

Top 5 physical tips for shooters • 2020 Women of Shooting event • The one shirt you need

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

Hunting
the perfect
connection



Issue 8

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Editorial



Gemma Dunn

The 2020 Women of Shooting event was again a standout success and we take you for a behind the scenes look covering the fantastic weekend.

We've all had the jitters in some way when shooting so columnist Laetisha Scanlan covers the importance of pre-shot routine and guides us through her simple method for success.

I highlight my top five physical fitness tips for shooters to follow on from my psychological tips featured in **Issue 3**. Part one of two covers the fundamentals for optimal sporting performance.

Hunting often unfairly receives a bad rap but our feature story reveals how it brought a couple closer together and encourages everyone to give it a go.

The SSAA family has you covered with the versatile *Australian Hunter* magazine shirts that are ideal for all Aussie hunters and fishers. We show you why they can be worn to just about any occasion and offer an incredible deal for subscribers.

Keep in touch via our **Facebook** page and **email**. Also, remember to enter the draw to win a pair of Howard Leight electronic earmuffs thanks to **TSA Outdoors**.

Gemma

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AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

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Taking aim with Laetisha Scanlan



How important is pre-shot routine?

It is widely known that many athletes from around the world have pre-shot routines which they use religiously on the playing field. Some can be more noticeable than others. Sports such as golf and tennis generally stand out more with their warm-up behaviours and actions, especially before they serve the ball or line up to a tee.

But is it useful for shooters? Whether you are a beginner or a professional, absolutely!

Clay Target shooting is a monotonous sport. You are doing the same process on a repeated basis for sometimes hours on end. Yes, the targets may be varying in speed and direction or your foot position may change depending on different stations, but the set-up and your approach should be identical every time you call for the target.

A pre-shot routine helps with not only your physical movement to the target but also your mental clarity, maximising your ability to perform at your best. I personally attest to my own routine saving me from nerves in high stakes international events on numerous occasions.

How many of you have missed a target because you were distracted by a thought that came into your head moments before you called? Or something caught the corner of your eye? Or the gun didn't feel right in your shoulder, but you called anyway?

A majority of these little issues can be avoided by having a solid pre-shot routine that is the perfect distraction from unwanted thoughts and that can significantly help improve your own mental game. It doesn't have to be complicated; it can be as simple as you want it to be.

I keep it short and sweet:

- Remind myself to stick to the process
- Check hold points using a shotgun shell as my height indicator
- Wiggle my feet and tap toes to feel loose and relaxed
- Place ammo into the gun
- Tap my hat and glasses
- Mount gun securely in shoulder
- Call for target

But the key is that it has to be your own and cater to your specific needs. There will always be a trial and error process involved in finding your own but when you are happy with your routine, it's imperative to use it repetitively, shot after shot. The more you do this the more it will come naturally and the more secure you will feel in high pressure competitions. The only undoing of a pre-shot routine is if it's too long or that you are not fully comfortable with it yourself.

Simply put, when we have a solid process from start to finish confidence becomes a by-product of this and confidence is built from consistency. I urge all target shooters who don't have a routine to at least try and see if you will reap the benefits like I have from a simple yet effective strategy to stay on target.

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:

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Hunting, the perfect connection

Nathan Komninoglou

In a world where we are surrounded by so many distractions, throwing your belongings into the back of the ute and heading bush is the only thing that makes any sense.

We as hunters are passionate about what we do, and spending time outdoors away from the sights and sounds of the daily grind is only the beginning of the many social, physical and psychological benefits of the sport. Some people enjoy going to the movies, others to the beach, or just out to eat with friends. When my girlfriend Kara and I want to unwind, we hunt and fish.

I was introduced to hunting at the age of 19. A distant family member approached

me one day and asked if I'd like to join him, his two sons, and his overly enthusiastic German shorthair on a quail hunt. Without hesitation I eagerly jumped at the chance. Driving away from suburbia and into flat stubble country, walking through wide open fields and breathing in fresh country air, watching a dog do what it was actually born to do, it was right down my alley. It was safe to say the hunting bug had well and truly bitten me that day.

