

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER



Suzy
Balogh
continually
on target

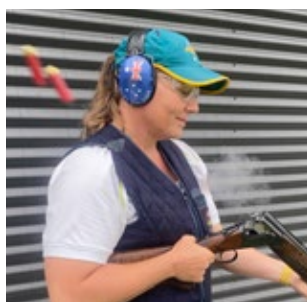
10th
EDITION



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Editorial



Gemma Dunn

It's pleasing to present our 'golden' milestone 10th edition in print form as the first for the year. As times continue to be so topsy-turvy, Laetisha Scanlan offers an insight in to what the 2021 Tokyo Olympics are likely to look like for competitors.

We have a double Suzy Balogh feature in honour of her unique dual shooting successes of gold medals in both the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. Suzy covers the 'Fight-or-Flight' response to help tackle nerves when shooting and in everyday life. We also profile the SSAA Life Member and Order of Australia recipient who is on a crusade to help other shooters reach their dreams.

I've hit the SSAA range with a focus on suitable eyewear for shooting no matter what the conditions and find the right pair of affordable glasses from industry-leader Wiley X.

Furthermore, we take a hands-on approach to shooting and hunting when pregnant with Michelle Pares, from the early stages of expectancy right through to full-term, looking at how she kept healthy and safe along the way.

Remember to enter our draw on page 3 for a rare Australian Women's Shooter jacket.

Gemma

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AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

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Taking aim with Laetisha Scanlan

Never let yourself be defeated

As we have moved into 2021, I can't help but reflect on what Pre-COVID-19 life was like. I feel a sense of nostalgia looking back at previous years and the carefree attitude that many of us had with domestic and international travel. 2021 brings us some hope but also new challenges in that the world we once lived in will most likely never be the same again.

With the one-year postponement of the Olympic Games and the swirling rumours regarding cancellation, I feel for the athletes who have worked so hard for this achievement to be dealt with these doubts and distractions. During this time, I have seen athletes withdraw, retire and lose hope for their Olympic dreams.

So, what will Tokyo 2021 look like in a world with COVID-19 knocking on its doorstep?

Here is what the situation is likely to be:

- A significant reduction in support staff as well as media personnel in and around the village, as less people equals less risk.
- A fly in-fly out Games, arriving in Japan no more than four days prior to your event. Previous Games allowed you

to stay until closing and soak up the atmosphere, go sightseeing and support other athletes, but not this time. The day after the completion of your event, you will be flying home for a 14-day hotel quarantine.

- Round the clock COVID testing. This means everyday testing for everybody with quick turnaround results of less than one hour.
- A high chance of only local spectators and no international fans. The parents, friends and families of these individual athletes will not have the chance to be there in person, but like many will have to watch the results unfold on television.
- Probably the most daunting rule of them all, a positive COVID test in Tokyo will mean automatic disqualification from your event at the Games.

As international travel prior to Tokyo is looking highly unlikely, it's hard to comprehend that the first major competition I will have in one-and-half years will be the Olympics.

So, what have I been doing to prepare for such an unorthodox Olympic Games?

- Learning to go with the flow, adapting to the ever-changing environment. It's no longer advantageous to have long-term set plans as the goalposts are constantly changing.
- Taking advantage of domestic competitions and using them to become match fit, mentally as well as physically.
- Not putting pressure on myself to be perfect at training. The only real competition that matters this year is the one in Japan. Everything before this is just a lesson or opportunity.
- Working on my fitness by using my competitive nature to achieve goals in this setting, mixing it up between cardio and weights. Healthy body, healthy mind!

And lastly, constantly communicating my concerns, queries or questions with my sports psychologist and coach. It may be an individual sport, but we are not alone.



