

Firing Line



I'd Like to Shoot at Camp Perry. What Do I Need To Know?

The National Matches at Camp Perry are over for this year, but if you have ever wanted to participate in the National Matches, now is the time to prepare for next year. Here are some things you need to know before you get to Perry, and things you need to do when you arrive.

Before you go you must practice with all your equipment. You must know how to load, unload, and clear your rifle. Be knowledgeable of its workings, how to break it down, put it back together, and keep it clean and running. Know where your rifle's zero is with your favorite ammo. Zero your rifle at 200 yards and, if possible, get zeroes at 300 and 600 yards. Learn how to use your sling properly and how to adjust it quickly. Practice this while wearing the clothes you would wear when on the shooting line. This includes a shooting coat, sweatshirt, hat, glove or mitt, eyewear and hearing protection. You will have three minutes prep time at the line and you will have to set up your equipment, find your position, and get a sight picture in that very short time.



Knowing your rifle, and how to react when things don't go entirely right can salvage a bad situation. Note live round ejected during John's sitting rapid fire during the National Trophy Team match.



John Joyce displaying the GCA green flag (GCA PA Patriots team)

By John Joyce

Shoot as often as you can and do it at as many different clubs as you can. This will get you used to competing with strangers and following range commands. You will need to know how to do pit duty, and shooting at ranges with pits will be a big help in learning how to pull, mark, and paste targets efficiently. You will also learn how to score targets and mark score sheets for other competitors.

If you wish to compete in the team matches you will have to join a team. It is up to the individual shooter to seek out a team or to form one with friends. Teams do not need to be made up of shooters from the same area or state. If you are forming a team you will need six shooters, a coach, a team captain, a pair of target pullers and a scorer (for the National Trophy Team match) and a brass policer for the National Trophy Infantry Team match. The coach and the captain can be shooting members of the team, but it is better if the coach does not shoot. The captain is responsible for the team. He or she will coordinate all of the team members with the GCA, letting the GCA know the name of the team, the names of the shooters, if they are old or new shooters (new shooters on GCA teams are issued ammo on their first trip to Camp Perry), shirt size, what matches they will shoot, their contact information, etc. The captain needs good communication and organization skills.

When registration for the matches opens on the CMP website you must sign up for and pay for any match you wish to shoot. The GCA will reimburse shooters who participate in the NTT or NTIT and for any other matches in which they also shoot the M1 Rifle. Team match fees are covered by the GCA for teams shooting the Garand. GCA staff will purchase the team cards at Camp Perry.

You need to get to Camp Perry at least one day before you intend to shoot. This means you will have to make arrangements to stay somewhere. If you are shooting with a team it makes sense to have all your team members stay at the same place. This will make it easy to discuss strategy and share info and also give you a chance to sit and talk with team members.



The sea of shooters that slowly become visible as the sun rises at Camp Perry is nothing like you've ever experienced at your home club!

The sunrises are breathtaking as well.



Shooters and scorers packed tightly on Rodriguez Range for the JCG match.

There is a squadded practice on the day before the matches begin. This is a good time to test your zeroes at 300 and 600 yards. You will get ten minutes at each distance to fire as many rounds as you wish but you must sign up early on the day of the practice. This is one of the reasons to arrive early.

When you arrive at Camp Perry you must register at the in-processing area. The building for doing this is the last building on the right side of the main road. There is a small armored vehicle and two rockets out front. Go inside and sign the forms you are given, then get in line and finish registering with the volunteers manning the computers. They will make sure your information is correct and they will give you a hat tag and labels with your name, competitor number, matches you are shooting, and the relays and firing points of those matches. Make sure you get extra labels! You will need them all during your time at camp.

After you register you must go to the CMP armorer's trailer. Here you will present your rifle(s) for safety inspection. The armorer will make sure your safety works and he will weigh your trigger to make sure it is in compliance with the rules. Remember that a rifle used for an "as issued" John C. Garand match cannot have any match parts, bedding, etc.

You are now almost ready to shoot. You still need to consider some things you will need when on the range. You must be ready for any type of weather because the matches continue unless there is a severe storm or lightning. You need to have clothing for sun, wind, rain, and cold. Sunblock and insect repellent are almost a necessity. Keep several gallon-size, zip-type plastic bags in your equipment bag, as you can use them to keep your scorecards and stickers dry. Keep a lens cleaning cloth and towel in another. If you are using a score book put it in another. Make sure you have several extra pens as you will need them when scoring.



Being prepared for foul weather is DEFINITELY part of the Camp Perry experience. It is a wonder that no competitors drowned at the 2014 JCG match!



Taking advantage of the "Shooter Shuttle" when possible always beats walking.

You will need to make sure you have plenty of drinks with you even though there are hydration stations at each assembly area. Failure to drink enough will cause you serious trouble. You will also need to bring snacks and/or something to eat since there is no lunch break.

Even if you are going to be issued ammunition for a match, make sure you bring plenty of your own ammo. Your rifle may not like what is issued, so having something it shoots well is a good idea. There is also the possibility of a mix-up where your issued ammo does not show up on time.

You need a way of moving your equipment around. Most competitors use some sort of cart. No matter how you decide to move your equipment, make sure you have a seat or chair, it will make your range time a lot more comfortable. You will also need it when you are doing scoring duty. It is possible to spend two hours scoring for others, depending upon the relay to which you are assigned. When scoring, you will need to have a spotting scope in order to see the scoring disks on the targets. A clipboard will also make writing scores easy.

Pit duty can be a challenge. At Camp Perry there are no berms behind the targets so you must watch them to see when they are struck by bullets. This involves a lot of looking toward the sky, so a good pair of sunglasses and a hat are essential. Most shooters carry a "pit bag" that includes some rain gear, snacks, water, extra ear and eye protection, and other things to make life more comfortable.

The final thing you need to consider is time because matches start early. For some matches, squadding takes place around 5:30 a.m. on the 200-yard line. You'll need to be on the range with your gear and at the assembly line before the squadding begins. This means you will have to arrive at the range, find a parking space, get your gear, and move it about one-half mile just to get in line to be squadded. (If your match is on Viale range, that is a minimum of an 800-yard walk, not counting the distance from where you parked!)

You need to get up really early and with a clear head. The Nationals are not like deer camp or a fishing lodge where you can stay up late and sleep in if you wish. Take care of yourself the night before a match, eat a good dinner, get plenty of rest, eat breakfast, show up early and you will enjoy Camp Perry like no other shooting experience you have ever had. It's the World Series, Super Bowl, and World Cup of shooting rolled into one!