I spent a few years hunting the bread and butter species such as quail, ducks and foxes, but as time went by I gradually found myself looking for more of a challenge. That's when the idea of deer hunting crossed my mind. Little did I know

that in the not too distant future I would be completely obsessed with deer.

Besides filling the freezer and starting a bone collection, deer hunting has given me many more blessings and taught me some great life lessons. Sitting on the side of a mountain and watching the first flickers of light start to peak over the horizon really is something special that unfortunately many people never take the time to appreciate. Seeing the wondrous beauty of mother nature is amazing. A wise soul once told me: "Some people are so poor, all they have is money." I couldn't agree more. Taking time in the field to appreciate the little things means you never leave empty-handed.



I've also formed some great relationships with people thanks to hunting. For those of you that have been blessed with a partner who not only supports your love for hunting, but shows interest also, I really do encourage you to introduce them to it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Not only will you have an extra pair of eyes and ears, you'll also have someone to help you with hauling out meat. Your relationship will also become stronger and deeper as you share

important moments with each other and make memories out in the field together.

Watching Kara being smitten by the hunting bug has been an amazing and encouraging experience for me. It brings me back to when I was introduced to it. From firing a gun for the initial time, to seeing her opening wild deer, these are all memories that we'll never forget. We'll carry these moments in our hearts and minds.

Our most standout hunting experience would most definitely be our first successful hunt together. The plan was to sit high up on a ridge line glassing a spot where four gullies intersected with each other. With high hopes, we made our way to our spot the night before and planned on being up at dawn to glass. Adrenalin filled my veins as our alarm broke the morning silence. I unzipped the tent and threw up the binoculars. "Deer!" I exclaimed to Kara in my loudest whisper voice.

Sitting on the side of a mountain and watching the first flickers of light start to peak over the horizon really is something special...

Kara glassing for fallow bucks.



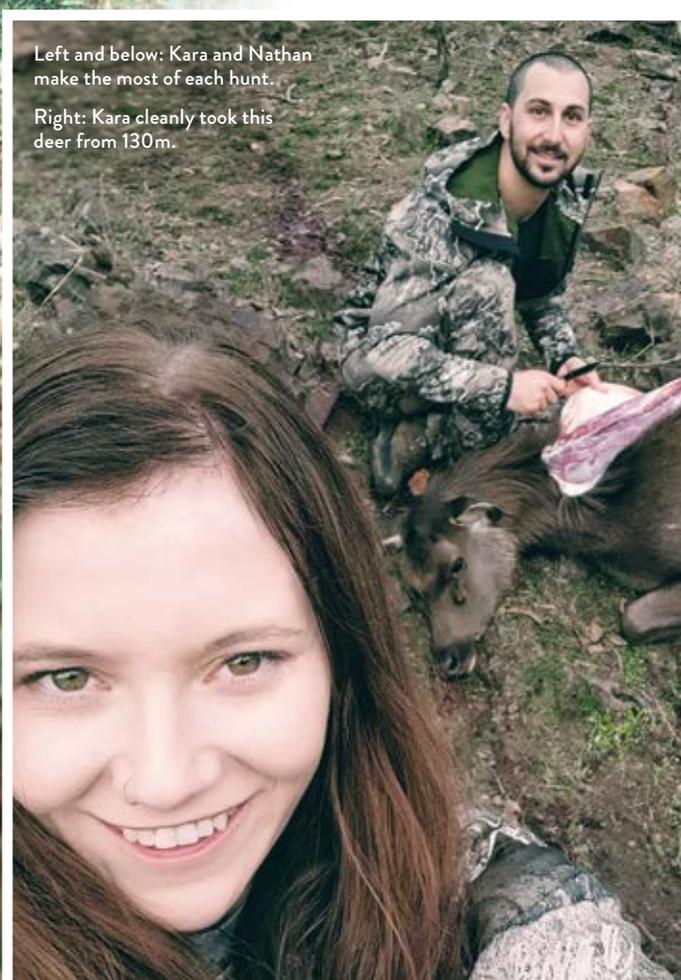
I wasn't expecting to find them so quickly. With haste she jumped out of the warm confines of her sleeping bag. I'd never seen her wake up so fast. Two sambar were silhouetted on a ridge line just more than 700m away. I passed the binoculars to Kara so I could set up the rifle. Within 20 seconds they had fed into a gully towards us.

