

*The United States Of America  
Lord Dewar  
International Rifle Team  
And  
Team Roster*

*Prepared for the Dewar Subcommittee  
of the  
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by  
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*A Short History  
Of  
The Dewar International Postal Match*

*In the United States serious conventional prone shooters measure excellence by earning membership on one, or more, of the major prone matches shot in the English speaking world. In the arena of international shoulder-to-shoulder competition it is the Palma Match for the highpower competitor and the Pershing/Roberts series for the smallbore shooter. Smallbore shooters have the additional advantage of being able to participate in two high level postal matches.*

*For women the match to shoot is, undoubtedly, the annual Randle Trophy, sponsored by the National Rifle Association of America (NRA). The Randle Trophy, named for Thurman Randle, a past NRA president and donor of the trophy is open only to women. However, regardless of gender, for all smallbore prone competitors, there is no more prestigious postal match to fire than The National Smallbore Rifle Association (NSRA) of Great Britain's Dewar Trophy International Match.*

*The Dewar Trophy, so often mispronounced by the uninitiated, pits the best twenty-shooter and coach combinations from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States against each other on an annual basis. Each shooter fires what has become known as the Dewar Course, forty shots for record; twenty record shots at fifty and another twenty at one hundred yards. The match is fired on the NSRA's British Match 1989 Series Targets or the NRA equivalent targets, the A-51 and A-33.*

*The Dewar is unique among major international sporting events because those with physical handicaps are able to compete, on an equal basis, with those who are able bodied. Dewar rules provide that a disabled shooter, who complies with certain categories of the International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation rules, is eligible to participate.*

*The match rules state that it may be fired anytime after January first, and scores are required to be received at the NSRA's headquarters, Lord Roberts House, at Bisley no later than October 31st. This ten-month span allows each competing nation ample time to select its team and have them fire, usually at the national championship of each nation, so that the scores will arrive by the deadline. The match is fired under the competition rules of the NSRA that differ, in only small details, from those of the United States. But the Devil is in the details and a careful eye must be turned by team officials at Camp Perry to insure that sling dimensions and metallic sights meet the standards established by International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) rules.*

*The Dewar Trophy is the oldest and most celebrated of postal matches. When it first began it was in a rather different format than is now seen. In late 1908 the forerunner of the NSRA, The Society of Miniature Rifle Clubs (SMRC) of Great Britain, tendered a challenge to the NRA. Perhaps it was the flush of the extraordinary performance of the British shooters in the 1908 Olympics that gave birth to the idea. The IV Olympiad had*

*been held in London and in the smallbore, or miniature, rifle events the British won the first eight places in the individual match and were first in the team event!*

*It was suggested to General James A. Drain, the NRA president, that a postal match of ten shots be fired at 25 yards on the SMRC target by teams consisting of 500 shooters! Drain was a progressive thinking man and the NRA quickly accepted the invitation asking that the range be reduced to 50 feet, a more common indoor range distance in the United States, and that the match be conducted during the winter of 1909.*

*Australia was also included because Arthur Hill, a noted Australian rifleman, had spent some time in the Mother Country and, upon returning home, organized several postal matches with his old club in England. The match was now a triangular meet and it was agreed that the winning team would receive silver medals while the second place team would receive bronze ones. This has started a tradition that is carried over to the Randle Trophy Match. There was no team trophy, but feelers were put out seeking the donation of an appropriate award.*

*By the time the match rules were made final, the team size had been reduced to a more manageable 50. Each competitor would fire 30 shots at 25 yards. The rifle could be no larger than .230-inch caliber and had to be equipped with metallic sights. The choice of position was left up to the shooter. Once the ground rules had been established the various associations went about the business of selecting teams for this momentous match.*

*The British Team was selected with care. 15 alternates backed the fifty shooters. This proved to be a wise decision by the NSRA as some shooters elected not to shoot the match. In the United States there were problems in selecting a team as the target was considered too small by many of the United States smallbore shooters who, at this time, practiced Schützen style shooting. The Schützen match involved shooting from the standing position, with telescopic sights being much more common than metallic sights. Almost all of the US team shot from the more stable prone position. Seven, for some reason, elected to shoot standing with an elbow rest. The high scorer from the US was among the seven.*

*The Australians, like the United States, also put up a hastily organized team. When the results were published the host's careful preparation was evident. Great Britain easily won with a score of 14,583X15, 000. The British score, an individual average of 291X300, was a full 404 points ahead of the second place US entry that was just 18 points ahead of the Australians.*

*It was at this time that the SMRC's search for a match patron came to a happy and more than satisfactory end in the form of Sir Thomas Dewar. Dewar was an enterprising salesman who made his name and fortune during the waning years of the 19th century by creating a market for Scotch Whisky. His father, John, rose from poverty to wealth by purchasing and packaging whisky under various labels for other firms. Sir Thomas entered the family business before he reached his majority and was responsible for much*

