

I am a person that tries to learn from my mistakes. Yes, I do learn the hard way and sometimes I go kicking and screaming, but I still learn. This year's Sniper Challenge is no different. I probably learned more this year than I had the first two years. The way I see it, all the problems at the match coming down at once actually reinforced things I had forgotten or believed were unimportant. This is a short list of the things I learned and plan on correcting for future competitions.

Intel Vs. Reality: The first is one that I am wrestling with, but I will find a happy medium. This is information flow Vs necessary changes. There is a saying that everyone is familiar with and I have always believed in it, it says, "Knowledge is power." I have always made it a point to keep my soldiers informed of every little thing no matter how small or how unimportant. My reasoning here is two fold. One, it allows my soldiers or subordinates to make decisions based on the intel provided and it also allows them to carry on the mission regardless of what happens to me or our communications. We have run the Sniper Challenge under these same guidelines. Tell the shooters everything!

One of the things that makes the Sniper Challenge so popular is the amount of information we provide. We have always provided things that nobody else does. Things like a course of fire in its entirety, a timeline, week-by-week updates of the sponsors and their prizes, constant updates on range and target developments, as well as all other relevant and irrelevant information. This year it has come back to bit us in the butt. Due to world events, our staff was reduced to almost zero. I had to fight the powers to be to let me fly across the US just to run my own competition, so I too almost didn't make it. Due to these world events, the course of fire changed constantly and threw as many monkey wrenches into the wheels as we could handle. Because of the constant changes, some people viewed the competition as a poorly organized and poorly run event. On the contrary, I think it clearly shows how well it was run and shows that even when faced with complete disaster, our ability to keep the thing moving forward in a positive manner is a tribute to our dedication. It would have been much easier to cancel the competition and refund monies.

The biggest complaint is that the match and the individual events were not the same as printed in the match bulletin. This is true. What is also true is that we give, and we gave about 80x more information than any other competition ever thinks of giving. Guess what, it all came back to us and is biting us in the ass right now. SO the solution is simple. We give no more or no less info than is standard for all other comps. We will put out our match flyer with times and dates, cost and basic rounds as well as equipment needed and THAT IS IT. No more course of fire, no more time line, no more suggestions on this or that. In the safety briefing we will not discuss the course of fire. That will be done 5 minutes before the event. We will only discuss safety issues and general range conduct. I like this better anyway because it will put even more stress on the competitors and make them carry all possible equipment at all times.

ZERO DAY: There will be none, you will have a few minutes to confirm 100 yard zero and we will start from there. The competition will be held at Tac-Pro this year, which is a private/public facility. Anyone that wants to come early to confirm zero will have to show up before the day the comp starts and pay the daily range fees. Again, we tried to provide this as a courtesy but it isn't worth the criticism we have gotten by people that couldn't see their hits on steel or couldn't see targets because they had a bad spot on the berm. This is a simple solution with simple logic. A sniper needs to be able to engage targets under any environmental conditions. Military trained snipers know this better than anybody. They may fly around the world, get off a plane and have nothing more than an MRE bag to pace off at a 100 yards and confirm zero on. All other data must be changed on the fly with a calculator, a data book, and brainpower. So now, the competitor will be in the same boat.

TEAM MATCH - It will be. A spotter will be allowed to spot on every event unless both are shooting at the same time (as in they have to engage different targets as a team at the same time). We will correct it so that all get to use the spotter except in the above-mentioned circumstances OR during any side match. There will be no more differences in this area. You bring a partner and he spots your rounds, but their will be a 60 second change over period implemented. This simply means that from the time the first shooter is finished, there will only be 60 seconds before the next relay begins. Period, end of story. We will wait on no one.

1000-YARD - The 1000-yard target was not 1100 yards as a handful of people are claiming. These people are of course trying to go off mil readings and not the 3 lasers that we used to set our berm in place, including a military class IV laser capable of reading out to 10,000 meters with an error rate of less than 5 meters. Anybody, that tells me they can mil a target at 1000 yards and be even close is full of shit! After about 500 yards, milling a target becomes pretty useless. The Army teaches this fact and I have found no reason to deny it or prove it wrong. At around 600-700 my milling goes to complete hell and I will challenge anybody and everybody that says they can accurately mil to 1000 yards to show me (at a location that they are unfamiliar with). I know what you were thinking. You were going try and show me at your match on your home turf...no chance. I can tell you what range every piece of grass is at on our range without even looking through a piece of glass!