"They're feeding so fast," exclaimed Kara as she watched them do their thing. We sat and waited in anticipation to see where they would eventually reappear. It was amazing having someone by my side just as eager in that situation as I was. I felt so lucky in that instance that this person was my partner. The sambar finally reappeared for a split second just under 500m away. We decided to stay put as they were feeding towards us, and the wind wasn't in our favour.

Since we were situated a mere 20m away from camp, I decided to let Kara keep glassing for a minute as I went and made us a quick hot brew. As the water started to boil, I noticed some movement on the

Left and below: Kara and Nathan make the most of each hunt.

Right: Kara cleanly took this deer from 130m.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a camouflage jacket and pants, is sitting on a large deer in a grassy field. She is smiling at the camera. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

Kara's advice to any girl who has a partner who wants to take them hunting is "just go!"

A close-up photograph of a deer lying on the ground in a grassy area. The deer is facing right, and its head is resting on the ground.

ridge line 140m away. I most awkwardly hunched over and ran to Kara. "Look," I whispered as I pointed towards the small clearing on the next opposing face. Adrenalin started coursing through our veins as she set up behind the .300 Win Mag. The fully grown hind was ready to bolt as she was already onto us.

Kara settled herself behind the scope, took two deep breaths, and squeezed the trigger as she had done before. Boom! Every gully system in sight received a rude awakening as she had just taken her first shot at a live target. I was confident in her shooting capabilities as she had proved to be quite the shot on prior occasions at the range.

The hind made a dash straight downhill and out of sight. As she unloaded the empty shell, she had the biggest grin I'd ever seen. We stood up, she slung the rifle over her shoulder and we made our way to where the deer was. Not only did Kara secure her first deer, but her shot placement couldn't have

been any better. Two broken shoulders, two lungs, and a heart all fell victim to this girl's hand. It was the most ethical of shots.

If I had to explain how I felt, 'proud' was a massive understatement. We went on to give this deer the respect it deserved and utilised every cut of meat from her.

Kara's advice to any girl who has a partner who wants to take them hunting is "just go!" You may have preconceived ideas of what it's all about, but without experiencing it for yourself, you really don't know what you're missing out on.

Apart from having fun and filling the freezer at the same time, the connection you make with your partner deepens. You understand them and their pastime more. You'll shortly realise it's not just about shooting something; it's about reconnecting to yourself. If you have a chance to go for a hunt, take it by the horns.