Women's-only competition

Only female SSAA members are eligible to enter. One entry per member. To enter, simply write your name, address and membership number on the back of an envelope and send it to:

**Black Renegade jacket,
Australian Women's Shooter,
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061
or online at ssaa.org.au/win**

Competition closes March 31, 2021



WIN a Black Renegade jacket with AWS logo

Please confirm size

Kindly donated by
SSAA Online Shop
onlineshop.ssaa.org.au

Valued at \$144.95

Suzy hits another target with tutorial venture

Dave Rose

Anybody wishing to learn the ropes about shotgun shooting should know they will be in expert hands with Australian Olympic gold medallist Suzy Balogh.

The 47-year-old SSAA Life Member found fame as the first Australian lady shooter to grab gold at an Olympic Games, when she triumphed in the Women's Trap in Athens in 2004. As an added accolade, she was the initial Aussie to achieve that feat on debut. She has also won Commonwealth, World, Oceania and National titles. In 2005 Suzy was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to sport.

Since those heady days her goal is to introduce people to the world of clay-target shooting. Suzy does this from the helm of her company Hitting Targets, which has been on the scene since 2008.

She started her enterprise back then and has relished her new role. The year of 2008 proved a turning point for Suzy in many ways as she was looking forward to competing in the Beijing Olympic Games. Alas, she was incapacitated during the trials with glandular fever, dashing her ambitions of adding another medal to her tally.

Olympic champion Suzy
is a SSAA Life Member.



Suzy is one of few shooters worldwide to have won gold medals at both the Commonwealth and Olympic Games.



Suzy coached the 2015 Australian Universiade Games Shotgun team of Catherine Skinner, Gemma Dunn and Indi Gladman to a medal.

“I was number three in the world and number one in Australia at the time of the selection shoot but missing out was a life changing moment,” she said.

“My aim is to introduce the shooting sports to all people – they can be absolute beginners or aspiring Olympians.”

Suzy is based in Sydney and does most of her work from the Sydney International Shooting Centre in the western suburb of Cecil Park. For interested newcomers, everything is provided – that means ammunition, targets, firearms, hearing and eye protection, safety frames and shooting jackets, range fees, insurance for shooters and spectators and temporary Shooting Club membership. Firearms are even on hand to cater for 12-year-olds, which is the minimum age for shooters in NSW.

“I’m out in the west which covers a big area,” she said.

“I’m the sole director of the company but I have 12 casual staff on the books.

“We are very busy all the time. I started the business at the time of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and we survived that. So I’m sure we can survive COVID -19 and come out the other side.”

So Suzy is certain that good times are ahead for the business. “It’s important for anybody who wants to try things out to pre-book. With coaching I deal with

anybody from first-time shooters to Olympians. The corporate side of things is also busy, incorporating team building for groups.”

And among the people that Suzy has mentored during her ground-breaking initiative is the SSAA’s very own Gemma Dunn, the editor of *Australian Women’s Shooter*.

“My aim is to introduce the shooting sports to all people – they can be absolute beginners or aspiring Olympians.”

It has certainly been an eventful journey which has brought Suzy to where she is today. The high point in competition was undoubtedly the Athens triumph. But even before then she had been making big strides. Suzy has represented Australia in ISSF Trap, ISSF Skeet, American Skeet, Down the Line and Universal Trench. However, her potential came to the shooting world’s attention when she was enlisted in a ‘filler’ position at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Suzy performed way beyond expectations but could not qualify for any medals and admits she felt like a virtual bystander.

But from there the momentum was fuelled. At the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, in tandem with Susan Trindall, she carried off bronze in the women’s Trap Pairs to the delight of the Australian shooting fraternity.

The winning continued at the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games where Suzy struck gold in the Trap.

Suzy’s record of success could have been extended but though she qualified, the Australian selectors overlooked her for the Delhi Commonwealth Games of 2010.

She was hopeful of making amends in the 2012 London Olympics, she managed to set a new Australian Record, a PB and to qualify for the final surpassed the previous Olympic record, yet was unsuccessful in the final.

So with her competitive days behind her, Suzy can look forward to a fulfilling career that involves being a business owner and coach, a mentor, public speaker, and a team builder. Between 2013 and 2020 Suzy was the National Coaching Director and Head Coach for the Australian Clay Target Association.

