

# Military Excellence-in-Competition Matches

1904

## Including the 1904 National Trophy Matches

By Dick Culver

The 1904 Army shooting season was an “off year” for the “All Army Match” but the Army Divisional Matches continued to be held annually. The Divisional Matches were designed to continue to encourage practice and competition with the Service Rifle throughout the United States and, to act as a vehicle for awarding medals signifying credit(s) towards the designation of Distinguished Marksman. Then too, the Divisional Matches gave the Army hierarchy a gage to select the Army Shooters assigned to represent the various 12-man Army Branch Teams (Infantry, Artillery, Cavalry, etc.) on years when the All Army Matches were not held. Competition was becoming heated in the newly established (1903) annual National Trophy Match and of course, to represent the Army in the yearly National Rifle Matches participated in by the finest rifle shooters, both military and civilian, in the United States.

Since the elliptical bullseye, standard since 1885, had been finally replaced by the traditional round target in 1903, the Army shooters felt that they could finally get back to pure marksmanship instead relying on a “trick bullseye” to match the beaten zone of the older Trapdoor Springfield on a typical target face. The course of fire for the 1904 Divisional Matches was identical to the 1903 matches, but the targets were of the more modern format.

### The 1904 KD Course of Fire for Rifle Leg Matches

Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
200	A	Slow	10	Standing	Average of 1 Minute per shot*
300	A	Slow	10	Sit or Kneel	Average of 1 Minute per shot*
500	B	Slow	10	Prone	Average of 1 Minute per shot*
600	B	Slow	10	Prone	Average of 1 Minute per shot*
200	D	Rapid	10	Standing	2 Strings of 5 shots fired in** 20 seconds per string
300	D	Rapid	10	Sit or Kneel	2 Strings of 5 shots fired in** 30 seconds per string

\*No specific time limit was specified during the slow fire stages. In the old days slow fire was understood to be “a reasonable amount of time” and usually averaged approximately 1 minute per shot.

\*\*Since the Krag was reloaded with 5 individual cartridges with no “stripper clip” to assist, rapid fire strings were fired in two 5 shot strings

The above course was standard for both the Army Qualification Course ***and*** the Excellence-in-Competition, and were fired along with two runs through the Skirmisher's Course. One run through the E-I-C Course took 60 rounds and the Skirmisher's Course took 20, making a total of 80 rounds to complete the entire course. Regulations specified that the course(s) would be fired twice (both the KD Course and the Skirmisher's Course). The match was conducted on two days, with one run through the KD Course and one Skirmish Run being fired each day. A competitor's total score for the E-I-C match was the aggregate of two days firing. Two runs on the course allowed for a good rifle shot to correct any mistakes or rifle trouble experienced the first day with a possible comeback on the subsequent day. Conversely, an individual who had just been extremely lucky on the first day had an opportunity to allow the "match pressure" to "psyche him out" on the second day if he was not a consistent rifle shooter. The double course tended to separate the (shooting) wheat from the chaff.

### **The 1904 Skirmish Run**

Total number of rounds fired = 20 per Skirmish Run (a total of 40 rounds per individual for the match)

Each shooter fired two Skirmish Runs utilizing the targets called in slang, the "Squaw" and the "Papoose". Officially, the Squaw (the larger of the two) was called the "E Silhouette Target" and the Papoose (the smaller of the two) was called the "F Silhouette Target".

The Skirmish Run was fired in the following manner (this was a sort of individual version of the "*rattle battle*" or *National Trophy Infantry Trophy Match*):

**Hits on Squaw Target = 4 Points**

**Hits on Papoose Target = 5 Points**

### **Conduct of Fire:**

1. Each shooter had one (each) Squaw and Papoose Target sitting on top of the butts in front of his firing point – any firing position was allowed at all ranges (you could shoot prone at all distances if you wished).
2. The line of shooters formed just to the rear of the 600 yard line in a skirmish line. When the line was formed, it was ordered forward ("***well dressed***", needless to say) to the 600 yd. firing point and halted. On command, each shooter fired 2 rounds at the target(s) within a time limit of 30 seconds.
3. Upon expiration of the 30 second time limit, the line was ordered forward to the 500 yard line. The first half of the distance was covered in "quick time (120 steps/minute), and the last half at double time (180 steps/minute).
4. Upon expiration of the 30-second time limit, the line was ordered forward to the 400 yard line. Again, the first half of the distance was covered in quick time, with the last half at the double. At 400 yards, **3 rounds** were fired in 30 seconds (vice 2 at 500 and 600 yards).
5. Upon expiration of the 30-second time limit, the line was ordered forward to the 350 yard line using the quick and double time routine (which would be continued through the end of all courses of fire during the Skirmish Course). Again the shooter/competitor was required to shoot 3 shots in 30 seconds, just as at 400 yards.

