

THE JUNIOR SHOOTER

AN INTRODUCTION FOR JUNIOR SHOOTERS & HUNTERS

Issue 16



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Editorial

Welcome to *The Junior Shooter 16*. Assistant Editor Dave Rose kicks off this issue with extensive coverage of the 2015 SSAA National Junior Challenge, which was held at the Glenorchy range in Tasmania in July. The National Junior Challenge is an excellent event and we encourage all SSAA junior members to have a go. Two of the stars from this year's event were the Freeman brothers, 13-year-old Laughlan and 14-year-old Harry, who finished first and third respectively in the Under 15 title on their home range. Also featured is South Australia's Jordan Robinson who won the 15-18 age group prize.

In a thought-provoking introspective, Queensland member Jared McCarthy details how he made the heady transition from a listless underachiever at primary school into an accomplished performer on the international stage as an Air Rifle Field Target shooter with the Australian team.

Joseph Nugent describes the excitement he felt when he embarked on his first red deer hunts with his Dad. The outings were part of Joseph's 13th birthday celebrations and he hopes there will be many more such adventures. Another youngster out on the hunting trail was Matt Fox. This time, it was goats in the hunters' sights as Matt and his dad Ian enjoyed a Father's Day trek.

The Buttress sisters, Kimberly and April, would like to go hunting one day, but in the meantime, the 16- and 13-year-olds from Victoria are making solid progress from rank novice shooters to competing at the SSAA National Junior Challenge.

Enjoy *The Junior Shooter 16* and don't forget to take part in our competition for your chance to win a pair of BodySpecs glasses.

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SSAA National 2015 Junior Challenge

by Assistant Editor Dave Rose

photos by Phil Guest and Kaye McIntyre

Tasmania played host state for the 2015 SSAA National Junior Challenge with 23 young hopefuls heading to the Glenorchy range from July 3 to 5 in the tussle for honours. The annual event offers aspiring shooters aged from 12 to 18 the perfect stage to demonstrate their sports shooting abilities in an atmosphere of friendly rivalry. And all the youngsters certainly enjoyed their outing across the Tasman Sea as they contemplated their forthcoming 3-Positional Rimfire, Rifle Metallic Silhouette Rimfire and Field Rifle Rimfire shooting.

The AIF Range is located just five minutes' drive from the Glenorchy CBD and 30 minutes from the centre of Hobart. It has been in continuous operation for more than 50 years. New targets were purpose-built for the Junior Challenge in order to meet national specifications. >

All shooters hit the deck during the 3-Positional Rimfire event.

The Freeman brothers starred for Tasmania on their home range, with 13-year-old Laughlan taking out the Under 15 age bracket title and his 14-year-old brother Harry coming third. Sandwiched in between the Freeman pair in the runner-up spot was Keigan Williams, of Mandurah, Western Australia.

Laughlan has been shooting for just more than a year, said his dad Douglas. "He wasn't expecting to do so well because it was only his first national competition and Harry is actually considered the better shot," said Douglas. "Laughlan got into shooting through his uncle, Brian, who is an avid shooter. He had done one state competition, but that's all."

The fact that the brothers, from the Hobart suburb of Old Beach, were shooting on the range where they are members may have helped their cause. But shooting certainly runs in the family, as last year the Under 15s title was won by their older brother, James, who has just turned 16. "James wasn't competing this year," said Douglas, who is obviously very proud of his sons.

Consistency was the key for Laughlan, who grabbed second position in all three categories from a starting pack of eight. He pipped Keigan, who won both the Field Rifle and Rifle Metallic Silhouette events, but was unable to match those stellar performances in the 3-Positional, where he had to be content with fifth spot. Top of the pile in the 3-Positional was

the other Freeman brother, Harry. That result, coupled with a third in Field Rifle and fourth in Rifle Metallic Silhouette, was enough to cement Harry's third spot overall.

