



Competition Shooting

Well, this is one page I didn't expect to write until months ahead! I couldn't help but notice yesterday evening, that some probationary members were already shooting competition cards. The development of some of you has been remarkable over the last few weeks. Very well done to all of you and to the coaches who have made this possible.



Fantastic progress!



I suppose the first question which we should ask is:

When am I ready to shoot in competitions?

In theory, if you can handle a rifle safely without supervision, you can start competition shooting. Is the sooner-the-better applicable here? Well, not really. If your technique needs lots of improvement, it is better that you focus on practice rather than competition for the time being. So how do we know when the time is right? As a general rule if you can **consistently** shoot around 80% of the maximum score possible for your discipline, you may like to start competing. Your Head of Section will certainly be encouraging you to do so! Of course, if competitions are not for you, that's perfectly OK too. Don't be too shy to say so.

Team shooting:

Although there are lots of competitions that you can enter as an individual, these tend to attract more seasoned shooters, and for good reason. They are mostly external to the club though some can be shot within our club and the results forwarded to the organising body. If you are relatively new to our club, the way forward is via team shooting. That way you will be in a supportive group who will offer you the encouragement that you may need at an early stage. Everything is organised for you right down to the timescale for shooting your cards. All you have to do is to turn up when it is convenient to you, and shoot. **Your cards must be signed by you and witnessed by another full member of the club.** After this they are posted to the adjudicating authority. This being the case, it is best to shoot your cards in a full club session. The teams at our club mostly shoot in local (within Devon) leagues. There are many teams that cater for all abilities. For example Team A members may consistently



shoot at 98% of the possible total, whereas Team E members may shoot at 80% of the possible total. So you will be competing against people at your own level. Your Head of Section will advise you on which team to enter.

Shooting in team competitions can be a chief motivating factor towards improving your scores.

How do I approach my first competition cards?

There is no theoretical difference between shooting a practice card and shooting a competition card, but psychological factors (known as the inner position), certainly can



affect your shooting in a competition. Take this example: imagine you are walking on log across a shallow stream. Now imagine walking across exactly the same log over the same stream when it has become a raging, ice-cold river. Same log, same stream, different inner position. Same card, different inner position!

It's all down to that little white sticker on your card that declares it to be a competition. So what is there to worry about when shooting a competition card?

- letting the team down
- letting yourself down by failing to reach your average score
- results being published for everybody to see
- running out of excuses for your performance!

There is no one way to deal with the emotional hit the above factors can have upon our shooting. However, the power of **positive thought** can have a wonderful calming effect. So how about replacing the negative thoughts with their opposites?

- ✓ I am supporting the team by shooting this card
- ✓ I am going to try to better my average score
- ✓ I am going to use my results as a platform for improvement
- ✓ I will get advice on how to improve my scores

You could try doing this:

Just before you squeeze the trigger, close your eyes and imagine a slow motion picture of the bullet leaving the barrel and striking the centre of your target. Open your eyes, and squeeze your trigger.

Best of luck (and skill) in all your competition shooting!

Andrew (Training officer)