*of its growth and success. A bachelor, he was a great sportsman and indulged himself in pursuits as disparate as animal husbandry, the fine arts, and automobile racing. His public endeavors included serving as a Member of Parliament, patronage of various activities, and charitable works.*

*The handsome trophy is a large silver loving cup standing over two feet tall. It has two oversized handles and is ornately decorated. Engraved upon it is the following commemoration,*

*"International Post Trophy Match  
Presented by  
Sir Thomas R. Dewar  
Afterwards Lord Dewar  
to the  
Society of Miniature Rifle Clubs  
For Annual Competition"*

*Dewar was known by the honorific of Sir Thomas until being raised to the peerage, as Baron Dewar of Homestall. Therefore, It can be inferred that the inscription on the trophy was either not completed until, or amended after, he had received the baronetcy from his sovereign in 1919. It was from this generous contribution that the match got its name.*

*After the close of the maiden Dewar Match the competing countries were all eager for a repeat of the match, but all pressed for changes in the format that would more in accord with their own shooting customs. Under the leadership of Arthur Hill the Australians were pushing for shooting several prone stages at different distances, much like the Palma Match, rather than all of the shots at one range. The United States team's laundry list of changes held out for telescopic sights, an increase in the size of the aiming black, a change in the course of fire to include both prone and standing stages, and allowing teams from continental Europe to enter.*

*In the face of so many demands the sponsors, in a sporting manner, agreed to allow the use of telescopic sights and permitted competitors to blacken in the target out to the eight ring to make a larger aiming point. Although the nations of Europe were not added the scope of the match was widened to include any British dependency interested in entering. This was no small expansion. At this time, the close of the Edwardian Era, much of the world's map was colored red and the sun never set on the British Empire. An increase in the possible number of competing nations went along with an expansion of the course of fire to 50 shots at 25 yards.*

*Considering the number of concessions made to the United States it seems no surprise that the match went to them in 1910. Shooting a score of 24539X25000 the United States team bested the British by 100 points and the Australians by 650. There was to be no competition in 1911 as the United States, while agreeing to the conditions of the match, were unable to organize themselves in time to compete.*

*In 1912 the conditions remained roughly the same but telescopic sights were no longer allowed. Shooting a score that exceeded the United States' winning score of 1910 by nine points the sponsors regained control of the trophy in the two-way match. The silver cup was crated and shipped eastward across the Atlantic to its nation of origin.*

*1913 saw four teams contest for the winner's laurels. The United States, without their telescopic sights, won this year's tournament by 38 points. The United Kingdom was second, the Canadian's first Dewar effort found them in third place. From the Asian subcontinent, India made its only appearance in the Dewar match series with a fourth place finish.*

*Only three nations would shoot in the 1914 edition of the match. The North American teams from the United States and Canada would place first and second respectively with the host nation in third place. This match would mark the last to be held for some time. On June 28th of that year Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian nationalist, leaned into the royal carriage carrying Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the Hapsburg Empire, and his morganatic wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg. In Princip's hand was a fully loaded 9mm pistol that he emptied into the couple. Within hours the royal couple was dead and before six weeks had passed Europe was plunged into World War One.*

*British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey would remark, as a spider web of treaties pulled nation after nation into the caldron of war that, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." So it was with the Dewar Trophy. The SMRC kept the Dewar spark alive throughout the Great War. It would not be until the booming guns fell silent along the Western Front that the pop of smallbore rifles would again be heard contesting for Lord Dewar's cup. Just as Europe was changed by the war so it was with the Dewar.*

*Soon after the armistice was signed in November of 1918 the SMRC began preparations for the resumption of the match. It was at this time that the multiple stage course of fire, earlier suggested by the Australians, was introduced. The 20 shots for record in 20 minutes at 50 yards followed by another 20 minute period for 20 shots at 100 yards course of fire that emerged has entered into shooting terminology as the Dewar Course. The target may have changed over the past eighty years but the course of fire and time limit has not.*

*In 1919 United States Army Captain Edward C. Crossman, a noted marksman and small arms expert brought the concept of a national smallbore championship to reality. As a result of Captain Crossman's efforts smallbore shooters from across the United States congregated at Caldwell, New Jersey to contest for the first National Smallbore Prone Championship. The range was modeled after plans provided by the SMRC. Camp Perry, which had been in use for the national high power championships since 1907, was not available and the United States Navy conducted the matches. The shooting championships would move back to Camp Perry the next year and would remain there since, except for a short period of wandering after World War II.*