“For the past decade, I’ve had the pleasure of introducing over 30,000 people to the fantastic sport of clay target shooting.”

– Suzy, Athens Olympic Games gold medal winner



Suzy’s shooting passion means she is involved with hopeful followers from all backgrounds.

“Shotgun sports are for every body, age, and fitness level, literally. Shotgun is one of the few sports where all ages, genders, and abilities compete together,” she said.

“For the past decade, I’ve had the pleasure of introducing over 30,000 people to the fantastic sport of clay target shooting. At Hitting Targets we deliver Sydney’s most exhilarating, empowering and explosive experience.”

Suzy’s speaking agenda sees her keep busy across the whole metropolitan expanse of Sydney.

And with her Olympic background, she is well versed in what lies ahead of potential medal chasers. Olympics Unleashed is an Australian Olympic Committee program

in partnership with the New South Wales Government, Optus and New South Wales Institute of Sport.

“My aim as a speaker for Olympics Unleashed is to inspire Year 9 students to look for their strengths and passions to assist with setting career and sporting goals,” said Suzy. Her engagements took her to about 40 different schools in 2019 and to outposts as far afield as Albury and Broken Hill.

Suzy is also involved with the AIS Gold Medal Ready Program “I am extraordinarily proud to be a part of this project. As one of only 33 Australian Olympic Gold medallists chosen to work in tandem with 10 Australian Army Commandos in the Gold Medal Ready Program, our objective is to mentor Australia’s Tokyo Olympians and aspiring Paris 2024 Olympians.”

As a further aside Suzy spends time as a community ambassador with the National Breast Cancer Foundation. This role is linked to the time when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer before the Athens games and as a result, Suzy’s family could not travel to the event.

“As I was standing on the podium, with a gold medal round my neck I was thinking of my mum back at home who had just undergone more treatment,” said Suzy. Thankfully, her mum recovered and Suzy continues to back the cause.

With Suzy’s noted credentials and high ideals, her blossoming venture with Hitting Targets sounds the perfect starting point for would-be shotgun shooters in the Sydney region. For more details go to hittingtargets.com.au

Keeping healthy and safe *while pregnant*

Michelle Pares

Well ladies, at the age of 36, the time has come for me to start my family. Being an active member of Conservation Wildlife Management and having my own local, private pest control properties, I thought this was the end of my activities.

Life as I know it would come to a screaming halt. Morning sickness/all day sickness was about to kick in, along with all the dreaded stories you hear about how horrible pregnancy can be. How was this going to pan out? Also, the unfinished private jobs that still needed some pests removed were hanging over my head.

Was I going to be able to commit to those tasks and see them out to the end? Was I going to be a liability to the properties that I shoot on? Was my obstetrician and midwife going to be understanding of my co-curricular activities? What safety protocols need to be put in place for my baby and myself? All these questions needed to be sorted.

To my surprise, at 35 weeks pregnant I was feeling amazing and still working at my full-time job. I was lucky enough to work up to 39 weeks. I only had two moments of morning sickness which passed after eating confectionary. I have always lived an active life, going to the gym on a daily basis and either running or walking to work which is roughly a 14km round trip, combined with my hunting on the weekends and projects I attend for CWM.

My first appointment with my midwife I advised her what I do. I won't lie, it took a while for her to understand and fully comprehend all the information I told her. I exercise discretion with who I inform about my hunting. I have two rules that guide me:

1. Do I have enough time to explain to this person all the facts they need to know to have a better understanding of pest control and protecting our Australian heritage?
2. If the person has been drinking alcohol, it's just a no-go conversation. If I'm going to take the time to shed a positive light on what I do, then I want it to be to someone that has all their wits about them.

My midwife's questions were: How often do I hunt? Do I have any contact with the animals I shoot? By that, she meant with blood, bodily fluids and faeces. Plus, how much interaction do I have with lead? And how loud is the shooting? My midwife was impressed with my fitness and encouraged me to continue what I was doing, as having a good level of vigour generally meant an easier labour.

