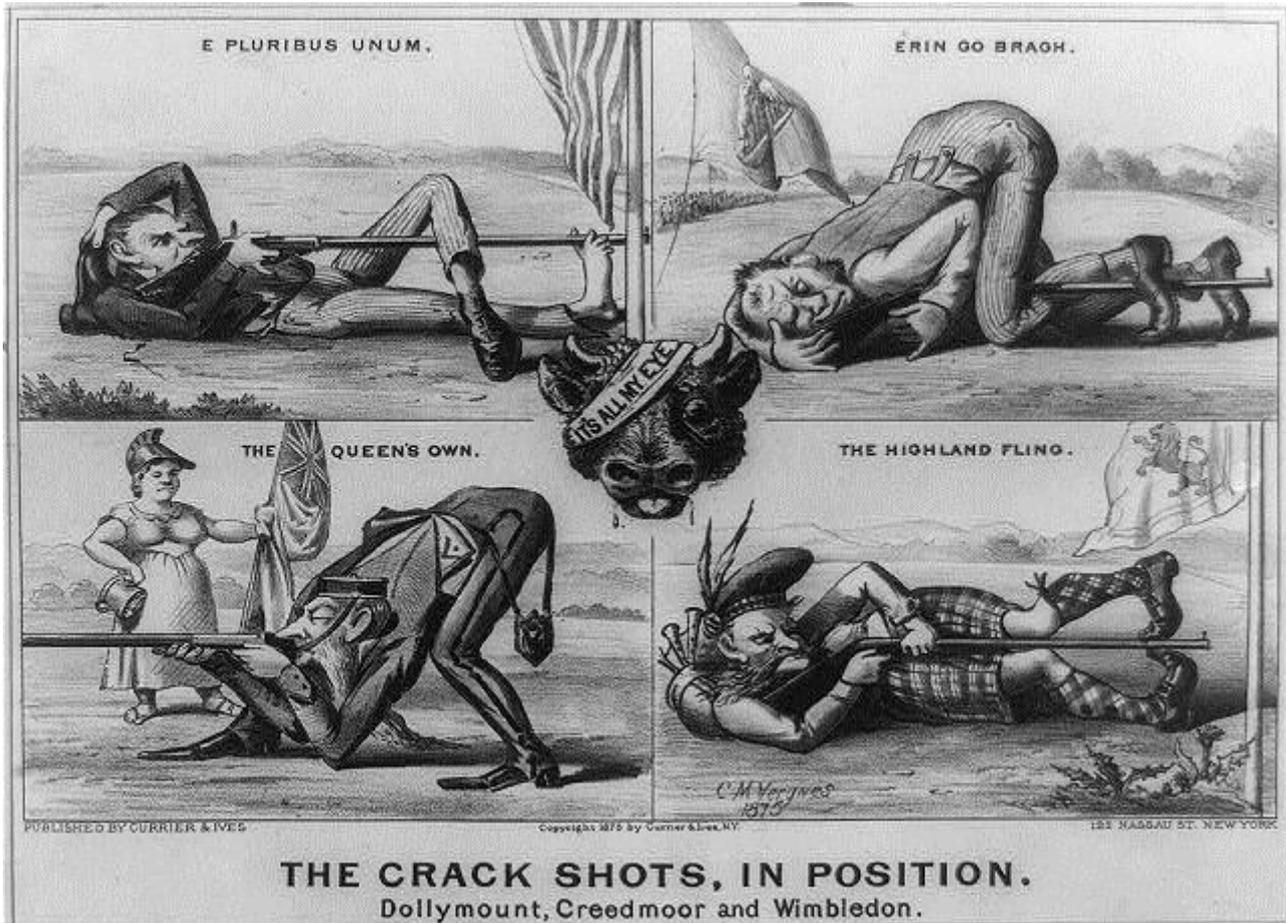


A History of the Palma Match

By Hap Rocketto
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For any shooter who has lain, swaddled and sweating, in a leather shooting coat on a hot August afternoon at Camp Perry while frantically searching through the mirage for a target 1,000 yards away, the irony of the site's present use is not lost. Today the hulking red brick buildings that loom over Long Islands' Union Turnpike, about 15 miles east of New York City's Central Park, house one of the Empire State's largest mental hospitals: Creedmoor.

On September 13-14, 1876 Creedmoor, a long distance shooting range on Long Island, was the venue for "The Great Centennial Rifle Match". As part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the independence of the United States, the fledgling National Rifle Association of America hosted eight man teams from Australia, Canada, Scotland, and Ireland for the first meeting of what would become the longest continuously running international rifle match in history. The National Rifle Association of Great Britain had been slow to acknowledge the invitation. Realizing, too late, that all other invited national associations from the British Empire had entered teams individually, and it was now impossible to field a British Team, the English declined.

