

# THE JUNIOR Shooter

An introduction for Junior Shooters & Hunters

Issue 20



**WIN**  
a Bistoli Range Bag  
and Beanie

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## Editorial

**W**elcome to the 20th edition of *The Junior Shooter*. It's hard to believe that it's been nearly a decade since we first started this publication. Time certainly flies when you're having fun and we all know how enjoyable recreational shooting is - and writing and reading about it is just another enjoyable facet of our sport.

We kick off this milestone edition with an overview of this year's SSAA National Junior Challenge. The annual championships were held at South Australia's SSAA Para Range in July and featured a variety of rimfire rifle and air rifle shooting competitions. By all accounts, it was another successful event, with healthy competition but plenty of camaraderie and friendships formed too.

Next up, following on from his article last edition about identifying and ageing sign, Joseph Nugent now offers a number of great tips for stalking and hunting quarry, including researching the species, knowing their habits and habitat, using the terrain to your advantage and taking the shot.

We then speak with Olympic Games shotgunner Aislin Jones about the challenges she faced in being a left-handed shooter and the changes she made to take her competitive Skeet shooting to the next level.

Thank you to everyone who has supported both this publication and the SSAA's ongoing campaign to introduce, encourage and champion our next generation of Australian sporting shooters and recreational hunters. Keep talking about your interests. Share them with your family and friends. Consider taking a mate with you the next time you go to the range. Ask a fellow club member about their equipment, or challenge yourself by trying a new shooting discipline. There's always something new and interesting out there waiting for you.

Finally, as always, if you have a story to share about your shooting or hunting activities, be sure to let our Editorial team know on 08 8272 7100, [edit@ssaa.org.au](mailto:edit@ssaa.org.au) or [facebook.com/ssaanational](https://facebook.com/ssaanational)

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# 2017 SSAA National Junior Challenge

by Communications Officer Sam Talbot  
photos by Paul Robinson



**T**his year's SSAA National Junior Challenge was held in South Australia at the SSAA Para Range in July and featured some of the best young shooters from around the nation. Competitors arrived on a Friday and almost immediately there was a clear sense of camaraderie among them. The highly competitive weekend of shooting produced some great results but the story of the event was the female shooters who proved almost unbeatable and a step above the boys.

The Challenge kicked off on Friday afternoon with a supplementary 10m Air Rifle Precision grouping to warm up all the juniors ahead of the main competition beginning the next day. The under-15s category was won by Nicholas McConnell, while Jordan Robinson claimed the honours in the under-18s. Some younger junior shooters, who were ineligible for the main competition because they were shooting from a supported position, were also able to take part.

Sebastian Brown was the winner, narrowly beating Bryce Auld, with Jackson Ashby third and Emily Robb in fourth spot. However, what they lacked in arm length, they more than made up for in enthusiasm throughout the weekend of competition.

The first discipline to formally start the Challenge was Field Rifle, which featured a tight battle between the under-18 South Australian girls. Only .04 of a point separated Kata Kowplos in front with 373.06 from Nicole Worthley in second with a score of 373.02. In the under-15s, Kyle Noack came out on top, with Kelsey Rawlings and Xavier Romanes following closely behind.

The 3-Positional was the next event and it produced similarly competitive results. Jordan Robinson finished first for the under-18s, while Kelsey Rawlings went one better than she did in the previous event by landing top position in the under-15s.

With two disciplines completed and only one to go on Sunday, the juniors finally had a chance to relax with pizza and a quiz night. The evening was a highlight for competitors, parents and organisers and helped forge friendships among shooters of all ages around the country.

When Sunday morning arrived, the juniors jumped straight into the final discipline, Silhouette Rimfire. In the under-18s, the girls continued their domination, taking out the top four berths with Kata Kowplos the winner. A shoot-off between Sinee Khanprasert and Nicole Worthley was required to decide second place, with Sinee prevailing. Kelsey Rawlings proved too good again, claiming first position for the under-15s, followed by Kyle Noack in second and Jaden Wilkie third.

A final presentation of the 3-Gun Aggregate finished with Kata Kowplos first for the under-18s, followed by Jordan Robinson in second and another tie between Sinee Khanprasert and Nicole Worthley for third. For the under-15s, Kelsey Rawlings completed her almost flawless run taking first place, with Kyle Noack second and Jordi Krikke third.

Russell Brown from the SSAA Port Lincoln Pistol & Shooting Club echoed everyone's thoughts by congratulating the organisers on a wonderful event. "The SSAA Para Club exceeded all expectations for our shooters, with medals, trophies, shirts, hats and prizes - all happy little shooters," he said. "A massive thank you to the Para Club

members who assisted our under-12 shooters in all of their shooting activities. Without them it would not be an easy event to attend."

