

Army Shooting Prizes, Post 1916

The army designed new shooting prizes, later called badges, in 1922 that for the first time had high ranking shooting medals not primarily made of gold or silver. In 1922 and 1923 the army retroactively awarded some of these badges back to 1916. The same general design, which has three parts, continues today.

1916-1940

The top bar, often called a brooch, came in two versions, both made in bronze. Army and national level match prizes/badges had rectangular brooches ornamented with oak leaves. The one for Corps Areas or Department matches had a narrow bar with rounded ends and a larger circle in the center that had either the tactical corps shown in Roman numerals (I through IX), or a simple design for the Philippine Department, Hawaii Department, or the Panama Department.

The center clasp depicted crossed weapons – muskets that represent rifle matches, flintlock pistols for pistol matches; and crossed Browning Automatic Rifles for those matches. These clasps came in gold, silver, or bronze, as described shortly. Only certain weapons clasps were authorized for some branches – in other words, selected branches could enter teams only in some matches.

				
National or Army level prize shown by the colored ring and rectangular top bar, for a pistol match. All army/national match prizes had bronze weapons clasps.	National or Army level prize shown by the colored ring and rectangular top bar, for a rifle match. All army/national match prizes had bronze weapons clasps.	V Corps area prize shown by bronze pendant and V on top bar. BAR match with the gold weapons shows the winner was in top 1/6 of those receiving a prize.	I Corps area prize shown by bronze pendant and I on top bar. Silver rifles show type of match and that the winner was in top 1/2 of those who won a prize, but not in top 1/6.	Hawaii Dept. prize shown by bronze pendant and design on top bar. Bronze BARs show winner was in bottom half of those receiving badges.

The pendant was bronze colored and the ring containing 13 stars was enameled for army and national matches. Corps Area matches had only solid bronze colored pendants. The ring colors authorized, with the associated branches and clasps, are shown in the table.

Ring Color	Stars Color	Branch	Authorized Weapons Clasps
Dk Blue	Orange	Air Corps	Pistol
Dk Blue	Scarlet	Philippine Scouts	Rifle, Pistol, BAR
Yellow	Bronze	Cavalry	Rifle, Pistol, BAR

Red	Bronze	Coast Artillery*	Rifle, Pistol
Red	Bronze	Field Artillery*	Pistol
Scarlet	White	Corps of Engineers	Rifle, Pistol, BAR
Light Blue	Bronze	Infantry**	Rifle, Pistol, BAR
Orange	White	Signal Corps	Pistol

* The prizes were identical in design.

** National Guard and Reserve teams comprised of members from more than one branch received infantry prizes.

Department designs for the central disk on the top bar were a sea lion for the Philippines, a dolphin for Hawaii, and, as shown right, a portcullis for the Canal Zone.



Above are four 1922 style pendants for national and army level matches for members of the (L to R) Air Corps team, Philippine Scout team, Infantry team, and Signal Corps team.

The army engraved all of these prizes before they were issued – script engraving before 1930 and block engraving from 1930 until 1940. The cavalry had two different shades of yellow, depending on when the prize was awarded, presumably due to purchases of badges at different times.



A 1928 national level rifle prize given to Sgt Williams Reynolds, Machine Gun Troop, 2d Cavalry. This is typical script engraving used before 1930.

A 1937 national level pistol prize given to Sgt Williams Reynolds, Machine Gun Troop, 2d Cavalry. This is typical block engraving used after 1930.

1948-1958



When the army resumed regular shooting matches after World War II the prizes/badges were of the 1922 design but in all cases the pendant was always in bronze without any enamel. BAR competitions disappeared so the only weapons clasps used were for pistols and rifles, and for all matches the crossed weapons were in bronze. For “area matches” the brooches were of the old Corps Area or Department design but with a blank central circle. For national, inter-service, and army level matches, the brooch was the same as before, rectangular with oak leaves.

Unissued Prototypes

Badges of the general 1922 design but with different brooches and with the entire award in gold, silver, or bronze color are often found. A set of these prizes is shown. The army never issued any of the gold badges and only the silver and bronze versions with the top bar that had the U. S. ARMY wording.





Current Badges

In 1958 the 1922 style badge with a new top bar that carried the words U. S. ARMY and made in all bronze and in all silver became known as the *Excellence in Competition Badge*. Criteria for these badges changed over the years but generally those soldiers who had started to qualify for a distinguished badge received the bronze excellence in competition badge while those who were closer received the silver version. Of the 30 points needed for a distinguished badge, soldiers with 20 or more points now receive the silver version and those with less than 20 have the bronze.



Left is a current bronze pistol Excellence in Competition badge and a silver version for rifle matches. Each comes with either crossed pistols or rifles and with backs that are either pin-back or clutch back.