Top 5 physical tips for shooting

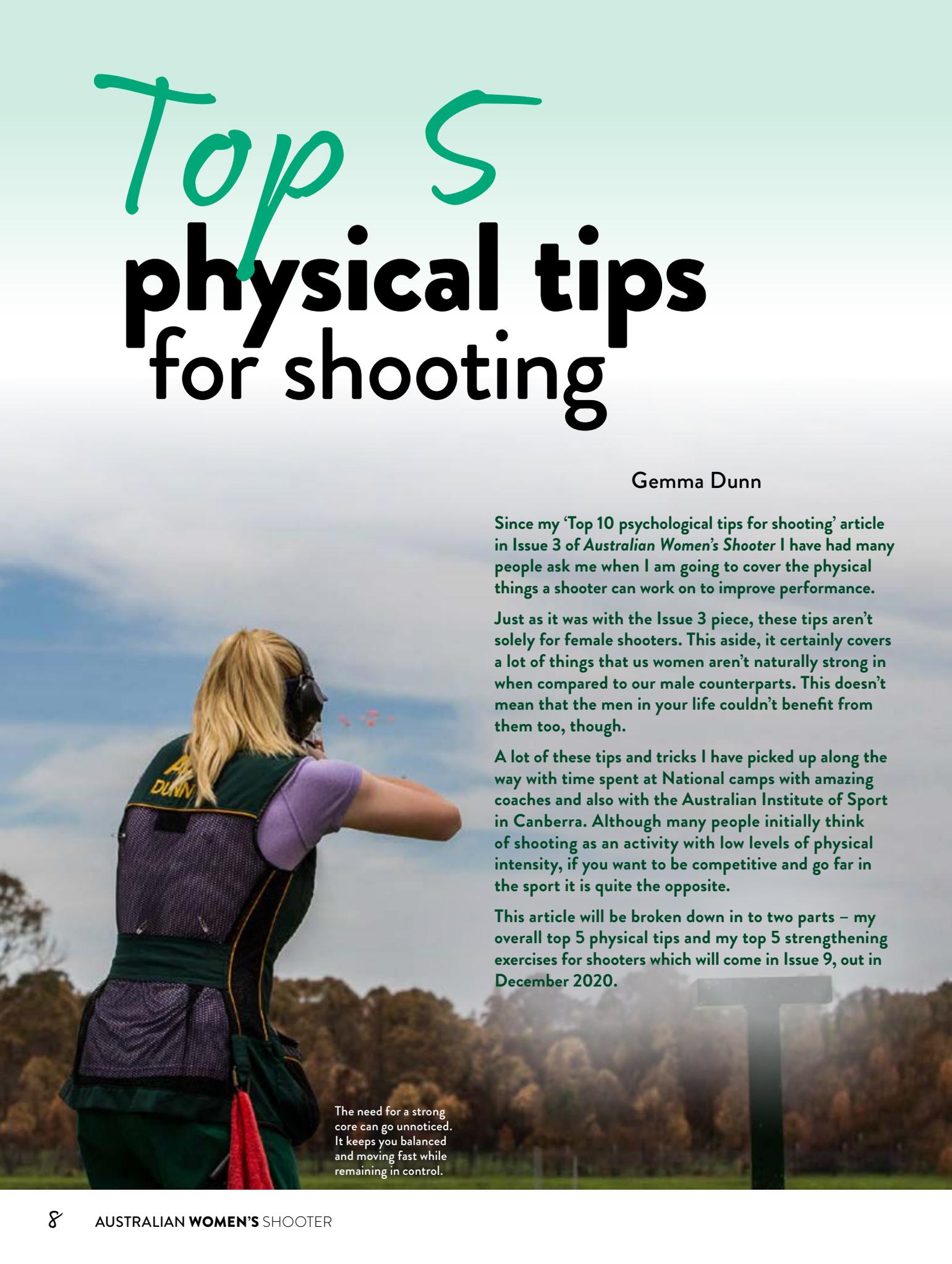
Gemma Dunn

Since my 'Top 10 psychological tips for shooting' article in Issue 3 of *Australian Women's Shooter* I have had many people ask me when I am going to cover the physical things a shooter can work on to improve performance.

Just as it was with the Issue 3 piece, these tips aren't solely for female shooters. This aside, it certainly covers a lot of things that us women aren't naturally strong in when compared to our male counterparts. This doesn't mean that the men in your life couldn't benefit from them too, though.

A lot of these tips and tricks I have picked up along the way with time spent at National camps with amazing coaches and also with the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. Although many people initially think of shooting as an activity with low levels of physical intensity, if you want to be competitive and go far in the sport it is quite the opposite.

This article will be broken down in to two parts – my overall top 5 physical tips and my top 5 strengthening exercises for shooters which will come in Issue 9, out in December 2020.



The need for a strong core can go unnoticed. It keeps you balanced and moving fast while remaining in control.

1. Staying hydrated

No matter how long you spend practising on targets or in the gym, if you are dehydrated during your session, everything goes out of the window.

The typical symptoms of a person with dehydration are a general feeling of weakness, a lack of concentration, excessive eye strain and even confusion. With any degree of dehydration, even at a minor level, you will experience a functional decrease in mental performance and reaction time and for us shooters this is not ideal.

The basics of having good hydration is simple – don't let yourself reach the point where you are thirsty. Being thirsty is the first stage of dehydration so at this point you are already behind the eight-ball, especially if it is hot.