Jordan Robinson continued her run of impressive performances over recent years by claiming the 15-18 age group crown. Fifteen-year-old Jordan, from Elizabeth Park in Adelaide's northern suburbs, has shown up well in both junior and senior events since she took up the sport five years ago. This time, she stayed ahead of her rivals by winning the 3-Positional and Field Rifle events. Jordan sealed her success with the runner-up spot in the Rifle Metallic Silhouette.



Tasmania's Andrea White leads the line of shooters.



Keigan Williams, from WA, makes sure his aim is true.



Keigan is all smiles after his impressive performance.



Glenorchy public officer Shane Bowden in his bright pink marshalling attire.



Victoria's William Mavor takes careful aim.

"I love my sport and the friendliness that the people around me always show," said Jordan. "The shooting community as a whole have always been very positive.

"The older members are always willing to share their experiences in the field and even give me a hard time in order to encourage me to do better. Because of this, I have picked up a number of awards, including state and national titles. Even the Scouts are now using shooting as part of their organisation with badges handed out. I think it is great to see, learning about using firearms with the safety aspect and high discipline that goes with it."

Victorian James Davenport, a member of SSAA Springvale, was the next-best from the total line-up of 15. He edged out Jordan to win the Rifle Metallic Silhouette and build on second spot in the 3-Positional along with third in the Field Rifle. Third place-getter was Ross Gibson, who had travelled from Lara, Victoria. Seventeen-year-old Ross collected two thirds (3-Positional and Rifle Metallic Silhouette) to add to his fourth in the Field Rifle.

The Glenorchy club's public officer Shane Bowden stepped into the marshalling role for the whole three days and gave the morning briefings. There was no mistaking Shane's presence and he certainly looked the part, resplendent in his bright pink garb.

"There was a reason for doing that," said Shane. "There are so many people running around the range during



Nick Coghlan, of the ACT, prepares to fire another shot.

competitions with various colors on and high-visibility vests that I thought I needed to do something to make me stand out. And I knew I would stand out in pink.

"I got a bit of stick from the members, but it was all good fun. I didn't want to come across as being over-officious and I think it helped to break the ice. I was happy to concentrate on my duties so that the other officials and range officers could get on with their jobs undisturbed and not be sidetracked."

The happy band of shooters show their delight at the end of the competition.



Competitors were never in danger of going hungry as SSAA Glenorchy President Denis Bergman and Junior Vice President Dave McAllister gladly took up the role as caterers for the three days. The Honourable Adriana Taylor MLC, an ex-mayor of Glenorchy, provided the official welcome and opened the range for action.

Shane felt that the whole operational set-up ran incredibly smoothly. “The juniors should be commended on their behaviour, ability and sportsmanship,” he said. “They listened intently to what you had to say at all times. “They were a great bunch of kids right throughout the championship.”

The event would not have been possible without the support of parents, many of whom travelled with their respective sons and daughters to see them in action on the range.

Some families took the opportunity to extend their trip into holiday mode with further exploration around the Apple Isle after the competition.

SSAA Tasmania State President Andrew Judd thanked the parents for bringing the youngsters to Tasmania and said they would be welcomed back for any future competitions.

It was all smiles at the end of the fun as the youngsters showed off their medals accompanied by a communal waving of their letters of participation.

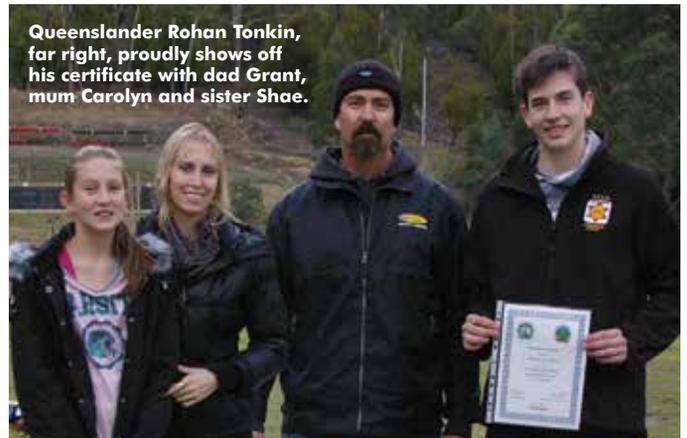
For a full list of results, visit www.ssa.org.au/juniorsports

South Australia's Jordan Robinson, who took out the 15-18 age bracket title, with Under 15 champion Laughlan Freeman.



