

Competition metal detecting is a term given to annual detecting hunts that are usually sponsored by a club or private individuals. These competition metal detecting events are held in public parks, at ocean beaches and on privately held grounds. The hunt events are fee based and will have pre-planted fields with coin and token targets. The exception is a relic: they are usually held in open private terrain, there are no pre-planted targets and can also be fee based.

Competition: Is the act of competing between individuals using one's skill, ability and metal detector to seek a prize or prizes. In a competition event rules are necessary so that all participants in the event have an equal opportunity to seek and recover the prizes. These type of hunts usually have a theme for each hunt and are held for a specific period of time (45minutes to one hour.) To participate the detectorist must pre-register and pay a fee for each of the hunts in the event.

A competition hunt is just that, you are competing against the other detectorists on the hunt field. So keep in mind that every second counts and the fastest detectorist takes homes the greatest numbers of targets and prizes. To be a fast detectorist takes detecting skill and a detector and equipment that matches the needs of a competition hunt. The detector along will not make the detectorist successful one must practice, practice and practice their detecting and recovery techniques.

Open Hunts: You need not be a club member to participate in the hunt. An open hunt is for any one who is willing to pay the entrance fees and follow the hunt rules.

Closed Hunts: You must be a club member to participate in the hunt and be able to show a current club membership card at registration. A closed hunt is for club members only.

Terrain. The detecting environment in a competition hunts can consist of a saltwater beach, a public park grass area or an open plowed field, usually found on private lands. The coin or token target depth can be slightly different for the three hunt environments. A detectors depth - sensitivity is only important if you are a detectorist that swings their coil far above the surface of the ground during the hunt.

- Beaches. The target depth at a saltwater dry sand beach can vary from one to three inches.
- Parks. In public parks the target depth is usually controlled by the length of the grass which conceals the target. The grass may be two to three inches long.
- Plowed Field. Target depth in a plowed field with no ground cover can vary from being on the surface to four inches deep and sometimes greater. There are clubs that have special tools to plant targets at one to five inches that leave no marks on the ground surface. These type of competition hunts can be much more challenging.
- Relic hunts which are focused toward recovering artifacts will not be covered in this article since they do require detectors with very good sensitivity, depth discrimination and many other important features.

Equipment. The metal detecting equipment used in competition events may not be the same as what is used for detecting on beaches, in parks and fields for coins, jewelry and relics. In competition hunts there is no need to have a very high end detector model with many features and adjustments, instead keep the detector very simple.

There are a number of important reasons to purchase a metal detector just for competition hunts since having a detector with specific attributes may be much more productive for the detectorist. This is especially true if the detectorist goes to a high number of these competition events throughout the year.

We can probably agree that the most important piece of gear for a competition hunt is the metal detector. So lets explore the important characteristic or attributes of a competition hunt detector.

Detector Characteristics. The most important metal detector attributes for a competition hunt are that the detector should have a very fast target response time, light weight, frequency shift capability, tone ID, narrow discrimination notch adjustments and reasonable cost. The detector depth capability should not be of primary concern since most targets are not going to be at a great depth.

- Audio Output. A good sharp and crisps audio output.
- Coil size. A good all around coil size for a competition hunt is eight to eleven inches. Having the capability to swap coils is very beneficial since hunt terrain and hunt type may require a larger or smaller coil.
- Fast Target Response. This means that the detector should respond instantly to any target that the coil is swung over by providing instant audio feedback by way of the headphones to the operator.
- Frequency Shift Capability. There can be a large number of detectorist participating in a competition hunt with many different detector models. Each detector model may operate at a different frequency and these different frequencies can cause (EMI- Electro Magnetic Interference) or crosstalk between detectors on the competition hunt field. By having the capability to rapidly shift the detector's frequency under use without any impact on detecting speed is an important detector attribute.
- Light Weight. The lighter the detector the faster and easier it is to swing the coil.
- Low Cost. Keeping the cost down will ensure the simplest detector possible for competition detecting.
- Narrow Discrimination Notch Adjustments. A narrow notch discrimination capability may be a plus in competition detecting if there is a certain type of target and / or if there is a lot of trash on the hunt field.
- Simple to Use and Adjust. keep the detector's adjustment features to a minimum.
- Tone ID. This is the ability to differentiate target type by audio tone, this can be very desirable in a competition hunt. Knowing what the target might be before recovery can be very important.