My midwife's questions were important. They all have varying answers, depending on what type of hunting you do and what species you are targeting. Here is my experience over nine months.



A roaming wild dog
skilfully taken.

For blood and body fluids there are different types of diseases that animals carry.

Pigs – Brucellosis: This can occur in wild pigs. The main point of infection from pigs is via their body fluids such as blood, urine and milk being inhaled or splashed in the eyes. Good personal hygiene and careful dressing of a carcass are the best preventive measures. **Leptospirosis:** This disease spreads in the urine of infected animals and is more common in the tropics. It is a serious disease, but hygienic handling of animal body fluids is an adequate safeguard.

Dogs – Wild dogs harbour a number of parasites of significance to human health such as roundworms, hookworms and hydatids.

The most important parasite of wild dogs in Australia is the hydatid tapeworm. This tapeworm is present in a high percentage of wild dogs and the intermediate stage, the hydatid cyst, is sometimes fatal to humans. Care should be taken to wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling wild dogs and domestic livestock with injuries.

Having frequent blood tests throughout my pregnancy ruled these diseases out. I also had a good personal protective equipment (PPE) bag with elbow-length rubber gloves, antiseptic wipes, hand sanitiser and my mesh butchering gloves, which was always packed in the car stocked and ready to go. But also, don't forget about airborne pathogens.

In regard to lead, there was a concern around reloading. Was I using factory rounds or reloading? For the aim we were taking within 100-200m, a heart-lung shot, or head shot was able to be engineered comfortably with factory ammunition. I had no need to be reloading during the start of my pregnancy. If you do like to reload and are planning a pregnancy, maybe make sure you have a good stockpile of your favourite ammunition.

Between 18-24 weeks your tiny little one starts to hear its first sounds, rapidly developing by 24 weeks. After 30 weeks they can hear your voice, music and clearly perceive what calibre of rifle you are using. Be mindful of your loads and the loudness of the rifle as well as muzzle

brakes. This is where subsonics and lighter loads come in handy if you're shooting short distances, which luckily for me was all the properties I was operating on.

I also had the bonus of using thermals and being able to sit and wait at night for deer to come in and graze. I was able to situate myself in a position where I could lean over and around different machinery in paddocks to protect my stomach from the end of the muzzle, reducing the sound. And also being in the middle of winter I was wearing three layers of jumpers which was enough padding within itself.

All these things combined made it a safer environment for myself and my baby. I purchased a stomach wrap for extra protection so if I did have to free stand shoot and be exposed to more sound I could use the wrap and padding around my stomach.

Having a hunting friend Alastair who I share the private jobs with made the process easier. Alastair took on a cluster of properties with rusa deer problems and I concentrated on the chital deer and wild dogs. Using a .300 Blackout with subsonics, Alastair was able to reload for subsonic

rounds to keep neighbours happy. He was also great for heavy lifting, sharing his butchering skills and knowledge along the way. Having someone who you can sit beside, trust that they are confident in shooting, knowing property boundaries, has good relationships with the property owners and shares the same shooting ethic is reassuring and means a lot.

Doing the research, monitoring, setting trail cameras for weeks, sometimes months, before shooting made our nights shorter and easier. Having done these hours means we knew what time the pests were coming, their habits and routines.



From trail camera footage we were aware that 'deer time' is anywhere from 6.50pm-7.30pm. If the deer hadn't come in during that period we were ready for a late night, with the deer normally arriving around 1am and onwards. We could then plan our nights down to three hours which included setting up, waiting, then field dressing so the meat wasn't going to waste.

Keeping in mind the maximum session I could sit and wait between having to pee was roughly three hours. So our time frame worked perfectly. From the second trimester of the pregnancy the biggest combat to overcome is having a little kung fu panda practising fly kicks as you sit there and wait silently for deer. As months pass the kicks become stronger and more frequent.