*The first national prone championship in the United States was also the first time a woman would earn a place on the United States Dewar Team. Mrs. Blanche Crossman earned her place in United States smallbore shooting history by placing 15th in the roll of the 20 shooters. Mrs. Crossman, the wife of Captain Crossman, was also the mother of Colonel Jim Crossman, who would become an important figure in United States shooting.*

*The distaff side had already been represented in pre war matches from the British dependencies. During the first two years the match was fired the Australian team included two husband and wife teams. Mrs. E.S. Matthews and Mrs. A.C. Catt began the long tradition of first class woman marksman on Dewar Teams. In 1913 the team from India, which was made up of English expatriates, had seven women on the team. A Mrs. D. Paton fired the second highest score on that team. Her husband, Sergeant Paton, was the high scoring shooter.*

*Making the motto 'The family that shoots together stays together' a reality the United States would also feature a husband and wife team. John and Edie Reynolds each would earn a place on the team in 1986 and 1988. Shooting legend Lones Wigger and his son Ron are often seen together on the Dewar score sheet. In 1986 and 1987 there were three Wiggers on the Dewar Team when Deena Wigger joined the two Wigger men. Olympians Jack Foster and his daughter Jean would shoot together in 1994.*

*A measure of a shooter's skill, and the high point of any match, is to shoot a perfect score. F. Tretheway of Australia recorded the first 'clean' in the Dewar during the 1909 match. In 1913 two United States shooters, Joseph Lorenz and F.A. Anderson, fired scores of 500. In the last of the pre World War I events British shooters A.J. Bayley and Lieutenant H. Pickard shot possibles with Canadian J.S. Gilker and Thomas K. Lee of the United States duplicating the feat on the western side of the Atlantic.*

*After the resumption of the match in 1919 a perfect score would be a long time in coming. During the 30s and 40s the major arms companies ran advertisements in The American Rifleman touting the success various shooters had with their arms and ammunition. These spreads commonly covered two pages and were replete with scores and pictures. In the September 1934 edition of The Rifleman Remington's ad congratulated the British Dewar Team on its fine performance. It went on to announce that E.G.B. Reynolds, of that team, had used Remington Palma ammunition to shoot the first 400 recorded in Dewar International Match competition since 1913. Reynolds, a fine shot, was also a firearms expert who wrote and published on the subject of small arms between the wars. Because of the time involved in preparing copy, transatlantic mail time, and publication schedules it can be presumed that the British shot the match no later than July.*

*The United States fired its Dewar targets at Camp Perry in August and two perfect scores were shot and reported in the traditional October Rifleman report on Camp Perry. Sam Bond, a noted purveyor of shooting equipment who maintained a shop on Commercial Row, cleaned the course with 30 Xs. Bill Woodring, whose feat of winning three consecutive National Prone Championships from 1936 through 1938 is still unmatched, came in second on the United States team with a 400 with 25 Xs.*

*In the last two decades only a three members of the US team have fired perfect scores. Douglas Knoop accomplished it with a 400-23. In 1974 Mary Stidworthy Sparling shot another 400-23 in 1978, the same year she won the second of her three National Prone Championships. In 1979 the 1969 National Prone Champion Tom Whitaker cleaned the targets with 29 Xs.*

*The target is a tough one for United States shooters who are more used to their .89 inch 50 yard ten ring and a two inch 100 yard ten ring. The Dewar targets have .719 inch ten ring for short range and a 1.045 inch ten ring at long range. For a United States shooter to clean the course Dewar Course on British targets they must shoot what amounts to a 40X possible. A score like that, with metallic sights, requires the best rifle and ammunition combination, a high level of skill, and just a touch of good luck.*

*At Camp Perry, in the pre War years, the Dewar team was selected from those who fired the top scores in the various Dewar courses that were shot during the aggregate. Currently the top 22 shooters in the metallic sight aggregate are selected to represent the United States in this match. The team Captain and Adjutant are usually selected by the NRA's Smallbore Rifle Committee during the previous winter. Traditionally those selected must be shooters who have made great contributions to the sport and usually have been shooting members of earlier Dewar Teams. Since 1955 the person selected to be Adjutant has usually succeed to the position of Captain the next year.*

*Selection to one of these positions is considered to be a high honor and recognition of contributions and achievements in the sport of smallbore rifle prone shooting. The list includes, among others, Olympians such as Art Jackson, Art Cook, Jack Foster, and Lones Wigger. Serving as an official of The Dewar Team links recent National Champions such as Dave Weaver, Ernie Vande Zande, and Ron West with Perry champions of an earlier age of, such as three time Dewar captain G.L. Wotkyns, the first National Prone Champion.*

*After the team has been selected each shooter seeks out a coach. The role of the coach is important. In the matches held before World War II the position was considered so important that the coach was listed in The Rifleman's report on the event right next to the shooter. A shooter chooses a coach based on personal need. Usually it is a fellow shooter who helps read the wind, keeps an eye on the clock, and changes the targets. Sometimes it is a friend or a relative who may not know a whole lot about shooting but can help the shooter stay calm and focused.*

