# WOMEN'S SHOOTER



BERETTA

Inaugural issue • Proudly printed in Australia

An official publication of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia



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### Editorial

#### Gemma Dunn

Hi, we're excited to welcome you to the inaugural edition of Australian Women's Shooter. The SSAA is proudly marching towards a membership of 200,000 and this quarterly publication is for our female contingent of sports shooters and hunters.

Our premiere edition features Commonwealth Games gold medallist Laetisha Scanlan, whose regular column you can look forward to from the second edition of AWS. We review the Weatherby Vanguard Camilla rifle, which looks and feels great for women shooters. In the first of my women's shooting practical pieces, I focus on ocular cross-dominance in women and take you through the steps to see if genetics plays its part for you too. Also, we have a story highlighting lady (and junior) membership on the rise at our SSAA Rockhampton branch. Oh, and there's also three fantastic prizes to win.

We encourage those who aren't members to join the SSAA and we'd love to hear from all women regarding what content you would like to see in your *Shooter* magazine, along with any questions you may have for Laetisha and me. We can be reached at aws@ssaa.org.au and details on membership benefits can be viewed at ssaa.org.au

And fellas, there's strength in numbers so please pass the magazine on to your wife, girlfriend, mother, daughter, niece or whoever. If you have a read first, this magazine shows the different aspects of shooting for a woman and may help you to either introduce and/or assist them with their shooting.



### WOMEN'S SHOOTER

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### A place to call your own

My husband and I are sporting shooters of many years and enjoy reading Australian Shooter each month. Your magazine always gives us plenty to think about and talk about but, as is no doubt the case in most marriages, we don't always agree!

The problem is he can only see the shooting sports from a male perspective and has never been guilty of trying to look at it from a woman's viewpoint. We had the privilege of watching Laetisha Scanlan shoot for gold at this year's Commonwealth Games and I was delighted to see a young female shooter doing so well.

And that's when it occurred to me that the women shooters of Australia deserve a bit more recognition - and maybe even their own publication. Hopefully this is something the SSAA can give some thought to in future. Keep up the good work on a great magazine.

#### Linda, Qld.

You're reading our minds, Linda! With the rising number of women in the SSAA's ranks, we also reckoned it was time to put female shooters in the spotlight - so welcome to Australian Women's Shooter. This is your magazine and we want to hear from the growing band of Aussie women enjoying the shooting sports. Tell us what you want to see included in these pages and we'll do our best to make it happen.

Gemma Dunn, Editor.

Do you have a women's shooting day coming up?

Let us know at aws@ssaa.org.au

### Their numbers are up

### - Rockhampton junior, lady membership on the rise

The SSAA Rockhampton branch continues to go from strength to strength, running a host of events this year while seeing an encouraging rise in the number of women and junior shooters taking part.

January saw lots of new faces at the Junior Open Pistol Day, another in a series of events to encourage more young shooters into the club. Junior representative Chloe Culliford with the support of family and club members works tirelessly to make sure everyone enjoys their introduction to the shooting sports. Whether aiming at paper targets, metallic silhouettes, clay targets or balloons, the branch has many repeat customers which has led to an upturn in numbers.

In February the women took charge with the second Ladies Day at the pistol range. This year saw the participation of several female politicians who serve at local, state and federal level. With club members keen to show what Rockhampton has to offer, it was the perfect opportunity for the ladies to visit the range, have a shoot (with great scores) and take the grand tour with life member Tony Malinconico who is passionate about his sport and the range complex.

The high scores shot by some of the visitors were highly encouraging and by offering casual open days like this one, without the pressure of competition, the club has encouraged more ladies and their families to sign up.

The Queensland State Air Rifle Championships were held in March with visitors travelling from Townsville, Emerald, Tin Can Bay, Sunshine Coast and Brisbane. Rockhampton member Stefan Viljoen is an experienced Field Target competitor and placed first in Master Grade, with her dad Cobus doing likewise in AAA Grade.

Nicholas Bianchi finished runner-up in the Junior 15+ category using the air rifle of Ryan Loveday from Brisbane, forced out with a hand injury but more than happy to lend Nicholas his rifle and plenty of coaching to go with it.

