

# U.S. ARMY SMALL ARMS CHAMPIONSHIP

A record number of shooters participate in the Army's premier marksmanship competition

By Michael Molinaro  
U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit

**IM**ore than 300 Soldiers from across the Army descended on Fort Benning, Ga., March 19–28, to take part in the 2011 U.S. Army Small Arms Championship, the Army's preeminent marksmanship training and competition event.

Reservist Sgt. 1st Class Russell Moore of the 91st Small-Arms Readiness Group, Camp Bullis, Texas, won the overall individual championship, his third championship in a row.

Though winning the title is a significant accomplishment, the ultimate goal of the event is to raise the overall combat readiness of the Army, he said.

“The ‘All-Army’ Small Arms Championship not only provides the training every Soldier needs to excel in marksmanship, it also provides a means in which to test their skills among their peers as well as some of the best shooters in the world,” Moore said.

“When we all signed up to be Soldiers, we volunteered to take on innumerable challenges and new experiences. This should be one of those experiences for every Soldier. Come out with a desire to learn and do your best, and it will be a great time.”

Hosted by the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, the competition featured Soldiers competing in rifle, pistol, and combined-arms matches.

The training and competition is like no other Soldiers experience in the military, said Lt. Col. Daniel Hodne, commander of USAMU.

“Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s words, ‘Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that on other fields, on other days, will bear the fruits of victory,’ put this one-of-a-kind training event in the proper context,” Hodne said. “The seeds have been sown here at the All-Army. The responsibility now lies with those Soldiers who took part to incorporate what they learned

into the training of their units. Their efforts will bear the fruits of victory in Afghanistan, Iraq, or wherever the requirements of national security take us.”

The field of Soldiers was the most numerous in 18 years. Superb weather welcomed Soldiers from as far away as Alaska, Guam and South Dakota.

While many All-Army veterans, such as Moore, found their way back to Fort Benning, a large contingent of first-timers embraced the challenges and uniqueness of the championship.

“This is the best thing in the Army,” said Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Byler of 1st Battalion, 335th Infantry Regiment,

## THE WINNERS

### Service Pistol Champion:

Sgt. 1st Class Russell Moore, 91st Small-Arms Readiness Group, Camp Bullis, Texas

### Service Rifle Champion:

Staff Sgt. Matthew Waechter, 132nd Fighter Wing, Iowa Air National Guard

### Combined-Arms Champion:

Cadet Matthew Ray, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

### Long-Range Champion:

Sgt. 1st Class David Perdew, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 44th Chemical Battalion, Illinois National Guard

### High Drill Sergeant:

Sgt. 1st Class George Pickowicz, Regional Training Center-East, Fort Dix, N.J.

### High Cadet:

Cadet Matthew Ray

### High Novice:

Sgt. 1st Class David Perdew

### High Active-Duty Soldier:

Sgt. 1st Class Nelson Ashbrook, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Benning, Ga.

### High Active-Duty Soldier (E1-E4):

Spc. Kevin Kelley, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga.

### High Reservist:

Sgt. 1st Class Russell Moore

### High Reservist (E1-E4):

Spc. Benson Munyan, 2nd Battalion, 91st Small-Arms Readiness Group, Fort Douglas, Utah

### High National Guard:

Sgt. 1st Class David Perdew

### High National Guard (E1-E4):

Pfc. Jason Parsons, 507th Engineer Battalion, Michigan National Guard



Above: Soldiers compete in a rifle match March 21 on McAndrews Range at Fort Benning, Ga., one of several matches conducted during the 2011 U.S. Army Small Arms Championship.

Right: A Soldier negotiates around obstacles while shooting his rifle on one of four combined arms courses at Fort Benning's Krilling Range.

Photos by Michael Molinaro

205th Infantry Brigade, First Army-Division East, Camp Atterbury, Ind. "Marksmanship is a perishable skill. Soldiers should really make it a point to come here for this event. It's great."

Byler came with seven others from his unit on their first trip to the All-Army. They spent two weeks on Fort Benning late last year taking part in a Close-Quarters Squad Designated Marksman course conducted by the USAMU. Between the advanced training they received at the course and competing here all week, they are more confident than ever in their marksmanship ability.

"I prefer the service rifle, but it's cool to shoot some pistol, and the run-and-gun stuff is an absolute blast," said Byler, an 18-year Army veteran. "You don't get to do that anywhere in the Army. We made a lot of good friends here and got a lot of good pointers on shooting from guys who have been here before. We'll definitely be bringing the team back again next year."

Soldiers were split into four main categories: novice, open, pro and cadet. Winners received plaques, coins, guns and trophies. The overall high novice shooter for the week was awarded a Secretary of the Army M1 Garand Trophy Rifle, and the top pistol shooter won a Secretary of the Army pistol built by the gunsmiths of the USAMU Custom Firearms Shop.

Five cadets from the Reserve Officer Training Corps earned scholarship money provided by the Civilian Marksmanship Program. Cadet Matthew Ray of the U.S. Military Academy received a new trophy, the Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley Award, given to the cadet with the highest aggregate score of the two Excellence in Competition matches.

The retired Col. Ralph Puckett Excellence in Marksmanship



award, given to the Soldier in the novice class who achieved the highest aggregate score of the two EIC matches, was won by Staff Sgt. Matthew Waechter of the 132nd Fighter Wing, Iowa Air National Guard.

"The competition is designed to test the entire depth of a Soldier's shooting ability," said Command Sgt. Maj. Chris Hardy, command sergeant major of the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning. "No matter where you ended up, participation in this event makes the Army much stronger. For a competitive marksman, consistently applying the fundamentals and achieving success on the range translate to achieving success on anything that you do, whether on the battlefield or other walks of life."