They came to contest for honor and a trophy modeled after a Roman legion's standard. The trophy was a custom product of Tiffany's of New York. The famed jeweler crafted a unique award built around an ornately adorned steel shaft a full 7 ½ feet tall. At the top was perched a spread eagle, made of copper and holding a silver laurel wreath. The noble bird sat upon a panel bearing the word PALMA instead of the ancient Roman Legion's SPQR (Senatus Populusque Romanus- the Senate and People of Rome). Latin scholars, referring to the writings of the Roman orator, statesman, and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero, believe the word implies victory or honor or glory. The Romans often used the palm interchangeably with the laurel wreath as a symbol of victory. A second panel bore the words, "In the name of the United States

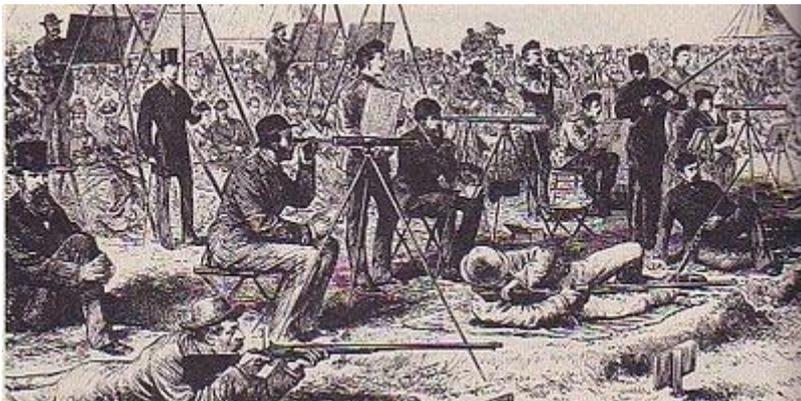


of America to the riflemen of the world." The rest of the trophy is a baroque collation of scrollwork, fasces, friezes, and fringes. A great chain, holding discs to be engraved with the winner's names, was draped from both upper corners. It did not take long for both the trophy and the match to be referred to as The Palma.

The competitors took the line to shoot 45 record shots apiece. Each man would discharge 15 shots at each of the three yard lines: 800-900-and 1,000. There were no lighters. The target was a six by ten foot frame of canvas that had a 36 inch black five ring, or bull's eye, and a 54 inch four ring printed upon it. The remainder of the inner six by six foot section, outside of the rings, was worth three points. A two foot wide panel ran down each side and was valued at two points. In the 1920s, a 20 inch V ring was added to the center of the five ring in order to break ties. This target would remain virtually unchanged until the introduction of the decimal target at the Centennial Palma in 1976.

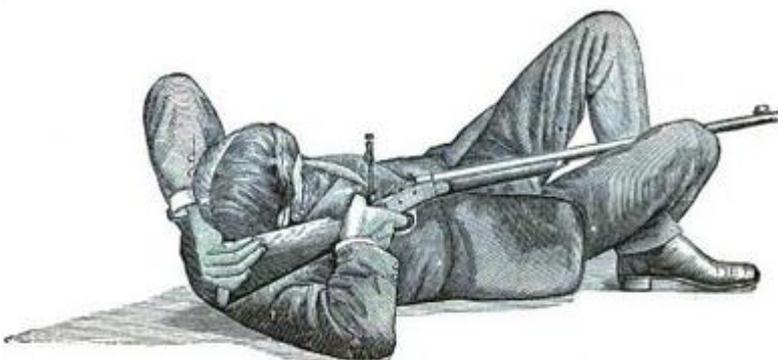
Prior to this 1876, event targets were constructed of iron plates bolted together. Weighing as much as 1,000 pounds the targets were embedded in, or set upon the ground. The three foot square black painted bull's eye was valued at four points. They were tended by target boys who huddled in protective culverts or bullet proof

huts adjacent to each target. A hit produced a clanging sound that was readily audible on the firing line! Each shot's value was indicated by a disc fitted onto the end of a long pole. A brush was affixed to the back of the scoring disc and the target boy used it to dab paint over the bullet smear on the marred target face. It would have taken a pit crew of Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Hulk Hogan to manhandle one of those iron monsters, if they could be installed on a modern style counter balanced sash frames.



The Palma Matches quickly became the preeminent long range international shooting event. However, it would be a misnomer to refer to these early events as prone matches as many of the shooters fired from the popular back position. Lying supine, with their feet pointing towards the target, the shooters would rest the rifles upon their legs or feet and blast away. The long barrelled rifles and the tall vernier sights of the time favored

this seemingly ungainly, but strong, position making it a less formidable task to shoot than it looks. The 32 to 34 inch long barrels and sights mounted close to the butt gave shooters an incredibly long sight radius, the advantage of which has recently been rediscovered by modern prone shooters who use the "bloop tube" barrel extension to increase sight radius while minimizing weight.