Doing well in the Silhouette discipline was member Malcolm Bell who placed third in AA Grade, while Stefan Viljoen finished second in A Grade and went one better with gold in the 10m Target.

April saw the return of our local Girl Guides who love to visit the range and due to the high interest have to book six months in advance. Some of the girls are now shooting scores close to our top pistol shooters.

With the success of these social days to encourage more members into our sport, we'd like to thank sponsors Hall's Firearms and The Outpost Arms & Munitions who continue to offer ammunition and great prizes without hesitation. Thanks also go to our Range Officers for volunteering their time, firearms and coaching.



# Laetisha Scanlan at the top of her sport

### by Thomas Cook photos by Studio Reflections Photography

SSAA's Laetisha Scanlan is an Australian sports shooter who has won gold at the past three Commonwealth Games. Laetisha's successes came in the Trap Pairs with Stacy Roiall at Delhi 2010 then in the women's Trap at the Glasgow 2014 and Gold Coast 2018 meetings. Nicknamed 'Taesh', she was born on April, 13, 1990, grew up in Berwick, Victoria and is involved with the Victorian Institute of Sport. Laetisha is a righthanded/right-eye dominant shooter who, along with her gold medals, has had continued landmarks since taking up the sport in 2005 and initially competing as a 17-year-old in 2007, when she made her first Australian team.

Laetisha was born on 'Friday the 13th' but this competitive yet humble champion is anything but unlucky. Her other shooting achievements include a fifth place in the Olympic Games and International Grand Prix, Australian and Commonwealth Games records, first place in the Oceania Championships in 2011, a World Cup win in 2013, gold in the World Cup in 2014 and most recently

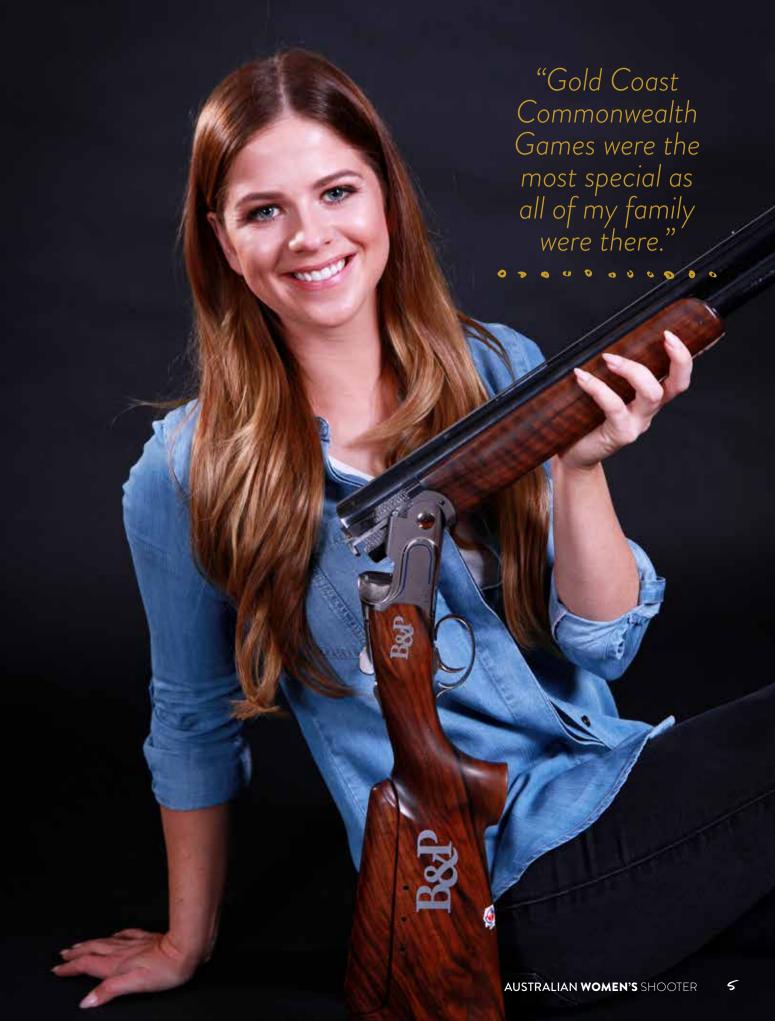
fourth place in the 2018 World Champs in Korea. Laetisha is a national champion and currently ranked No. 1 in Australia and No. 6 in the world.