Good athletes will drink before they are thirsty. The key to this is to take yourself to a point where you are maintaining a good level of hydration 1-2 days prior to any competition or training session and continuing this throughout your match/training.

Maintaining proper hydration mainly involves replenishing the salts (electrolytes) that are lost in the body. It is important to know that those electrolytes are needed, but only if they have been expended first. Sports drinks, like Gatorade, deliver those electrolytes but sometimes in volumes that are not needed and an excess can cause you performance problems as well.

Because during shooting we are generally not burning something like 5000 calories, it is unnecessary to be consuming a full-strength sports drink to replenish those lost electrolytes. I was always taught to split one bottle of Gatorade over two bottles of water so the drink is diluted by at least 30-50 per cent. Another good option is the same ratio mixture but with water and fruit juice.

There are a number of options to maintaining hydration. I was taught that they should be treated in the same manner as your gun and ammunition. You should find out how they work for you before going into action. Don't wait for your outing to chug a lot of sports drinks if you don't normally drink them and don't know what effect they will have on your body. And remember, the age-old trick to gauging hydration levels is the colour of your urine.

Aside from hydration, good nutrition is also key. I have an extremely useful nutrition guide for a day at the range. If you would like a copy, please **email** me.



Here you can see what Gemma usually does on a hot day. If well prepared and properly hydrated you will very rarely need to drink a fully concentrated sports drink for shooting.

2. Strong core

During the past 10 years I have taught the basics of shotgun shooting to thousands of people who have never shot before. Time and again, I would have big burly blokes with enormous biceps turn up to the range thinking they would have no trouble handling the shotgun's weight and recoil.

Granted, they would handle it much better than a junior or a small-framed man or woman would but it wasn't necessarily a guarantee. Quickly it would become apparent that their lower back was starting to hurt and their stance would falter during the session and it would always highlight to me that having a good strong core and shoulders trumps large biceps any day. This is not to say that it isn't important to have strength in the arms but it means it's not always going to give you the best performance for shooting.

Having a strong core produces so many benefits to shooters it's almost mind-boggling. If someone does not have the core to hold the gun in the proper manner over and over again, their lower back will begin to strain and the stance will quickly change. And in shooting, consistency and gun hold are imperative. A strong core will also keep you sturdy on your feet and keeps your whole body engaged, especially useful if you are participating in a more dynamic discipline such as IPSC, Action Match or Sporting Clays.

For me, shooting Olympic Trap, I found the stronger my core, the better reaction time I had. My body could keep up with the pace of the targets travelling at more than 100km per hour and I certainly didn't fatigue as quickly. I was able to replicate my stance and movement consistently over hundreds of targets, which was the key to good results.

In the next issue of AWS, I will outline some good physical strengthening exercises that will be sure to improve those core muscles.

3. Eye exercises

Visual skills tend to break down much faster with fatigue or stress than physical skills. If eye teaming/binocular vision, eye tracking, visual reaction times of hand-eye coordination are inefficient initially or break down, visual information gathering will become inept and slower, resulting in delayed or inaccurate shooting.

It is important to awaken or train these visual elements just as much as it is crucial to training your body's muscles so that you have the ability to withstand eye fatigue without causing decreased performance.

There are good games you can play to train your eyes better for shooting and these include **Exercises to Improve**

Eye Performance and Improve Your Shooting Skills With These Eye Exercises.

A good tip I acquired was to awaken your eyes and reflexes prior to action. Just as you arrive at the range, set up your gear and prepare to shoot, you should be doing something as simple as juggling some balls in the air or if you can't juggle, bounce a springy ball against a brick wall alternating hands with catching and throwing. This will help you warm up so that the first target is not so much of a surprise to the mind. This can also be done prior to each round or detail. Be careful not to overdo it as you don't want to be fatiguing your eyes before you begin to shoot.



Australian Junior trap shooter Renae Jones warming up her coordination before competition begins.

4. Breathing and controlled heart rate

Breathing properly is not only relaxing, it facilitates performance by increasing the amount of oxygen in the blood. This carries more energy to the muscles and facilitates the removal of waste products.