SSAA Glenorchy President Denis Bergman, Adriana Taylor MLC, Deputy Mayor of Glenorchy Alderman Harry Quick and SSAA National Secretary Kaye McIntyre.

Queenslander Rohan Tonkin, far right, proudly shows off his certificate with dad Grant, mum Carolyn and sister Shae.



Roaring reds

by Joseph Nugent

In February this year, I turned 13. It was both my best and worst birthday. It was the worst because two days before, I had broken my arm and faced six weeks in plaster. It was the best because my parents had surprised me with my own centrefire rifle - a Tikka T3 stainless in .223, with a stainless finished 3-9x40 Tasco scope and a 10-round magazine. This was totally unexpected but exactly what I had been wanting.

All those product catalogues that had been left conveniently around the house for me to read and Dad's "So what do you think of this?" comments over the past months suddenly made sense. Dad also told me that this year I could actually participate in our annual hunt for venison, not just be put on carry-out duties. What a great birthday!

The next six weeks went past so very slowly because I was itching to give my new rifle a go. Finally, the plaster came off my arm and we headed to our property to sight-in my rifle. Our friend Dave had provided four different loads as part of my birthday gift. He had handloaded rounds suitable for rabbits and hares, foxes and dogs, pigs and goats, as well as deer. After a long session on our range, we had the rifle zeroed. Only after I showed Dad that I could place three shots into a 50-cent piece at 50m was he satisfied that I could safely participate in our Easter hunt.

We have four trail cameras on our property that take some great shots of deer all year round. Leading into the roar, Dad and I had placed the cameras in areas that we thought the deer might be found. >

Joseph Nugent found this well-rubbed tree, still slightly moist with sap. Notice the height of the uppermost rub.

Two deer on the property, a doe and a yearling. This was one of more than 100 trail cam photos collected prior to the roar.



The weekend before the Easter holidays, we collected the cameras to see what animals had been about. We were rewarded with more than 100 photos, and after carefully looking at them, we were confident that there were about 20 or so deer, and a few wild dogs, currently on our block. One ridge in particular was showing a lot of early-morning and late-afternoon activity, so this was where we decided to concentrate our hunting efforts.

We had two hunts planned for Easter. In the first week, we hunted with Dave and in the second week with another friend, Kent, and my godfather, Peter. Unfortunately, we were not able to take anything. There was plenty of sign in the form of rubbed trees, thrashed saplings and a mountain of droppings, all of which told us that the deer were around, just as the cameras had revealed.

The stags were also roaring their heads off. We could hear about eight of them, but this year, none seemed to have decided to base themselves on our property. The best we could do was to climb to our western boundary and try to glass them. This was a little disappointing, but my dad is very strict about respecting other people's property and he hates trespassers. So we sat as the mist lifted, watching and listening, which was an amazing event in itself, before then returning to hunt on our own block. After this experience, my dad contacted the neighbouring landowner and now we have permission to hunt both deer and wild dogs on the adjoining property. So next Easter we should have a good chance of a trophy.

We did have several close encounters with deer over our two hunts though. Several times, at short range, we were 'barked' at by deer unseen in the lantana and had to listen as they ran away through the undergrowth. We regularly found droppings that were obviously only minutes old. But no deer. Another time, as we rested on the edge of one of our tracks, a deer actually crossed silently to our left, but everyone except me was looking right at the time and it was gone before we could take a shot. It was being trailed by a large wild dog, which we spotted only as it turned and retreated back into the bush.