While not everybody can be a winner, all the juniors had a great time and learned a lot. Most juniors were quite accomplished with one or two disciplines, though many lacked experience with another. Nevertheless, they tried their best and no doubt plenty of them will be back and better next year. The 2018 SSAA National Junior Challenge will be held at the ACT SSAA Majura shooting complex in Canberra.

A number of sponsors helped guarantee the success of the event and we would like to thank the following organisations for their support: The Adelaide Gun Shop, Fisher Firearms, TerryWhite Chemmart Elizabeth Park, Kent Civil, Bunnings Parafield, the SSAA Store, SSAA South Australia and SSAA National.

For full results, visit [ssaa.org.au/juniorsports](http://ssaa.org.au/juniorsports) ●



A total of 36 juniors competed throughout the weekend.



# My Challenging experience



SSAA Para junior Nicole Worthley with Rod Frisby.

by Nicole Worthley

IN JULY 2017, I competed in the SSAA National Junior Challenge at the SSAA Para Range. There were a total of 36 competitors in the under-15s and under-18s combined. The atmosphere was great, with everyone chatting to each other and helping each other over the weekend.

I competed in all the categories and performed my personal best in each of them, which I was excited about. I borrowed a rifle from Dennis, the SSAA Para Air Captain. I had never shot with his rifle before and it really improved my performance.

Jordan Robinson, one of the under-18 competitors, was a great help mentoring me over the weekend. I will miss her at the next one as she will be 18 years of age then. The parents and caregivers also helped out by changing targets and scoring, which was really good to see and was a great help to the organisers and competitors.

In the Silhouette shoot, I shot equal 25 with another competitor and had to have a shoot-off. The shoot-off was very nerve racking and my legs would not stop shaking. Once I hit the ram target, I felt relief then I was excited when I heard another 'ping' from the other competitor. Then with the turkey targets, I heard a 'ping' and got scared as I had not shot yet. I had to put my rifle down a few times and breathe then I took my shot, I heard a 'ping' and was very relieved. With the pig targets, the other competitor took her shot and hit, while I missed. I was very proud of the both of us as we each shot really well.

On the Saturday night, we had pizza and a quiz night. Everyone seemed to have a fun time with the quiz night as there was lots of laughing and chatting. Everyone who attended over the weekend received an item off the prize table too.

I would not be where I am today with my shooting if it were not for Dennis, Rod, Jordan, Brett and my parents, who have helped and mentored me along my journey so far. I look forward to the National Junior Challenge next year to see all the friends I made over the weekend. ●