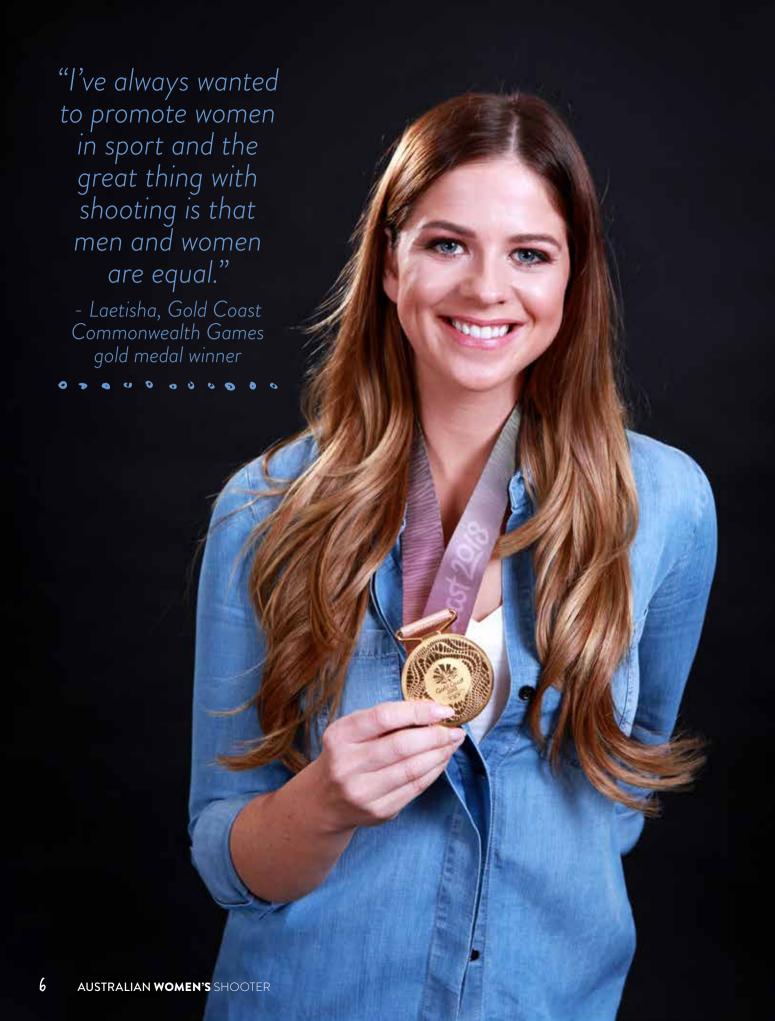
When I asked Laetisha what she enjoys most about shooting she responded that she loves all of the travelling and experiences it brings, saying that "its introduced me to such a diverse array of people that I ordinarily would most definitely not have met but am glad I have."

Laetisha finds her resilience helps with sports shooting and said that "losing has helped me grow as a person." Admitting to being a little "naïve as a child, expecting to win," she said that when she won her "first gold medal I was right in the moment but it was only upon reflection that I realised the magnitude of my achievement." Laetisha stated that her greatest accomplishment as an athlete to date is "winning my first World Cup [in 2014]" but went on to say that the recent "Gold Coast [Commonwealth] Games were the most special as all of my family were there."

The ongoing support provided by both her parents is greatly appreciated by Laetisha. Her mum Pam has a lot of faith in her daughter and says it was simply Laetisha's curiosity and subsequent enjoyment of shooting with her father that led to her 100 per cent commitment to the sport. Pam says Laetisha's dedication to shooting was tough to begin with, particularly concerning schooling. Laetisha went to an all-girls school until her final year, when she transferred to Haileybury as part of the first intake of females. This was a huge move for Laetisha and she is grateful the school was supportive of her sports shooting.