Dad sent me in after the animal. As it made off into the bush, I slowly stalked in, checking under each and every bush for the golden-brown dog. I was about halfway down the ridge when, just ahead of me, I heard a loud rustling and the snap of a stick. I knew it was him, so I began to whistle to try and draw him out of the lantana for a clear shot, but sadly, he was gone. I returned to the road empty-handed. From there, we made a new plan and set off again.

Later, I also spotted a doe resting in the shade above a small clearing on a ridge opposite the one we were stalking with Dave. I tried to point it out to Dad, but he just could not see it, until it moved quickly across the clearing



A group of three deer on the ridge that was targeted during the hunts.



Fresh deer tracks in the mud of the creek bank.



A hunting knife shows the size of this scat. A single deposit by a large animal, probably a few hours old judging by its color and soft texture.

towards a lantana-choked gully. Although he put the scope on it, he did not have a good shot and was not prepared to risk losing a wounded animal. Dad says that as hunters, we owe it to the deer to make sure of a clean kill. He therefore passes up more animals than he shoots. Our property has a mix of open hillsides, lightly timbered ridges and lantana-filled gullies, so it is easy for an animal to disappear if not dropped with the first shot.

Further on in the afternoon the next day I spotted two deer grazing at the bottom of a gully. Kent and Peter had stalked past without noticing them and Dad would have done the same if I had not pointed them out. The deer headed off before we could move into position for a shot. Dad and I quickly cut across the ridge to where we expected the deer to reappear, but once again, that familiar 'bark' of alarm told us that the deer had actually crossed into a second gully and beaten us.

Our Easter hunts were exciting, but did not produce a deer, so we returned at the start of May to try our luck. This time, it was just Dad and me. We arrived at our property at about 10.30am, unpacked the ute and were ready to hunt by 11am. Dad's attitude is that 'You won't bag one by sitting in the shed', so even though it was almost the middle of the day, we set off.



Joseph with his first red deer.

The wind was perfect to try the neighbour's patch and Dad had often admired one particular spot where he thought bedded deer would be found. This little gully system offered water, shade, escape routes and a sunny, grassy basin out of the wind. We stalked down the open face of a steep ridge and made our way into the gully, crossing the small creek and noting the fresh-looking deer tracks that we found.

Suddenly, about 10m ahead of us, the grass erupted and a large doe trotted off up the hill. I cycled the Tikka and waited for a shot to present itself. I did not overreact at the sight of the deer escaping, as Dad has explained to me that if you do not spook the animal, a red deer will almost always stop and have a look back at you. That is exactly what happened; at about 30m, she stopped and turned to properly identify us.

I was so excited and concentrating so hard that I hardly heard the crack of my .223, but I clearly saw the doe collapse. Dad had been at the ready with his .308 just in case, but I had taken a neat and quick kill. We had been hunting for 30 minutes and the job was done. I felt ecstatic at the thought that I had just harvested my first

red deer for the freezer. I will remember the moment I saw her drop for many years to come.

When we went to take a closer look, walking through the waist-high grass of the clearing, I reflected that this was the largest doe I had ever seen. She was in top condition; healthy and very fat, with her winter coat just starting to grow through. Her size made it rather difficult to take a photo, but we managed it and to my relief, it turned out to be a fairly good one. We had our supply of venison for the year and now I can't wait until next year's hunt when I can do it all over again.

Dad field-stripped the deer, taking as much venison as possible. We carried it back to our shed, loaded the esky and by 3pm, we were back home in Toowoomba, preparing the meat for the freezer.

Now that we have the compartment full, our next few trips will concentrate on trying to pick up one of those stags we had to admire from a distance over Easter. I have a feeling that it will be a bit of a challenge now the roar is over, but I am up for it.

Prosperity

by Jared McCarthy

At the age of 12, in my final year of primary school, I found myself part of a maligned group on the verge of my transition into high school. Always quiet, I spent my time registering poor to mediocre accomplishments in my subjects, then went home to play video games each night. I needed something else. I wanted to take on something new. I had many plans, all to do with some sort of club, and then I found the SSAA Brisbane website. I had only ever shot a gun on one of my video games and my mother was unsure of them. How could I convince her to send me off to actually shoot a real one?

