



From a small beginning Oklahoma's pistol team (shown left) has won a national niche for itself. The team and its trophies

Pistol training

BY LIEUT. IVAN D. YEATON

Last year, for the first time in the history of the university, the pistol team won first place in the national R. O. T. C. meet, and important recognition in the National Rifle association. It also participated successfully in several state matches.

Much of the credit for the success of the team is due to the zealous support given it by Major E. P. Parker, jr., the P. M. S. & T., who had constructed an indoor 22-calibre range and a new 45-calibre outdoor range, so that the men could practice inside or out, day or night. Also, he purchased new 22- and 45-calibre pistols, plenty of targets, and an abundant supply of ammunition.

During the first week of the school year, a meeting was called for all those interested in pistol firing. Eighty men turned out for it. In order to weed out those who were only mildly interested, I deemed it advisable to explain all the unpleasant features of the necessarily rigid training and to leave it to the individual to decide for himself whether or not the small reward, in case they turned out a winning team, would be worth their time and trouble.

Practice hours were set at 8:00 a. m., daily; 4:00 p. m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 8:00 to 12:00 a. m. Saturday. Once a week, each man was allowed to fire a score and in three eliminations, covering one month each, the squad was reduced from eighty men to twelve. With the team decided upon, at least one match was fired every Tuesday night for several months. We shot weekly telegraphic meets with the two best civilian teams in the state and shoulder to shoulder matches with local police forces. At first we lost consistently, but our score began to mount steadily, ten to fifteen points a week, and by the time we were forced to devote all our attention to the 45-calibre pistol the squad was equal to the best in the state.

Two winning teams had been our

hope, but out of that vast amount of material, only six consistent shots could be mustered, and some of these were late arrivals from the junior class. The 22-calibre team was then sent off by itself to finish the year without help from anyone. They were fortunately held up to second place by the expertness of two men, one of whom, strangely enough, could not shoot a 45 without endangering the lives of the bystanders.

Having been successful in the national R. O. T. C. meet, permission was granted and funds secured by Major Parker, for the team to attend the N. R. A. southwestern pistol and small bore rifle tournament at Dallas, Texas. We attended this meet armed with the 45 and found that we were to compete against 38-calibre revolvers with two pound triggers. The courage and stamina of the boys were proven when they agreed to "sleep on the ground and eat hot dogs for two days" in order to purchase one 38-calibre revolver and the necessary ammunition to enter the team captain, Jack Louthan, in all events. He more than justified the sacrifice because he won (with a 38-officers' target model) one first place, three second places, and two third places, losing the southwestern individual pistol championship by only three points, this due to a hang fire. All men, except the substitute, qualified as N. R. A. experts.

Later in the summer, the captain of the team was sent to the Oklahoma state meet after a month's additional training at the R. O. T. C. camp. Out of three events entered, he managed to win two first places and one fourth. He was awarded a silver cup by Major Parker for being the best pistol shot in the university. The seven high men of the squad received a letter consisting of red crossed pistols on a black and white bull's eye set inside a white O. U. on a red background.

At the beginning of each practice hour each member of the team draws his pistol and, standing in the proper position, extends his arm for five minutes. Thereafter he may shoot one round on the N. R. A. 50-foot target, whenever he desires. Any shot landing within the black rings is considered a hit, anything outside the black is called a miss, and a man is allowed to continue shooting just as long as he remains within the black. Whenever he misses, he must stop firing, go back and hold his 45 extended for three minutes more. Then he is permitted to fire again. Since credit is given only for so many consecutive rounds fired within the black, it makes every contestant extremely careful of each round fired.

No one is allowed to practice or fire except under supervision. Sighting and squeezing are checked daily in order to prevent development of bad habits.

The longer rapid fire can be delayed, the better will be the result. Only enough time to assure proper timing should be spent on this phase. A man will shoot his best score after holding his arm extended with a pistol in his hand for five or six minutes, then resting a few moments. An occasional round fired while resting the wrist on the coach's arm will often help diagnose troubles which crop up from time to time.

Our program for the coming season will include shoulder to shoulder matches with local police forces, entrance in the N. R. A. pistol meets, Field Artillery R. O. T. C. meets and state matches in the spring. In order to compete on an even basis we are purchasing five 38 calibre revolvers, one 22 calibre revolver on a 38 frame, and one 22 calibre pistol on a 45 frame.

It is too early in the year to prophesy the ultimate result of our efforts, but if great enthusiasm on the part of the applicant is any indication of success, the University of Oklahoma should produce another winning combination.