Unfortunately, many individuals have never learned deep diaphragmatic breathing. Those shooters who become uptight during a high-pressure performance situation find their breathing is usually affected in one of two ways; they hold their breath or they breathe rapidly and shallowly from the upper chest. Either of these variations produce the same effect – increased tension and worse performance.

I have some good breathing exercises to help combat this that I can supply.

Something as simple as juggling... will help you warm up so that the first target is not so much of a surprise to the mind.



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Breathing properly is not only relaxing, it facilitates performance by increasing the amount of oxygen in the blood.



Laurn Mark shows a dry firing training technique in the Go Shooting Shotgun Coaching Videos on YouTube.

s. Dry firing

This is probably one of the most undervalued training tools within the shooting sports. There are so many benefits to dry firing training for a shooter that I simply have no idea why more people don't do this.

Dry firing is essentially practising your firearm handling skills without actually needing to fire the firearm. What dry firing techniques you use depends heavily on your shooting sports discipline of choice.

There are plenty of videos and articles out there to give you guidance on how best to train for your discipline but the one bit of advice I would give you is to make sure you keep whatever you are doing simple and consistent with what you would be doing at the range shooting targets.

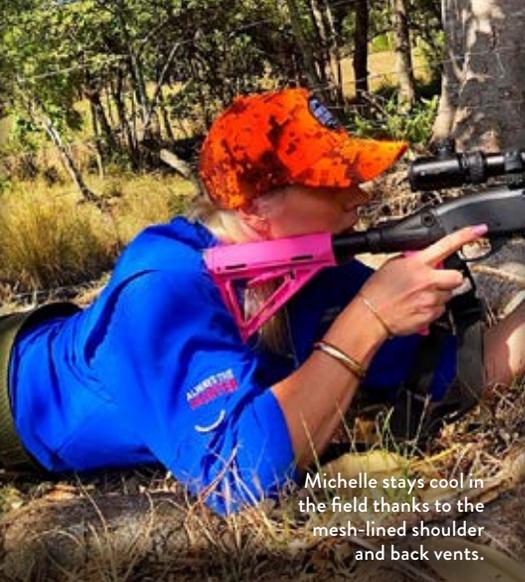
Dry firing allows you to gain a feel for your gun in your hands – so much so that it becomes second nature to handle it while in action. The last thing we want to be doing is manipulating or moving our guns differently with each shot as this does not create a consistent

base for you to perform from. Along with this, dry firing will also produce:

- General shooting skills and safety habits
- Shooting fundamentals (grip, extension, stance, aiming, trigger control, hold control, breath control, follow-through)
- Shoulder, arm and hand muscles necessary for a steady hold
- Hand-eye coordination
- Eye muscles and focus
- A proper, smooth draw/mount and presentation
- Quick target acquisition
- 'Muscle memory'

Lastly, dry firing allows you to save money on ammunition and extra trips to the range as a lot of skills you learn there, you can learn during dry firing practice.

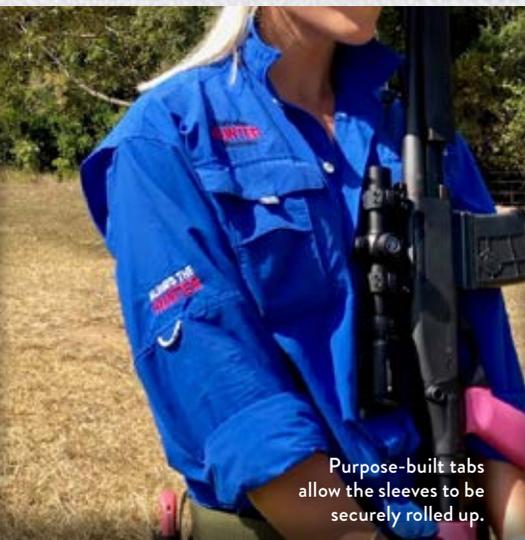
For more information about all these tips, just email me at aws@ssaa.org.au



Michelle stays cool in the field thanks to the mesh-lined shoulder and back vents.



The shirts provide style and practicality for Australia's keen hunters and fishers.



