

The Australian Junior **SHOOTER**

An introduction for Junior Shooters & Hunters

Issue 24



WIN
Glowshot
Flipping Jack
.22 Reactive
Steel Target



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Editorial

Educating our young shooters on the fine art of hunting is the theme of edition 24 of *Australian Junior Shooter*, with some of our regular contributors to *Australian Shooter* teaching hunting and stalking skills to the next generation.

Our cover story sees Mark van den Boogaart and a couple of hunting mates take his young son on a long-weekend trip to one of their favourite locations, where they took the first steps in passing on their extensive knowledge to a keen-as-mustard youngster.

Carl Redlich was only eight years old when he first tagged along with dad Chris on a red deer roar hunt and now, as a teenager, has put the knowledge and experience gained over the past few years to good use as he took instruction from Chris and his mate Terry to take the first red deer of his hunting life.

Foxes are the bane of many a sheep farmers' life and Leon Wright has been teaching the art of luring to two generations of the same family. It had been 25 years since Leon supervised Mark in his first fox hunt and in this edition it's Mark's son Nick who accounts for one of the wily predators.

Young shooters really came to the fore in this year's New South Wales Benchrest state championships and we turn the spotlight on some remarkable performances which augur well for the future of the sport in that state.

And turn to Page 14 for our juniors-only competition which this time around offers a Glowshot Flipping Jack .22 reactive steel target worth \$60 courtesy of Glowshot Targets.

Contribute to Australian Junior Shooter

If you are a young shooter or hunter and would like to share your experiences with others, consider writing an article for *The Australian Junior Shooter*. Send an outline of your proposed article to edit@ssaa.org.au and we'll be sure to get in touch.

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Introducing youngsters to the hunting experience

Mark van den Boogaart

As far as I know I'm the only hunter among my immediate and extended family. It all started 32 years ago when not long after buying my first car I drove to the local SSAA range, joined on the spot and rented a rifle.

Soon enough I had my first rifle and was hunting, or at least building the skills and experience to one day call myself a hunter. Hunting has over the years become a big part of our family life. With trophies on the wall and

a freezer usually full of game meat, hunting is a constant around our house so it stands to reason that with the birth of my sons, I wanted to share the hunting life with them.

Exactly how to start is something I've given a lot of thought. Introducing both my boys to fishing when they turned four has been instrumental and we slowly worked our way towards our first dad and eldest son hunting trip.

We set on a date to take advantage of the school holidays and were on the road towards a favourite hunting block. The



Tim and Mark's son discuss the finer points of shot placement.

A photograph of a forest floor with a green circular callout containing text. The forest floor is covered in dry leaves and twigs, with several thin tree trunks visible in the background. The callout is a bright green circle with black text inside.

Tim had delivered a clean, well-placed shot on a small but mean-looking boar.

Introducing youngsters to the hunting experience

plan was to travel on Friday, spend two full days hunting and leave on Sunday night. Along for the trip was long-time hunting friend Tim, while another great mate Simon would be waiting for us in camp.

Arriving early afternoon we met Simon and put our camp together and, with that done, got my son set up for his first taste of hunting. By that I mean ear protectors, a blaze orange hat and child-size safety work shirt. That first afternoon we found goats and stopped the truck while Tim jumped out and I went into the back seat to alert my son. We had agreed Tim would take an active approach to the game and we'd follow up as soon as we could.

From 30m we watched Tim preparing to fire. The crack of his rifle filled the air and my boy was engrossed in what was happening and not at all nervous or uncomfortable. Unfortunately, Tim didn't manage to connect which was something my son commented on for the rest of the afternoon and, with a child's innocence, possibly mentioned a little too much!

Start of a tradition

On Saturday morning we were hunting some big blocks which would mean plenty of travel. Heading off at 7.30 we spent a few hours looking for game, the time punctuated with short walks, the picking up of countless sticks, rocks and other interesting artefacts and just being out in the bush. We decided to head towards the bottom of the block before looping back, which would have us at camp by 2pm. As the day heated up the sign became a little fresher, then just on midday we spotted game.

The initial call was goats so while Tim and Simon went forward to investigate, like the afternoon before, my son and I followed. We stayed back and caught movement, not goats but a little black boar cutting in and out of the cover. It was exciting as we had a panoramic view of the action. It looked like Tim was going to take the shot and watching him close in we saw him fire.

