

The Australian Junior **SHOOTER**

An introduction for Junior Shooters & Hunters

Issue 27

Eyes on the PRIZE

Olympian Kata has
Paris in her sights

Win!

**Magnum Shooting
Glasses**

Master the basics

TOP 10 TIPS

to make you a
better shot

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Contribute to Australian Junior Shooter

If you or someone you know has a junior related story to tell or would like us to tell it for them, email us at edit@ssaa.org.au and let's put the wheels in motion.

Editorial

We're all aware that shooting is a sport for all ages but the old adage of 'start them young' applies here just as much as it does in any other walk of sporting life. And that's why this edition's cover girl Katarina Kowplos will be an inspiration to every young Australian looking to make a name for themselves in shooting. While no longer a junior herself, Katarina enjoyed her first taste of this great sport aged just 12 yet within just six years was a proud Aussie Olympian.

Introduced to the sport through a Scouts Australia program, Kata quickly worked her way up through the competitive ranks and by the tender age of 17 was representing her country - and winning a silver medal - in the Oceania Championships. And from 'up' the only way was even further up as the young South Australian competed in the Junior World Cup before personal best performances in Olympic nomination trials ended with selection to the national team to shoot on the biggest stage of all at last year's Tokyo Games.

So to all young shooters out there the lesson to be learned here is back yourself, put in the hard yards and the sky's the

limit. Of course, we don't all have Olympic or international aspirations but the desire to perform at our best on every visit to the range is something we all feel. And that's where coaching comes in.

Which is why we've called on Gemma Dunn, the SSAA National Coaching and Membership Development Manager who has penned her top 10 tips to help get your head right when it comes to focusing on the job at hand. Gemma has called on her years of shooting experience and in this issue will pass on some of the helpful psychological routines which assisted her on the way to becoming an international competitor.

Elsewhere, accomplished shooter and hunter Mark van den Boogaart offers his thoughts on how to start, continue and pass on the proud tradition of the shooting sports to future generations while we also turn the spotlight on young Jaidyn Patterson who's already being touted as the future of Fly Shooting in Western Australia and beyond. Welcome aboard!

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Master the basics

Shooting is as much in the mind as it is in pulling the trigger and SSAA National Coaching and Membership Development Manager **Gemma Dunn** has these top tips for young shooters

There are several key factors which make or break a shooter's performance and it's important as a beginner to build a good foundation in the four main elements of the sport: target acquisition, equipment, mind and skill. Once these cornerstones are formed they'll allow you to continue to develop as a shooter for years to come, so here's what I feel are the top 10 most important psychological aspects to becoming a better shot.

Throughout my shooting career there have been many psychological traits I've had to adopt to be a better competitor. In terms of pinpointing just 10 it's a lot more complex than it seems as youngsters have a different set of factors and hurdles to those of experienced shooters. So here are my top psychological hurdles to a shooter's performance on the range with a brief insight on ways to overcome these.

1 Goals

Regardless of your ability and experience (or inexperience), having an idea of where you want to go with your shooting is important, so set goals and make sure they're specific to you and your sport, ensuring they're measurable, achievable and realistic. Set a time-frame for objectives where possible so you can evaluate performance and appropriateness of those goals.

Coupled with goal-setting you must also make a plan to achieve these aims and commit to that plan.

Goal-setting has kept me in check throughout my shooting career though in hindsight there were occasions when some of my ambitions probably weren't overly achievable in the time frame I'd allocated. Goal-setting has taught me a lot about myself, not just in shooting but in everyday life.

Regular practice is the key to shooting success.



2 Keep a journal

It's impossible to effectively evaluate your goals unless you have the data to go back through. You should be looking for where you performed well and not so well, what you should keep doing and what needs to be changed, trained for and practised. Looking back on some of the journal entries I made as a junior I can gauge how far I've progressed in my 13 years of shooting. Completing a journal has also pointed out some recurring problems I'm now aware of to which I've set goals for and can work on these in training. I have a handy journal template so email aws@ssaa.org.au and I'll send it to you.