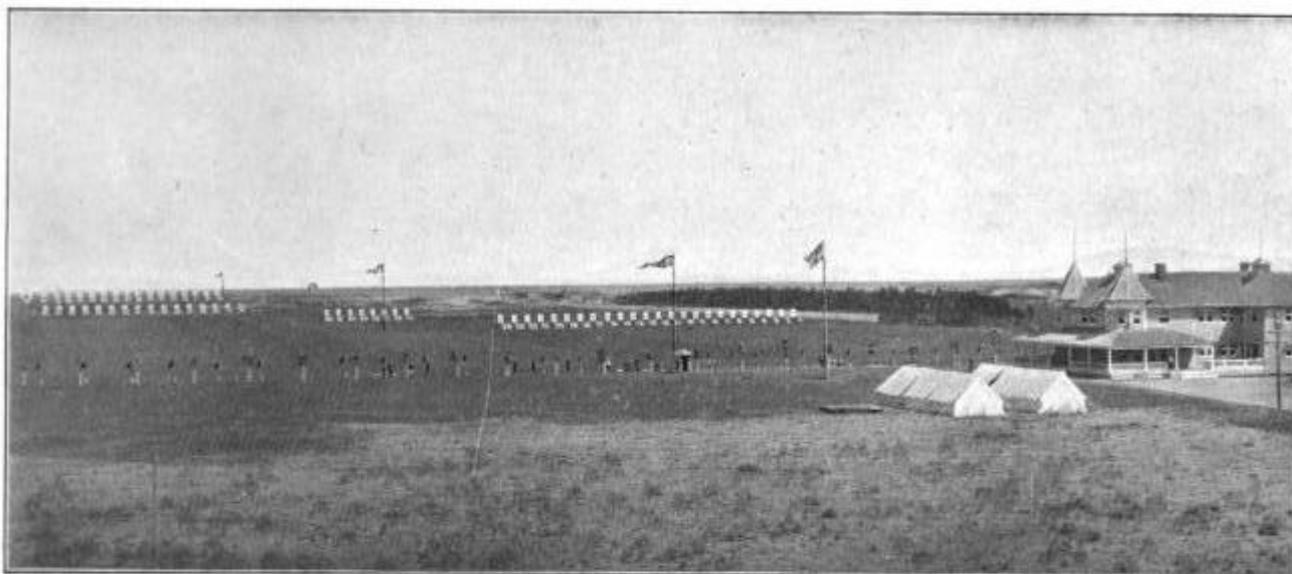
MAJOR HENRY FULTON IN POSITION.

The American team fired breech loading cartridge rifles made by Sharps and Remington while those teams from the British Empire preferred Rigby or Mefford muzzle loaders. The American rifles were chambered in 44 caliber with 95 to 105 grains of black powder pushing a massive paper patched 520 grain lead bullet. The teams fired twice across the 45 shot course in two days and when the billows of black powder

smoke had cleared the home team had won the first Palma Match.

In 1877 Palma Match was again fired at Creedmoor but on this occasion, in contrast to the larger field of the previous year, it was the United States against Britain. A single team comprising the finest riflemen from England, Ireland, and Scotland faced off against the hosts. After two days of intense competition the final results were a resounding victory for the United States, 3,334 to 3,242. L.C. Bruce, of the United States team, fired the record individual score of 219 x 225 on the second day using a .45-100 cartridge with a 550 grain paper patched bullet.

An 1878 invitation from the sponsors to compete went unanswered. The United States fired the match without competition and the Palma Match soon faded away until after the turn of the century. Thus ended the brief era of international long range black powder rifle competition.



RIFLE RANGE, SEA GIRT, N. J.

In 1901 the Palma competition resumed at a new site, Sea Girt, New Jersey. A new venue had to be found after the closing of the Creedmoor facility in 1892. Canada accepted the invitation and beat the United States 1,522 to 1,492. The American team used the .3040 Krag-Jorgensen rifle bolt action rifle which loaded five rounds of 30 caliber ammunition through a magazine gate located on the right side of the action. The 220 grain bullet was jacketed with cupro-nickel and had a muzzle velocity of about 2,000 feet per second. It was also equipped with a sling that could be used to steady the rifle during firing. The Canadians fired the 303 caliber Lee Enfield in their successful bid to win. These were the first modern rifles using smokeless powder and jacketed bullets employed in the Palma and the first of the many service rifles that would be used in the years to come.