6. Upon expiration of the 30 second time limit the line was ordered to the 300-yard line. Here you had a total of 10 rounds of ammunition remaining. The individual shooter was allowed to distribute these in any way he wished between the 300 and 200-yard line. He had another 30-second time limit at 300 yards, but was shortened to 20 seconds at 200 yards.

Old timers were said to have favored the prone position at all ranges, with a few diehards using the sitting position at 200. Total possible score was 100. An extremely accomplished shooter of the day was thought to be doing well if he scored 80 or more points on a skirmish run.

**Put into table form, the Skirmish Run would look like this:**

**Skirmisher's Course – total number of rounds fired = 20**

<b>Range</b>	<b># of Rounds Fired</b>	<b>Time Limit</b>	<b>Position</b>
600 yards	2	30 Seconds	Any
500 yards	2	30 Seconds	Any
400 yards	3	30 Seconds	Any
350 yards	3	30 Seconds	Any
300 yards	10 rounds to be used at the shooter's discretion	30 Seconds	Any
200 yards		20 Seconds	Any

**Summary of Skirmisher's Course Rules**

- Both targets (“squaw” and “papoose”) were located on top of the butts at the 600 yard line.
- Movement of shooters between yard lines = ½ quick time, ½ double time
- All shooters move as a “skirmish line” down range on command at each yard line.

As a strategy, most competitors fired at the “squaw (kneeling) target” down to and including 350 yards. They then fired at the “papoose” target at 300 and 200 yards. Colonel Whelen recounted that he personally used the junction of the target and the ground as an aiming point, and set his sights to hit into the (wider) shoulder area of the kneeling target.

**The Selection of the Departmental Teams:**

As in previous years, each Army Department held annual rifle competitions (such as the Department of California, the Department of Arizona, etc.). As a matter of course, the two best rifle shots from each company of Infantry (similarly from each equivalent Cavalry and Artillery Regiment) and the two best rifle shots among the officers of each Infantry, Artillery and Cavalry Regiments were ordered to attend the Departmental Matches as competitors. All competitors fired the course(s) as described above. In keeping with the method of selecting the “Departmental Team” of the day, the top 12 shooters in the Departmental Matches became the Departmental Team. Medals in the Departmental Matches were distributed as follows. The winner was awarded a gold medal, the second two individuals were awarded silver medals, and the last nine shooters were awarded bronze medals.

In a year such as 1904 where an All Army Match was not held, these Departmental Teams supplied the raw material used by each Army Branch to select a team to represent them at the National Matches.

## The 1904 National Trophy Matches:

The 1904 National Trophy Matches are not as well documented as those held in 1903, but we have the recommendations of the National Board for Rifle Practice's recommendations for the conduct of the matches:

- According to the National Board, the 1904 National Trophy Match were to have the match include one run of the Skirmisher's Course, and two (2) full scores "timed fire" at *rectangular targets(?)* and rapid fire *if possible*.

As above, the year of 1904 was an off year for the All Army Match, but the Departmental Matches were held in standard fashion utilizing two runs of the Excellence-in-Competition Match (including two skirmish runs) fired in 1903. The All Army Team (always consisting of 12 men in those days) was selected from the best shooters "making" the Departmental Teams.

If Col. Whelen's recollections are to be believed, the National Trophy Match held at the Nationals in 1903 utilized one run through the standard Army Qualification Course (Excellence-in-Competition Match) and one run through the Skirmisher's Course - plus 10 shot strings of slow fire at 800 and 1000-yards. The course set forth by the National Board differs somewhat from Colonel Whelen's notes. In 1903, the National Board called for:

- A string of slow fire to be fired at each of the following ranges; 200, 500, 600, 800, 900 and 1000 yards.