On top of her shooting Laetisha owns racing greyhounds with her dad Bernie, who is a clay target shooter and responsible for getting her into sports shooting. Bernie primarily shot pests like foxes and rabbits when Laetisha was growing up but they found a bond competing against each other in sports shooting. She also enjoys water sports and did karate for 10 years before stopping as a teenager, already a junior black belt instructor, to concentrate solely on shooting.





Laetisha's accomplishments at just 28 years old are remarkable and right now she is heavily focused on her shooting but is looking for a transition into coaching at some stage. She appears to be taking all the right steps, having studied Communications at Monash University and more recently Childcare. "I started Childcare study last year, as the year after an Olympic Games is generally very quiet," she said. She now has her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Laetisha's love for her little cousins and enjoyment playing with them helped steer her in this direction.

When I asked Laetisha if she had considered coaching other females, males or juniors in the future, she responded that she is currently involved in a "business that caters for all types of people who haven't shot before - through RedBalloon and other organisations." Laetisha wants to "do early coaching to promote shooting" and has "been coaching with [Australian shooting gold medallists] Russell and Lauryn Mark for eight years." She added that "unfortunately shooting generally gets a bad rap but it really is diverse."

SSAA member and Olympic great
Russell Mark was one of Laetisha's first
professional coaches and he admires her
progression. He believes Laetisha is lucky
to have had Australian women exposing
her to international scores and international competition, making it difficult
to crack the Australian ladies team. He
says Laetisha's mix of toughness and skill
makes her a top competitor.

Having seen Laetisha on stage at the SSAA SHOT Expo in Sydney earlier this year and when speaking with her, it's apparent that a media job could be a realistic calling. Laetisha's Communications degree comes into play here and she's a real natural in front of the camera. There's a hilarious YouTube video of Laetisha taking on comedians Hamish and Andy in clay shooting. Let's just say, that despite a severe handicap, the competition wasn't even close.

Her passion for the shooting sports is evident and when I asked Laetisha about a media role she responded that she is "keen and passionate to do media in the future... after retirement" and went on to say that she would "love to be a sports journo or reporter." Interestingly Laetisha's sporting idol comes from the world of athletics, saying she'll "never forget Cathy Freeman winning gold at the Sydney 2000 Olympics." Something we both share!

When I asked Laetisha about her training, she said: "I train with more men than women, which is purely circumstantial.

"I've always wanted to promote women in sport and the great thing with shooting is that men and women are equal.

"The sport is actively involving females and young people in a way I've never seen before."

Laetisha trains for hours each day shooting and working out her core with exercises like pilates and says shooting is 20 per cent physical and 80 per cent mental. She admits her biggest weakness is on the mental side, saying "I care too much about what other people think of me." Taking key elements from her time with sports psychologists to stay at the elite level, Laetisha finds sticking to a routine important. She has found solace in adult colouring books for relaxation between events, which sports psychologist Mark Spargo, from the Victorian Institute of Sport, says is almost like a form of meditation.

Laetisha pointed out that each country must first qualify to actually compete in any Games. There is an internal process from there to select the athletes who represent their country. In Korea recently, Laetisha actually won Australia's second quota spot for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Well done!

Laetisha and the SSAA are of course, very "disappointed" that shooting has been dropped from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and she feels that perhaps it might be a bit of a political stance. We didn't go over politics a great deal but Laetisha did make a very poignant comment in relation to firearms and shooting deaths, saying that "an F1 driver wouldn't be asked about fatalities on the road."

Laetisha would like to see the shooting sports and recreations promoted in the right way, ideally beginning with "a safety program within schools with the right kind of education for young people." She agrees that many observers unfortunately hold misconceptions when it comes to firearms and believes education is the key. On that theme, she went on to explain how during her time with Russell and Lauryn Mark, people are often "very apprehensive" to begin with. However, she happily explained that once the "misconception" is gone people really open up and walk away with a greater understanding of the sport and firearms in general.