It took a bit of persuasion, but I was permitted to go to the SSAA Brisbane range, along with my father. Upon arrival, a few forms needed to be filled out and I took part in a firearms safety course along with other first-time shooters. To my surprise, the next step was to choose a rifle from a rack of different .22s. I selected mine and with the close eye of a safety officer behind me, I fired my first round, one of thousands to come. The next time at the range, I would throw myself in at the deep end for my first competition.

Each year in July, the Australian Shooting Games are held to test club shooters' skills against one another. The most popular event is the two-day Junior ASG, for anyone under 18, from the SSAA, cadets or like myself, someone just looking for a bit of fun. The Games turned out to be a set of different disciplines to assess your skills across the board. At the end of the day, even though I didn't win anything, I knew this was something I enjoyed. In time, not only would

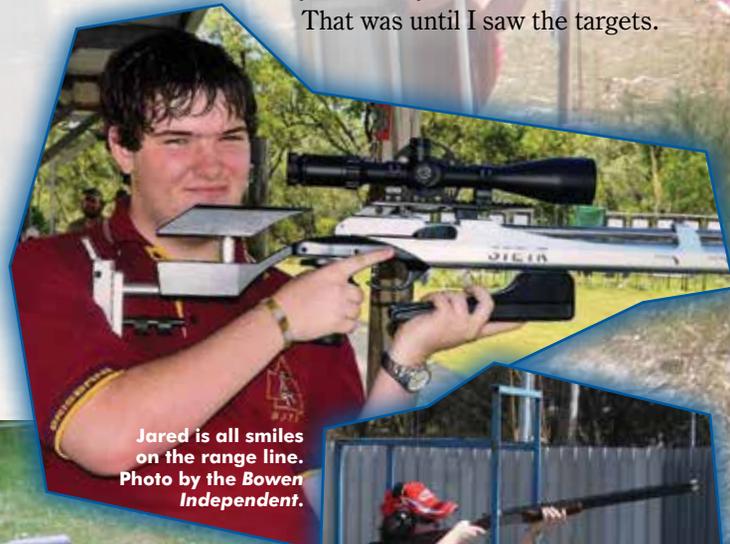
I become champion of the Junior ASG, but sports shooting would spark a turning point in my life, as I made new friends and saw new places around Australia and abroad.

In 2012, the shoot captain of the Brisbane Junior Target Shooters and my mentor, Chris Crouch, brought something that can only be described as 'alien-looking' to our competition. A sleek adjustable wooden stock contrasted with anodised black aluminium housing the components of a well-oiled machine. It was a Steyr air rifle. For the most part, air rifle action seemed belittled in comparison to the plethora of other shooting events. Nonetheless, the addition of an air rifle discipline added a new layer to my shooting experiences.

The first competition I entered with an air rifle was 10m Precision, something I had not done before. Due to this, I underestimated the skill involved. I thought to myself: 'It's only 10m away. How hard can it be?' That was until I saw the targets.



Jared McCarthy completes his preparations, with Craig Oliver taking aim to his left.



Jared is all smiles on the range line. Photo by the Bowen Independent.



Jared takes aim out on the firing range.

in precision

- how sports shooting turned my life around



They were very small targets, simulating to some extent what the targets look like through the scope during Field Rifle competition.

After my first shot with the borrowed Steyr, I didn't feel the same buzz, something that almost caused my short-lived air rifle career to be over before it started. I pondered for some time whether to buy an air rifle, going over some models with no prior experience apart from shooting the Steyr. I almost chose a budget pump-action .177, but before I could, my father had talked with his boss, the managing director of Steel Pro, and I was fortunate enough to be on the receiving end of his simple question: "What's the best one you can buy?" A Steyr LG 110 Field Target, to be precise. Of course, he wouldn't have even considered spending the money necessary if he didn't have faith in me.