3 Pre-shot routine

Whether you shoot clay targets, rifle, pistol or hunt, whether you play golf, tennis, snooker or darts you need a routine before every shot as a pre-shot procedure enables you to go over the basics. Are my feet in the right position? What is my gun-hold position? Where is the point I'll see the target clearly and be able to focus on it? Where do I follow-through to? Sometimes a pre-shot routine can involve a relaxation strategy such as centring, a visualisation technique or key word or phrase.

I was introduced to this concept at a national training camp as a junior but since then, and after travelling and working alongside Olympians and world-class shooters, the emphasis on a pre-shot routine has followed me throughout my shooting journey. It's something I'm still working on but I know I can rely on it when under pressure in competition so next time you're at the range take a look around and see if you can spot other pre-shot habits. You can bet that every time it's my turn to shoot I've touched my ponytail (to put it out the way), secured my glasses and am taking deep breaths - these are all part of my pre-shot routine.

4 Silence the mind

You can't focus on the target if there's continual dialogue going on in your head as your mind giving instructions on what to do won't help you hit the target. Negative self-talk which recalls past failures or judges your self-worth based on scores is just a hindrance. Techniques such as visualisation (imaging yourself hitting the target), humming, focusing on some sensory experience in the here and now and catchphrases all help keep the mind at rest.

5 Stay in the here and now

To shoot well you must be in the 'present' as when you let your mind go back to some other time, another shoot or target you missed five attempts back, you're shooting in the 'past' which leads to you

making judgments about your ability or self-worth as a person and a shooter. When you focus on what happened in the past you miss because you're not concentrating on the target in front of you. Shooting in the 'future' can also be a problem as thinking about the score, result, trophy or prizemoney will also distract you from the job at hand. Shooting in the future only leads to anxiety and worry.

6 Focus on the process

If you do this the outcome will look after itself and by that I mean if you only think about the process of shooting the target, you'll probably hit it. The process involves the pre-shot routine, making sure you're set up properly, staying in the present, having fun and enjoying the sensory aspects of shooting such as the sun on your back, wind, noise, smell of the gun being fired and recoil. The opposite of being process orientated is to be product orientated where you're focusing on the score, prize or the feeling you get from winning. Focusing on the product takes you away from the present and you'll be shooting in the future.

7 One shot at a time

Rather than expect to shoot a perfect score or perfect round each time, compete with the expectation to shoot one target 25 times as an example, as this will keep you in the present and focused on the process. This not only works in competition or training but also with everyday life. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by your mental to-do list? Having a list of all the things you need to achieve can help but looking at it in its entirety will only cause more stress. Take one task at a time if you can and before you know it you're binning the completed list.

8 Breathe

This should be self-explanatory but when people 'choke' it's because they don't breathe. As you read this take three deep breaths: breathe in and out, in and out, in and out then do that for the rest of your life! Breathing and relaxation go together and the latter is a good way of staying in the here and now.

9 Have fun

Remember shooting's a sport so have fun, be sporting, enjoy yourself and don't interfere with others enjoying themselves.

10 Practice makes perfect

If you're going to practise make sure it's perfect practice. Don't practise mistakes or bad habits, don't do it half-heartedly or just go through the

motions. Make sure you also know the difference between practice and training as the latter is about learning a new skill or technique and practice is generalising that skill or technique into your shooting.

It's important to note that no one factor here is more important than any of the others. You need to work on all 10 and make sure they're integrated into your shooting every time you compete or practise as by continuing to improve these skills you give yourself a good foundation to rely on in competition or out in the field. ●



Gemma's pre-shot routine includes removing perspiration from her hands.