Australian Women's Shooter is excited to welcome Laetisha on board with a regular feature column in AWS starting next edition. You can ask Laetisha or editor Gemma Dunn any questions via aws@ssaa.org.au

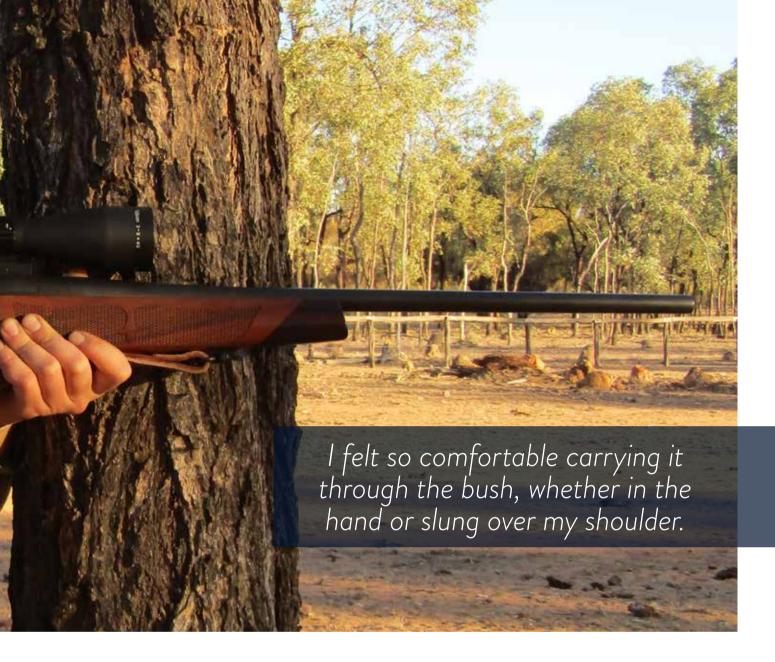


# Weatherby Vanguard

- a rifle royale

Lamilla

by Christie Pisani



I was initially apprehensive about my task of field testing a rifle bearing the name of a princess. But on arriving at the gunshop and seeing 'Camilla', the new women's rifle by Weatherby, I changed my mind. And my sigh of relief was accompanied by a comment to the shop owner: "Thank goodness - I was worried it was going to be pink!"

So what do women want? Well I'm not sure we even know, but after consulting some gal pals on a wine and movies night we came up with some ideas... mostly related to rifles.

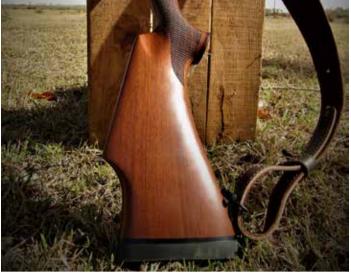
Good looks I was immediately impressed by the Camilla's elegant but not dainty appearance. I understand the practicalities of a synthetic stock but there's just something sexy about wood. The Camilla boasts a satin-finish Turkish A-grade walnut stock with chequering at the fore-end and grip. The barrel and action have a matte, bead-blasted, blued finish.

Lightweight and slim • Let's face it, a lot of women are happy to drop a kilo or two and my impression on being handed the Camilla was a typical female response: "She's so skinny!" The buttstock was deliberately designed with a slim profile for the fairer and not-so-broad shouldered sex,

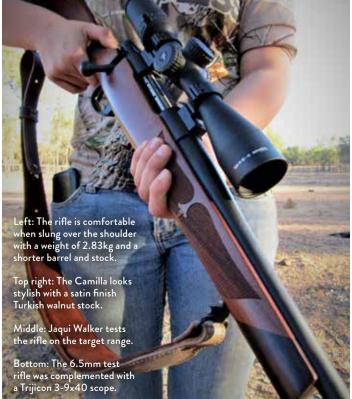
allowing it to nestle comfortably into the shoulder. Being fairly broad shouldered myself this has never been an issue for me, and personally I found it a little too narrow, possibly because it's so different to the fairly chunky rear end of the rifle I normally shoot. But I can see how it would appeal to the smaller-framed lady.