Over the years prior to picking up my new Steyr, I had competed in hundreds of competitions at club, zone, state and national levels. Notorious for always placing third in my early days, progressing onwards, I had stepped up on skill and confidence and began to secure titles all the way to national

level. In 2013, my air rifle sporting career was officially underway when I secured my place in AA grade first time. I went on to AAA before my debut National Air Rifle Silhouette competition, earning first place in AAA. It was the beginning of something inconceivable to me at the time.

That same year, I competed in many club, zone and state competitions with the goal of beating my own personal best as I went along. In October 2013, the big one came up, the National Air Rifle Field Target Championships in Tin Can Bay, Queensland. Air Rifle Field Target is still really only in its infancy in Australia, championed by Chris Dale and Greg Riemer in the hope of creating a new, fun and competitive sport. Being able to take on friends or friendly rivals outside in rain, hail or shine, shooting targets set out at unknown distances with air rifles was unheard of to me. Even today, it is still only just reaching out to the rest of Australia. With an all-Queensland cast due to the unfortunate bushfires in New South Wales at the time, we met to battle for the National title and name the Australian world team at the same time. >

Participating on the world stage was something I had not even thought about beforehand. The World Championships were to be held in New Zealand and the top four national shooters with international-standard rifles would line up as the first Australian Air Rifle Field Target team. To my own disbelief, I made it in, along with Chris Dale, Craig Oliver and Phil Brooker.

In August 2014, we touched down on foreign soil in New Zealand, ready to take on the world as the underdogs. After a scenic tour from Auckland to Wellington, we arrived in our campervan at the venue we would call home for the days to come. We met an assortment of new people including fun-loving Americans, food-bearing Canadians, the British, South Africans and of course the hosts of the party, the Kiwis. All the while, we were shooting in the absolutely beautiful environment that New Zealand has to offer.

The day of competition arrived and many of us were suffering from nerves. We all stuck it out and tried our best to succeed, while learning a lot about the competition and how it is run around the world. As the action came to a close, I had relived my formative period of managing third place. However, this time, it was the World Championships and I received a medal to prove it. Not only that, but as a team, we brought back fresh knowledge to push the Air Rifle Field Target discipline forward in Australia.

The second National Air Rifle Field Target Championships were held in Canberra in October 2014. On this occasion, there were representatives from all over the country, who had gained know-how from their international experiences. These people now have what it takes to secure Air Rifle Field Target as a national sport for decades to come. I have been honoured to be a part of it and will continue to compete and promote the sport for the foreseeable future.



Jared McCarthy takes a shot from a sitting position.



Phil Brooker, left, Chris Dale, Craig Oliver and Jared McCarthy formed the 2014 Australian team for the Field Target World Championships in New Zealand.

Over the years, it could not have been possible without the support of my parents, sponsors and mentors alike. I would encourage any junior looking for something new to take up sports shooting in general. I consider myself a perfect role model for anyone who has not even seen a gun before and was looking for discipline and a challenge. I believe I am an example that anybody can make it to the World Championships, provided you put in the hard yards to succeed, along the way achieving prosperity in precision.

Calling for school competition shooters!

The SSAA Rockhampton Branch in Queensland runs an annual tri-discipline shoot to bring people together and to give them a taste of the types of firearms used at the club. It is also a great opportunity for our junior shooters.

Last year, two students from St Brendan's College in Yeppoon took out the junior prizes. Finn Burgess won the junior rifle competition and Kane Tougher won the overall shotgun trophy. These boys have been shooting the St Brendan's match for some time, but this was an open competition, rather than a student event.

The College had previously hosted an interschool competition, but the other school's shooting club has

unfortunately now closed. This leaves us with little opportunity for the competition that boys such as Finn and Kane need.

The St Brendan's shooters are a part of the SSAA Rockhampton Branch and have two shoots per month. If your school has a shooting club and would like to compete against St Brendan's College, we would love to hear from you. Anyone interested can contact me on 07 4939 9400 or HayesP@sbc.qld.edu.au

Peter Hayes
Shooting Coordinator, St Brendan's College, Yeppoon, Qld

A newfound sport and touch of camo for Buttress sisters

by Assistant Editor Dave Rose

Sisters Kimberly and April Buttress are so glad that they followed their father's lead, for Scott's hunch that his daughters may enjoy joining him in sports shooting has proved right on the mark.