Living the

Kata went from come-and-try day to Olympics in six years, writes
Rachael Oxborrow

It took just six years for Katarina ‘Kata’ Kowplos to go from complete novice to shooting in the Olympic Games. The now 21-year-old was barely a teenager when she began ruffling feathers at SSAA National Championships and was still in her teens when she qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. What happened next is one for the history books and while many athletes were frustrated at the 12-month COVID delay in Japan’s turn to host the world’s best, Kata believes it was her saving grace.

“I never expected to qualify for Tokyo and had set my goal as the 2024 Games in Paris,” she said. “I started shooting the ISSF disciplines when the 2016 Olympics were happening and by the following Games I was there competing. For older shooters, particularly on some overseas teams, having that one-year delay in Tokyo was catastrophic to their plans to make 2020 their last Olympics but for myself and many other younger shooters I was a year older and that gave me time to get my head in the right space.”

SSAA member Kata was introduced to target shooting as a 12-year-old through a Scouts South Australia program

run in conjunction with the local Para Range and within six months had competed at the National Field Rifle, 3-Position, NRA and Scoped Air Rifle Championships and knew at that point she’d be shooting for many years to come.

She made her international debut in 2017 when she competed in the youth division of the Oceania Championships and won silver in 10m Air Rifle. She went on to shoot in the Junior World Cup at Suhl in Germany then in Sydney where she placed in the top 15 against the world’s best young shooters in 10m Air Rifle. In 2019 she returned to Suhl for the Junior World Cup before finishing 13th as a member of the Australia B team at the 3-Positions Oceania Championship in Sydney.

Things ramped up pretty quickly from there and in February and March 2020 she took part in two 3-Position rifle Olympic nomination trials and recorded personal best scores of 1141 and 1142. Kata was soon eyed as a favourite for selection and ended up landing a spot in the 10m Air Rifle and 50m 3-Positions events as well as the mixed team 10m Air Rifle. And if that’s not enough she did the bulk of

Youth in Focus

Katarina Kowplos

by Rachael Andrews

Just six months after being introduced to target shooting, Katarina 'Kata' Kowplos was pitting her skills against experienced shooters on a national level. The 12-year-old took the pressure of competing in the SSAA National Field Rifle, 3-Positional, NRA

and the Air Rifle Championships. The busy 12-year-old said she was "a bit nervous" but she was excited to be there.

"I started shooting with the Scouts because it was a great way to spend time with my friends," Kata said. "But I found I really like the shooting and I'm making more friends by doing it."

"My goal is to get my dad to get into target shooting... He used to do it when he was younger and I want to shoot with him now."

Kata, who also swims as a sport, was introduced to target shooting through a highly successful Scouts South Australia program at the SSAA Para Range.

"I started shooting with the Scouts because it was a great way to spend time with my friends," Kata said. "But I found I really like the shooting and I'm making more friends by doing it."

A young Katarina featured in our Youth in Focus slot back in 2015.



Kata is looking forward to shooting at the range with her dad and sharing her pastime with her family.

that Olympic qualifying while studying Year 12 at school and using a borrowed rifle to suit her left-handed requirements.

Following selection and news of a delayed 2020 Tokyo showpiece due to the global pandemic, the mind games began for Kata though on a positive note those extra 12 months allowed her time to adapt to a new rifle gifted by her grandmother. During that time she made good use of a SCATT machine to practise dry-firing and develop the technical side of her shooting and was able to access her home range at Para for outside practice when restrictions permitted.

In the lead-up to the Olympics in 2021 Kata hit form as competition shooting returned and she registered a personal best on her way to winning the Open 10m Air Rifle title at the Target Rifle South Australia Championships at Wingfield in May last year, scoring 251.0 and defeating fellow Olympic team members Dane Sampson and Elise Collier in the process.

The final few weeks before flying to Tokyo were filled with Olympic team shooting camps and essentially isolating

Katarina has her eyes set on the 2024 Paris Olympics and plans to draw on her Tokyo experience.