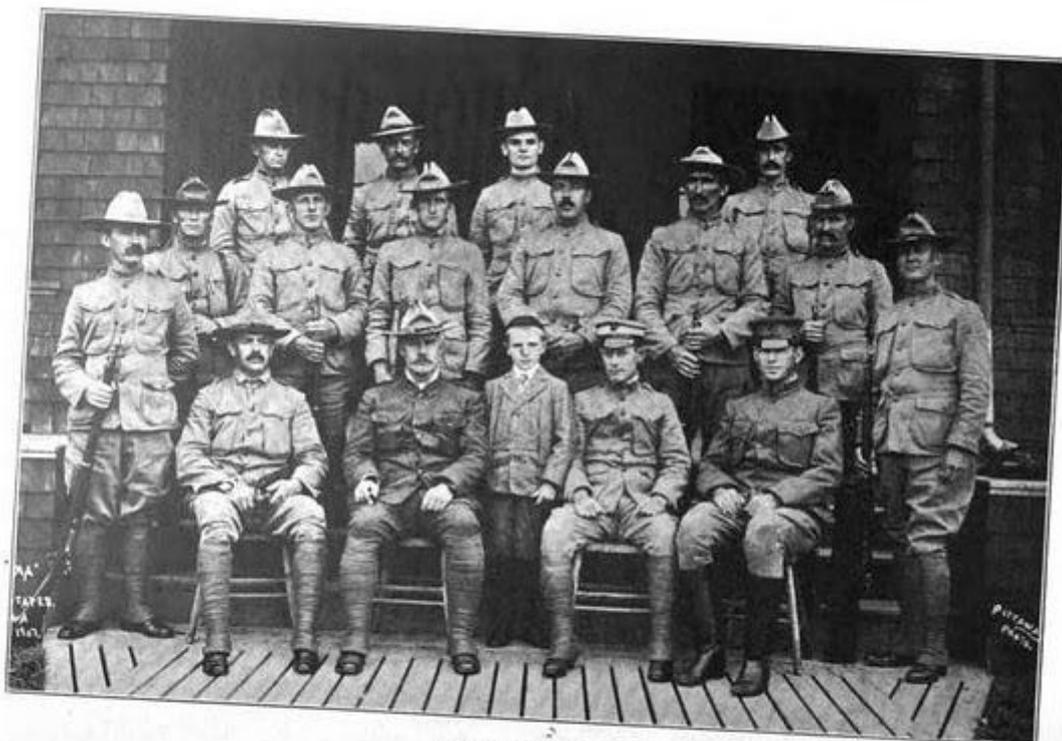
The following year, 1902, the United States team journeyed to the ranges at Rockcliffe, Canada located outside of Ottawa, in an attempt to regain the trophy. The eight man team again used the Krag rifle almost exclusively. Two of the shooters fired experimental 30 caliber rifles that spat out a 220 grain bullet at 2,300 feet per second. The experimental rifles were based upon the 1898 Mauser design and featured a redesigned firing pin and a magazine cutoff, as well as other changes, and was manufactured at the Springfield Armory. They were the prototypes of what would become the United States Rifle, Caliber .30, Model 1903 that would serve the nation so well for nearly a half a century. Great rifles or not, the United States did not finish in first place. The team from Great Britain won the match, and according to match rules, were to host the next match at Bisley Camp.

The National Rifle Association of Great Britain's national ranges were relocated to Bisley when Wimbledon, like Creedmoor, closed in the early 1890s. Today, Wimbledon Common includes the world famous tennis

courts and golf facilities. Bisley, in the words of the computer generation, is not "user friendly". Shooters who have competed there and at Camp Perry make a simple comparison; a bad day at Perry is a good day at Bisley. Whereas Viale Range at Perry is flat, hot, and humid; Stickledown, the high power range at Bisley is on a terraced hillside, cool, and most often damp. United States teams, be they smallbore or highpower shooters, have a healthy respect for the Bisley ranges.

The 1903 match saw a field of seven teams square off for the trophy. The competing teams had agreed that each country would use a service rifle and ammunition. This policy would continue unbroken through 1967. In 1973 the use of the service rifle of the host country would briefly surface when the United States provided M14 rifles. In 1903 the United States team again used the Krag-Jorgensen but with a new twist. The rifles were barreled by legendary persnickety gunsmith Harry Pope and used a rifling twist and bore configuration that was not the same as the issue rifle. As a result, although the United States bested the Mother Country by a 15 point margin, the match victory was under a shadow because the United States used rifles that did not meet service rifle specifications. Not wishing to damage the reputation of the match the United States returned the Palma Trophy to Great Britain. The British refused to claim a victory, and simply held it until the next Palma.

Four years later, in the fall of 1907, four teams met at Rockcliffe, Canada to see who would emerge as the world's long range champion. The United States team (below), with its .30-40 Krag-Jorgensen rifles now conforming to standards, ran away with the match, a full 41 points ahead of the second place Canadians.



AMERICAN TEAM.
 Winner of PALMA TROPHY MATCH.
 FRONT ROW—From left to right—Standing, Sergt. G. H. Doyle, 71st New York, coach; seated, Capt. A. E. Wells, 71st New York, coach; Lieut. Col. N. B. Thurston, I. S. A. P., N. G. N. Y., team captain; Master Fred Wells, mascot; Capt. F. E. Evans, U. S. Marine Corps, adjutant; Lieut. M. C. Mumma, U. S. Cavalry, quartermaster; standing, Capt. G. W. Corwin, 71st New York.
 SECOND ROW—Lieut. C. B. Chisholm, 5th Ohio; Sergt. Clarence E. Orr, 1st Ohio; Capt. K. K. V. Casey, 1st Delaware; Sergt. G. E. Bryant, 23rd New York; Maj. C. B. Winder, I. S. A. P., Ohio N. G.; Capt. J. C. Semon, 5th Ohio.
 THIRD ROW—Corporal Ivan L. Kastman, 2nd Ohio; Capt. C. S. Benedict, 7th Ohio; Dr. W. G. Hudson, New York; Capt. W. A. Tewes, 4th New Jersey.

My apologies for the crooked picture, but that is all I have and better than not seeing it at all. - GAS -

The seventh Palma Trophy match was again held at Rockcliffe in 1912. The United States team came outfitted with Springfield '03s and they again finished ahead of the hosts, but this time it was a mere eight point difference, 1,720 to 1,712.