The Camilla weighs 2.83kg without a scope and with its 20" barrel was easy to take through the bush - not cumbersome and awkward - and less metal equals a small drop-off in the overall weight. I felt so comfortable carrying it through the bush, whether in the hand or slung over my shoulder.









### ...this is no 'girlie' gun. It's perfect for a practical woman who wants to get on to the target range or go hunting in the field.

A good fit > The independent huntress is no longer satisfied with hubbie's hand-me-downs. Most of us hunting gals did that enough as a kid walking through the bush wearing their older brother's oversized camo pants, rolled up at the legs. This stock is made specifically to fit women. The slim pistol grip has a shorter grip-to-trigger reach, ideal for slightly smaller hands. I did appreciate this feature although it did take some getting used to.

The length of pull (distance from the middle of the trigger to the end of the buttstock) has been shortened to 13". For the shorter shooter it increases comfort and it's useful for the new shooter to avoid the temptation to overstretch, causing poor posture and placing the face too close to the scope.

And speaking of scopes, a feature of the Camilla is a higher comb, which helps line a lady's eye with the optic (with our tendency to have longer necks). This is a feature I'd never thought of before and was a pleasant surprise. It seemed my eye lined straight up with the scope with everything in its right place. I had another lady shooter, Jaqui Walker, try it and she made the same observation, that her eyes were at the perfect level to look through the scope immediately on settling the rifle to her shoulder. Knowing I could raise the rifle and find my target immediately became a major selling point of this rifle.

Shoots to kill • Most new hunt-resses' principal anxiety is wounding an animal. We aim for the heart - just ask any man who has ever been in love! The ethical hunter wants to shoot with deadly accuracy, thus we need a rifle that brings out the best in our shooting ability. I fitted a Trijicon 3-9x40 scope to my 6.5mm calibre test model - available calibres include .223 Remington, .243 Winchester, 6.5mm Creedmoor, 7mm-08 Remington and .308 Winchester - and using Federal 6.5mm Creedmoor 140gr soft points was able to shoot consistent groups at 100 yards.

Friendly • We don't want to be intimidated by our rifle. The user-friendly bolt action with hinged floorplate was a treat to use as the bolt had an extremely smooth draw and absolutely none of the stickiness that can come with a brand new rifle that hasn't been 'worked'.

The recoil pad has been given a negative angle (the toe canted away from the body) to sit into the lady's shoulder groove and has been reduced in size. While sighting in at the target range I noticed quite a kick in the rifle, not surprising for its light weight. The recoil pad seemed to absorb the impact of the first few shots fairly well despite its size, but after a few more shots I found myself wishing for a bit more padding, either on the rifle or my bony shoulders.

My options? Have a thicker pad fitted (I've heard of ladies doing this to good effect), more time on shoulder weights at the gym or eat more cheese sandwiches. Or just put up with it. Shooting in the field where it wasn't just consecutive shots off a bench gave no such problems.

I don't believe it's the size of the recoil pad that counts but how well it holds that butt in the right place. It seemed to absorb the impact fairly well despite its size.

I found the Camilla quite comfortable once I got acquainted with its compact nature. While I personally would prefer a rifle with a little more size and weight about it, I feel it would be a perfect match for a smaller-framed lady or new hunter who hasn't been conditioned to a lifetime of large rifles.

The Camilla was named after company founder Roy Weatherby's wife, not the Duchess of Cornwall. Overall the Camilla is graceful, well designed, classy, tasteful and refined, all the words that come under 'elegant' in the Macquarie Thesaurus. Just like a royal.

However, despite the chic name and appearance this is no 'girlie' gun. It's perfect for a practical woman who wants to get on to the target range or go hunting in the field. If this 'Camilla' were a human I would picture her as a sophisticated grazier's wife who isn't afraid to get in the yard with the cattle!

The Camilla is available now from about \$1500.





As a child being raised by a family of baseballers, it was inevitable that I followed suit. But as I grew older I discovered shooting and that was the start of my love affair with our sport. I have always had great hand-eye coordination thanks to baseball and I never had any trouble with my vision, which made me easily pick up the basic skills of shooting. I chose to become a clay target shooter because I loved the fact that the targets

moved, something I think stemmed from

I speak about my baseball for a reason – it directly relates to both my strengths and weaknesses as a shooter. It allowed me to be dynamic and strong enough to be a competitive shooter but it also brought something of an 'issue' for my shooting to the forefront.