Living the dream

from the public to avoid exposure and the need for mandatory quarantine. On arrival at the athletes' village in Japan, Kata said it was surreal to finally be at the Olympics and while she was initially disappointed that COVID controls meant she'd be unable to explore Tokyo, the experience was an eye-opener nonetheless.

She remembers waking on that first morning in the village to the sounds of cheering and yelling as the Australian water polo team played cricket on a central lawn in front of an audience of athletes watching from the balconies of surrounding buildings. "That's when I realised where I was," she recalled. "We were among all these athletes from other countries and having the chance to experience that community aspect of the village was just amazing."

Athletes were permitted to arrive five days prior to their event for training and preparation and Kata's initial range

visit allowed her to assess the lie of the land and have her first practice shoot. "I felt pretty comfortable on the range as I knew what I was dealing with and the targets were a similar style to what I'd shot before," she said. "From there it was really about making sure I focused on what I could control."

Kata said the unexpected variable which threatened to unravel her Olympic debut was Tokyo's 30-plus degree heat and stifling humidity of 70-80 per cent which badly affected her double-layered canvas shooting gear weighing more than 8kg. "My biggest issue was controlling how I felt in that weather," she said. "The fit of my gear was different and I was bloating due to the necessary water consumption in that heat and humidity."

Regulations require a 7cm overlap in jacket fit which is tested prior to competing. Before leaving Australia,

Preparation for her first Olympics gave Kata the chance to mature as a person and a shooter after qualifying at age 18.



Kata waited more than a year between finding out she'd qualified to finally competing at the Tokyo Games.

Kata could have brought her buttons in if she wanted but ultimately was glad she left them where they were as when tested in Tokyo she was told to move them out by 4cm. “That was something I couldn’t plan for and it definitely shook me up,” she admitted.

“I was disqualified once because my rifle was too heavy when I filled the air cylinder at a competition and hadn’t filled it when I weighed it at home. But in Tokyo I didn’t have time to overthink things as I had to remember what I was there for and just had to focus and rely on my training to see me through.”

Katarina was happy enough with her Olympic debut but not her results. “I’m not sure anyone is ever happy with their results unless they win.” She placed 22nd in 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team with Dane Sampson, 45th in women’s 10m Air Rifle and 36th in women’s 50m Rifle 3-Position. “I felt really

good with how I went on the range and the fact I was able to adapt to that environment,” she said. “I’m lucky I still have time on my side and am just starting out in international shooting so I use the Olympic debut as a learning experience and know I want to keep going.”

Kata was selected for the 2021 Oceania Championships which unfortunately were cancelled and was also named an ambassador of the inaugural Australian Institute of Sport ‘Thrive with Pride’ program which aims to enhance respectful, educated and inclusive communication in sporting events. In the short-term she’s taken a six-month break from shooting to focus on her Bachelor of Information Technology studies at the University of South Australia before preparing for the Paris 2024 Olympic qualifiers. ●



Snack time in a deep gully.

Tradition *starts with you*

As Mark van den Boogaart argues, a family custom needs a launch pad



The thing about tradition is it has to start somewhere as at some point it's not tradition, it's something completely new and only after it proves itself and others pick up the idea does it slowly become accepted. Among my parents and siblings there's no tradition of hunting but for whatever reason the subject was always in my consciousness and I started as soon as I was old enough. That was more than 30 years

ago and now, with children of my own, hunting's part of our collective spirit as I talk about, write about and actively go hunting with antlers, horns and tusks adorning our walls and the freezer full of game meat and fish.

I'm also fortunate my eldest son, all of eight years, is interested in hunting and since he was five I've taken him with me on selected trips and while he's still just tagging along, the idea of hunting and the skills needed to be a



hunter are gradually forming. One such trip was during our annual visit to a fallow deer block in the Hunter Valley and while not quite yet a tradition, we visit every year and I'm even planning to take the whole family there just to see if I can generate some interest.