The 1913 Palma was the first of many shot at Camp Perry. Five teams met on the shores of Lake Erie and the United States team, using their '03s with precision, finished 30 points ahead of the nearest competitor. Unexpectedly the silver medal team, armed with 7.65 Mausers, was from Argentina! After this match the Palma Match suffered a hiatus while the various nations that had competed against each other in friendly competition now allied themselves to racer over their rifle sights at the Kaiser's forces and employed their marksmanship skills with more lethal intent.

As the physical, emotional, and financial carnage of The Great War began to fade into memory the Palma reemerged again. In 1924 the Canadians hosted the United States at the new home of the Dominion of Canada National Rifle Association, Connaught Range, near Ottawa. Both teams shot the 303 caliber cartridge out of issue Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifles. A year later three teams met at Camp Perry and all fired the Springfield '03. It was the United States' rifle, range and victory. In 1928, with both teams using the .30-06 Springfield rifle, Cuba would be matched against the United States and lose to the North Americans by 31 points.

There is some controversy concerning the matches fired in 1924 and 1925. While they were international matches fired under Palma conditions were they The Palma Matches? There are arguments for both sides of the debate. The match regulations had been continuously changed, amended, adjusted, and tweaked by the various national association that made up the governing board so that almost each match finds itself running under altered conditions from the last. However, both the National Rifle Association of America and The Dominion of Canada Rifle Association have agreed that these matches are unofficial Palma Matches.

There is some additional mystery surrounding these matches as they were the last at which the original Palma Trophy was seen. The massive trophy, as tall as the center on a National Basketball Association team, was known to be hanging outside of the office of the Secretary of War during the 1930s. At this point in history it vanishes as completely as gun smoke on a windy day.

Extensive searches conducted by the National Rifle Association, in cooperation with the old War Department, its successor agency, the Department of Defense, and the Smithsonian Institution, have failed to turn up any clue as to its location or even its existence. There is some speculation, put forth by fans of the Indiana Jones movie trilogy, that it was crated up and lies stored, and uninventoried, next to the Ark Of The Covenant in a huge and dusty secret government warehouse in the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland, perhaps on the fringes of the presidential retreat at Camp David. Considering that the time frame of the movie and the last known date of the location of the trophy coincide, this romantic theory is as plausible as any. The trophy's disappearance closed the early epoch of the Palma Match.

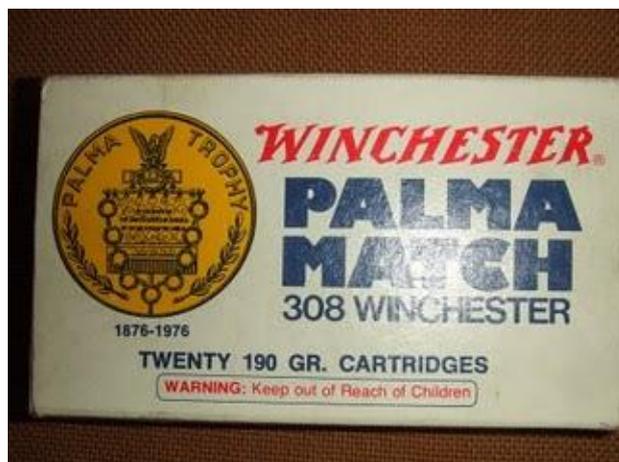
The mysterious disappearance of the trophy may have been a wet blanket on the competition as no matches were held from 1928 until 1966. However, it is more likely that the world wide Great Depression and World War II placed Palma competition on the back burner. In 1966 the National Rifle Association of America and the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association revived the match. Agreeing that a match was needed to establish procedures they planned a "preliminary" Palma, as opposed to an official or unofficial Palma. Meeting at Camp Perry, with both teams firing the M14 rifle, the United States emerged victorious. This resurgence marked the start of the "modern Era" of Palma competition.

For the next eight years, 1967 through 1974, there would be a Palma fired each year. At these matches the host team provided both rifles and ammunition for the matches. The idea was to make conditions as even as possible for all comers. In reality it probably gave the home team an additional advantage. Match results from this time frame show the home team winning all but one match.

The United States hosted four of these eight matches. In 1973 the shooters were provided with M14s and 7.62mm National Match M118 ammunition. In 1968, 1971, and 1976 the National Rifle Association commissioned Winchester Arms Company to create special 308 caliber Model 70s. The 1968 rifle was marked "PALMA TROPHY MATCH". Less than 100 of these rifles were built and few exist in the original

condition. In the late 60s good bolt actions were hard to come by and many of the Palma rifles that stayed in the United States were rebarrelled and restocked as "across the course" guns. The 125 rifles manufactured for the 1971 match were marked "NRA Centennial 1871-1971" on the barrel to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the National Rifle Association of America.

In 1974, Palma competition left the familiar shores of North America and England for the first time. Hosted by the South Africans the Palma shooters converged on Bloemfontein where they fired the Musgrave rifle. The South Africans are avid long range shooters and, in this first match fired south of the Equator, took full advantage of range and rifle and won the 18th Palma.



