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NSSA WORLD SKEET CHAMPIONSHIPS

Report by Glenn Clarke

It was a true privilege to receive the Australian Shooting Team badge in the mail. I have no doubt that this badge and the opportunity to represent Australia at the world Championships is highly coveted by all skeet shooters who compete and love the sport of Skeet. To actually be selected in the team was a huge milestone for the author and I extend my gratitude to the ACTA for continuing to support Skeet in this country and send international teams to world championships like they do.

I remember back in the 80's watching the big names of our sport performing at such a high level at the nationals and the selection of the teams at the nationals gave most competitors the hunger for success and watching these people receive their team selection was a huge motivator to keep the hard work going into the sport. As this continues in 2012 and beyond and the new format for team selection will only foster more club and State Title attendance and ensure the most consistent people are sent away on these missions.

Thankfully our Skeet Nationals are in May and the world cham-

pionships are not until October which allows enough time for the Myriad of Paperwork to be done. There was much preparation to be done to obtain the necessary paper work from all of the authorities to be able to get the gun across to the USA and back such as Police, Customs and the American ATF, many hours were spent writing letters and following up to obtain the necessary permits.

Monday the 24th September began the journey at Customs in Melbourne and as I was getting my gun inspected I saw another Tuffpack already in the customs area, it turned out the owners were Linda Watson and Max Oakley also heading stateside on the same day, and I must say that on top of the 5 person Skeet team there were nearly 30 other Australians that travelled this year to the world shoot which is a fantastic effort and also demonstrates how strong the skeet fraternity is in Australia.

The long haul flight from Sydney direct to Dallas was a huge effort at 14 hours 30 minutes but the positive side was there were no connections to be made and anyone who has travelled via Los Angeles in the past few years know that this is a big airport to avoid as it is just so overcrowded and inefficient, particularly when travelling with a firearm!

Walking outside the airport doors at Dallas at around 4 pm in the afternoon and the huge whoosh of hot air that greeted me was nearly overwhelming. I waited for fellow team mate David O Sullivan to pick me up (on the wrong side of the road mind you) and we jumped into the car and headed for San Antonio approx. 4 hours drive away. Apart from a very bad hamburger experience in Belton Texas

we made it safely to the hotel and after getting our respective rooms crashed exhausted into bed at approx 11pm.

Tuesday 25th September saw a very late start and IHOP for breakfast with pancake crepes and endless coffee the day started well. Paul Johnston and Shane O'Brien fellow team mates made contact and suggested we have our first shot in America at the Bexar Community range which was approximately 40 minutes drive east of our hotel. Our Sat Nav looked after us well and we were there with no problems, Paul and Shane had already shot a few rounds and soon it was Dave's and my turn, despite these targets being superfast the opening rounds were ok (maybe it was the jetlag!). We just had to make sure we didn't stand on any fire ant mounds (and they were everywhere). A couple of rounds done and it was back for a swim at the hotel as it was scorching hot.

Wednesday 26th September. We started early as we all wanted to go to Cabelas at Buda Texas which was approx. 60 miles away, whilst at Cabelas we met other Aussies there Nick Aird, Wayne Petersen and Kel Madsen also enjoying the big superstore. We had all arranged to go to Bandera gun club that afternoon as they have their weekly competition there every Wednesday afternoon at 4pm. When we got to the grounds there must have been a 100 shooters there competing for the cash prize. The format was one round of singles and one round of doubles and then sudden death shoot off at stations 3, 4 and 5 and there were Kiwis, Americans and British and of course the Aussies. Our very own Mal Briggs was the victor of the day with excellent shooting followed by Billy Williams one of the All American team members and Glenn Clarke third overall so things were looking good for the Australians.

Thursday 27th September. Was the registration day at the National Ground with us all getting our final registration and squadding paperwork completed and the process was handled very well by the NSSA and we were done in 20 minutes. The biggest issue was that as the author was non classified with the NSSA, it took me a while to convince the NSSA that I was AA grade and I showed my ACTA scorebook to verify my grade and to please let me nominate that way but we got there in the end.

Our Team Manager Paul Johnston had arranged to hire a skeet field for the day and for the rest of the day the Aussies were found on field 17 practicing for the big event. That night you could also practice doubles under lights on the top fields and some of the contingent went back to the club to practice shooting under lights which was truly a unique experience as the sight pictures are completely different in the dark!

Friday 28th September, Mini World Doubles. The weather had been fantastic all week but it was getting worse and the day was very windy and the clouds were coming in pretty heavily a big storm front was moving into Texas expected in the afternoon. The wind was gusty and swirling but luckily the white flyer targets were still staying pretty true. The Mini is a great warm up event for the Main world shoot but the doubles are the first event in the USA where we shoot them last in Australia

Saturday 29th September. Today we shot 200 targets and the huge storm that passed the night before had dumped approx. 10 inches of rain overnight so lots of water lying around and the fields were very muddy, a small amount of showers were coming through sporadically but gradually as the day went on the weather was on the improve. In the morning it was the 12 gauge and in the afternoon it was the 28 gauge and two Aussie





Members of the Australian Team at the 2012 NSAA World Skeet Championships held in San Antonio, Texas. L-R: Shane O'Brien, Paul Johnston, David O'Sullivan, Craig O'Neill and Glenn Clarke

team members performed incredibly well with both Paul Johnston and David O Sullivan shooting the 100 in the 12 gauge and then David backing it up in the afternoon with another 100 in the 28 gauge. At the end of day one of the Mini World David had won 14th overall in the 12 gauge and was AAA5 which is 8th overall in the 28 and was equal leading for the High Gun with approx 675 shooters which was a fantastic start for the weekend.

