

## What is Camp Perry?

Every July, some 800 conventional pistol shooters convene at Camp Perry, just outside of Port Clinton, Ohio, to participate in the National Pistol Championship. Everyone is invited and there are no qualifying scores in order to participate.

Pistol shooters are not the only people in the area; Port Clinton is on the shore of Lake Erie and the town is the “Walleye Capital of the World,” and many fishermen will also be in town.

So, what is it like to attend the National Championships? Camp Perry is not like other pistol matches. The ranges are wide open and fully exposed to whatever wind is blowing at that time of the day, which might be quite different from the way it was a few hours ago. You may not be able to park near your firing point, so leave plenty of time to get to your point. There is no protective cover and if it rains, so be it. Some red dot scopes are nowhere near waterproof; using your scope adjustment knob caps might keep the water out of your Ultra Dot. In the midst of your shooting, if it starts to rain, it will be too late to run to a store to buy rain gear and no umbrellas are allowed on the firing line; so, if rain is in the forecast, or even if it isn't, it's best to have your rain gear nearby/with you. The matches will be conducted unless it is so windy the targets are blowing out of the frames, or there's lightning, or a tornado. Under those circumstances, there may be a temporary interruption but you should “stay in touch” to find out when shooting will resume. The ranges face north. In the morning, the sun rises off to your right, then travels overhead behind you, towards the west, getting strongest in the afternoon. You might want to wear sun protection to avoid sunburn.

You will be given instructions, over a PA system, as to when you can put your gear on the shooting benches. Gun boxes must remain closed until the start of the three minute preparation period and you will have only that amount of time to get your equipment set up. Consequently, you may want to do some things before you even get to the firing line, such as putting on your shooting glasses, inserting ear protection, loading magazines, etc. You will need to pick up your targets, from the target van, before you go to the firing line. You will be shooting on different firing points at different times, so it is always best, each time you pick up the gun, to check to make sure you are aiming at your own target. There is one set of turning targets for both slow fire and timed and rapid fire. Shooters move between the 50-yard line and the 25-yard line, taking all of their shooting equipment with them, so you might want to take “extra” stuff out of your shooting box to lighten your load. Every ten shot string is fired on a “brand new” target, after removing the old one from the target frames, so you will not need a staple gun to post a new repair center. Also, you may want to leave any guns you will not be using during this match out of your gun box. Most shooters use some kind of a “geezer cart” to move their equipment to and from the line and some use one to move between the 50 yard benches and the 25 yard line. The most popular carts are the collapsible ones used by boaters, called “dock carts,” available from boating supply merchants. The ones with the largest wheels, about 10 inches in diameter, are more stable. Regular luggage carts are not very stable over the ground at Camp Perry and can lead to spilling your gear on the ground.

You should make sure your score cards are in your gun box before you go to the line; if you forget them and have to buy them from a referee, they will cost five dollars per card. There are four ranges, with room for 100 shooters each, in use at any one time. It can be unsettling, while you are shooting at 25 yards, to have shooters on an adjacent range, firing at 50 yards, behind you! You will soon get used to this. There may be a “cease fire” called in the middle of firing because of boats that wander into the impact zone, or because an eagle has landed down range. As soon as the reason for the cease fire has been cleared, firing will resume.

Each day has something different going on. Shooters generally arrive on Sunday and have to check in before 9 p.m. to register and pick up their score cards for Small Arms Firing School, which will be conducted on Monday. You might want to arrive earlier than 9 p.m. to allow time to get settled in where you’ll stay and to do shopping for food or anything else. On Monday, shooters attend Small Arms Firing School, run by the Civilian Marksmanship Program, with both classroom and range events. You will be shooting a service pistol, the M9, equivalent to a Beretta 92FS, shooting supplied 9 mm ammo. If you have no EIC points, you may win 4 points if you shoot well (top ten percent) in the EIC match. You will be able to pick up your NRA packet that day, containing labels with your name on them to be stuck on the score cards. In that packet, you will also receive a small piece of paper assigning you a relay and a firing point for the revolver matches as well as your relay and point for the other guns (.22, CF, and .45). The match director’s bulletin will give times for the various relays. Later on Monday is the First Shot Ceremony and a Shooters Reception at the Camp Perry Clubhouse, where you can meet and greet local merchants. Sometime during the week, you’ll have to register with the CMP for their matches, to be conducted on Sunday. You’ll also have to get your service pistols inspected; the best place to do that is at one of the Armorer’s vans, on the road behind the ranges.

On Tuesday, the CMP warmup match is held, consisting of the President’s Match course of fire, 20 shots slow fire, 10 timed and 10 rapid. Participants receive a very nice medallion. That same day, you can “practice,” shooting one or more National Match Course. If you care and are lucky, you can even shoot on the same firing point you will be using for the rest of the matches. If someone comes along behind you while you are shooting, you will have to pick another point for the next relay. That same day, the revolver matches (Harry Reeves Match and Distinguished Revolver) are held. For those shooting on a State Team, the Team Meeting will be held at 5 p.m. on the Petrarca, or “covered” range. At the meeting, you will meet your team captain, find out who else is on your team, and what firing points the team will use. Team matches are conducted at about 3 p.m. on .22, CF, and .45 days. Make sure to bring a strip of your competitor labels with you to give to your team captain.

Wednesday is Preliminary Day and you will shoot a NMC with each gun. Check your squadding ticket to find out which relay and firing point you are on. This is the lightest shooting day because there are no team matches that afternoon. It is also the most hectic “moving day” because you will be moving your equipment back and forth between the 50 and 25 yard lines several times! Because there are no team matches, this

might be a good day to use the rest of the day to go to Cedar Point amusement park in nearby Sandusky or go to the outer islands by ferry. Wednesday evening is usually the day for the Ultra Dot picnic, with lots of goodies given away.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday are firing days for the National Conventional Pistol Championship. Thursday is .22 Day, Friday for CF, and Saturday is for .45. Team matches will be conducted after the individual matches are completed. On Friday evening, the Team Dinner will be held. That is also the day for the NRA Competitors Meeting, where shooters get to address issues with the NRA Competitive Shooting Division personnel. On Saturday evening, after the completion of the NRA individual matches earlier in the day, the NRA Awards Ceremony will be conducted in the auditorium, crowning the National Champion, Women's Champion, Collegiate and Junior Champions, as well as the Team Champions.

Sunday is "Service Pistol" day, using iron sights only. Adults shoot the service pistol (1911A1 or Beretta 92FS, while junior shoot .22s. The President's Match (20 slow fire, 10 timed fire and 10 rapid fire) is fired first, followed by the National Trophy Individual (NTI, or "Leg") Match, firing a National Match Course. Following the NTI, team matches are fired, again using the National Match Course. Sunday evening is the CMP Awards Ceremony, again in the auditorium. You've made it - - completed Camp Perry! It's not too soon to be thinking about next year and what changes to make.