Competition Hunt Characteristics Summary Table				
Importance Rank	Terrain	Saltwater Beach	Public Park	Plowed Field
	Terrain Attributes	Sand Salt	Grass Trash No Digging	Bare Earth
	Target Depth	2 - 4 Inches	Grass Height	2 - 5 inches
	Detector Attributes			
	Detector Must Have Features			
#1	Fast Target Response	Yes	Yes	Yes
#2	Light Weight	3 - 4 lbs	3 lbs	3 - lbs
#3	Frequency Shifting Capability	Yes	Yes	Yes
#4	Tone ID	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Detector Should Have Features			
#1	Coil size	11 - 12 Inch	8 Inch	11 - 12 Inch
#2	Audio Output (Sharp and Crisp)	Yes	Yes	Yes
#3	Simple to Use and Adjust	Medium	Yes	Yes
#4	Cost	< \$ 500	< \$350	< \$350
	Other Support Equipment			
#1	Head Phones (Median to High Quality)	Yes	Yes	Yes
#2	Recovery Tool	Sand Scoop	Fingers Only	Scratch Tool
#3	Finds Pouch	Sand Basket	Pouch	Pouch
#4	Electronic Pin-Pointer	No	Yes	Yes

The table on the left list the three types of terrains across the top with various attributes on the left side.

Take time to study the table before buying any competition equipment.

Probably the most popular detector manufacturers at competition hunts are Fisher, Garrett, Tesoro, and White's, however, other manufacturers' detectors such as Minelab, Teknetics, Bounty Hunter can also be found at a hunt.

Generally, the fastest detectors at a hunt are Tesoro, Fisher, Garret and White's and usually in that order.

There are detector models that are more popular than other models but this short article will not try to pick one model over another.

Just a reminder: PI- Pulse Induction Detectors are not allowed in most competition hunts since they transmit a good deal of EMI-Electro Magnetic Interference to other detectors.

Other Important Competition Attributes.

The better you understand your detector and other equipment the more productive you will become in a competition hunt.

Learn to recover and retrieve targets without knelling down. This will improve your speed and provide you more time to detect for more targets.

Your starting position on the hunt field may also provide an advantage. Always try to start the hunt from a center field position and stay away from the corners at startup. There will be an overlap of participants at the corners with detectorist coming onto the hunt field from two directions.

Observe how other detectorist hunt and recover their targets during a competition hunt. After the hunt try to find detectorist that have recovered many target during the last hunt and observe their detecting techniques in the next hunt. Practice at home what you learn from observing others on the competition hunt field.

Current Detectors. Here is a short list of current detector models available from manufactures. Many of these detectors may fit the attributes of a competition detector. If you are in the market for a competition detector this list would be a good starting point. Or do some research and you may find that a discontinued detector would be a better fit. Check the used classified section available on many of the web based equipment forums.

- Fisher F2 w/2 coil package
- Garrett Ace 250 & 350 w/2 coil package
- Minelab 305
- Teknetics Delta 2000 & 4000 w/2 coil package
- Tesoro Compadre
- Tesoro Cibola
- Tesoro Silver Umax
- Troy Shadow X2, X3 and X5
- White's Coinmaster Pro & GT Series

A Couple of Discontinued Models.

- White's IDX-PRO
- Fisher 1235X
- Fisher 1266, etc---
- Plus there are many older discontinued manufacture models that would make a very good competition detector.

Summary. Competition metal detecting can be fun and also a great husband and wife outdoor activity. If two are going to a competition event them both should use the same model detector with one other detector as a backup. This will keep the learning curve low if one of the detectors should happen to fail and you need to substitute another detector. Above all have fun, find targets and make friends.