Sunday 30th September. Wind and wind, as the front had come through on the Friday the wind was coming through and it was strong making the targets move around unpredictably and most of us got caught at one stage or another. The 20 gauge was first up and Shane O'Brien came in with a 100 and Paul, Glenn Craig and David all had 97's. The wind was blowing even harder for the last event of the mini which was the pop-gun, the lowly 410 and what a battle, shooting in the gale with the little guns, so much so that I will keep the scores out of the article so not to stain the page with tears!

Shane ended up winning AA class after a shoot off in the 20 and

came 13th overall which kept the Aussies in the spotlight. Another big mention here to Matt Fallon, Matt who lives in NZ and travels to some of the Aussie shoots shot the 100 in the 20 gauge and went nearly 2 boxes under lights in the stadium shoot off field and came 3rd overall in the mini 20 gauge what a fantastic effort for Matt.

Monday 1st October, Main Event Doubles. The weather was starting to right itself and the morning was bright and sunny the wind was still there but it was fairly consistent so the targets were flying pretty well. The writer was scheduled to shoot at 11.30 am and in the distance you could see a storm front coming through. As we shot the clouds were getting darker and darker and the clouds were so dark it was like shooting under lights with the orange target against the black background, half the field was in dark cloud and half was in bright sunlight making the tough job of doubles even harder. The wind started to blow as the front got nearer and nearer and just as the last station was shot there were lightning strikes. As we all literally ran back to the

car the heavens opened up and the torrential rain came down. The NSSA had to stop the shoot for nearly 2 hours because of the lightning strikes. An hour or so later the storm front had passed through and the sunshine came out and the shoot was back on. The Aussies performed well with Craig O' Neill with a 97, Dave and Glenn with 96's, Paul with a 95 and Shane with a 90 which was not too bad considering the conditions.

Tuesday 2nd October, Main Event 12 Gauge World Championship. Today was the big one and the event which the team was entered so there was a lot of pressure on all of the Australian team members. Luckily the day was a beauty with beautiful bright sunshine and little or no wind, perfect for skeet and no excuses!!

Well that was until you stepped onto Station One on the 9 am rotation in the morning and looked up to see the target and you looked directly into the sun. My heart sank as I realised that it was just impossible to see anything in the air expect for the sun. After much faffing about with hold points and hat adjustments there was no other choice but to call pull and hope you hit it. Luck was on our sides as somehow (and I don't know how) we managed to get off station one still clean and lots more hard work to be done.

The 12 gauge is actually 3 separate events with 75 targets being shot in the morning called the East then 75 targets shot the afternoon called the West and then the aggregate 150 targets is the actual World Championship event. This format is new as the 12 gauge for many years had been a 250 target event

shot over 2 days of 125 targets a day and the NSSA changed it to a one day event several years ago to shorten the world shoot by a day amongst lots of controversy with the traditionalists.

After the 150 targets were shot our Australian Team had done their best with Dave 150/150, Glenn 147/150, Paul 145/150, Shane 145/150 and Craig 144/150. This aggregate score had been enough to secure World Runner Up (Zone 8) to Team USA (Zone 1) which is a fantastic achievement for the ACTA and Australian Skeet shooting.

Other notable achievements from other Australians at the event were Lorraine Hughes with a 149/150 Glenn Walker with a 150/150, Nigel Hughes, Harry Bader and Mal Briggs with 148/150, after the shoot offs Glenn Walker an amazing 11th overall and David O Sullivan 18th overall in the 12 gauge event. Commiseration to Lorraine who actually did miss her first High One in the sun and ran the next 149 straight which is a gutsy effort!

Once again there were lots of lessons learnt and anyone who has got on a plane and travelled half way around the World will I am sure attest to the fact that it is not easy to compete on a world stage. Coming from winter cold to summer heat and competing when you should be normally sleeping it takes all the experience you can muster to achieve your best performance on the day and this event threw all it could at us to try and make it hard from sweltering heat to mud to rain and wind so I think to all of the Australians who travelled to the World Championships this year a great well done for all of your efforts!

Clarrie Barnes Memorial at Mildura



Clarrie Barnes Memorial winner N Watts & Gladys Barnes

Clarrie Barnes was a life member of the club as well as a foundation member.

Clarrie's niece Robin and her husband Des made the trip from Horsham. Also Clarrie's nephew Evan and his wife Margaret Gunbee from Adelaide attended. Eight squads contested the 105 target medley championship. Shooters travelled from Pooncarie, Horsham, Robinvale, Patchewollock & Melbourne.

Mrs Gladys Barnes was present on the day to present sashes & trophies to the overall and grade winners.



1st C D Mills, 1st AA R Malic, 1st B J Absalom, OA/A N Watts, Gladys Barnes

Overall winner was Norman Watts 140/155, 1st AA R Malic 130/155, 2nd G Clarkson 138/155, OA/A N Watts 140/155, 2nd A J Villiva 149/165, 1st B J Absalom 139/155, 2nd P Garraway 137/155, 1st C D Mills 130/155, 2nd Miss M Barnes 122/155, Jnr T Box 113/155, Super Vets R Walker 126/155.