A shot rang out and from the body language of the two hunters this one had struck its target. Simon turned and waved us up. Tim had delivered a clean, well-placed shot on a small but mean-looking boar and after making sure all rifles were clear and everything was safe, he explained to my son what had just happened while I walked back to the truck for hog transport duties. After taking photos we clarified the situation to my son a few more times. What was obvious was we were all taking things a little slower than usual and no one seemed much in a hurry. Young minds need role models and I'm lucky enough to have some good friends who are also keen hunters.

As Sunday rolled around we followed the same approach as the day before but decided to investigate a less frequented part of the block. Simon and Tim again spotted

Introducing youngsters to the hunting experience

game up front - definitely goats this time with two small mobs moving around. They were younger and very good eaters so this was a chance to take something worthwhile for the freezer. My son and I hung back to keep an eye on all the happenings, Simon taking the lead this time as he moved into some heavy cover. As we were 50m away I removed my son's ear protectors so he could hear the action if Simon managed to find a target.

That he did as a series of shots rang out before Simon appeared and we had the all-clear to head up. On the ground were three goats, all good freezer fillers. After photos we watched as Simon and Tim did some field butchering and with pig and a good chunk of goat meat on ice, we decided to head back to camp for an early lunch and pack-up.

We were done and loaded by 3pm and as I hadn't even chambered a round, our intention was to investigate more spots along the way so I might have a chance on some game before hitting the bitumen. Things didn't go to plan though as we spiked a tyre and after unloading the truck, taking the gear out and changing the tyre, the afternoon light was just about gone so we headed for the road. Arriving in Brisbane the next morning my son was well and truly hunted out though smiling from ear to ear.

We managed a couple more family treks over the holidays

and on his second week back at school my son spoke about his hunting trip with dad during 'show and tell' and even took in a pig tusk to illustrate our new family tradition. If, like me, you're keen to introduce your children to hunting but aren't sure where to start, the following ideas might help.

Fishing

My boys, six and four, know we turn animals into food. Catching fish, letting the smaller ones go and bringing home a few 'keepers' has been instrumental in developing their understanding and has helped instill the idea that not everything is fair game and you need to consider your actions.

Safety that suits the audience

The reality is my son didn't go near a firearm and we stayed well back from the shooting. But we did have a simple rule - when I said so he had to become my tail, walking behind me and following my tracks, just like a tail.

Field butchering

Meat was taken during our weekend away and my eldest watched and even wanted to join in the butchering. A big part of the whole process focused on knives and respecting such blades as tools, not toys.



The 'Feral Fence' bordering the hunting block. Installed to help re-establish a native bilby population in an area free of natural predators and other animals.

Keep it simple

Short bursts of hunting on foot, punctuated by exploring was about right for my six-year-old. On the other hand, sitting on a dam led to the fidgets so for the time being hunting is about moving.

The other stuff

Over the weekend we concentrated on 'the other stuff' as well, including looking for sign and a little bushcraft. Whenever we spotted prints and sign we'd try to learn something from it. We also practised basic navigation - keeping an eye on the sun, direction of shadows and your own footprints were all part of it. At times I'd suggest he lead us out of the scrub using his new-found skills.

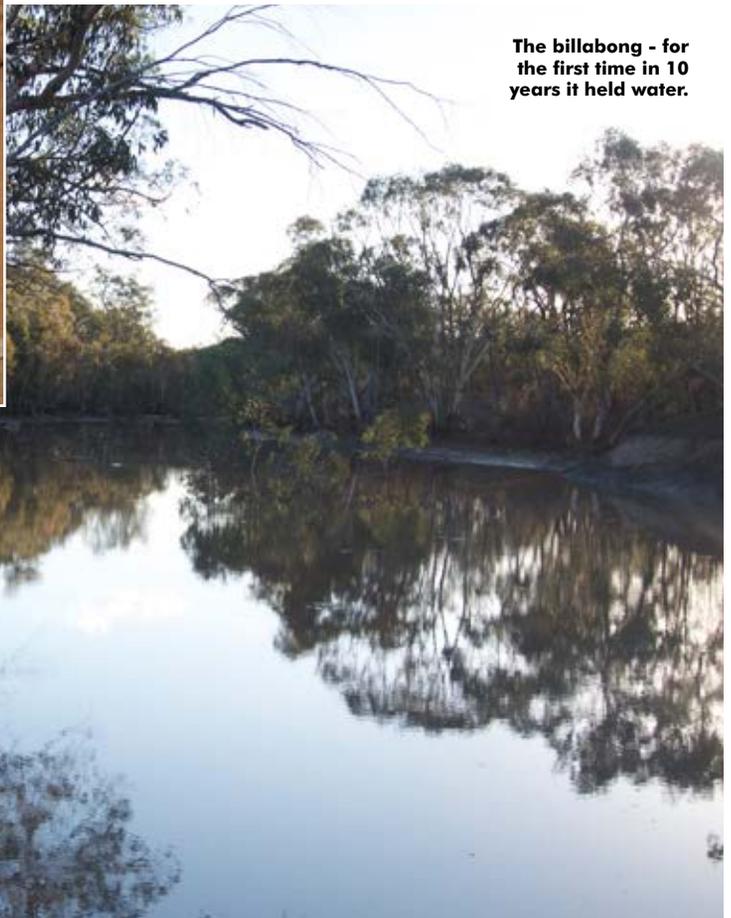
There are any number of challenges to the future of shooting and hunting and one of the biggest is participation. We can't let hunting become just an ol' boys pastime. We need to introduce our families and friends, put them out there and have them hunting now and for years to come. ●