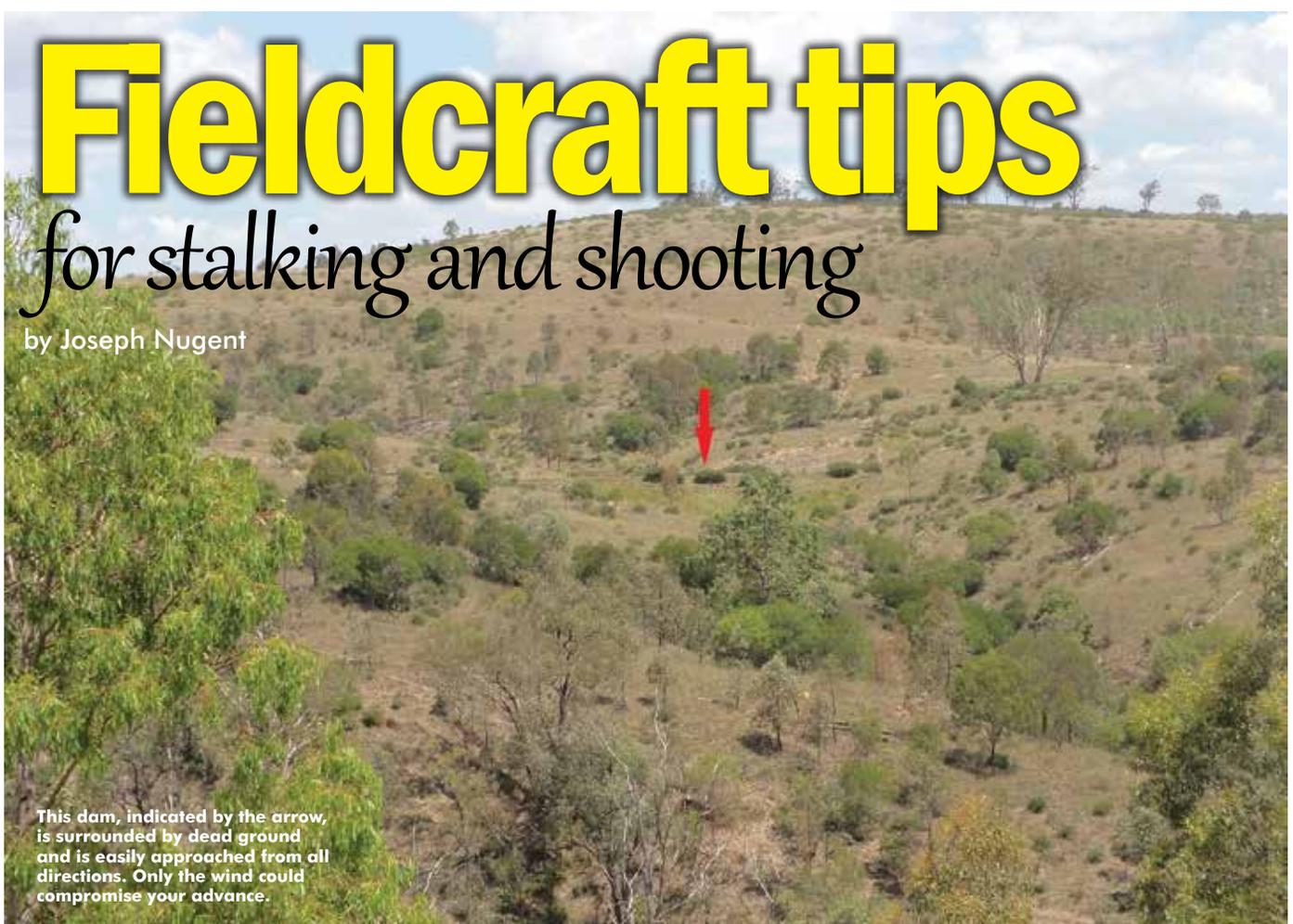


Winners are grinners: Kelsey Rawlings took first place for the under-15s.



There were lots of prizes on offer for the juniors.





This dam, indicated by the arrow, is surrounded by dead ground and is easily approached from all directions. Only the wind could compromise your advance.

**T**here are many elements which work together to produce a successful hunt. Having the right gear is one of them, so is the ability to read sign and give yourself the best opportunity to locate and take game. However, I believe the most beneficial hunting skill that my father has passed on to me is the capacity to stalk animals and move close enough to ensure a quick one-shot kill.

My dad is not a fan of long shots and prefers to close the range as much as he can. In fact, most of his hunting successes have come at less than 50m. He holds me to the same standard, which can be frustrating, as sometimes we miss out on an animal when it becomes aware of us but I guess that is all part of the hunting experience and I am proud to say we have never wounded or lost an animal.

Apart from good shot placement, the ability to stalk is by far the most important skill to develop as a hunter. There are many facets to a successful stalk that a hunter must take into consideration when attempting to close the distance between themselves and their prey. Critical aspects of a stalk include knowing your quarry, moving through the bush, using the ground and working the wind.

### Knowing your quarry

Knowing your target species' habits and likely behaviours in various situations is a crucial part of any successful stalk. There is both a theoretical and practical side to learning about the activities of game. I have invested a lot of time into reading books and magazine articles on various game species. I have also listened intently to conversations between my father and our hunting mates. Learning from the experiences of other hunters is a great way to enhance your own knowledge. However, there is no substitute for practical experience in the field.

To determine your best course of action when planning a hunt, you must have an understanding of factors such as: What the animal is likely to be doing at this time of year? Where on the property might certain game be found and why? What direction is the animal likely to flee if spooked? How will it most likely react to your presence? The best way to gauge this information and gain vital experience is to experiment in the field, spending time observing your target species at every opportunity prior to a hunt. Watching, listening and learning.

One very effective and hands-on way to acquire knowledge and experience is to attempt practice stalks. This is particularly effective when unsure about how an animal will react when unnerved, surprised or pressured, as the goal of a practice stalk is to hone your stalking techniques by putting them to the test. How close can you regularly move before your presence is noticed and reacted to? Can you position yourself for that perfect side-on shot and produce a one-shot kill?

## Closing the gap

After knowing the habits of your species and selecting an animal to harvest, you must go about reducing the distance between you and your target. When trying to close the gap between you and your objective, quiet and decisive movements are required in order to succeed. To transform 500m into 50m you must know how to move through the bush quietly, use dead ground and work the wind.

Moving through the bush can present many challenges from thick patches of lantana to vast carpets of dead leaves. To traverse such a difficult environment care must be taken when making each move. However, I have devised five simple tips for quiet movement through the bush.



**Red Deer Hunting Guide.** Image courtesy of Paul Rattray, author of the ebook *Secrets of the Reds*.

**Tip 1:** Take your time. When tracking any animal you will be eager to put a shot away, Dad calls it 'antler fever'. However, it is imperative that you slow down, ease yourself into the best possible position before considering a shot and avoid making any excess noise when creeping closer to your prey.