The block is great for hunting with a novice as it has some basic facilities and the terrain, while challenging, isn't too difficult and more importantly holds fallow in good numbers

along with signs of red deer and pigs, though unconfirmed as yet. A big part of the fallow block tradition is my good mate Tim who I've hunted a lot with over the years and having an 'uncle' along does help create a great atmosphere for my son. It was time to go and we had our permits sorted.

Unfortunately rain, more miserable than torrential, was travelling with us but being the 'glass half full' type I happily pointed out every break in the clouds as a sign of finer fare

Tradition starts with you

on its way, though my son's iPad seemed way more interesting than dad's weather updates. Reaching camp in late afternoon we made everything ready, lit a fire and cooked dinner (hotdogs with cheese, a campfire staple among my lot).

The next day started cold and wet. The property had received good rainfall during the previous six months and was looking better than I'd ever seen it though the long wet grass was going to be a challenge to my son's hunting outfit. Through some creative thinking along with Gaffa tape and plastic bags we soon had his boots and trousers waterproofed and up top we fitted him out with my rain jacket. Complete with belt, beanie and new hunting knife made for him by a US-based contact, he looked like a mini-mountain man and was now raring to go.

Hunting with my boy involves a couple of fundamentals starting with short legs versus long legs and while it'll happen soon enough, at present he can't outwalk dad. The other is appetite. The lad has to eat, constantly it seems, and when you're pushing on you can see the limitation of his small energy reserves as not only does an empty tank affect him physically, it modifies his concentration. That being the case our hunts are usually two to three hours in duration with plenty of food breaks as we go and back-up snacks in the ute for the drive back to camp.

What this really means for me is expectations have had to change. As I strive to create hunting a tradition I've had to re-evaluate my own expectations and during the past few years have become more focused on the chance of game rather than concentrating purely on trophy animals. That



Tim glasses for any opportunity.

doesn't mean we never pass up an animal as I firmly believe it's an invaluable lesson to teach young hunters you don't shoot at everything, though for the past few years it's been more about the freezer than the wall.

Leaving camp we crested a hill and found fresh sign leading back towards a short, steep gully system. After about another hour of working our way slowly down we headed towards what looked like patches of clear ground and, continuing to drop into the system, we finally spotted deer. They were younger fallow, perfect for the table, so I made sure my son had his ear protection on and was seated in a good yet safe position.

One particular fallow presented a broadside and you take the chances presented and on firing I watched it drop then roll down towards a small creek line. The little mountain man was excited as now he had a chance to use his knife and after some photos we broke up the animal and even had him do a little cutting before we began the slow carry back to the ute.

The drizzle seemed well entrenched so on reaching a track, Tim and my son stayed put while I fetched the vehicle and in no time we'd everything loaded and were heading for camp where, with the carcass cooling off in the shade, it was time for a feed. After lunch the wind picked up and while blustery, overall the conditions had improved so we decided to try our hand at holding up behind cover.



An older tree rub makes for a good leaning post during early morning rain.

Things didn't go quite to plan as Tim walked a circuit to see if we could make something happen. The wind was really up now and though it was drier it was also cold along the exposed ridges so we eventually split up with Tim looking to drop down on a known deer clearing while my son and I walked out along a track. He was starting to flag and becoming too talkative just as I spotted a couple of deer yet try as I might I couldn't make him concentrate and with my attention focused on the boy, the deer moved on. With one deer in the esky and two missed opportunities we closed out the day around the fire.

With the dawn came respite from the rain and periods of sunshine. It was colder again but we were dry and breaks in the fog made glassing from camp much easier. During one of those intervals Tim spotted a buck, easy to see being white and bringing the big binoculars and spotting scope to bear we had a good read on him. He looked a typical bush buck, similar to one I'd taken the previous year though it certainly wasn't the animal you'd want to go after with an eight-year-old in tow so I told Tim to carry on while we remained.

Quietly discussing his approach he opted to cut down into the creek line as with some open ground to cross we felt the creek might provide best cover. While it would initially take him away from the animal it would keep Tim right with the wind and allow him to circle up and around into a shooting

position. It meant that for a time he'd be unable to follow the buck and if the animal moved he wouldn't know until he was up and around the far crest.