Tim inspects the goats before starting field butchering.



Studying sign.



The billabong - for the first time in 10 years it held water.

The first **red** for Red junior

Chris Redlich



Carl shows off his first deer.

Carl made himself comfortable and squeezed the trigger, the shot connecting and anchoring the deer.

My son has accompanied me on many deer hunts during the past few years although he'd never fired a shot. Hunts aren't measured by the amount of deer taken but the experience gained. Carl was eight years old when he first tagged along on a red deer roar hunt, a memorable experience to say the least, and was so overcome with excitement and anticipation he felt ill in the stomach.

We hadn't travelled far from camp atop a mountain when we heard roaring from the next gully. I told Carl only to move when I did and step as softly as possible. Slowly we closed the gap until reaching a clearing overlooking a track where the deer were audibly close but not visible.

Using a large log as cover we waited to see if they'd appear and sure enough they emerged from the bush, well camouflaged in the dense eucalypt and their reddish-brown coats concealing them well. Two hinds followed by a young double-four stag entered the clearing cautiously. I was tracking them through my binoculars when Carl let out loud a roar - the excitement was too much and he couldn't hold it in any longer. He began to throw up. Amazingly the hind replied with a bark and with every 'roar' from Carl she kept replying, the hilarious performance continuing for a few minutes until the young stag ushered his girls away.

Later that afternoon we tried again hoping to find a meat animal and as we approached another clearing a young stag came into view and into range. Shouldering my 7mm-08 Rem offhand at 80m, I leant against a tree and shot him through the head. Maximum effect for maximum gain as we left with a bulk load of venison, a successful first hunt for my son and a memory that will last forever.

Fast forward five years and I accepted an invitation from my mate Terry to join him on a hunt. He was taking his son Dan and told me Carl was welcome along. The property was



lightly-timbered cattle grazing country surrounded by pockets of forestry and cropping, perfect habitat for deer and for hunting and glassing.

We embarked on an afternoon hunt and hadn't ventured far from camp when a hind and two fawns ran across the track in front of us. We drove a little further and prepared for a hunt on foot. Using a tree line for cover we maintained height advantage and worked our way up and across a gully. Terry and I glassed for a while before eagle-eyed Carl spotted movement - a mob of deer feeding out from the tree line but too distant and moving away from us.

With light starting to fade Terry took us over the crest of a hill where we spotted a mob of hinds unfazed by our presence and ideal for Carl to have his first shot at a deer. Terry let Carl use his new Kimber 84 Stainless in .243 Win. Under his guidance and me watching closely through the binos they edged their way closer to the herd and at 90m found a rest. Carl made himself comfortable and squeezed the trigger, the shot connecting and anchoring the deer. On Terry's instruction Carl chambered another round and fired again. The others bolted, Carl had taken his first red deer and, despite the pressure I'm sure he was feeling, didn't miss. He was rightly excited to have humanely shot his first deer.

With light fading fast we had to hurry and after a brief photo session we removed and packed out the meat, headed for camp and hung the cuts from an old mango tree to set overnight. By morning our venison had fallen foul of the flying foxes' appalling toilet habits and as known carriers of the lyssavirus and Hendra virus, both potentially deadly to humans, the meat was now useless.

Disappointed at losing the spoils from Carl's first red, we took off again. Before I even had a chance to open the gate to our first paddock, we spotted a large mob of red deer feeding on oats. They took off as if they'd been caught

The first red for Red junior

trespassing and as we hastily made a plan to cut them off they disappeared into the tree line and were gone.