Two years into my shooting career my coach discovered that I was cross-dominant. This means that I shoot right-handed but am actually left-eye dominant. Eye dominance happens to those animals

with binocular vision – namely humans. Binocular vision is what allows us to form a single three-dimensional image using both eyes. The main advantage of this, and one that is most relevant to shooters, is that binocular vision helps us to gain depth perception from what we are viewing.

Depth perception is crucial to those shooters who are trying to obtain a clear view of a target rapidly and accurately. In someone with normal binocular vision there is an effect of parallax, and therefore

my baseball days.

the dominant eye is the eye that is primarily relied on for precise positional information. The dominant eye isn't 'stronger' but it feeds the visual information to the brain the fastest. So this is extremely important for sports that require aim such as archery, darts and of course, shooting.

As a shooter trying to aim with something that is essentially an extension of my eye, being right-handed but left-eye dominant poses a few challenges. This is because I am basically relying on my 'slower' eye to pick up the target, which can lead to tardy/inconsistent reaction times and quicker fatigue.

Studies found in optometric journals online show that cross-dominance had a big effect on scores in shooting. Those with uncrossed dominance had substantially shot better than those who had not.





men. After just two or three shots I could clearly see whether my attendee was cross-dominant or not. This was due to them either trying to tilt their head over the stock to use their left eye, seeing two sets of barrels or just completely missing consistently to the left of the target by about a foot and having no clue why.

If you're lucky enough to have your dominant hand and eye match, you have no worries when it comes to shooting. But if you want to rectify this or still can't quite work it out there are going to be some things to consider and important steps you will have to take.

# Step 1 As stated previously, your first port of call should be seeking professional help. Sports optometrists have played a vital role in the success of shooters all over the world and it is well worth the small price you pay. After all, having 20/20 vision does not always mean you have good visual acuity. Doctors of optometry

can help shooters by:

- Maximising the athlete's clarity and contrast through the correct prescription.
- Adjusting focus for the sighting distance and movement of targets.
- Utilising tints on lenses to maximise contrast.
- Eye training exercises that can enhance/ aid with hand-eye reaction time.

It is really important to note that trying to change your eye dominance is something I would not recommend. I spoke to my sports optometrist about this as an option and he advised me that you can never fully re-train your eye dominance. You will only lessen the absoluteness of it and this can cause you more confusion down the track. Some people do opt for this, but you should always seek the advice of a professional before trying this as everybody is different.

### ...it's more common for women than men to be cross-dominant. It's purely genetic.

Of course, this was an advantage when I was playing baseball because as a right-handed batter, my dominant eye was the one watching the pitches coming. Many studies show that baseballers, cricketers and golfers with cross-dominance had a slight advantage over their counterparts. Therefore, this has the reverse effect for shooting. To make things even more interesting, it's more common for women than men to be cross-dominant. It's purely genetic. Scientists are yet to ascertain why exactly this is more prevalent in women apart from genes.

After instructing try shooting and corporate team building days full-time for nearly seven years I began to notice just how much more it impacted the female participants than males. The numbers affected were roughly 70 per cent of women and only about 20 per cent of

Many people don't know about ocular-dominance, but why is it more of an issue for us girls? I believe a lot of females don't realise they may be cross-dominant because of two things. Firstly, most women are introduced to shooting by a male relative or friend, meaning that secondly all the early learning is done from those that do not commonly have cross-dominance. This often results in the issue not being noticed early on and the female shooter learns to shoot with essentially the wrong handedness for their dominant eye.

So, how do we work out our eye dominance? There are many simple ways outlined on the website: allaboutvision.com/resources/dominant-eye-test.htm

## Women's-only competitions

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: (Name of competition),

Australian Women's Shooter,
PO Box 2520,
Unley, SA 5061

### or online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competitions close January 31, 2019



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Step 2 Consider trying to shoot with a 'patch'. This is something I commonly did with my beginner shooters that was a quick and non-drastic fix, just for the day so they could simply enjoy their session.