**Tip 2:** Avoid grabbing saplings and brushing against bushes. By doing this you will make noise and create movement, two dead giveaways when stalking. This will alert your target animal which may flee if feeling pressured or scared. Taking the time to stop and consider the quietest way to negotiate a stand of thick brush or patch of lantana is a good investment for a successful stalk.

**Tip 3:** Never stand on something that may slip, move or fall from under you. Taking a fall when stalking will almost certainly bring your hunt to an end as the animal will flee and your rifle and scope may be damaged in the process. You may even be injured yourself. As a result avoiding loose rocks or weak logs is advisable. A good practice is to test the stability of suspect ground by only partially applying your weight at first; if satisfied you can then move forward with confidence.

**Tip 4:** Always stop in cover, never in the open. When you have to stop during a stalk to assess the movement of your target animal, pilot a way through or around thick vegetation, to gauge your bearings or even to just have a quick drink. You should take advantage of the landscape to mask your presence from your prey. Use thicker stands of timber, deep shadow and the larger beds of lantana to keep your position unnoticed and then resume the hunt.



The fruits of a careful stalk and good shot placement.

**Tip 5:** Take advantage of game trails. It is just commonsense. The trails exist because game animals use them regularly and with this in mind, you have a very good chance to encounter animals on or near game trails. They also allow for brisk, silent movement through the bush.

### Dead ground and wind

Dead ground is one of the most effective forms of cover when stalking and simply refers to parts of the landscape which allows you to be out of the line of sight of your quarry. It allows a hunter to quickly close on an objective without being detected by wary animals. Dead ground can take the form of a creek line, undulating ridge lines or on the lee side of larger spurs or ridges. It provides superior cover as your movements are entirely hidden, meaning being spotted is impossible.

Correctly working the wind will often be what makes or breaks a hunt, as game animals such as deer, pigs and foxes have an extraordinary sense of smell. When stalking wild game you should always try to put the wind in your face or at least quartering across you away from the direction of the

hunt. By doing this you allow your scent to drift behind you, away from the animals, instead of towards your target. If the wind happens to change, the direction of your stalk should change with it, as your scent is enough to betray your presence and make many animals disappear in an instant. In ridge country you should also consider the time of day, as early in the morning your scent is likely to be rising on the warming morning air and likewise descending as the air cools later in the afternoon.

### Taking the shot

The most telling part of any hunt is the split second it takes to size up your target and squeeze the trigger of your rifle. All of the time and effort spent in preparing for a hunt, scouting your hunting ground and stalking count for nothing if you cannot accurately place your shot in the kill zone of an animal.

A poorly aligned sight-picture, flinch or a jerky trigger release can totally change where your shot actually strikes the target. At best, you may miss completely and have just wasted a day's stalk. At worst, you may wound an animal



and require a follow-up shot, something every hunter should avoid at all costs. Having confidence in your technique and knowing where a shot must be placed to put an animal down properly and quickly are absolutely essential to successful hunting.

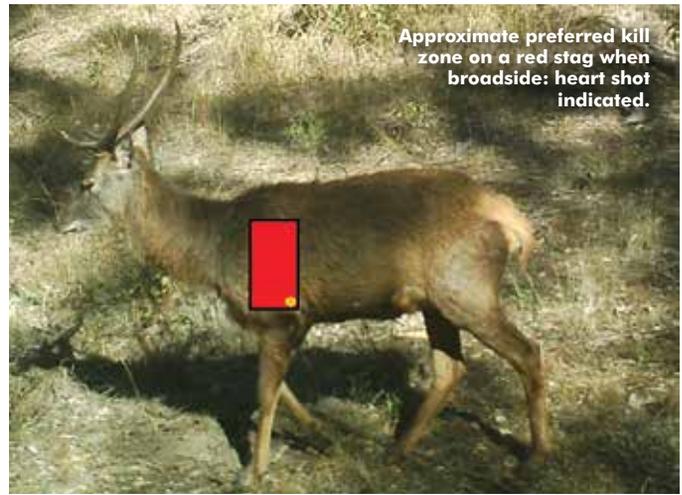
## Technique

When shooting in the field or at a range there a few general guidelines that must be taken into consideration. These are known as the principles of marksmanship. The four principles of marksmanship are:

**1: The position** and hold must be firm enough to support the firearm. This means that a shooter should be able to easily hold the rifle without over exerting themselves. This minimises the chance of accuracy-destroying movements.