In 1976 the Palma returned to the United States for the observance of its centennial. For this anniversary match, Winchester built 140 special Model 70 Ultra Match rifles in their custom shop. Each rifle was stamped "PALMA MATCH 1876-1976" on the right side of the barrel. They were engraved to recognize the Palma Centennial and special ammunition was loaded and boxed for the event.

Winchester-Western produced 25,000 rounds of specially boxed and headstamped .308 ammunition. The cartridge had a nickel plated brass case and its head-stamp read "PALMA 76" on the top half circle

and ".308 WIN" on the lower half circle. The two notations were separated by a pair of upper case Ws, representing Winchester-Western. The case was topped with a 190 grain hollow point boat tail match grade bullet. When fired the bullet was clocked at 2,550 feet per second. The ammunition was packed 20 each in a specially commissioned red, white, and blue box that bear a gold circle enclosing a line drawing of the trophy. The ammunition, as well as all three rifles from 1968, 1971, and 1976, have become highly prized collector's items.

Like the two prior Winchester rifles, the 1976 edition was equipped with ¼ minute Redfield International Match receiver sight and a Redfield Big Bore front aperture sight. For some unexplained reason the 1976 rifle's front sight was mounted on a two step smallbore block. Even after moving the sight to the lower step shooters found themselves having to crank on almost 60 minutes of elevation, which is the limit of adjustment. The rear sight was so high that it was unstable and this provoked dark muttering from all involved. The ever present armorer's vans soon were doing a land office business as United States shooters lined up to have the military gun plumbers and the lone Redfield representative attempt to make things right. Not having access to the technical support available to the United States the other teams took things into their own hands and ended up looping rubber bands around the sights and the stock on either side of the trigger guard. To this day shooters from other countries are bothered by this turn of events. Veterans of the British 1976 Palma Team wear a rubber band around their Palma Team ties in remembrance.

Other than the sight issue, the visitors were very impressed with both the rifle and the ammunition. The shooters were issued Lake City 7.62mm M118 National Match ammunition to get rough zeros and then switched to the issue Palma Match ammunition to fine tune sight settings. They thought the ammunition quite superior to what was available to them at home.

Even though faced with strict customs, tax, and firearm laws in their native lands many of the Commonwealth shooters were determined to return home with one of the classic American firearms. These rifles would be rebarrelled, in many cases, to handle the local 7.62mm ammunition.

However, some of these rifles would stay in the United States. Each Palma shooter was entitled to purchase the rifle they used at cost. Some foreign competitors purchased their rifles and sold them to waiting collectors and shooters. The going rate was about \$400, which represented a fair price.

At the conclusion of the 1976 event the National Rifle Association of America and the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association, who controlled the conduct of the match at that time, decided that the Palma would be fired every three years and the site would alternate between the United States and Canada. However, should a national association ask to host the Palma, and the National Rifle Association of America and the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association agree, then the normal rotation is suspended to honor the request. Three years later, in 1979, New Zealand hosted the match at the ranges at Trentham about 20 miles north of the capital city of Wellington on the North Island. The hosts provided the competitors with Omark Sportco M44C rifles and the Australians used them effectively, beating all comers in the 20th Palma.

It is worth noting that no commercial 7.62mm ammunition is manufactured in New Zealand. As an indication of the deep and sincere personal feelings many have for the Palma a New Zealand family volunteered to handload all ammunition required for the match, using Australian components.

The matches held in the southern hemisphere are always a bit unsettling to the shooters from the opposite end of the globe. The seasons are reversed and the hardholders from the north have usually not had the time they might wish to train and work up ammunition and equipment for this major event. Of course, the same is true for those down under when the match is shot in Europe or North America.

Canada's Connaught ranges were the venue for the 21st Palma in 1982. Because there were no commercial match rifles manufactured in Canada in the quantities required for the match the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association purchased Omark Sportco M44D rifles from Australia for this, the last match requiring all teams to shoot the same rifle. These rifles were marked "DCRA Centennial 1982 Palma Match" in celebration of the event, However, they were of such poor quality, the team from Great Britain finished the match with only six of the 20 issued rifles usable.

The Canadians won the match with a 27 point margin over the second place Australians and 44 points over the third place New Zealand Team. After this Canadian home turf win the Palma Council, which replaced the National Rifle Association of America and the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association as the controlling body of the Palma Match, met to discuss some changes in the rules. The first of which, as a reflection of the Sportco disaster, was that host countries would no longer provide rifles but rather make them the responsibility of the firer.

Although the course of fire had not changed since 1876 the general rules underwent many changes since the inception of the match. Team size has varied from eight to 20 shooters, equipment regulations fluctuated from bring what ever you have to having the hosts provide the rifles and ammo, the use of sighting shots changed, and even the selection process For the match site varied over the course of match history.

Often the Palma is a focal point at major national celebrations. It started with the inaugural match during the celebration of the United States Centennial in 1876. In 1971 the National Rifle Association of America hosted the Palma as part of its 100th anniversary observance. Five years later, in 1976, both the Bicentennial of the United States and the centennial of the Palma fell at the same time. The 125th birthday party for the National Rifle Association of Great Britain was observed at Bisley in 1985 and the Palma was present when the Australians celebrated their 200th anniversary in 1988 in Sydney.