Towards the end of my pregnancy, it coincided with spring and young wild dogs venturing out. In our local area the baiting program with our council had been postponed so it was at a point to set the traps and cameras.

The property owners where my cows reside had seen three young wild dogs each afternoon playing and sleeping on the track. I knew I had to act quickly as calving season was only weeks away. This was enough intelligence for Alastair and myself to set three traps in that location. Within three days of the traps being installed, we had our first dog snared. The trap was reset and the second dog was caught within 24 hours.

All in one day, a dog was trapped in the morning, with a midwife appointment at lunch, followed by my husband's fly out day to work. A chital stag was shot in the afternoon, field dressed, put in the fridge and I was home by 8.30pm. Talk about when my worlds collided...

Being honest with the property owners where I was shooting was a safe way of doing my job. They were happy for me to finish off my time there, they knew my health and hunting ethic before I was pregnant and were happy for me to

continue until I felt I could no longer carry on. I knew my limits and I know my body and what it was capable of.

One of the most important things I could pass along to the expecting mums who still want to go out and make a difference is, if your health and body could handle it before you were pregnant then your body will adjust when you are pregnant. Introducing something new that your body hasn't done before while you are pregnant is a risk and you are advised by professionals not to do so. Your body is creating a tiny little human and putting

it under new stress it is not capable of, is only going to cause unwanted tension to you and your baby.

So I welcomed into the world a beautiful baby girl named Addison with a problem-free five-hour labour. I went home the next afternoon after Addison passed all her tests, including her hearing check. It's been smooth sailing so far. Addison loves being outdoors, already having completed a trip to Fraser Island and seeing her first dingo.

I wanted to share some positive light on how we can adapt to changes with only having to make to subtle adjustments for a healthy pregnant mum to enjoy her life while expecting. Please always remember we are all unique; please consult your healthcare professional to receive the best suited information for you.



I knew my limits and I know my body and what it was capable of.

flight Fight-or-Flight fight

Suzy Balogh

When we are involved in a shooting competition or preparing for that perfect hunting shot, we can become nervous.

And when we really care intensely about the result, our nerves can cascade into physical stress. This is also known as the Fight-or-Flight response. It is a reaction that occurs when we are faced with something terrifying. Our sympathetic nervous system kicks in and releases a flood of hormones such as adrenalin and cortisol to help prepare our bodies to either fight the impending danger or flee from it – hence Fight-or-Flight.

I am lucky enough to introduce people to their very first shot every day. Some take it in their stride, are empowered, exhilarated and others are just downright scared of the unknown.

These fearful and nervous people are often speechless, shaking and you can even see their throats gulping for more

air. Some acknowledge and communicate that they have never done this before and beseech you for help, while others just carry on with it in silence. My role at this stage is to assure them that nerves are normal, to talk calmly and directly to them, to guide them through their shot and let them know that it will be exhilarating. I love seeing the smile on their face when they hit their first target or even just fire a gun.

Throughout my 35 years of competitive shooting I've seen and experienced many ways that the Fight-or-Flight response manifests itself in people who are nervous and stressed before and during competition. For the past 17 years as a coach I've been educating my athletes in Fight-or-Flight. And for the past three years I have been involved with the AIS Gold Medal Ready Program furthering Australian Olympians in their awareness of Fight-or-Flight.

One team-mate would throw up as the butterflies in her stomach were so intense (**response:** hormones are being released and absorbed into the capillary-rich gastro intestinal tract); another would have shaky, trembling hands (**response:** adrenalin surging through the blood, body preparing for quick reflexes – primed for action). Yet another would do several visits to the toilet (**response:** the body expelling waste to be able to run faster). I definitely had nervous peeing syndrome on competition days.

A coaching client becomes really cold, with almost numb feet and hands (**response:** blood is being redirected to larger muscles ready to run, and also being taken from extremities in case in battle an arm is hacked off and hence less chance of bleeding out).

My own father would experience a tight chest, cough or clear his throat when he became nervous – a trait I have too



Documenting how you feel is important to building towards success.