**2: The firearm** must point naturally at the target without undue physical effort. This requires the rifle to be balanced, naturally pointing in the direction of the target. A way to check if you are holding the rifle correctly is to align your sights with the target, close your eyes for three seconds then open them again, if the sights have drifted off target your position needs to be altered.

**3: Sight alignment** (aiming) must be correct and natural. This principle follows on from the above. To align the sights correctly, ensure that the crosshairs of your scope intersect precisely with your intended point of impact and that you have a full sight-picture; there must be no black voids in your sight-picture. This can be achieved by simply moving your head into the correct position.



**4: The shot** must be released smoothly and followed through without disturbing your hold on the rifle. This rule means that the shot must be released with a gentle squeeze of the trigger not a pull or jerk. Having fired, you should not be off-balance and ready for a follow-up shot if required.

## Shot placement

Shot placement is a very important aspect of a successful hunt as there would be nothing worse than wounding an animal. As a hunter it is essential that you ensure you make a quick, clean and humane kill on any animal. This can be achieved by practising good marksmanship and learning proper shot placement. When shooting wild game such as deer, goats and pigs it is advisable to go for a heart/lung shot to put the animal down as quickly as possible.

If a clean kill is to be achieved, a hunter should aim slightly behind the line of the front shoulder/leg, particularly in the lower third of the animal as this will ensure the shot penetrates the vital heart and lung area. However, a broadside shot will not always present itself. In the case of a front-facing animal, you should aim at the middle of the chest, perhaps even slightly low right, as this shot will again penetrate the heart and lungs. If the animal happens to be sitting or lying down a shot through the base of the neck or spine would despatch the animal, if properly executed.

## Summary

Hunting is not an exact science, it is an acquired skill and many elements impact upon your chances of success. However, if you are prepared to put in the hard yards by learning to know and understand the habits and behaviour of game and are confident enough to take your time maneuvering into a position from which you can guarantee a killing shot, you will find that you experience a successful hunt more often than not. ●

A photograph of Aislin Jones smiling in the foreground, with a large crowd of people and flags in the background at the closing ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The text 'Aislin with plenty to smile about during the closing ceremony at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.' is overlaid in the top right corner.

Aislin with plenty to smile about during the closing ceremony at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

# Aislin Jones

- becoming a lefty the right way forward

by Communications Officer Sam Talbot

Getting a junior shooter's technique right when they initially begin shooting is crucial for a long and successful career. However, in all the excitement of shooting for the first time it can be easy for even experienced coaches to forget some of the basics. In fact, one simple test that could easily be skipped over for junior shooters is figuring out which is their dominant eye. For Olympian Aislin Jones, knowing this one small but important fact led to her overhauling her technique and setting down a path to the Olympic Games as well as a bright future.

Like lots of juniors, Aislin became interested in shooting after going to the range with her father, Dave Jones. Dave found Aislin an over-and-under 20-gauge shotgun with the plan of selling it later if Aislin lost interest. But Aislin was a natural and her skill only improved as she moved onto the more orthodox 12-gauge shotgun.

However, while it was clear Aislin had a real talent for shooting, Dave noticed she was left-eye dominant, even though she was right-handed for most things, including shooting. This is not a good match for someone wanting to represent their country as a Skeet shooter because she would potentially always be shooting in front of or behind targets or having to have one eye shut and limiting her peripheral vision.

As Aislin's coach at the time, Dave was not sure what to do since Aislin had already been shooting for six months. "I sent ex-Olympian Russell Mark an email asking for his advice about what to do after seeing an article in the *Australian Shooter* he wrote where he mentioned left-eye and right-eye dominance," said Dave. "Russell told me that she was still young enough to make the switch and ultimately, it is better to shoot left-handed if you are left-eye dominant." Clearly, this was good advice and Aislin successfully made the switch to her left side.

SSAA member, *Australian Shooter* columnist and 1996 Olympic Double Trap gold medallist Russell Mark remembers receiving Dave's email and the advice he gave at the time. "Twenty-eight per cent of people are right-handed but left-eye dominant, so this affects more people than you think. Often people realise they are dominant in the opposite eye to the shoulder they are shooting from but they can't make the switch like Aislin was able to because their technique is too ingrained in them," said Russell. "Juniors need good coaches who can set them up with the right technique.

"Another common thing juniors do is shoot with one eye closed, instead of having both eyes open. Having both open is a real advantage for clay target shooting but lots of parents

A photograph of a young woman, Aislin, standing in front of a large sculpture of the Olympic rings. The rings are in their traditional colors: blue, yellow, black, green, and red. Aislin is wearing a white t-shirt and blue pants. In the background, there are modern apartment buildings and a fountain. A text box in the top left corner of the image reads: "Aislin is Australia's youngest shooter to attend an Olympic Games."