In 1985 the match rules required that each shooter be responsible for providing a rifle meeting the requirement of the target rifle as laid down by the host country. The rules of the National Rifle Association of Great Britain were generous and allowed for a bolt action rifle weighing as much as 12 pounds with a trigger pull slightly over three pounds. The rifle had to be chambered for the 7.62mm NATO round, our .308 Winchester cartridge. The match officials control this by allowing only ammunition issued on the line to be used in matches. The standard British service rifle ammunition at that time was L2A2 Military Ball. It is a cartridge that is similar to the United States issue M80 Ball and, like its American counterpart, not designed for target or long range use. All shooters are issued ammunition from the same lot to insure that conditions are as uniform as possible.

Long range shooting styles differ. In the United States the standard practice is to assign a single shooter to a firing point where they fire at a speed consistent with the shooter's comfort, range conditions, and the pit service. The Commonwealth nations, on the other hand, put either two or three shooters on a target and they fire in rotation and score for one another. Because there is such a relatively long time between shots shooters become very adept, out of necessity, at keeping track of conditions and record keeping. When translated to team shooting the quick firing Americans usually have an advantage. This, coupled with the change of rifle rules, helped the United States win the 22nd Palma held at Bisley, in 1985, in honor of the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the National Rifle Association of Great Britain.

The first Palma match fired in Australia, in 1988, was a triumph for the home team and something close to a disaster for the United States. Finishing fourth is not a familiar location for United States Palma teams. The Anzac Rifle Range can not support a 900 meter (984 yard) firing line. As a result there was a deviation in the distance of the three stages shot. One stage was shot a 700 meters (765 yards) and two at 800 meters (874 yards). With occasional wind gusts strong enough to require 24 minutes of adjustment at 800 meters, and three rifles that had but 24 ½ minutes windage available, United States shooters would have to hold on a target upwind of the one assigned to them in order to strike the correct bull's-eye at 900 meters. While this circumstance is not unheard of, it is a situation that can easily turn into a can of worms.

During the first stage the Australians moved to the front and never looked back. They won each yard line and then the match handily. Great Britain won the silver, while New Zealand took the bronze medal. Finishing fifth was a team from The Channel Islands and when one realizes that the largest of the four major islands is only about 25 kilometers across, it is amazing that they can find a place to shoot long range at all. Bringing up the rear was the team from Kenya.

Despite the disappointing finish for the Americans they were able to provide several bright moments during the match. While the mystery of the disappearance of the original Palma Trophy has never been solved, a search of the Tiffany archives in New York fumed up a few of the original drawings. Dr. Herb Aiken generously donated \$40,000 to produce a two-thirds scale reproduction of the original. The original was paid for by public subscription and was valued at \$1,500. Considering that the replica is two thirds the size of the original and cost almost thirty times as much is a remarkable note on the value of the American dollar.

The new trophy was created under the supervision of the late Creighton Audette. Audette stands as one of the giants in United States long range shooting. The talented Vermont artificer was a shooting Renaissance Man: capable of building a rifle, working up a load, testing both, shooting them to win, and then telling the tale for the enjoyment of all. The new trophy sits upon a massive wooden block covered with brass plaques engraved with the names of the winning teams. From the bottom of the base to the top of the eagle it stands some six feet tall. It serves to inspire all who participate in what has become the World Championship of Long Range Shooting.



Arthur C. Jackson, a veteran of a half century of shooting that encompasses the Olympics Pan American games and three Palma Teams, presented the "Henry Fulton Trophy". This trophy named in memory, and honor, of the high individual scorer at the first international match fired across the Palma course between the United States and Ireland at Creedmoor in 1874 is presented to that shooter regardless of which country, who replicates Major Fulton's feat. Fulton was also captain of the United States team in the first Palma in 1876.

The United States would not just sit around licking its wounds. The 1992 Palma Match would be

contested in the United States. The National Rifle Association's 33,000 acre Whittington Center is the most recent of four recent sites in the United States that have hosted the Palma. It may possibly become the permanent home of the match in the United States. The new ranges were in the best of shape, the Sturm Ruger Arms Company manufactured special rifles for the home team, and team officials were working hard to ensure that the home team would win the maiden match on the home court. Fifteen nations would participate in this match with the nations from Africa and Europe forming composite teams.

While the traditional Palma format would be followed in the team event a dozen fired individual matches and aggregates comprising the World Long Range Individual Rifle Championship, would be added to the program. Shooting two of the Rugers and an assortment of Winchester Model 70s and Remington 700s and 40Xs the United States got off to a fine start in the individual matches. However, when the team match began the British took firm control. Perhaps smarting from the loss on home turf in 1985, they were determined to win. After the first stage it was obvious that the British were the team to beat. In the end, wielding rifles built around Paramount actions and Border barrels they won in a walk with a 59 point margin over the second place Canadians. New Zealand again found itself in third place. The United States ended up a disappointing fifth behind the Australians.