The girls were given their first tentative instructions towards handling firearms in January 2014. At the time, April was just 12 while Kimberly was 14. Since then, the pair, who live in the Melbourne suburb of Lilydale, have embraced their new pastime with such verve that in July they both took part in their first competition - the 2015 SSAA National Junior Challenge at the SSAA Glenorchy Club in Tasmania. Though both girls finished up trailing the rest in their respective age groups, the fact that they were there at all is the real success story.

Kimberly, now 16, was pegged back from 15 entrants in the 15-18 age group, while April, now 13, put in a plucky show among eight Under 15s. Far from being disappointed, mum Donna said that the girls just wanted to go on to become better and better. "It's a learning curve for all of us that are involved," said Donna. "My husband Scott is the shooter in the family. He was a hunter, but gave up the activity for a long period then he picked it up again. He was the one who got them started. He wanted them to have a background on how to use firearms safely. So we decided to put them in the Junior Youth Training Scheme, which they run at the Springvale Club. They are now SSAA members."

The girls had shot informally in one discipline in their only other national outing, but the Glenorchy meet was the first time they had shot three disciplines in one event.

"I really enjoyed meeting people from other states," said Kimberly of her Tasmanian adventure. "I didn't think it was strange that Dad wanted to get us both into something that he was

interested in. I'm going to keep it up because I'm really passionate about it."

When asked which sister was the better shot, Kimberly was diplomatic in her reply. "Well...we both have our strong and weak points. We are both happy to help each other out," she said.

Scott is glad he stirred the girls' interest. "I thought it would be something to do to have them off the computers and out and about," he said. "The people at SSAA Springvale have been fantastic with them and made such a big difference. They are not into hunting, but maybe one day."

Donna echoed those sentiments. "Kimberly would like to shoot a fox, but we haven't got that far yet. There is still the paperwork to do for that, which I am still working on," she said.

Donna also had other work to do for Kimberly. It was the school 'formal' at Lilydale Heights College at the end of July and Donna was asked to make Kimberly's dress. Nothing unusual there, except that Kimberly wanted a full-on 'camo' number in homage to the sport of shooting.

So for Donna, it was a race against time, but the results helped Kimberly give a glamorous reference to her new passion. "The dress certainly had the desired effect and everyone thought it was a wonderful idea," said Donna.



Kimberly moves smoothly into firing mode.



Shooter Kimberly looks so chic in her 'camo' number.



April sets her sights on the target.

A Father's Day goat hunt

by Matt Fox



Matt Fox with his top-of-the-hill billy.

Matt with the second goat he shot on the first morning.

Months had passed since Dad had told me he had organised to hunt goats on a mate's place about four hours from home. I had been aware that the date must have been approaching, but for some reason, it seemed to take an age to arrive.

At last, we packed Dad's dirt bike on board the Hilux and left straight after school on the Friday before Father's Day. We drove into the night, meeting up with our fellow hunters for steak and chips about 30 minutes from our destination. Hunting buddies were to be four other teenagers around my age plus three dads, including mine.

We were pleased to end our journey, arriving at the mountain cabin with the outside temperature hovering around 2C. The initial job was to light the log fire and find our bunks, as we planned to rise early for the first day's hunt.

The next morning, my eager father woke me. I was fast out of my warm sleeping bag and hauling on my hunting gear to the smell of fresh bacon and eggs cooking in the kitchen. We ate on the verandah and not more than half a kilometre away, I could clearly see the mobs of goats making their way down the mountainsides towards the

river below. Like blobs of white cotton wool, the mobs moved slowly in single file along the well-worn tracks, descending the extremely steep terrain.