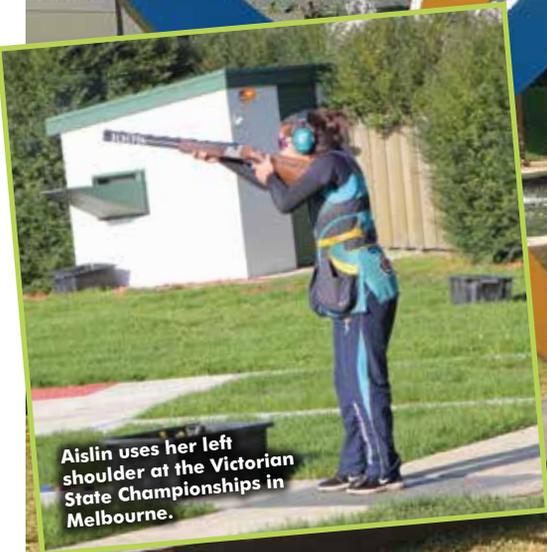
Aislin is Australia's youngest shooter to attend an Olympic Games.

## How to check which is your dominant eye

PUT ONE ARM out directly in front of you and stick your thumb up.

With both eyes open, focus on an object in the distance and cover it with your thumb. Your thumb might partially disappear, but don't panic, that's normal.

Without moving your thumb or your head, alternatively close one eye at a time. The eye that keeps your thumb over the object in the distance while your other is closed is your dominant eye.

A photograph of Aislin in a blue and black shooting outfit, holding a shotgun and aiming it. She is standing on a paved area with a grassy field and a white building in the background. A text box in the bottom left corner of the image reads: "Aislin uses her left shoulder at the Victorian State Championships in Melbourne."

Aislin uses her left shoulder at the Victorian State Championships in Melbourne.

of junior shooters let that sort of thing slide when they are learning.”

As Aislin improved, Russell's wife Lauryn Mark heard about her as a promising young shooter and picked up where her husband left off. Lauryn has had a very proud shooting career as well, being the youngest competitor ever to win the United States Open Women's Skeet Championships and collecting three gold medals at the 2002 and 2006 Commonwealth Games. Being a left-handed shooter herself, Lauryn was excited to meet a young left-handed female shooter. Dave and Aislin travelled to Werribee in Victoria to have a training session with Lauryn who was impressed with Aislin, although during their first meeting Lauryn pointed out the shotgun Aislin was using did not fit her perfectly.

Wasting no time and excited for Aislin's future, Dave stopped by Beretta Australia on the way home and bought Aislin a brand-new shotgun. Similarly to changing from right- to left-handed shooting, making sure Aislin was fitted to the correctly sized shotgun was a small but crucially important step in creating a champion. These pieces of the puzzle added up to put Aislin on the trajectory to become Australia's youngest shooter to attend an Olympic Games.

One man who deserves a lot of credit for Aislin's success is her father Dave, who has since created a junior shooters' academy in Gippsland and offers these guidelines for parents of junior shooters. "My first advice to parents is to get their kids a gun that actually fits and from there you have to get them on the pattern board every three to six months because they are growing so much and their face and body shape is changing," said Dave. "Shotguns aren't like rifles, which have two sights. On a shotgun, your eye is the second sight so it's crucial it's in the right place."

Dave feels the next thing to think about is doing more competitions because while there should always be a focus on fun, juniors still have to learn to shoot under pressure. "If you're serious about going further in shooting, competition and learning how to shoot under pressure are crucial," said Dave. "There are a number of AA-grade shooters in Australia who quickly become C grade shooters when they are in competition."

Aislin agrees with her father by saying juniors should keep shooting as long as they are enjoying it. "Lots of competition really helps and some high-level coaching is also a really good idea," said Aislin. ●

# New ground as target shooter goes hunting

by Melissa Dean

Adelong's Melissa Dean has been an accomplished target shooter since her early teenage years. In fact, the SSAA first reported on Melissa's achievements in the Rifle Metallic Silhouette discipline in the July 2011 *Australian Shooter* magazine. We have watched her shooting over the years and were proud to see Melissa represent the SSAA at the prestigious NRA Cowboy Rifle Silhouette National Championships in the United States last year. Now, at 22 years of age, she has decided it is time to try her luck at hunting. In her own words, Melissa describes how she made the transition.

**T**arget shooting just seemed so natural to me, so to then start hunting I thought it would be the same, but I found hunting a bit different. The concentration and ways to handle pressure from target shooting did give me the upper hand when aiming at a live animal. Although I hadn't ever had to think of my surroundings as much. Not being able to simply talk or even make much noise, I found hard because in target shooting I rely on my spotter to talk and help me and I'm a very talkative person normally.