In part, the failure of the United States to do well was our different style of shooting and method of team selection. The other national teams fire a good deal more long range team matches together as a team than does the United States. Palma rules allow the coach to move sights, a practice forbidden until a change was published in the 1996 rule book, by National Rifle Association of America rules. As a result of permitting coaches this freedom there is little time lost in transmitting sight corrections, verbal confusion is cut to a minimum, and the shooter can get off a shot within seconds of a sight change, cutting down on the effect of rapidly changing wind conditions.

Moreover, here is no rapid fire competition in high power shooting outside of the United States, except for the service rifle, so the distraction of learning two styles of shooting does not exist for the majority of competitors. As a matter of fact, Eric Pintard, who won the bronze in the individual phase of the 1995 World Long Range Championships, has simply given up shooting the National Match Course. Since 1992 his training and resources have been devoted solely to long range prone shooting. He finished the best of all United States shooters in the individual events and nothing supports an argument as well as success.

The teams from the Commonwealth countries, Britain in particular, spend considerable time building a team. The United States team is selected, as required, on a match by match basis. Despite the talented shooters and coaches, we are lacking a strong and cohesive team that has worked together for an extended period of time. Learning from the previous two Palmas the United States team officials were determined not to make the same errors and started immediately to plan for the next Palma to be fired in the austral summer of 1995 in New Zealand.

January 1995 may have been cold and blustery in the United States but it was just as blustery at the 25th Palma Match in New Zealand. Each day, for two days, the teams went over the 45 shot Palma course. During the first two stages the United States team fired quickly and accurately amassing a good lead that they held on to through the end of the first day. The second place team from Great Britain was a force not to be ignored. They were experienced and, just as sailors vying for the America's Cup, they had spent considerable time in New Zealand charting the winds and building a data base during the previous two years.

On the second day the British gained eight points on the first stage. The British had done their homework and inexorably gained points throughout the 900 and 1,000 yard stages. In the end it was the experience working as a team, long term preparation, and hardholding that lead the British to their second consecutive Palma victory by a staggering 99 point margin! The United States' hard work over the last several years paid off. They slugged their way back onto the awards stand, after two previous disappointing showings, to earn the team silver. Host New Zealand again medaled, winning the bronze medal for the third Palma in a row.



The heart and soul of United States Palma shooting lies in a shooter who is a legend among United States long range shooters. The man who is deserving of the title "Mr. Palma" is Middleton Tompkins of Prescott, Arizona. Mid has been associated with Palma Team shooting for three decades. Although he has won the National Rifle Association's High Power National Championship six times, his real passion is for long range shooting. So much so that the National Rifle Association's Long Range Highpower Rifle Champion is awarded the Tompkins Trophy, which he endowed. In thirty years he has served in every capacity possible on 15 Palma Teams! He has been the driving force behind the developing long range shooting facilities and in restructuring the United States Palma Team's philosophy concerning training, coaching, and equipment.

The Palma tradition is strong in the United States. For some 20 years there has been an annual "Mini-Palma" fired between a team representing the New England states and one from the Canadian Maritime Provinces. It is not surprising that New England should be involved in this type of shooting and help maintain the long range spirit. A quick glance at the roster of Palma veterans reveal a high percentage of shooters from this region. The list includes, among others, Creighton Audette, Jim Gomo, Bob Reil, Albert and Peter Laberge, John Kamisarek, Mo Defina, Bill Brophy, Art Jackson, and Larry Racine. The long range shooters in the southwest have a similar tournament called the Rocky Mountain Palma Match. The likes of Middleton Tompkins, Bob Jensen, Nancy Tompkins-Gallagher, and George and David Tubb all gather at the Whittington Center to shoot individual and team matches.

It has been said that money is the mother's milk of any activity. To assist in fostering and supporting long range shooting, and Palma competition in particular, Dave Fiegtner and Bert Rollins formed Palma Promotions, Inc. Fiegtner is a holder of the Distinguished Rifleman's Badge earned while shooting for the U.S. navy. Rollins, also holder of the Distinguished Rifleman's Badge, is a Palma alumnus. Palma Promotions, Inc. is a nonprofit amateur sports organization and may be contacted at P.O. Box 441, Mineral, VA 23117 or by email at info@palma.org.

The stage is now set for the next Palma to be fired in South Africa in 1999. The disciples of the arcane discipline of long range shooting will gather to see who can best execute a shot and read the wind. For almost a century and a quarter hardholding marksmen and sage coaches from almost two dozen countries A, Australia, to Z, Zimbabwe, have peered through haze and mirage in search of excellence. Those who have been successful have carried off the trophy. However, all have been winners who, meeting on the field of friendly strife, learn, teach, and establish lasting friendships and strong bonds between nations.

A note on sources: The article, written in 1996, was extracted from discussion with Palma Team members, the author's experiences, and articles and information published by The National Rifle Association of America in NRA Trophies, American Rifleman, Shooting Sports USA, and Insights and Precision Shooting. Larry Moore's article, "The Palma Team Match" published in May-June 1986 Rifle magazine was the source of valuable information on both the rifles and ammunition used in the Palma. Arguably the authority on the Palma Match is The History And Records Of The Palma Match (The World Long Range Rifle Team Championships) by Colin C.C. Cheshire. If one is looking for greater detail than this simple historical review provides, you are directed to these sources.