Later that day after an unsuccessful attempt at fox calling we resumed our deer hunting mission in search of another meat animal. Over a ridge and down into a flat grassy area by a creek, I spotted movement through the lantana. A quick glass confirmed two hinds who had obviously heard our approach and made for cover. Using a rest I shouldered my Tikka T3X Super Lite and took a sight picture. The larger of the two was only partially exposed so I aimed for the shoulder and at just on 100m the 168gr Nosler LR AccuBond found its mark.

Terry reckoned I'd missed but I was confident the 300 WSM had connected. We crossed the creek and pushed our way through some scrub to where the hind lay dead. It was an old one but I was happy to have an animal we could take for meat.

With a little more daylight remaining we returned to the other side of the property for a sweep over the oats crop and spotted a mob of does and two large bucks. Unlike the red deer stags, the fallow bucks were still wearing their headgear. Terry was keen to have a crack at a fallow buck and this gave us inspiration for the next morning's hunt.

As the sun came up the fallow bucks were nowhere to be found but a nice young fallow spikey had us interested for meat. As Dan hadn't shot a deer yet it was his turn and we

all pitched in to make it happen, preparing for an ambush hunt as the spikey was feeding his way back to the tree line. Carl and I set up my spotting scope and glassed its every move, giving regular feedback to Terry who had Dan ready with the Kimber in .243 Win.

As expected, the fallow crossed into the sight path of Dan's Leupold scope and at 120m he downed the spikey with a single shot. This was real teamwork and sportsmanship that ended in success and we were rapt with the result that left us with wonderful memories. We departed with a truckload of experience for Carl and myself, not to mention a ute full of beautiful fallow and red deer venison. ●



Carl with a fallow antler.



A memorable first red deer hunt for Carl, aged eight, with his dad.



Leon with young Nick and his first fox.

Young hunter learning the ropes

A day out on the foxes was called for with a dual purpose - to rid a farmer's property of the predator and introduce a young hunter to the thrill of decoying

Leon Wright

I glanced at the speedo and saw I was cruising at 60km/hr and my immediate thought was 'Oh Lord, I'm turning into old Bert!' Old Bert was an elderly bushie who used to let me, when barely in my teens, tag along with him rabbit hunting. Everywhere we went he'd never get above 35mph in his old FJ Holden. He once picked up a hitch-hiker who, after watching the speedo for a while, asked if 35mph was its top speed. When told 'yes' he asked Bert to let him out - he'd rather walk. Old Bert and I worked well as a team. Well I thought so - I'd shoot them and he'd carry them.

Not wanting my passengers to notice how slow I was going I put the foot down and we were soon at our hunting area for a morning's fox whistling. Father and son duo Mark and Nicholas were keen to bag Nick his first fox. It was startling to think it had been 25 years since I first took Mark as a teenager out after his first fox and now we're doing the same for his son.

I was attempting to kill two birds with one stone. The area we were to hunt bordered the property of a farmer friend who was keen to see fox numbers knocked down a bit while bagging Nick's first redcoat. Shotguns were the order of the

Young hunter learning the ropes

day as I figured in early autumn most foxes coming into our calls were bound to be youngsters on their own and they'd be fairly hungry.

As long as we kept our movements to a minimum I should be able to call the foxes within easy reach of the shotgun and naturally, if they're on the move and still approaching our stand the shotgun is a far better choice. Coupled with a premium load of No.4 or No.2 shot, any fox within 30m would be in serious trouble.

I have a number of calls I use for foxes but my favourite is the Scotch Predator. There are lots of hares in the area we were to hunt and the predator call, if worked properly, sounds much like an injured hare. So it wasn't surprising the first spot we tried had a hare come in almost immediately after I started working the call. As with numerous other hares I've called up throughout the years, this one was in a highly agitated state and came within a few metres before sensing all was not as it seemed and bolting back into the surrounding timber.

We could have easily taken the hare and I daresay young Nick would have been keen to do so but I'm a firm believer in focusing on the game you're after and enjoying the experience with other game that happen along - learning to show restraint can only be a good thing.

The first fox taken would have to be good luck rather than

good technique. We'd been wandering along, talking softly, looking for our next stand when I noticed a fox just 50m away. Unfortunately, it had spotted us and was hell-bent on putting as much distance between us as possible. Putting it down to bad luck I was about to head off when Mark pointed out another fox.

