

# IDPA - A Truly Diverse Sport

By Jason Piccolo



Joy and Jason



Romy

**D**iverse. Diverse is one word to describe shooting sports. Over the past several months, I have traveled to International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA) matches, from Northern Virginia to Maryland to Raleigh, North Carolina. I have talked to so many different people from every background imaginable. An IT manager at Amazon, an administrative specialist working for the Department of Defense, an automotive technician, a pastor, and many more. They all had one thing in common, a passion for shooting.

## **That First IDPA Match**

With decades in the military and law enforcement, I still felt a slightly nervous feeling in my stomach walking up to sign in for that first match last year. However, my concerns were for nothing; after hearing that this was my first time shooting IDPA, the match director gave me a breakdown of how the match works and calmed my hesitation.

I noticed something right away during the pre-match briefing. As the match director singled out the new IDPA competitors, they were immediately welcomed by the seasoned shooters. It wasn't just me that the match director helped

out, but the others that likely had that same nervous feeling.

This slight nervous feeling entering your first match is expected and likely follows you onto the range for your first shot. Romy Vergara, a technical program manager for a global organization, started shooting IDPA in the past couple of years. Romy remembers that first match clearly. Romy said, "Everyone was very friendly and welcoming, gave me pointers, and put me as the last shooter so I could observe how they do it. My heart started beating fast when my turn came, but I took my time and shot as naturally as possible. I kept repeating in my mind, "safety, safety, safety." Safety was my main takeaway from the new shooter orientation, and it got stuck in my head the whole time."

## **On The Road**

Raleigh, North Carolina, is about 4 hours from my last match in Northern Maryland. I wanted to know if I would receive the same welcome as I did at matches in my area. I wasn't mistaken; they were open to outside shooters and made me feel at home.

The match in Raleigh also offered me the opportunity to talk with Joy Allen. Joy, a clinical research specialist, started shooting in 2016

and quickly became addicted. She moved on to competing in IDPA because it allowed her to practice essential skills like presentation, speed, movement, and shooting from cover. IDPA also allowed Joy to practice scenarios while testing out her equipment.

Joy recommends IDPA to everyone who is safe and comfortable with their equipment. She said, "One thing that makes the IDPA so ideal is that everyday "normal" equipment is welcome. Anyone who carries a firearm and has had solid training in safety and handling a firearm should give it a try."

Joy's passion for shooting led to her becoming a firearms instructor and drawing more people into the sport. She said, "I am a champion for seeing more minorities, especially women of color, represented in IDPA matches. This is an amazing, low-cost opportunity for EVERYONE to enjoy shooting sports. I'm so very thankful to be a part of it".

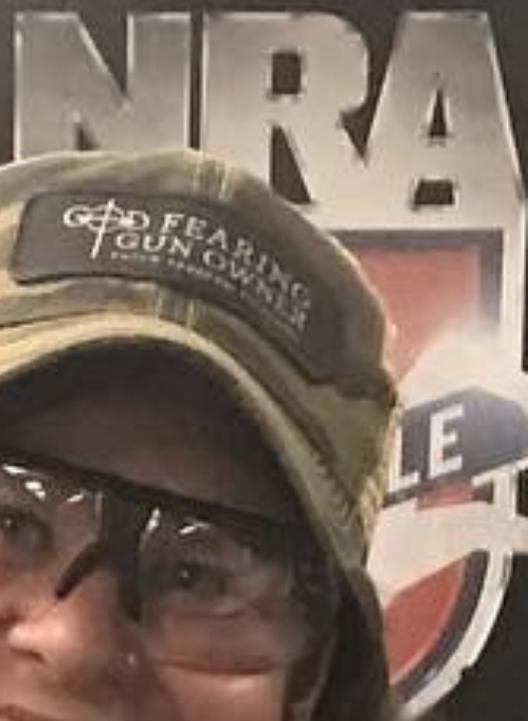
## **Military? Law Enforcement? Nope!**

You do not have to be a former military or law enforcement to shoot an IDPA match. In fact, some of the best competitors and

supporters of shooting sports come from outside those ranks.

The sport draws in so many competitors not only from diverse backgrounds but also from diverse experiences. For example, I met Virginia Barone at a few Northern Virginia matches I competed in. Virginia has an incredible passion for shooting sports gained in just three short years of shooting. She had a fear of firearms, and to get over that fear, she started shooting. Shooting turned into competing in IDPA. I asked her why she got into IDPA. She told me, "I got involved in IDPA because they were so welcoming and helpful! I really enjoyed the community of shooters as well as shooting the matches. I was looking for something other than static shooting in a lane and was told to check out IDPA! Ever since then, I've been to a lot of different clubs and found that the friendly, welcoming, and helpfulness I experienced was easy to find anywhere!"

Virginia, now a match director, also welcomes everyone to the sport. When asked if the sport is for everyone, Virginia she told me, "YES, hands down. What I love about IDPA is that it truly is for everyone! The biggest thing for novices is understanding the safety concerns/aspects, but IDPA is meant to have beginners. I've seen people in a wheelchair shoot



Virginia Barone  
Woodbridge, VA

matches and do well! It will also drastically improve anyone's shooting!"

## Common Themes

Everyone I talked to and encountered while shooting matches relayed two common themes.

First, they had a passion for the sport, an almost addiction to competing, and felt welcome at every match. So, the welcome you get at that first or fifteenth match is a significant factor that brings people back to IDPA. The second

commonality is the desire to learn more and to move away from static range shooting.

***After almost 30 years of shooting for qualifications in the military and as a federal agent, Jason finally jumped headfirst into competition. Jason joined IDPA in May 2022 and quickly became a fan of shooting sports. Jason is soon-to-be retired and moving on to his next career after serving over 23 years in federal law enforcement. Jason is also a former U.S. Army Infantry Captain with service in Iraq in 2006.***