I mentioned earlier that dominance is

not always absolute. For some, their dominance can transfer from one eye to the other depending on the conditions that the eyes are under. If you are not strongly cross-dominant, this approach might work to gain some consistency. This involves putting a small patch over the focal point of your dominant eye, as shown. The patch needs to be small enough to still let the peripherals (for depth perception to remain effective) of your dominant eye work as well as let enough light in but be big enough so that

the focal point of your eye is covered – therefore making it the

less dominant eye while shooting.

Of course, this isn't perfect because shooting is best done with both eyes open but it is better to use a patch rather than closing one eye entirely for events requiring the quick acquisition of a target (either moving or stationary). Also, it can be hard to learn to shoot with a patch because you're really only taking in half of the visual information to your brain when you're shooting.

Overall it is safe to conclude that beginners who use a patch or completely cover their dominant eye will find that it takes a little longer to master the art of target shooting. This is said not to deter, but merely provide you with the truths of dealing with being wired this way.

**Step 3** An alternative and quite drastic approach is to merely change the side in which you use to shoot – becoming

a left-handed shooter if you are left-eye dominant. It can sound daunting but really it makes the most sense if you are still a beginner. I have considered doing this but remained undecided as I have been shooting right-handed with a patch for more than 10 years. I just wish I had known about it earlier and saved all the hassle of patches and eye-dominance.

If you are a beginner or know someone with this issue who is a beginner, I would strongly recommend them to start shooting with uncrossed dominance.

This is because it is still
early enough for them to
develop their skills on
the other side before
they have learnt
to shoot crossdominantly. Or for
the pistol shooters
you can try using
your right hand but
moving the pistol over
to sight the target using
your left eye.

The final move is acquiring an accredited coach, attend a coaching clinic or at least speak to a friend/someone at the club that has coaching experience who can properly guide you in the direction of reaching your goals. It is imperative that you always seek guidance from those with experience. Alongside this, you need to ensure that you have the correct gun fit, optics and equipment before you go drastically changing things about your shooting.

Lastly, note that the information on this topic is only beginning to scratch the surface and we certainly could benefit from more studies by scientists and doctors. There are many resources out there in regards to this topic but not all of it is supported by scientific evidence, which is why my major suggestions are to go and speak to a professional sports optometrist and find a coach to help work out what's best for you.

### SSAA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

SSAA Membership Office, PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761
Phone 02 8805 3900 Fax 02 9832 9377 Email mem@ssaa.org.au

ABN 95 050 209 688



NEW RENEWAL Have you been a member before? Yes/No

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Cheques payab	ole to the Spo	rting Shooter	rs' Associ	ation o	f Aust	ralia	Inc.					1	VIS.	A	stercond	Pay	rai Ma

### APPLICANTS PLEASE READ AND SIGN

This application is made in full recognition of the Association's requirement for responsible and ethical behaviour. I undertake to do all in my power to preserve the good image of the sport and the Association. I understand that members breaking the Code of Conduct may be subject to suspension or expulsion. The Code can be found at ssaa.org.au/code

SIGNATURE:	
DATE:	

Refund Policy: Subject to Australian law, membership fees are not refundable, nor can they be transferred.

SSAA Inc collects personal information of members. The information you provide on this form will be disclosed to the state or territopy branch of the SSAA to which your membership application relates. A copy of SSAA Inc's privacy policy can be found at ssaa.org.au/privacy. You can obtain access to your personal information by writing to: SSAA, PO Box 2520, Unley SA 5061.

### ATTENTION NSW & ACT MEMBERS

Complete this section ONLY if you wish to use your membership of the SSAA to support your Genuine Reason for having a firearms licence. Register your SSAA activities by marking one or more of the following boxes:

TARGET SHOOTING

HUNTING (club membership)

COLLECTING

HUNTING OTHER (R licence, property owner/permission)

### Choose the insurance offer

and for just \$30 you get \$25,000 worth of firearms and fixed accessories cover.

### Want to know more?

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