Although it was looking in our direction it didn't seem overly concerned so we knelt and I rummaged in my pack for the Scotch Predator call. Without hesitation the fox lifted its head and looked our way the moment the soft wailing reached it and came trotting in - it was still closing when Mark dropped it with a single shot from his over-and-under. Even more surprising was its age as while the coat was in excellent condition its teeth were worn down to the gums. It's not often a fox of those years falls for such a simple trick.

With the whole idea of the hunt to find Nick a fox or two, it was imperative we placed him in the best spot to take a shot at any coming in. Easier said than done as we were hunting relatively flat ground and a fox could approach from any angle. A downed limb ahead of us looked a good spot to do a bit of calling from and there was a fair amount of surrounding timber with a couple of stands of sapling about 50m away.

Setting Nick up in a spot directly in front of me on a downed limb, I started working the call and was only 10



A young Mark 30 years ago.



Father and son enjoying a memorable experience.



This fox was lured to within three metres of the hunting party.

seconds or so in when we saw a fox heading our way. This one must have been hungry as it wasted no time in making a bee-line straight for us. I thought it best Nick take a standing shot, so when the fox was 15m out I spoke softly to it, hoping to startle it into propping and sitting still but this one was either deaf or ravenous as it kept on coming.

Coughing a little louder had no effect until the fox was standing on our downed limb staring Mark in the eye, no more than three metres away. It was an amusing sight really, no-one including the fox was moving, both locked in mortal eye contact.

Mark was first to react and the No.2 shot punched the fox back and off the limb. On inspection it was in excellent condition and Mark was already thinking about having it mounted whole. The fact it had trotted straight in without hesitation reinforced the discussion I'd had with Nick, explaining that as long as the hunter remained still and worked the call sparingly, a good result is usually the outcome.

Rumbling thunder, sporadic lightning and the build-up of some very dark clouds towards the east added a sense of urgency to our hunt. Spots of rain had us moving quickly to our next spot and, while we were succeeding in our task, Nick was yet to score a fox. Each time I put him in what I considered the prime spot, the fox came from the opposite direction, preventing Nick from taking a shot. When hunting flat country this is not unusual.

I surveyed the next spot and reckoned the fox was bound

to come out of the thick stand of saplings and downed timber to our immediate left, so I placed Nick directly in front of me. When all was ready I started working the call, softly at first in case a fox was holed up in some downed logs about 100m away. Nothing moved so I worked the call a bit louder and put a sense of urgency into the wailing and this time it worked as I spotted a young fox moving purposely towards us. I whispered to Nick there was one coming in on his left and ceased calling as the fox was heading straight for us.

Then for no reason I could tell, it stopped and stared intently in our direction. I worked the call ever so softly, just loud enough for the fox to hear and sure enough it started advancing again. Nick slowly raised the old single barrel Harrington and Richardson shotgun and, as anyone who has ever fired one of those old single barrels will tell you, they pack a real kick.

I was determined Nick was going to nail this one and let it come to within 15m before coughing loudly and, right on cue, he stopped. Seizing the moment Nick fired, scoring his first fox and a good one at that. He was delighted but no more than I was.

With rain falling in earnest we headed back. I hope the experience left a lasting impression on Nick and he keeps up his hunting adventures for, as I've said numerous times, the future of hunting is in the hands of young hunters and it's up to the seasoned campaigners out there to do their bit and share experiences and knowledge to ensure they do. ●

