

Run Fast and Shoot Straight: How to Win as a Second Lieutenant

By: George Fust

Congratulations! You just commissioned as a second lieutenant. Your college experience is now complete, and it is time to start anew. Now that you have arrived at your first unit, what can you do to stand out from your peers? How can you be recognized as the top of the pack? What



can help you get a platoon or a coveted school slot? What can help with your annual officer evaluation report (OER)? The answer is simple, run fast and shoot straight. Literally. This is not an analogy.

The Army is tasked to fight and win the nation's wars. At the absolute basic level this requires aptitude at marksmanship and physical fitness. All newly arrived second lieutenants are the same in the eyes of a Company Commander or Field Grade officer. Assuming you don't say something memorable during your introduction, you must work to prove your value to the team. That begins every morning during physical training. It is here that you demonstrate your hunger to be better than you were yesterday. It is here that you show your motivation and commitment. Never drop out of a run. Always complete the required pushups per set. Someone is always watching. If you really want to stand out, finish the run first or lift the most weight. How do you get to this point? Simple. You work hard every day. Sometimes twice a day. It may even require exercising for an hour *before* physical training begins.

Your efforts will not go unnoticed. You will also have the added benefit of preparing for potential school slots or unit fitness competitions. The act of developing fitness as a routine shows your maturity and

seriousness about your profession. Step one to winning as a second lieutenant is to run fast.

Your efforts in the gym are starting to pay off. You have developed a reputation as a “beast.” Now is the time to double down. At the upcoming small arms qualification range strive to shoot expert. Most will not achieve this status. With certainty, the unit commander will want to know and possibly recognize those who do. Make sure you are on that list. How? Simple. You work hard and practice. Seek out the top marksmen in your unit. Have them offer basic rifle marksmanship classes to you. Have an open mind. Network with range control or your lieutenant connections to practice with adjacent units. You might also consider a private gun range. Plenty of your peers will shoot as a hobby. Make a commitment to shoot expert during your unit’s qualification by developing a plan of action and following through with it. Step two to winning as a second lieutenant is to shoot straight and hit your targets.

Now that you can run fast and shoot straight you will probably notice you are performing at a high level on other tasks. You can brief with the best of them. Your OPORDs are always well written. Your platoon’s counseling packets are up to date and complete. This isn’t an accident. You have been working hard every day. You have established excellence as your baseline. You have applied the concept of rehearsals and preparation to upcoming events and tasks. Therefore, you are always ready and confident in your ability to perform.

Imagine how well this process will serve you in the future. No matter what unit you are assigned to, you can apply these concepts to stand out. The army will always value those who can run fast and shoot straight. Because it is these individuals who know how to accomplish their goals. They are the ones who refuse to settle for mediocrity. They know how to win.

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