The only animals that I had shot or even aimed at were two foxes and I managed to shoot them both. Hunting does run in my family, but other than spotlighting with Pop (my grandfather), I hadn't previously done any deerstalking until I met my partner Peter 'PJ' Lindley. He is a keen bow hunter but does love taking a rifle occasionally.

On the day PJ and I went hunting, it was an overcast morning. We started heading out at 10am to see if we could find any deer and to use PJ's brand-new Tikka .30-06-calibre rifle. We hadn't walked far and saw quite a large brown fallow buck roughly 800m away with a small herd of six even further away. We set off, PJ leading and I following with the gun. It wasn't until about two-and-a-half hours into the hunt, that a deer darted across in front of us about 50m away. It was gone in the blink of an eye.



The joy of the hunt radiates from Melissa.

At this point, I'd given up. The day was done in my mind so I handed the rifle over to PJ and I didn't care if I was loud. It took 15 minutes more walking when PJ signalled for me to get down quickly, because something was ahead. I took the rifle and crawled up to a rise where I had a rock to rest on - what I saw was a huge buck 150m away. My heart rate was going a million miles an hour, unlike when I target shoot and am able to keep it under control, so I had to take a minute to calm down. I looked at PJ as if I was asking permission to shoot and then I pulled the trigger and the shot rang out.

To my surprise, the deer stood up as if I had missed but then sat back down after taking a few steps to sit behind a rock. We both went over to have a look and I burst into tears of happiness. My first deer was so magnificent to what I have seen before. I had to sit down for a few minutes myself.



PJ shows off the deer that he took towards the end of the hunting excursion.

After I'd calmed down, PJ and I made our way back to the car to drive up and get my deer. We came across another deer on the way back and PJ had his turn at getting it at 200m and was successful. Overall, the day was great for both of us. We took all the meat home for the dogs because stag meat does not smell nice at that time of the year. Meanwhile, I am planning to have my stag head mounted.

So not only do I have to thank my partner PJ for taking me on all the hunting trips, allowing me to have my first shot and sharing with me his knowledge of hunting, but also I'll never forget my Pop Graeme sharing my first experience in fox hunting by taking me spotlighting. Target shooting definitely benefited me in many ways with my new love for hunting.

# Keen for fox caller

by Andrea Kiernan

I JUST THOUGHT I would share this little story with you to put a smile on your face. My son Dustyn, who is nine, has been desperately saving for a fox caller. He has been doing odd jobs around the house and working on the farm to make the money he needed.

He was nearly there, about \$10 short, when he got desperate so he came up with this great, crazy idea - the tooth fairy. Yep, he pulled out two wobbly teeth. The tooth fairy paid him \$10 for his effort.

Dustyn loves his new fox caller. We love the commitment Dustyn showed. He is an exceptional kid and we are very proud.



There was individual coaching and supervision for each junior.



# Juniors flock to SSAA Mackay for development day

by Sam Talbot

Lots of juniors waiting patiently for their turn.

**S**SSAA Mackay has pulled off another spectacular junior development day. This year, the Queensland Branch had 74 people make their way down to the club, made up of 45 non-licensed juniors (including 10 girls), three licensed juniors and 26 non-licensed adults. To put that another way, the club went through just short of 10,000 rounds of .22-calibre ammunition, as well as some shotgun ammunition over the duration of the day.

SSAA Mackay President Tony Watson said the key to a successful junior development day is to ensure there is no pressure on the kids. “We just want to make sure they can have fun,” he said. “So our two key things are safety first and foremost, followed by making sure they have a good time.”

Tony explained that at the start of the day, after all the paperwork was completed, the juniors were separated into groups for a safety course and discussion. “After we went through a firearms safety briefing, the day really started,” he said. “We had range officers giving direct supervision to the juniors on each range, providing direct advice for the various types of rifle, pistol and shotgun target shooting.”

The juniors tried their hand at each of the disciplines and were then able to choose their favourite to have as many turns as they wanted at it. Under the careful instructions of a range officer, Tony said just about all the categories had fans by the end of the day. “One thing we did to help make sure everyone was happy and safe was by having a .410-calibre

shotgun for the kids who weren’t comfortable with the 12-gauge shotgun. Just little things like that can make a big difference,” he said.

All ammunition and costs were supplied by the club, thanks to the work of volunteers and generous sponsorship. Tony said the whole event only cost the club about \$1500. “We have a great community and the local businesses have really gotten around us,” he said.

Through the generosity of two major sponsors, Mackay Shooters Supplies and one of the local IGA Supermarkets, the club was able to provide a sausage sizzle lunch, cold drinks and all ammunition at no cost to the participants. Club members also supplied some factory centrefire ammo, which was shot late in the day so some of the juniors could try out an array of centrefires including 9mm, .38, .357 Magnum, .223, .30-30 and .45-70. There was even a demonstration of black powder shooting given by a club member.