Controlling your excitement can be as critical to performance as controlling your nerves.

Nerves show up when we care about our performance, they tell us something great could happen. It is our body telling us we are preparing to compete...

(*response*: tightening intercostal muscles preparing to work hard, dry mouth and coughing a sign of digestion stopping – don't need to digest food when you are running away).

My own heart rate increases dramatically and my breathing becomes heavy (*response*: the body pumping more blood making more energy available for action, blood thickens or becomes 'sticky' carrying more clotting factor and glucose. More oxygen is taken in to make muscles and organs work more efficiently and powerfully).

For shooting particularly, I like the Fight-or-Flight responses that pupils dilate, sharpening our vision and our minds to actually become more able to focus on the challenge in front of us.

During my first Olympic final my heart rate was maxing out at 180bpm for about 40 minutes, I was breathing deeply, I had a tight chest, a dry mouth, sweaty palms and crazily my knees even knocked together at a couple of stages and towards the end when I knew I had won but still had three shots to go. I even started to cry. The crying was relief and also the stress response lowering.



2020 Women of Shooting event.
Photo The Outpost Arms

The catch with this final was that I was in a zone I had learnt to be comfortable in and hoped to emulate every time I competed at a World Cup, Olympics or Commonwealth Games. I wanted to feel physical stress of about an 8 or 9 on a stress scale where '0' you were dead and '10' was where you had tipped over and probably fainted, thrown up or worse.

Having a science degree background I knew that my body could do exceptional things when experiencing extreme stress and hence a physical place I was comfortable to compete in. I knew what my body did and in doing so it becomes almost super human - quicker reflexes, sharper vision, better mental focus, more energy. I also know that too much adrenalin and cortisol for extended periods of time can have a deleterious effect on our performance and overall health.

From a coaching perspective I want my athletes to acknowledge and embrace their physical stress response. Know how to utilise it and how to recover from it. Nerves show up when we care about our performance, they tell us something great could happen. It is our body telling us we are preparing to compete, as nerves tell us we are excited about the unexpected. Athletes who care put the effort in, set processes, routines and achieve goals.

Evolutionarily our bodies have not changed the stress response for roughly 250,000 years. It kept us alive hunting, fighting or fleeing. Our bodies now don't know the difference between the historic dangers such as being attacked by a lion, fighting off marauding clans, going to war compared to our new modern triggers such as playing sport, giving a speech or doing an exam. Our bodies will physically exhibit the same stress response for all of these.

...techniques helping you rise into or down into your zone are mental imagery, mindfulness exercises, resonant breathing, going for an energetic run and listening to music.



Photo: The Outpost Arms

Next time you are competing, training, hunting or just taking a shot, consider where on the stress scale of 0 to 10 you are most comfortable and where you perform at your best. It may be a calm 3, an aware 5 or a heightened 7. Where I am on the scale varies between hunting and competing, between disciplines being shot and the level of the event whether it be an Olympic Games or a club shoot with friends. Write down in your shooting journal (contact aws@ssaa.org.au for a free journal template) if required where on the stress scale you are and also the way your body responds physically to that level eg, shaky hands, butterflies, sweaty palms.

Once you have started identifying your own stress response you will be able to decide whether you perform better calm or heightened and then find techniques to bring you into *your zone* that you require for your performance – we are all individuals. Examples of techniques helping you rise into or down into your zone are mental imagery, mindfulness exercises, resonant breathing, going for an energetic run and listening to music.

To heighten my zone and arousal level I listen to music that has a thumping beat that not only evokes a strong emotion in me but takes me back to a time when I was performing brilliantly and felt a certain level of physical stress.

If I ever find myself too aroused for the zone I need to be in, I use some basic deep breathing techniques. We have four rudimentary types of breathing.