*At Camp Perry the team reports to the taped off area of the firing line just after dawn. The points are allocated in order of merit from the metallic sight aggregate, with the highest score to the left. The target frames are placed on alternating points and the shooters and coaches prepare their equipment. The Dewar is fired on Team Day, the same day as the Randle Trophy and the NRA Team matches. There are usually several women who will be firing on both international teams and a club team in the afternoon; they have a long day a head of them.*

*The team officials and the various NRA functionaries bring out the Dewar Trophy Plaque and distribute targets under the watchful eye of the official witness. Register keepers set up their scopes next to the large easels that hold score sheets, fill in the shooters name, and avail themselves of the continental breakfast laid out behind the line. The shooters are called to the line and, in the misty quiet dawn, the match is fired.*

*During the match the gallery will walk up and down behind the register keepers keeping an eye on various scores. The official witness, usually one of the several British competitors shooting at Perry, will be tallying up the unofficial score. Great Britain has usually shot by the time Perry rolls around and there is electric interest because the British score is not usually announced until after the US score is official.*

*After the match the shooters gather up gear, make a run at the pastry and beverages, and ready themselves for the official photographers. The team officials distribute special commemorative T-shirts to each shooter and two pictures are taken, one with the shooters and coaches and another of the shooters alone. The targets are escorted to the statistical shack where the witness and the officials observe the scoring and preparation of the official score sheet. The score of the US Team is posted in building 1002, the Master Bulletin Board Room.*

*The final act of the Dewar at Camp Perry is during the Awards Ceremony. The entire Dewar team is called up on the stage and recognized. The score is announced and, if known, the scores of other teams. Each shooter is presented a manila envelope that contains a copy of the team photograph, a copy of the photograph of the team and coaches for the shooter to present to the coach, and a small enameled pin. The pin has replaced a brassard that was previously issued. The brassard was a cloth shield shaped device with thirteen red and white stripes on the lower half. The upper field of blue has the words Dewar Team with a U on the left and an S on the right. The high scoring shooter on the US team is presented a plaque.*

*There may have been another award given. As a small tribute to the memory of a most benevolent man, it was not uncommon, at least through the middle 1970s, to see members of the United States Dewar Team emerge from Camp Perry's Hough Auditorium, after the prone phase awards ceremony, with a bottle of the Lord Dewar's amber liquid in their possession.*

*The British team uses a different team selection process than the United States that has proven to be an excellent method. A group of about 40 shooters are selected to compete for a spot on the team. The group is then assembled at and they fire a Dewar Course in the morning. Later in the day those that have fired the best 20 scores will shoot the match while the other shooters act as coaches. Since using this method the British Team has been remarkably successful in winning the Dewar Trophy. While the idea has its appeal to the United States shooters the vast distances involved in travel make the present method more practical.*

*Sometime in the early winter the official results will arrive at NRA Headquarters from Bisley. A short paragraph in Shooting Sports USA will make the announce the scores and the yearly cycle will come to an end.*

*For those who are numerologists, or tend to conspiracy theories, there are several years that are of interest. During the United States Bicentennial, in 1976, the home team at Camp Perry won all the Palma, Dewar, and Randle trophies. By serendipity, in 1969, an unusual syzygy of the major prone matches occurred when the United States won the Palma, Dewar, Randle, and Roberts Trophy Matches. In a similar situation the United States, shooting all four matches at Camp Perry, won the 1973 Palma, Dewar, Randle, and Pershing Trophy Matches giving it bragging rights to the unofficial prone shooting crown of the English speaking nations for those years.*

*Not to be outdone teams from Great Britain, in a bravura performance, took first place in the Palma, Dewar, and Randle Trophy Matches in 1992 and then won the Dewar, Randle, and Roberts Trophies the following year. In 1988 the only three teams to win the Dewar split the major matches with Australia winning the Palma, Great Britain taking the Randle, and the United States the Dewar and the Roberts.*

*The Dewar's importance, even though it is a postal, cannot be understated. Don Durbin, a long time member of the All National Guard Rifle Team and member of the 1984 Olympic Team, has said that anytime you are honored to represent your country, in any way, it is of supreme importance. To him the Dewar is every bit as important as the Olympics or World Championships and it carries the added pressure of being a part of a team of the best that your nation is able to muster. If you fail to win in an individual event it is a great disappointment that you must bear alone. If you fail in a team event it is quite another story.*

*The Dewar is about striving. Striving, as an individual, to is one of the few selected to be on the team. Striving, as a member of a team, to be the best in the field. In the end the path for a place on the Dewar Team is the quest for excellence as both an individual and a team.*