Apparently, the course of fire for the National Trophy Match in 1904 actually consisted of 60 rounds, fired in a series of slow fire strings at 200-yards, 500-yards, 600-yards, 800-yards, 900-yards, and 1000-yards, all prone with the shooters head toward the target. In chart form it would look as follows:

Course of Fire for the 1904 Nationals					
Range in Yards	Target	Type of Fire	# of Rounds	Position	Time Limit
200	A	Slow	10	Prone	None* Specified
500	B	Slow	10	Prone	None Specified
600	B	Slow	10	Prone	None Specified
800	C	Slow	10	Prone	None Specified
900	C	Slow	10	Prone	None Specified
1000	C	Slow	10	Prone	None Specified

\* Time limit was usually considered to be "reasonable", probably about 1 minute/shot

Apparently the recommendation of the National Board were ignored or changed, as no timed or rapid fire stages were specified or listed for the actual match. The National Board (NBPRP) approved the incorporation of two (2) Skirmish Runs during the 1904 Nationals, for both the National Trophy Individual Match and the National Trophy Team Match. While they

are not mentioned as having been fired in 1904, the “double” skirmish run became a part of the National Trophy Matches (Team and Individual) through the 1913 Shooting Season.

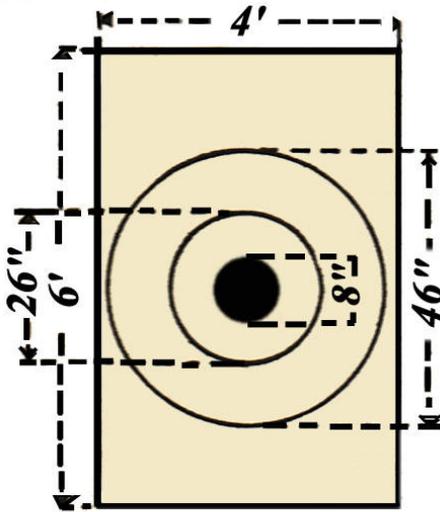
The 1904 National Trophy Matches included for the first time (at the National Trophy Matches) an “Individual National Trophy Match” as well as the “National Trophy Team Match”. This addition allowed the service rifle shooters an additional chance at a rifle leg medal during the National Matches.

The National Trophy Matches were held on the Rifle Range at Ft. Riley Kansas and heavily exposed to hot August winds. The range was not overly “shooter friendly” and the shooters had to climb a 30-foot mound to fire at 1000-yards.

Selection of the All Army Rifle Team became a bit tricky for 1904, as the rules specified that of the (standard) 12 man National Trophy Team, 7 of the 12 competitors were not allowed to compete in the National Trophy Team Match the following year. While this may sound strange, the provision was actually included to increase competition within the Army. Requiring new blood on the All Army squad each year would require constant beating of the bushes to find new talent... The 5 individual (usually called “old shooters”) would provide the talent or anchor for the team, and the new shooters would have to be brought along by the old salts in the various branches (Infantry, Cavalry, Infantry, Artillery, etc.). ...A most ingenious scheme to keep the program healthy and not encourage inbreeding.

**Targets Utilized in 1904 are on Pages 6 and 7**

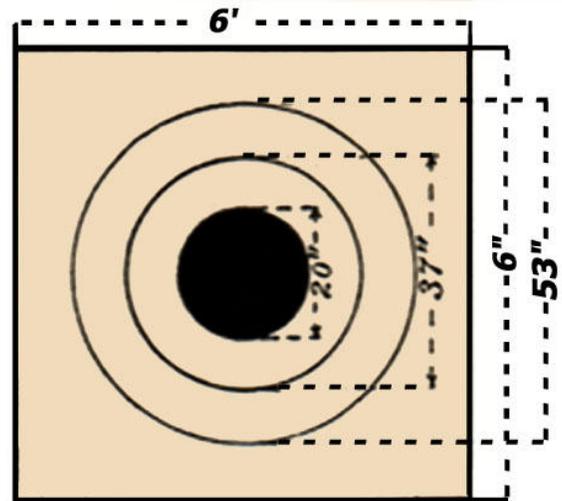
## Targets Utilized in 1904



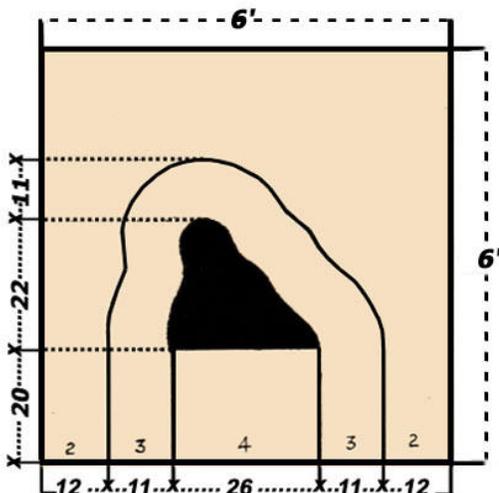
**TARGET A**

The 8 inch "A" Target had been used as far back as the Matches held in 1881 in essentially the same form. This target was to be utilized in the 8" version until 1920 when a 10" bullseye was substituted. The "A" Target has traditionally been the short range target utilized at both 200 and 300-yards for slow fire. In later years, the "10 inch A Target" and of course the later 12 inch versions (with "V-Ring") replaced the "D Targets" for the rapid fire stages until the introduction of the Decimal Target in 1967.

