

CLAY TARGET

George Papachristoforos
12 year old Victorian,
Overall winner of the
New Zealand 12g Skeet
Championship

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George Papachristoforos 12 year old Champion at New Zealand Skeet Nationals

George Papachristoforos, a Grade 6 student and member of the Metropolitan Clay Target Club in Melbourne, started his competitive shooting career in June 2024 when he turned 12. Since then, George, who is also a Junior School Sports Captain, has enjoyed competing in the Sporting, Trap and Skeet disciplines. He also loves to shoot in the field.

Coached by his father, George decided to focus on the American Skeet discipline and mostly trains at his home ground of Werribee Clay Target Club, who have been very supportive.

His first Skeet event was 9th June at Echuca where he won C grade in both the Singles and Doubles events. Receiving the sashes at the presentation was a turning point as the fire for competing was lit.



Tasmanian State Titles



Handicap win at Cecil Park Sydney



First Career 100 target at Cecil Park, Sydney

On August 11th, as a B grader, George competed at the Cecil Park Clay Target Club in Sydney, winning his first Handicap event against Australia's top shooters. At this event, he earned his first 100 target break badge and set a modern record for the youngest person to shoot 100 straight in open competition: 12 years and 2 months old.

From that time on, George has been training almost every weekend to improve his shooting. On 19th October George competed at Lake Macquarie Gun Club in Newcastle NSW where he won the Overall A grade and moved up into AA0 grade for Skeet Singles. He was so happy when he told a skeet stalwart, Wayne Petersen, that he made AA0 and Wayne responded by saying: "Welcome to the club, George" and gave him big hug. This was another memorable moment.

On the weekend of October 26, George competed at the Tasmanian State Skeet Carnival, winning the 20g State Skeet Championship with a score of 50/50. He followed up with a strong performance in windy conditions winning the Overall Open State High Gun and the Junior High Gun. George's mother was present, and he was so happy for making her proud.

At just 12 years old, and with two State titles under his belt, George began to see firsthand his hard work paying off.

The following weekend George competed at the South Australia State Skeet titles. At this event, he earned himself two 75 break badges shooting off for the Handicap and the Skeet Doubles titles. Unfortunately, the hot and windy conditions caused havoc, but George managed to shoot a



New Zealand trophies, 100 targets & Juniors

98/100 in the Singles, 50/50 in the Handicap and a 47/50 in the Doubles. Winning the A grade Doubles after a shoot-off, George was happy with his performance and had a chance to become friends with two other very talented juniors: Jack Bateman and Austin Gibbes.

His father promised George that if he put as much effort into his schooling as he did into his shooting, he would take him to New Zealand for the National Skeet Carnival that was being held at Waikato Clay Target Club in Hamilton. The hard work continued both on the scholastic and shooting front as George prepared for the New Zealand Nationals in late November. Prior to leaving for New Zealand, George attended Grade 6 Camp for a week.

Upon arrival at Waikato GC, George was a little overwhelmed by the entire experience and it took some time to find his form. On Friday 22nd November, George competed in the coveted 100 Target National 12g Championship. Being in the third wave, he carefully studied the field he was rostered to shoot and got a good read

on the targets, finally deciding on his shooting lense colour. George started in a strong position posting a straight 25 after his first round. He was ecstatic to shoot his first 25 in New Zealand. Continuing with a maniacal focus, he then shot 50 straight. George was absolutely delighted to be shooting so well, which certainly relieved some pressure.

The last 50 targets were going to be tough for squads shooting late in the day. The weather had turned for the worse with strong winds, a light drizzle, and overcast conditions coming and going. George was not deterred as he had trained in horrible conditions at his home club and learned how to handle wind-affected targets, (as in one training session, his coach had him shoot in strong winds while standing on one leg). After shooting a 25 straight in these conditions, George proved to himself that he could handle the wind if he took that extra millisecond to read the target, and the time to work the target properly.

With a 75 straight and a quick 2–3 minute break to replenish cartridges, George was back into it. He was moving well through the pads until he got to station 4, where on his call the machine malfunctioned. The referee called for a trapper who worked on the high house. Within 10 minutes, which seemed like an eternity, the machine was ready, and George was back on the pad. After seeing a proof target, George broke the high 4 and then the low. He was relieved that he could get back into the zone so quickly. As most skeet shooters know, station 5 can be insidious. Spending a lot of time and running training drills on this pad paid off as stand 5 was shot clean. Moving to stand 6 George continued to stay focused and cleaned this stand too.

At this point George become aware that he had a great chance to shoot the 100 if he could remain focused and not to get to sticky under the pressure. There is no such thing as an easy target. At this point a crowd gathered around the skeet field where the spectators were watching history unfold. Maintaining his hard focus, George shot his last target for the 100 straight, with the gallery erupting in cheers. George was elated to shoot another career 100, but did not know at the time that the highest score with all shooting concluded was 99. Andy Peter, a Legendary New Zealand

Skeet shooter, told George while congratulating him that not only did he shoot the 100 straight, but also won the National title. The news could not have come from a better person as Andy spent some time talking to George in the carpark on the first day and they struck up a good rapport.

George was completely shocked and in disbelief. He asked Andy 3 to 4 times if he had won the National title as it had not sunk in. In that moment, a 12 year old boy, still in primary school, became the youngest Australian to win a National title, setting an unbelievable record that will stand for a long time.

In the clubroom Andy Peter showed him the past luminaries and legends who had their name on the perpetual cup. Andy told George that his name will be engraved on this cup, and he had now joined a group of the most elite shooters going back to 1937.

In under six months of competing, George has earned himself two State titles and one National title, consequently earning 40 Championship Hall of Fame points. Truly an astonishing achievement for any competitor let alone one so young.

When not shooting, George enjoys being your average 12-year-old kid, training in karate twice a week at orange belt grade, riding his bike, playing soccer and tinkering with radio-controlled cars. George is banned from using technology. This is a strict rule that his parents enforce without remorse.

George shoots a 28" Beretta 682 silver action skeet gun that was manufactured in 1985. The gun weighs 4.5kg (or 9.9lbs) in total and he cleans it meticulously after every shoot or practice session. His father who is a part-time gunsmith keeps the gun in service.

He has personalised his firearm with the words "Molon labe" (come and take [them]) across the barrels, a Greek phrase credited to Leonidas I of Sparta on the eve of the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC.

George is very proud of what he has achieved thus far and would personally like to thank Mr Gary Jones and Mr Antonio Carta for all their help along his journey. He continues to work towards building his skills and competing with the skeet community he has grown to admire and respect.