

IPSC State Championships Port Augusta
January 26-28 2007
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Accuracy, Power and Speed

In a major coup for Port Augusta, the South Australian State IPSC Championships were held at the Spencer Gulf Shooting Club over the long weekend.

The International Practical Shooting Confederation or IPSC is the name of the peak body, the style is called practical shooting and it is one of the fastest growing shooting sports in the world.

I went along to this particular Australia Day event to see what it was all about. The “match” was conducted over three days comprising six “stages” each day. The match is spread over three divisions, Open, Standard and Production. These groupings refer to the “types” of firearms used and are then delineated into Junior, Ladies, Seniors and Super Seniors. Whilst Victorian David Soldini won the match (overall winner) he is ineligible to be state champion as he is not South Australian. In fact Adelaide’s Phil Edwards is the “Open” Division State Champion from Justin Arthur, incidentally the current Australian Junior Champion. Coincidentally his brother Rhys Arthur was crowned State Junior Champ in this match. Suzy Ballantyne the Ladies winner, Paul Williams from Adelaide was triumphant in the “Standard” Class and Paul Grech won the “Production” Class.

This sport is difficult to explain if you haven’t seen it before but I will try. Each match measures a shooter's ability in all three areas of accuracy, power and speed over obstacle courses (stages), requiring six to thirty or more shots to complete each time.

The sport in Australia involves centre-fire pistols and revolvers of calibres from 9mm to .38. The scoring system measures points scored per second, then weights the score to compensate for the number of shots fired. If a target is missed points are deducted, lowering the points-per-second score. Starting with pistols holstered on the belt, competitors move, negotiate obstacles, run, speed-reload through each of several courses as fast as their skills will allow.

The matches are varied and based on the safe use of the handgun. Although a great recreational sport, participation in these matches develops a high level of safety and proficiency in the use of handguns. The emphasis on safety was what struck me most and as I was shown around by Steve Brown the Deputy Regional Director for Australia. “Between stages and immediately prior to competing the guns are always unloaded with the hammer down, and no magazine inserted.” With Range Officers enforcing the rules and designated safety areas this sport takes itself and its safety very seriously. Having said that the clubrooms were abuzz with the smiling faces of exhausted and happy competitors. These people were having a lot of fun and thoroughly enjoying Port Augusta.

Traditionally held in Adelaide or Mount Gambier past Regional Director Des Lilley could not have been more complimentary of Port Augusta and the Spencer Gulf

Shooting Club. “The organisation of the event has exceeded our expectations and the support of the council, the club and the people of the city has been amazing.”

Local club member and competitor Tony Mitchell said the club was ecstatic after tendering for and winning the right to host the state titles for the first time. “We are still pinching ourselves that we managed to pull this off. With over fifty competitors from out of town including the Australian Women’s Team, the Australian Seniors Team and the reigning Australian Junior Champion the sport, the club and the city has been placed firmly on the map. This event has fired the enthusiasm of our members and acted as a catalyst to get some improvements done around the club”.

Port Augusta shooters Michael Cleary, eighth, Chris Rowe tenth and Darren Carter eleventh in the Standard Division learnt a great deal from the opportunity to compete against the best in Australia in a pressure situation and will no doubt be the better for it.

My experience at the Yorkey’s Crossing club was nothing but positive and further demonstrates how many sport and recreation options are out there. Anyone can go out to the club to see if they like the sport and are urged to give Mick Cleary a call on 0418 810 571