Red stag at the first time of asking

Seth McMahon

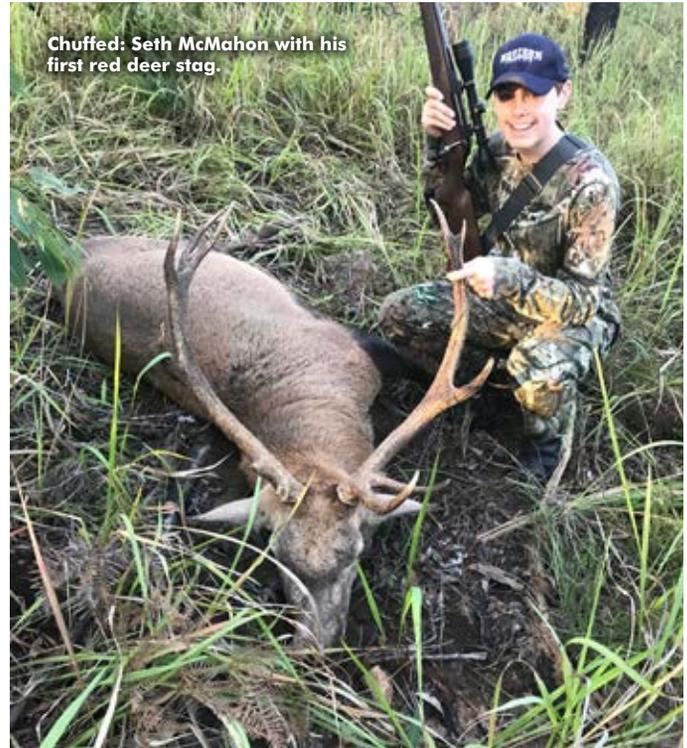
For a few years now I've been accompanying my dad hunting red deer in South East Queensland. My preference has been for hunting wild dogs as there's normally less walking and it can be done successfully from dad's ute or quad bike but, having turned 14 this year, we decided it was time for my first red deer stag hunt during the rut.

We'd done all the pre-rut work in finding locations where there were strong signs of stags, numerous rub trees, wallows and lots of tracks where there was obviously regular deer traffic. And so it was in early April we arrived at our location an hour before daylight and parked a couple of kilometres from our chosen spot, preparing our rifles and gear while listening for any faint roars. I'd be using a Tikka .243 with 100gr ammunition.

Within 15 minutes of arriving we could hear two stags roaring in the distance and as time went on we could tell one of them was moving into the location we'd scoped only a few weeks earlier. Just on daylight we walked into the area the last roars had come from.

Dad had devised a plan where I'd position myself on a ridge that was relatively clear and roughly 20m from thick scrub while he'd stay further back and operate the deer caller. We took up our positions and when there was sufficient daylight dad released a half roar from the caller. The stag responded immediately, its location within a few hundred metres, so he sent out a full roar to gain a more precise indication of its whereabouts.

Within a few minutes I could hear noise coming from the bush directly ahead. It had been no more than five minutes



from the first call when a large stag appeared 15m in front of me and I knew this was my chance.

I steadied myself, took aim and squeezed off the shot - a perfect heart shot dropping the stag in his tracks. There was lots of noise coming from close by where another stag had stopped to watch things unfold but as soon as he saw dad he took off.

The grass was thick and tall and it took us a few minutes to locate the fallen stag but when we did I couldn't wipe the smile off my face when I saw him. He was indeed an impressive animal and I was chuffed I'd taken one like him as my first red deer stag.

Our plan had worked to perfection, a special moment to share with dad and one which will give us plenty of encouragement for hunting trips in the future. ●

Juniors-only competition

Only junior SSAA members are eligible to enter. One entry per member. To enter, simply write your name, address and membership number on a piece of paper and mail it to us at:

October 2019 Junior competition
SSAA National
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competition closes October 31, 2019



**Glowshot Flipping
Jack .22 Reactive
Steel Target**

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Youngsters shine

in NSW Benchrest championships

The NSW state titles for Benchrest and IRB were held at the Newcastle range this year and attracted an excellent field of competitors from across the state. Juniors really came to the fore this year with a group of seven posting some impressive scores and four shooters earning an elusive 'Screamer' patch, Armidale Secondary College students Patrick Simpson and Josh Dawson putting in particularly outstanding performances.

Year 9 student Patrick came away with five medals, a 'Screamer' and top 10 patch the rewards for his diligent efforts. The 14-year-old took gold in the 50m Light Class grouping, bronze in the 50m-100m combined Light Class and silver in the 50m Heavy Class grouping and placed eighth in the 50m-100m combined Heavy Class.

In the 50m Light Class he shot an aggregate of .4552, narrowly missing out on the NSW record of .4312. His mark was bettered on the day by Tom Keys with an aggregate of .4308 - Tom just happens to be Patrick's coach! Patrick earned a 'Screamer' patch for shooting a .169 group in the 50m Heavy Class and was awarded the Top Junior accolade for the weekend.

Josh, 16, also shot consistently throughout, scoring two superb groups of .286 and .288 in the 50m Heavy Class while young Kaylene Bleasdale picked up her 'Screamer' patch for a superb 0.119 on her first target.

With so many juniors involved, this year's event had a real family feel with competitors and volunteers alike enjoying great camaraderie and sportsmanship. ●



Magnificent seven: The juniors who shot in the NSW Benchrest and IRB championships.