1. Breathing at rest known as eupnea – we don't need to think to do this and it activates both our diaphragm and intercostal muscles.
2. Deep breathing known as diaphragmatic (eg, belly breaths) which lowers our heart rate and can actually be used for pain management.
3. Shallow breathing – known as costal (eg, chest breaths) increases heart rate and can heighten your zone.
4. Forced breathing known as hypernea, which can be controlled such as when we are singing or be uncontrolled such as when we have done some extremely, exhaustive exercise. Forced breathing uses both the diaphragm and intercostal muscles as well as other muscles such as neck muscles and the obliques. The most basic deep breathing technique is to inhale deeply to a count of three through your nose expanding your belly with air, keep your shoulders relaxed and hold this breath for a count of three then slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of three.

Focus on the air coming in through your nose, feeling your belly expand and then the sensation of the air being blown out of your lips and your diaphragm working. Repeat a few times and you should feel your heart rate lowering and your body relaxing. Your zone level should also be dropping too.

To calm down others who may be anxious I employ the five senses technique. I ask them to tell me five things they see, four things they can touch, three things they can hear, two things they can smell and one thing they can taste. It truly does work by taking the focus away from what that person is fearing or stressing about and brings them back to focus on their here and now.

Ultimately when taking a shot you want to be in *your zone*, be mindfully present, be consciously aware you are ready to connect your vision with the target and once these are achieved simply execute the shot.

Wiley X glasses

value you can clearly see

Gemma Dunn

For me, a pair of shooting glasses aren't just made with safety in mind. You see, as a clay target shooter, there is a lot of emphasis on the lens colour of our glasses to suit the conditions we are in.

As shotgun shooting is done fully outdoors and with no shelter, we are completely exposed to the elements. This of course means light levels are always changing on us, so we rely on our lens colour to help us see the targets

better against the backdrop, in varying light conditions.

When I first started shooting shotgun competitively, there was really only one manufacturer that allowed such a free array of choice when it came to interchangeable lenses and their tints. Unfortunately, a new set of these particular glasses went anywhere north of \$700 depending on how many lenses you wanted and what style of frame.

Don't even begin to ask how much for a set with RX prescription inserts attached. I will say though, that they offer a fantastic product, with so much choice, they are basically indestructible and for a lot of us worth the money. So, I don't regret it for a second.

However, after more than 10 years, it is good to see that there are some more affordable alternatives starting to arise in the shooting glasses market. Many are just offering a smaller assortment of lens colours, to cover the basics. This is important because as a beginner, you are simply wanting to purchase the basic equipment you need, to start developing your skills and learn what it all means. After that, you can choose to either become a serious competitor, happily stay at club level or somewhere in between. And there are now all sorts of different equipment at various price points to take you as far as you want to go, glasses included.



Lens colours from left to right: Vermillion, Light Rust, Smoke Grey and Clear. Wiley X also offer Pale Yellow.



Along with the nose-piece, the length of the arm is adjustable too.

This is one of the main reasons I was so impressed with the Saber Advanced glasses 3-lens set from Wiley X, reasonably priced at \$109. For the purpose of this review, I chose to get an extra set of coloured lens, making it a 4-lens kit. You can purchase extra lenses for many of their range with the Saber lenses at \$39 each. Having a selection of lenses for shooting ultimately allows you to increase target visibility in varying light and background conditions, which is essential for clay target shooting among others.

To test these glasses, I went to a 200-target Sporting Clays competition held in Mudgee, NSW. I thought this would be the ultimate test for both the frame as well as the lens colours as Mudgee is known for its extreme light and background variations due to the terrain and climate.

Now, I love Mudgee as a region, but for whatever reason when we go for a shooting competition at the SSAA range, the weather is never kind. We have shot in high winds, sun, rain and even snow. This combined with the landscape and course layouts, giving us backdrops of hills, grasslands, creeks, dense trees and sky, turns Mudgee brutal at times for Sporting Clays.

This particular event was no different. The Bureau of Meteorology was telling us to prepare for more than 100mm of rain across the two days of competition but with fast-moving storm cells, meaning that we were going to be extremely wet and have a constant shift in lighting conditions.