The "B" Target remained the medium range target essentially unchanged until 1967. The only change made was the addition of a 12" tie-breaking "V-Ring" for the 1922 Shooting Season. The "B" Target was traditionally used at the 500 and 600-yard stages of fire.



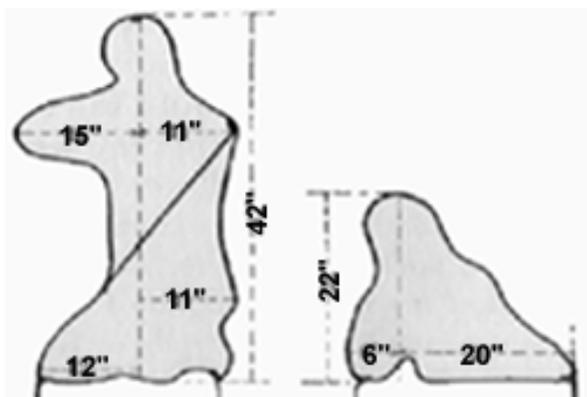
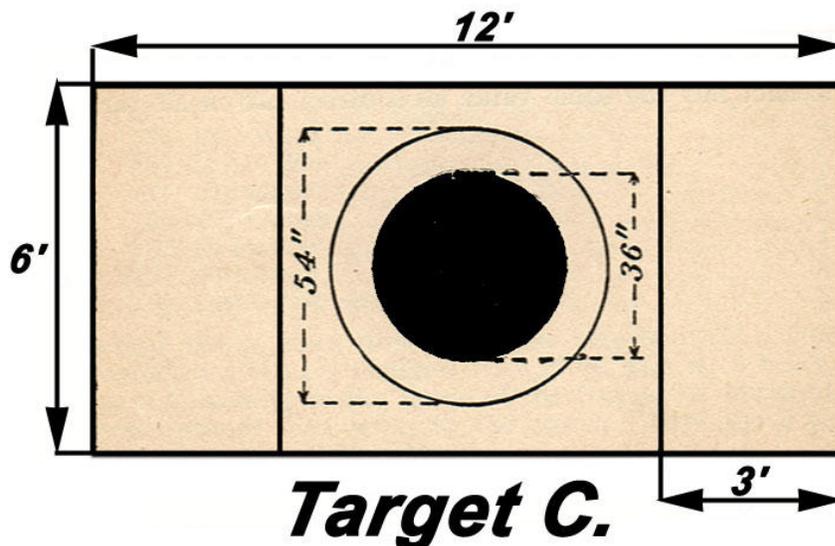
**TARGET B**



**Target D**

The "D" Target remained the rapid fire target for Qualification and E-i-C Match Firing. The initial versions of the "D" Target utilized a form very similar to the Skirmisher Target with additional scoring rings. It was obviously designed in an attempt to simulate the human form of an opposing rifleman in the prone position. This it did very well, but would have been much more effective if a "center of mass" hold had been taught at the time. Using the old six o'clock hold, it presented a challenging target. The format of the "D" Target was eventually changed to give a better 6 o'clock sight picture, but had to sacrifice the more realistic human silhouette.

The "C" Target was the traditional long range target used for ranges exceeding 600-yards. Used at 800, 900 and 1000-yards, it could and did present an illusive mark for shooters using rifles lacking the later technology necessary for pinpoint precision. Ammunition too was going to have to come a long way to make the 1000-yard line a "matter-of-fact" exercise, more often fired with a clean score than not. Even as things progressed, the "C" Target was not replaced until 1974 with the adoption of the Long Range Decimal Target. It existed in the above format until the 1922 Shooting Season when a 20" tie-breaking "V-Ring" was added to preclude the multi-round shoot offs of 1921.



### ***The Skirmish Targets***

**Utilized for the Skirmisher's Course and placed on top of the 600-yard Butts.**

**"Squaw" (left) and "Papoose" (right),**