Dad set up the 25x spotting scope on the outside table and as I took a mouthful of egg and bacon, I would drop my eye to the ocular lens and scan for trophy-sized billy-goats. 'What an unbelievable hunting spot!' I thought, being able to sit eating breakfast while choosing a trophy goat to stalk. I was soon feeling energised for the steepest, toughest, most treacherous terrain I had ever come across.

Our friend and owner of the property was ready to hit the hills as well, so we loaded up the rifles and jumped into the LandCruiser. Dad was carrying his Sako Finnlight in .270, while I intended to use my favourite Ruger Mk I in .243.

We were dropped off three-quarters of the way up the mountain, where the four-wheel drive lost traction on the soft muddy track. It had rained overnight and was still overcast as we disembarked and discussed the best route to approach the goats. The slope was severe as we took off on foot towards a higher vantage point from which we planned to drop down on the mob where I had identified a rather big billy with a better-than-average spread.

Not long into our trek, we located the lead mob about 200m across the valley and moving steadily away. Dad said he was sure the goats had winded us and although uncertain of the danger, they were intent on moving at a steady pace. We decided to work our way up the mountain to an even higher vantage point and try to head the mob off that had broken left, seeking the relative safety of the tops.

Just as we were entirely out of breath and struggling to keep our footing, a large billy and three nannies with kids materialised from beneath the scattered bushes that clung to the steep slope. They broke in all directions, causing us to consider our position and the likelihood of success at such a precarious angle. We agreed to let the goats go and to stay on our planned route to head off the main mob higher up.

When we arrived at the spot we had pushed so hard to reach, right on cue, the goats were below us and moving in our direction, but still perhaps 180m across a deep gully. "This place is not short of goats!" I said to Dad. "That's for sure," he replied as he began glassing the mob for the lead goat.

We stayed on the high side of the hill, glassing the grazing goats for almost 20 minutes until at last, a large billy emerged from behind one of the boulders strewn across the incline. He was a large white goat with a spread I would estimate at around 26 to 28".

Dad whispered "Billy!" and I got the nod to get into position. Dad ranged the distance at 176m and I knew that the .243 would be flat shooting out to that distance if I held on the intended point of impact. Dad chose another mature billy with a lesser head and what looked like a deformed horn on one side. He found a fork in a tree nearby that provided a steady rest for the .270. In such situations we have a system where Dad counts to three and we shoot on three. It's easier for us if we both shoot on three. That is: one, two, shoot! The .270 is dynamite on goats at this range and the .243 more than holds it own on these relatively soft-skinned animals.

The billy's chest was in my cross-hairs as Dad reached three. Two shots filled the valley with sound as both goats dropped on the spot. The mob broke in all directions, not sure of the location of the danger.

The shots had been well placed and by the time we traversed the gully and climbed the steep face on the other side to retrieve our fallen goats, both were well dead. Upon closer inspection, my billy was sporting an excellent set of horns measuring 27" from tip to tip.

Dad's goat, as suspected, was suffering from a horn deformity and was best considered a cull animal. Dad is keen for me to always identify the trophy value of my target and to watch for malformed animals so that they may be culled from the mob in order to improve the quality of the heads in the future. It's a strategy we always employ when deer hunting.

Dad glanced at me with that satisfied look in his eye. "Dropped him like the proverbial sack of spuds," he said, and I felt rather chuffed with my first shot of the weekend. It's a great way to get your confidence up with an ace of a first shot. I shook Dad's hand on a successful kill and went to set up the photograph for our hunting album.

Dad and I always carry two-way radios when we hunt. This is so that we can remain in communication even if a line of sight is not maintained. The radios are also particularly useful when locating downed animals between gullies. One of us sits on the side from which the shot was taken while they guide the other straight to the fallen animal.

We worked our way down the mountain over the next few hours and eventually reached the river-bed at the bottom. I also managed to shoot a second animal from the mob when we caught up with them again. Then we called the house and asked to be collected from the causeway. We reached the cabin at about noon, in time for a cool drink and some lunch while we watched the goats grazing across the valley through the spotting scope.

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 the back of an envelope and send it to:

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

or online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competition closes October 31, 2015

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