To begin with, as it was 9am with lowlight but a lot of glare, I chose the Vermillion coloured lens. This made me particularly nervous as in the past, a lens with a red colour base has never been useful to me

I found that the frame didn't obstruct any part of my sight window... and I also loved the fact that the nosepiece is adjustable.

as it changes the shade of the target by making it brighter. I have found it does the same to some of the 'whiter' clouds, making it hard to see a target against open sky backdrops. As those clouds were dark and nasty-looking, I thought it would be my best route and off we went.

I was pleasantly surprised to note that the Vermillion lens didn't actually do as bad in the whiter clouds as I expected. It must have a slight variation in the tint than what I have experienced before. Meaning that I ended up keeping the Vermillion lens in for the remainder of the weekend, even throughout brighter periods of light.

Apart from lens colours, the other really important thing for a shooter and their choice of glasses is the fit. Many shooters (particularly shotgunners) shy away from anything with a bulky, intrusive frame. This is due to head positioning on the gun meaning that the top of the frame or the nosepiece can obstruct a shooter's sight window. This is something I know can affect me and because of this, I was hesitant to see how I would fare with the Wiley X catalogue and was one of the main reasons I chose the Saber Advanced glasses as they seemed to have the thinnest frame at the top.

I found that the frame didn't obstruct any part of my sight window as it sits higher on my face than expected and I also loved the fact that the nosepiece is adjustable. A big tick for women as our noses can often be too small for some makes of



glasses, leading to them slipping off our face each time we take a shot.

This is not ideal for anything double-barrel as by the time you go to take shot number 2, you're worrying about the fact that your glasses have bounced around and sometimes blocked your sight window. Another big tick with the frame is the length adjustability of the arms, ensuring you gain the fit of custom glasses, without the price tag.

These glasses also have some amazing features that are designed with the shooter in mind. The WX Vapor, WX Valor, WX Rogue, Saber Advanced, Romer 3, XL-1 Advanced, WX Gravity, WX Wave, WX Omega, WX Twisted and Spear glasses are approved AS/NZS 1337.1 – meaning that it is an Australian standard lens for personal eye protection.

Also, the lenses are Shatterproof Selenite Polycarbonate with added protection from scratches with the T-Shell coating. This makes it great to have in your shooting kit for all environments.

My recommendation though, would be to always keep your lenses in the protective case it comes in or at least a microfibre lens pouch because although they are

heavily resistant to scratches - they're not scratch-proof. Finally, I love that they can be purchased with a pick for those shooters who require prescription lenses.

For a 200-target event, you are wearing glasses for a collective four-plus hours straight each day along with earmuffs. This means they are sitting over the top of the glasses frame and around the ear. I have retro-fitted some super soft gel pads

into my earmuffs (pictured), making the pads a lot softer but even still, I found that the frame of the glasses really dug into my head after a while.

Of course, this is to be expected to some degree due to the amount of time spent wearing them, Wiley X could do further testing on this to slightly modify the frame construction. So that it is either a bit thinner, less taut around the head or offers additional padding for the purchaser to buy if they find the glasses to be cutting in a bit too much for their liking. A great idea would be to provide a frame with a rubber wrap-around (as pictured) for the ears so that the glasses will not move easily but aren't being sandwiched between earmuffs and head.



The nose-piece is easily adjustable.



Changing the lenses is a bit of a challenge too but the sturdy frame can actually take a little heavy handling and once I worked that out, I was able to bring the lenses out with a bit of force. I would assume though, like anything, that after a while this may become easier the more often you do it. This applies to your method and the fact that the frames are a little more worn-in. I did read the instructions that come with the glasses on how to do this, but I think an instructional video on their Facebook page or website on how to do this would be greatly beneficial.

I would also like to see a bigger selection of lens colours, which is a topic I will be covering in the next issue of *Australian Women's Shooter*.

Overall, I think that the Saber Advanced set from Wiley X Australia is a fantastic offering for shooters across all disciplines of our sport as they are economical, functional and certainly built with the shooter in mind.

Visit wileyxaustralia.com.au