Purpose-built tabs allow the sleeves to be securely rolled up.

Australian Hunter shirt fits the bill

Gemma Dunn
Photos Michelle Pares

Many people would agree that second to the firearm or fishing gear of choice, the next most important decision is what we choose to wear to protect us from the outdoor elements.

Although at the time of writing we are all mostly rugged up in our best winter warmers, it is important to think ahead to what's available out there for the warmer months.

I was able to do some fishing on the northern coast of NSW and it made me realise that I probably only own one good, proper fishing shirt. As I plan on doing a bit more fishing and hunting I decided to keep it in the SSAA family and see if the *Australian Hunter* magazine shirt would be the right fit for my needs (let's face it, I wouldn't know what tanned skin was if it hit me in the face, I am that pale).

So, I always have to look for shirts that have a good UV protection rating while not being too bulky or hot.

These exclusive shirts are made by the Columbia Sportswear Company in the US, who are industry leaders in outdoor apparel after being owned and operated by the same family of passionate hunters and fishers for more than 70 years.

Their cutting-edge Omni-Shade UPF 30 technology has earned the Skin Cancer Foundation seal of recommendation. The tight weave construction

with UV absorbent yarns and ceramic reflectors block the full spectrum of harmful UV rays and will keep you protected from the harsh Australian sun for the life of the shirt.

A comfortably loose fit with hidden shoulder and mesh-lined back vents allows a cooling breeze in and out so they're ideal for hot and humid weather. Functional features include tabs to convert to short sleeves, two different utility loops, a rod holder and four secure chest pockets to store your ammo and other goodies while keeping your hands free.

Providing style and practicality in your choice of vivid blue or fossil, these button-down collared shirts can be worn anytime, anywhere. And for me it's suitable for fishing, and would also be fantastic for the long days out in the sun hunting or at the shooting range.

It is available with free delivery at onlineshop.ssaa.org.au for a discount price of \$75 for *Australian Hunter* subscribers or \$99 standard, making ours the cheapest high-quality Columbia sports shirts in Australia.

Australian Hunter yearly subscriptions are just \$30 for SSAA members: ssaa.org.au/publications/australian-hunter

Bumper turn-out for Women of Shooting encore



Dave Rose

The second Women of Shooting event, organised by **The Outpost Arms and Munitions** store in Rockhampton, and with SSAA support, has wrapped up for 2020 with the feelgood factor to the fore.

After the initial 2019 baptism The Outpost team was able to boost involvement all round. In the process they created a fantastic event for attendees, the McGrath Foundation, local sports shooting clubs and corporate sponsors alike.

The affair was held over two days at three local club venues, on March 7 and 8 to coincide with International Women's Day, beginning with a Gala Night on Saturday. More than 50 women, shooters and non-shooters attended celebrations amid charitable cheer.

They were able to hear Australian Olympic legend Suzy Balogh share stories of her trials and experiences in the Clay Target shooting arena.

Also, five-time world champion single action shooter, Kathouse Kelli (Joanne Dennes) recounted her journey in the sport. With these incredible women sharing their tales it's an understatement to say the audience was left feeling inspired and empowered.

Add in the enjoyment of world-class catering and non-alcoholic bar service and it was a night to remember. There was no better way to finish than by partaking in a charity auction to raise funds for the McGrath Foundation. The bidding was



Thumbs up: Amber, left, and Bree were happy participants at the SSAA Rockhampton Range's Rimfire Benchrest rifle shoot.



Many got to safely try shooting for the first time.

officiated by the team of experts from the local Elders branch and would not have been possible if not for the generosity of these valued business partners: Beretta Australia, OSA Australia, TSA Outdoors, Nioa and Yeti Australia.

Together with the participation of such wonderful guests a whopping \$15,000 was raised for the McGrath Foundation, which was a terrific result.

Following on from the Gala Night, The Outpost boosted the range day capacity fourfold on last year's numbers by working with three local sports shooting clubs to host their own separate ladies' 'Come and Try' days.