The buck seemed to be helping Tim's cause and was staying put until eventually moving down into a small wash-out and towards what we found later was fresh clover. By doing so I lost sight of the animal so my son and I just sat there hoping for a glimpse of the hunt as it was playing out. We heard the shot as the sound of the .30-06 reverberated in the surrounding hills though looking for a fleeing animal I still couldn't see anything so we were unsure of the outcome. About 30 minutes later we heard foot-falls on dirt and watched Tim walk back into camp with a thumbs-up and we knew it was deer number two.

That proved to be our last animal of the weekend as by mid-afternoon the rain returned followed by a howler of a storm that night. Slowly cleaning up our gear we made dinner and put the young bloke to bed before enjoying a celebratory drink under shelter. It seems the storm blew out the last of the rain and by morning it was clear but cold. Packing up we were ready not long after sunrise and set off for an early breakfast. A while later we turned north for home with yet another successful father-son hunting trip on the board and hopefully plenty more to come. ●



Even the mini-mountain man was in on the action.



Jaidyn receives his Top Junior Shooter trophy from WA Fly Shoot delegate Stuart Pethybridge after his remarkable small group record (inset).

No flies on him!

Young Jaidyn a real prospect says Gary Templeman

Most shooting disciplines unearth one or two newcomers who appear at their local club and exhibit extraordinary natural talent from day one and for the SSAA (WA) Perth Rifle Metallic Silhouette Club, their latest 'Top Gun' discovery is eight-year-old Jaidyn Patterson. After more than 18 months' coaching under the expert eye of his grandad Paul, a former Royal Marine, Jaidyn's weekends start with a 6am range set-up, something he's always keen to help out with, then it's on to display his uncanny ability to hit 'flies' and shoot

tiny groups which border on 'Screamer Patch' standard.

With that level of natural ability and his eagerness to perform at his very best on every outing, Jaidyn clearly has a bright future in the benchrest disciplines. As the club's most junior member and probably the youngest shooter in the state, Jaidyn underlined his credentials at the WA State Championships in July when he shot a remarkable 214 points in the RF Fly which rates as a silver in proficiency awards. Needless to say the youngster clinched the WA junior state title and turned more than a few heads in



Expert advice from grandad Paul has the youngster right on target.

shooting a junior 'small group' record with a five-shot group measuring an astonishing 1.416"

Jaidyn's interest in competition shooting started when playing with his Nerf guns then while watching grandad clean his rifle after a shoot one day, Paul asked him if he'd like to shoot a 'real' gun. The reply was an overwhelming "yes" so soon after at a club open day, Jaidyn was given meticulous instructions on range rules and etiquette, where he could and couldn't go and the many safety aspects of using a rifle at the bench.

Paul started by setting up some balloons to make sure Jaidyn could use and understand the scope properly then followed that with some 200m Fly targets. The young hot-shot went on to pop the balloons, nailed the fly at 200m and from then on was hooked. With his grandad the youngster has been a range regular ever since and also enjoys shooting silhouette 22LR, air rifle and his favourite 200m RF Fly which is where he really excels.

Along with his love of organised sports at Alinjarra Primary School, Jaidyn has recently developed a passion for boogie boarding though his favourite remains small-bore rifle shooting with his grandad. With family members



Young Jaidyn demonstrates his ability at 500m.

understandably impressed by his rapid rise in confidence and performance, even his grandma has joined the club and bought a 22LR pistol, so with two grandparents shooting targets and hunting it might just be a matter of time before his young sister is also a regular at the range. One thing's for sure though, the future of Fly Shooting in Western Australia is in very capable hands. ●

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 2022 Junior competition
SSAA National
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

or enter online at ssaa.org.au/win

Competition closes October 31, 2022

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Sign up a JUNIOR

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.

ssaa.org.au