

Australia/ New Zealand Glenn Trophy Challenge



CHRIST-"it's bl**dy freezing"-CHURCH

The Canterbury Gun Club must be the first obstruction that the icy cold Antarctic winds encounter on their journey northwards from the freezing Antarctic wastelands. You could almost smell the fish, penguins and sea lions in the air on this bitterly cold and windy Saturday afternoon but there was certainly nothing fishy about the Australian team who looked resplendent in their uniforms as they huddled together to prepare for this years Glenn Trophy challenge.

This most prestigious event dates back to 1966 and is conducted at the Skeet Nationals of both countries on alternate years. Odd years it is conducted in New Zealand and even years in Australia. It is a 50 target team event made up of five members from each country and a place in this team comes with its own unique type of pressure that cannot be trained nor practiced for. Nothing prepares you for the pressure you experience as you step out onto the skeet field in front of so many expectant eyes. This experience is not for the feint hearted!

With a broad range of age and experience in this years team the Australians certainly looked like they meant business in their immaculate uniforms and it was perhaps somewhat intimidating for their New Zealand counterparts to see that the Australian spirits were so high with the team having bonded well over the preceding weeks antics of various prophylactic pranks, failed fishing forays and some dubious pigeon plundering having taken place, don't ask.



Voice release:
Christchurch
skeet - 'special
edition' voice
release

But on this penultimate day of the New Zealand Skeet nationals several New Zealand titles and trophies laid firmly and securely in the clutches of Australian arms as a jovial squad squared off for the coin toss and Australia's youngest member Queensland's Antony Ballarino showed no signs of nerves as he was chosen by the squad to 'call the toss' for the choice of fields.

It was New Zealand who won the toss but this proved to be their last win for the day as both teams took to their respective fields to shoot their first 125 targets.

Australian team and team Manager Nigel Hughes had chosen the experience and solidity of Victorian shooter Dave O'Sullivan to lead from the front as shooter 1.

Dave was in top form having literally just shot an outstanding 100 target event minutes prior to take yet another National title back to Australia and his barrels were still warm with the glow of victory as he stood on station 1 and called for the teams sighter targets.

A few nerves were visible to the trained eye and some early misses put added pressure onto the team, it was character building time for some as the pressure mounted within the squad.

With seasoned shooter Glenn

Above: L-R: Antony Ballarino,
Paul Johnston, Dave O'Sullivan,
Glenn Walker, Nigel Hughes

Right: Trophy picture : job done!

Walker giving it everything he had as shooter 2 and fellow Queenslander Nigel Hughes as shooter 3 missing some early targets it was a worrying time for the squad as they edged nervously from station to station.

But with solid performances from the team's youngest member, Antony Ballarino showing no signs of nerves at shooter 4 being backed by the experience of skeet stalwart Paul Johnston at shooter 5 the team finished the first round 6 targets down.

Neither team was aware of the others score, no eye contact made and no words exchanged as the two teams warily stalked each other as they swapped layouts for their final round of 125 targets.

Plenty of encouragement and advice from within the Australian team saw a solid and dedicated performance for this second round as cloud after cloud of vaporised target dust hung briefly in the cold New Zealand air as the Australian team found their true form in these challenging conditions.

It is said that skill, determination and a little luck will always prevail over bad targets and poor conditions and this was certainly the case for the latter part of this second round as the wind increased to send high house targets crashing to the ground on station 6 and low houses screaming towards the heavens as if seeking to break free from the pull of gravity.

With a couple of impossible to hit targets diving earthward to find shelter in it was 5 very determined men who approached station 8 to shoot their



last targets and with no target managing to travel any further then mere feet from the trap house before hitting a solid wall of lead it was with a sense of relief and trepidation that the squad congratulated each other and looked to the supportive Australian crowd for an indication of how the New Zealanders had fared in their own quest for victory.

There was a nervous wait as the final scores were obtained and several red herrings released to confuse and worry both teams but when the joking and teasing stopped it was with relief that a victorious Australia were declared the winners with a mere 3 more targets hit than the New Zealanders resulting in victory once more for the Australian team and making it a 5 years in a row win for Australia.

Dave O'Sullivan was outstanding with a perfect 50/50 and the rest of the team shone though with solid performances. Antony Ballarino showed a calmness and maturity beyond his years and on the whole the team did Australia and their sport proud and they wish to acknowledge the fierce competition and pride displayed by the New Zealanders and we look forward to the re-match in 2016 in Wagga Wagga when perhaps the warmer Australian conditions will provide its own set of challenges for our New Zealand friends.

Nigel Hughes