching from one side of the range to the other. This target was only changed one more time until its replacement in 1974 with the 1000-yard Decimal Target. The only addition to the target as it appeared here was the addition of a 20” tie-breaking “V-Ring” in starting with the shooting season of 1922.



**1913 Skirmish Target**

**The Skirmish Target:** While the Skirmisher’s course had been eliminated from the Army (and Marine Corp’s) qualification and Excellence-in-Competition Courses, it was to have one last blast as a part of the National Match Course in 1913. For the Skirmisher’s Course, a reversion to a version of the Squaw/Papoose bullseye used on the older “D” Target was utilized. Since the new “D” target no longer utilized the quasi-human form of a rifleman in the prone position, a special version of the older target was concocted for the last of the Skirmisher’s Courses. It essentially consisted of the 4 and 5 ring of the old “D” Target. Whether the ring formerly comprising the 3 ring was also colored in the “buff” fashion is unclear, but the rules state that nothing out of the 4 and 5 rings count as hits. The target depicted here was scanned out of one of the old scorebooks as it was published. Pages in the scorebook for practice firing show ONLY the 4 and 5 rings.

The next article in the series was inadvertently published in the April First Shot (my error and my apologies) so to get the sequence in proper context, please access the First Shot for April. I’m still working on the history of the E-I-C Matches, and will let you know when the

latest version is ready for press. As previously noted, the change in targets and techniques clearly illustrate changes in military thinking and tactics before the American Doughboy was introduced to trench warfare!

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<sup>1</sup> Information Extracted From the *“U.S. Marine Corps Scorebook and Rifleman’s Instructor For the New Springfield Rifle”*, Third Edition(Revised for Use Under the 1913 Firing Regulations

<sup>2</sup> While the targets were taken from the USMC Scorebook and the 1909 Small Arms Firing Manual, the graphics were massaged, enhanced, dimensions added, and prepared for insertion, utilizing the considerable skills of my Memsahib, Gloria Culver, who prepares the graphics for all of my articles.