TOWER ISSUES - I can't even believe that I heard complaints about the tower movement. I have yet to shoot off a tower that didn't sway in the wind or move when people walked around on it. The tower conditions were identical for everyone so there was no advantage or disadvantage across the board. Yet the most important factor here is, there is no more RGVSC so there is no more tower. That is unless Tac-Pro puts one in.

TARGET ISSUES - Again, this won't be much of a problem if people don't know what to expect, but I will address a few, first, the two moving targets. There is only one other facility that I know of that uses mechanical movers and that is Storm Mountain. The rest either don't have movers or use "hand carried" movers, which is a nightmare all in itself. I am sorry that I ran over the power cord for the 600-yard mover with a tractor but what can you do? On the remote 100-yard mover, anybody that shot with us last year knows that that target works, so allegations made by a certain NG Captain as well as others that the target never worked and that we "made it up" shows ignorance and talking without thinking. With anything mechanical, it is subject to failure. Why the remote was not projecting past about 20 yards, I have no idea and I won't for at least another month or so when I can get back home and work with it. All I know is that it was working before I left state. Again, what can you do?

Now, for the issue of not having enough golf balls. This goes back to two factors, of which one was discussed. If you wouldn't have known about them then it wouldn't have been an issue. Additionally, trying to get 400 plus balls is a nightmare. We get our balls from driving ranges and the supply just wasn't there this year. 400 plus balls is a lot! Why did I tell everyone? Again, that goes to the fact that I keep people informed and don't lie about the facts. Why didn't I buy the other 200 balls? The simple fact is that I had no more money to sink into this comp. We do not put these events on to make money and we don't. Anyone that thinks you make money should put one on for the rest of us. I'll be the first to sign up.

MISC – Shooter order was a complaint. We told people prior to the comp that we would follow the traditional Sniper's Paradise method of drawing out of a hat before each event. Simply put, with the lack of range officers this was not possible. What I am thinking of doing for next year is designing a simple program that will randomly assign shooters to a firing order and then running the program for each event before the comp and logging the results. This way the random order will be taken care of but we won't have to waste time during the event. We'll see...

The night fire will be revamped next year. With fewer shooters it is not an issue, but we didn't realize until it happened. Hummmmm, does that sound like some of the things you shooters learned about your equipment or training at the comp? Maybe I should criticize and critique each and every one of you on your shooting? Naw! Not many other comps even shoot a night fire and most people never even train for it, yet 80+% of shootings occur in it. So we'll work on our end and everyone can work on there's.

The range shut down on Sunday. Not much I can say here. We had a choice of either serious legal actions or closing the 1000-yard range. Since we had no lawyers present for the late night meeting Saturday the solution was simple. Anyone there that wouldn't have done the same thing needs to put on a comp and stop complaining about ours. Again, I will be the first to sign up.

There was way too much paper this year. We have already talked extensively with Larue targets and will shoot about 80% of the 2002 Sniper Challenge on reactive steel. We will have plates as small as 5 inches so don't expect full size Larues and don't expect "challenges" based on paper. Either the target falls or it doesn't. If you have a .223 and can't knock it down, then get a bigger gun.

We are also standardizing the calibers and equipment. More will be released on the website by January.

CLOSING – The facts are simple. This was our third year for this event and we hit some major snafus, but we learned from them. No matter what you as the competitor observed or say, you will never be as harsh on me as I am. I am my own worst critique. We had growing pains and we had problems beyond our control but we prevailed in the end. There is a quote from a German General back in WWII that goes something like this, "War is chaos and the reason the Americans are so effective in war is because they practice it on a daily basis." We had 3 days of organized chaos and we prevailed in the end.

I also want to suggest that you be prepared for next year. I already have the course of fire laid out and on paper. No more thinking about it or trying to decide. I have 1 year to get the targets ready so there will be no excuses and no problems, except maybe mechanical. This will clearly be the most evil and most challenging course since I want to watch everyone that complained this year sweat in the dirt and cry blood. If you are weak of heart, then stay home for the 2002 Sniper Challenge. :>)