Graham Blines, from SSAA Mackay, said seeing the joy on the faces of the juniors and the fantastic feedback from parents make days like this worth the effort. “Not only did the kids enjoy it, but as soon as the event was over, our own club members were also talking among each other about how they can make the day even better for next year,” he said.

Graham explained that for other clubs to have their own successful junior development days, they should focus on three things: safety, fun and getting parents involved.



Pistol shooting also proved to be popular.



SSAA Mackay is home to some great coaches.

“Initially, I contacted nine local high schools and introduced myself and the SSAA Mackay Branch. I told them what we planned to organise and asked whether they would be prepared to disseminate the information to their students. There was not one knock-back, so I sent them all the invitation and registration form and the response just happened from there,” he said.

At the end of the day, all the juniors left happy and with a new appreciation for firearms. Each of the juniors was given a showbag with magazines, firearm information and safety guidelines in it.

In an unexpected but very pleasing bonus, the club has had six new members join, who were parents attending the development day, which means their children will have a much higher likelihood of returning.

Planning for next year’s event has already begun and Tony has a surprise for two lucky juniors in 2018. “At next year’s event we will choose two juniors to sponsor based on their enthusiasm and potential. The winners of the sponsorship will receive free ammo and use of club firearms for 12 months, as well as be exempt from club fees,” he said. That is a prize many older shooters would like to win for themselves or for their kids.

# Testimonials from the day

“My son Tim and his friend Caleb, along with two other friends with their dad, attended your youth day at the range yesterday. They loved it! Tim came home and said it was a really good day. Thank you so much for putting this on and allowing our kids to have such a good experience. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped coach and supervise the kids, for your patience, encouragement and generosity with your time and feeding them too. We really appreciate it and I am sure these boys will be back again next year and telling their mates about it. Please pass on our thanks to everyone involved.” - Carolyn

“I would like to thank you and all your team out there for today. It was a really good day. The kids and I loved it. Both my boys absolutely loved it. Graham, my oldest boy, had three goes at the shotguns and got all the targets, so I think I’m up for a shotgun now, and my youngest son loved the rifle and the handguns.” - Darren

“Thank you for a great day. We will definitely be looking into becoming members. The kids really enjoyed their experience yesterday. Thank you to all the members that made the day possible.” - Stacey

“Jack had the best day. He has not stopped talking about it. Thank you so much to all involved for giving the kids this opportunity to appreciate and learn about firearms.” - Julie

## 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 2017 Junior competition  
SSAA National  
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or online at [ssaa.org.au/win](http://ssaa.org.au/win)

Competition closes October 31, 2017

WIN a Bistoli Range Bag & Beanie



Valued at \$75  
Kindly donated by Teznic  
[teznic.com.au](http://teznic.com.au)

# SPONSOR A JUNIOR AND WIN

SSAA National's 'Sign up a Junior' campaign was launched to help introduce youngsters to recreational shooting. Juniors are essential to the ongoing strength and vitality of the SSAA and **we are seeking your support to protect and ensure the future of the shooting sports in Australia.**

Simply fill in the form below with the junior's details and your details as the 'sponsoring member'. You can add more than one junior by photocopying the form and adding an extra \$25 per junior. As an incentive to promote the campaign, all junior members who join or renew their membership between January 1 and December 31, 2017, will go into the draw to win \$500 worth of SSAA merchandise. Additionally, all adults who sponsor a junior member will go into the draw to win \$1000 worth of SSAA merchandise!



- \$25 - includes 11 issues of the *Australian Shooter*
- \$54 - includes 11 issues of the *Australian Shooter* and 4 issues of *Australian Hunter* magazine



Has the junior been a member before? Yes/No

Membership No.

Details of junior being signed up - (must be under 18)

Branch (if known) ..... Sex (please circle) M / F  
 First name ..... Middle name ..... Last name .....  
 Home address ..... P/C.....  
 Date of birth ..... Phone.....  
 Email .....

OFFICE USE ONLY

Details of sponsoring member:

First name ..... Middle name..... Last name.....  
 Membership No. ....

## Payment options

I also wish to donate \$..... to the SSAA

Enclosed is payment for the amount of \$.....

Cheque  Money order  MasterCard  Visa

Card number

Expiry date     Signature.....

Cheques payable to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia

- Fees are per year unless specified and include GST.

MAIL TO: MEMBERSHIP OFFICE,  
 PO BOX 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761

SSAA Inc is subject to the provisions of the National Privacy Act. Should you want a copy of the SSAA Inc Privacy Statement or seek further information, please write to PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061.