

# World Skeet Shooting Championships 2022

After 4 long years the Australian Skeet Team returned to San Antonio, Texas, to compete in the 12 Gauge Zone Skeet Teams event at the 2022 World Skeet Championships. Texas was hot and very dry after a long summer with temps above 100 degrees fahrenheit every day since May. The National Gun Club was presented impeccably well, albeit with not a blade of green grass anywhere around the 671 acre property due to the hot weather and the distinct lack of rain that Texas had suffered from.



The Americans were very happy to see the international shooters return to San Antonio to compete and many countries had sent their best to the World Shoot. The Zone 8 countries, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, South Africa, Canada and Puerto Rico and of course the USA, were all fielding strong competitors.

The NSSA staff were welcoming and helpful in assisting the Australian Team members navigate the complex registration and grading process. Some of the rotation times had been rejigged since 2018 and we learnt that there were two 12G rotations, one of which was shot on the Monday afternoon and the balance shot on Tuesday, which is the traditional 12G event day. This added further interest to the program. We had team members on both

rotations so that was a topic of discussion early on regarding strategies and approaches to the event.

The Australian Team had a skeet field booked for practice on the Thursday afternoon, so it was all hands down to practice field 18 for some much-needed familiarisation with the very hot and bright light conditions and the banded White Flyer targets. But before that, we had to sort out the ammunition supply? Ammunition has been very hard to obtain in the USA due to supply chain issues on the back of the pandemic. In short there was no spare ammunition, particularly the small gauge. Luckily the ASSA had worked with the NSSA to ensure all Zone 8 shooters could pre-purchase their ammunition from the NSSA



*Bwlow: Jack Stockdale, Paul Saliba, Michael, Buttigieg Shane Bennett & David O'Sullivan with the ACTA & Australian Flags*

as part of the pre-nominations to ensure the international shooters had a guaranteed supply of ammunition for the shoot. There was shoot-off ammunition available to purchase at the pro shop but limited to 2 boxes per shooter.

The World Championships are broken down into the Mini World and the Main World. The Mini World is essentially a warm-up event with Doubles shot on Friday and then on

Saturday the 12 gauge event in the morning and the 28G event in the afternoon. Sunday being the 20G in the morning and the 410 to finish, so a very quick way to get 500 targets under your belt in preparation for the main World Championship events which commenced on Monday. The Doubles event saw strong performances from the Aussie Team members, all in the very high 90's and there was only 2 x 100 target straights shot, out of close to 500 competitors.

Saturday morning saw a very strong performance by the Australian team with Jack Stockdale, Michael Buttigieg, Paul Saliba and Shane Bennett shooting 100 straight in the 12 G Mini event which bode well for the main 12 G event coming a few days later. Unfortunately, there are no 5 man team events in the Mini so it was individual performances only at the Mini World. It should be noted that one of our close country compatriots, Mason Reed from New Zealand, was one of only 3 shooters to shoot 100 x 100 in the 410 on Sunday afternoon and he won the shoot-off in the stadium. A huge win for Mason and his country by winning the overall 410 event at the Mini. What a great effort by Mason!

At the end of the weekend of the Mini, strong HOA performances by the majority of the



*Aussies on the practice field*



*Shoot-off fields under lights*

Australian team members, bode well for the main World Championship events.

HOA scores for the Team members were Shane Bennett 383, Jack Stockdale 387, Michael Buttigieg 393 and Paul Saliba 393, Dave O'Sullivan did not shoot the Mini.

### **World Championship 12 Gauge Event**

As mentioned earlier, this year the NSSA had offered several options to shoot the 150 x 12 G targets. Some rotations shot 75 targets on the Monday afternoon and 75 on Tuesday morning and some rotation shot 75 targets on the Tuesday morning and 75 on Tuesday afternoon with each event having its own sub-title, the 12 G East and 12 G West.

Station one in the first round of the 12 G event saw catastrophe for Australian Team member Jack Stockdale. Just as Jack closed his gun the stock cracked completely through the pistol grip area rendering the gun unusable. After a short break Jack started the event with a borrowed gun which was gut wrenching for Jack and the team! Jack showed his determination and grit and posted a 72/75 for the day which was testament to his character.

Mondays 12 G scores saw Bennett on 75, Buttigieg on 75, Stockdale on 72, Saliba on 73. Tuesday was a similar affair with only Dave shooting the traditional rotation of both events on the Tuesday and he posted a 73 and a 74 for 147/150. Jack tried in vain with several gunsmiths at the shoot to get his gun repaired overnight but unfortunately it wasn't to be and he was forced to shoot another borrowed gun for the second 75, posting a 74/75 on the second day for a 146/150. A huge congratulations to Jack for shooting so well considering the circumstances.

The rest of the team shot the second 75 on Tuesday with Shane Bennett on 75/75, Michael Buttigieg on 74/75 and Paul Saliba on 73/75

Totals for the 150 target main event were as follows: Shane Bennett 150/150, Michael Buttigieg 149/150, Dave O'Sullivan 147/150, Paul Saliba 146/150 and Jack Stockdale 146/150.

It should be noted that Shane Bennett shot off for the overall with 150/150 on the shoot-off fields and also made the shoot-off stadium

field for the East event with 75/75, running several boxes under lights in the stadium which was a great achievement. Michael Buttigieg also shot off for the East event on the shoot-off fields.

Totals for the Zone Team event was 738/750, an incredible effort from the team.

The good news was that this Team score was enough to win the Zone Teams World Championship against all of the other Zone Countries, so a huge congratulations to the Team and the ACTA for their support and funding of the Team. The Australians certainly made their presence at the shoot known, with the following notable performances: Michael Buttigieg achieving a truly remarkable 7th in the world in the HAA, in the 12 gauge Shane Bennett shot a perfect 150/150, in the 20 gauge Paul Saliba, Michael Buttigieg, Jack Stockdale and Sarah Bennett all shot perfect 100/100's, in the 28 G Michael Buttigieg shot another 100/100. In the Champ of Champs event Michael once again shot the possible 100/100. Sarah Bennet shot her first 100 in the 20 G event and then went on with her

husband Shane to win the coveted Husband and Wife team prize.

Every skeet shooter should make the pilgrimage to the National Gun Club in San Antonio to attend the World Skeet Championships at least once in their career. The long travel time, the time zone, the heat, the bright light, the near perfect targets and 700 of the best shooters in the world to compete against will truly put a broader perspective of just how good you have to be just to get a shoot-off into your skeet repertoire. It is a truly a life changing experience.

Our ACTA 5 Man Zone Skeet Team and all of the other Australian shooters who attended should be commended on their commitment and desire to compete against the world's best shooters and they should hold their heads high with some fantastic performances that are surely worthy of accolades.

A huge thanks to the ACTA for continuing to fund the Skeet Team and a huge congratulations to all of the Australian Team members for their dedication, determination and ability to Make Australia Proud!



*Watching from the stands*