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Instructor's Name

ENGL 1013

Date

Competition Pistol Shooting

Mentally, I was prepared for anything. My hands were in the ready position. I could sense my surroundings clearly. Finally, I heard the word "Ready!" I made no motion to indicate my readiness. Suddenly, the experience began as the Range Officer yelled "Standby!" and I heard the buzzer. With that audible signal, I turned to face the targets, while at the same time my right hand swiftly fell to my holster and I touched the grips of my pistol. I stopped and drew my sidearm and began the course, shooting two bullets into each paper target as I ran past. Stopping briefly to shoot a metal "popper," I watched the form fall to the ground. Next, I shot the rotating "Texas Star," trying to knock off all five points of the rotating star. I then dropped the magazine from the gun so I could slap in another from my belt. Rapidly, I reached the last part of the course of fire, which included a group of paper targets with covered scoring zones. I slowed down and took a deep breath to steady my aim and put a double tap into each target; then the shooting was all over. The Range Officer asked if I was finished, and I nodded "yes." When he asked me to unload and show clear, I did. I holstered my pistol and walked back to the beginning to check my score. This was just one scenario that I have experienced in the great sport of practical pistol, which involves shooting through made-up scenarios in the fastest time possible.

Even though that is the basic definition of the sport, there is much more to it. The sport evolved from self-defense shooting, so the situations are similar to what actually could happen.

This knowledge can keep things quite interesting and fun at the same time. I remember the last match that I participated in very well.

It was a cold day in November. The first thing I did upon arriving at the firing range was find the Match Director to register for the match and to check the schedule for the day. It was at this point that I told him the caliber of pistol I was going to be using for the match. He needed to know this so that I could be scored properly. I was using a 9mm pistol; therefore, I was in the minor category. Next, he asked what class I would be shooting in. I usually shoot in limited because I like to use high-capacity magazines for my pistols. The same was true that day. After I had registered, the people in charge held a shooters' meeting to go over any special conditions and to answer questions. We were then split into groups and sent to different courses of fire.

After arriving at the course of fire, I began preparing myself for the match. The shooters started to strap their gun belts on. As I strapped my belt on, I arranged my magazine holders so that the magazines could be changed quickly, yet I could still be safe and comfortable. I opened my gun bag and counted and checked my magazines, making sure I had gotten there with all eight magazines and that they had eighteen cartridges in each. Next, I placed four magazines into the holders on my belt. Now it was time to put my gun in its holster. I took my gun case to a designated safe area where shooters can handle their guns. As I opened the case, I made sure the Smith & Wesson 5906 had no magazine in it and that the chamber was clear. After ascertaining its safety, I placed the gun in its holster at my side. When all of the shooters were ready, a course walk-through was conducted by the Range Safety Officer so that the shooters could see what was involved in the course.

After the walk-through was completed, it was time for the first shooter to shoot the course. This is when nervousness can get to a person, but I had done this enough to know that a

balance of speed, power, and accuracy could win a match, so nervousness was not a factor. I was there for the fun of the competition, not just to win, so that helped as well. I stood by the rest of the shooters and watched the first shooter go through the course. The Range Officer then asked for volunteers to shoot next, and I figured I might as well go ahead, so I volunteered. I stepped up to the firing line, and the Range Officer made sure everything was okay and told me to load and make ready.

I removed my gun from its holster, loaded a magazine, and placed it back in the holster. He then asked if I was ready. I remained motionless to signify that I was. The Range Officer was using a specialized timer, which counted the time between shots and the start-to-finish time. He told me to stand by as I waited for the buzzing noise from the timer, telling me to go. I shot the course, unloaded, and walked back through the course of fire with the Range Officer to check my score. My score was good, so I went to my vehicle to reload my magazines. I soon returned to watch the other shooters.

After all of the courses had been shot, I prepared to end the day. I took my gun case to a safe area, made sure my gun was unloaded, and placed it in its case. Then I removed my magazines from their holders and placed them in my shooting bag and took off my shooting belt. I went back to the others to watch the end of the match. When they finished, we checked with the Match Director to see if everything was taken care of. Everything was okay, so I left for home.

The scores for the match came in the next day via e-mail. I did not win, but I did have fun and will compete again just as soon as I have time. Each match is different because the made-up scenarios are different every time, which gives a new challenge with each match. Practical pistol is indeed a great sport.