Directing the firm's marketing resources and the three clubs' facilities towards the same goal the SSAA Rockhampton Branch, Rockhampton Pistol Club and Rockhampton Clay Target Club engaged their members to turn out and help run their respective 'Ladies Only' range days.

A mighty effort resulted in more than 100 women, many who were totally new to sports shooting, being able to try their hands at their preferred disciplines in a comfortable, safe and welcoming environment.

The **SSAA Rockhampton Branch** excelled. As always their facilities looked immaculate and they had multiple club members on the firing line to help run participants through the process and discipline of Rimfire Benchrest shooting.

Before they started, all those who attended were treated to a shooting demonstration from Joanne Dennes, aka Kathouse Kelli. "Kat" as she is affectionately known, showed everyone how to shoot the immensely fun and challenging Single Action discipline.

The Rockhampton Pistol Club ran their attendants through courses of fire using Air, Rimfire and Centrefire handguns to showcase a selection of the different disciplines available to compete in. This was followed by a wine and cheese tasting experience in their clubhouse.

It was all hands on deck with an army of RPC regular members generously giving their time to supervise newcomers one on one. Working together they delivered a very well-run adventure.

The Rockhampton Clay Target Club showcased the dynamic sport of Clay Target shooting with the assistance of special guest Suzy Balogh. Suzy, who

runs her own shooting clinic business called Hitting Targets, was an absolute champion on the day, not stopping to draw breath until more than 60 women had received dedicated individual coaching from her. This was a real highlight for everyone who attended.

The three local clubs put a tremendous amount of work into this coordinated effort with the crew at The Outpost to create a platform for women to try the all-inclusive sport of competitive shooting. Having so many ladies sample the sport and gain a genuine sense of achievement in doing so made all the hard work worthwhile.

With the aim to drive even more interest and allow for The Outpost event to be bigger and better in the future, it has been decided to run the occasion every two years. So, ladies, mark your calendars for March 5 and 6, 2022. That's when this shooting bonanza will be happening again.

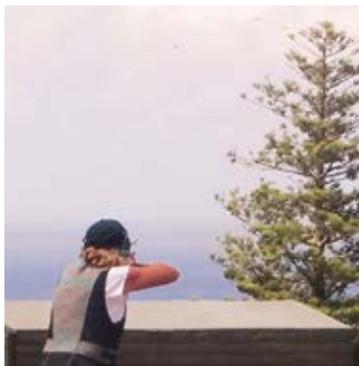
Certainly the managing director of The Outpost, Nathan Armstrong, is looking forward to a repeat success. "We could not be happier with the outcome for everyone involved," said Nathan.

Women who shoot

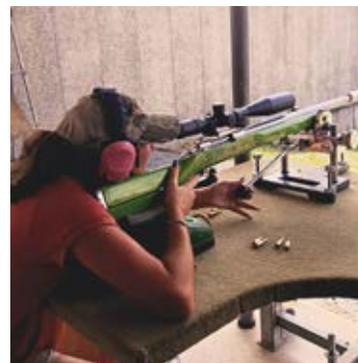
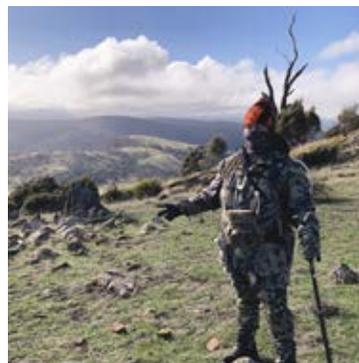
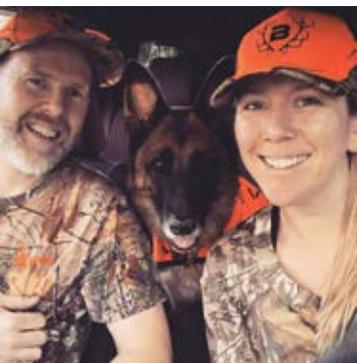
The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia is rapidly closing in on 200,000 members!



"We are particularly proud to see such a significant increase in female and family membership in our fun, safe, family sport.



"Encourage your family and friends to sign up and be a part of the awesome SSAA community." – National President Geoff Jones



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