



THE GLAMOUR DISCIPLINE

NSSA SKEET @ WATTLESPRING

CENTRAL GAUTENG CHAMPIONSHIP 2021

by Doug Cherry

THE CLAY TARGET SHOOTING ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

NSSA Skeet has taken South Africa by storm

A new age has dawned. Pieter Greyling inspired us all to greater heights.

A double Junior world champion with 100 straight in skeet and in doubles. He has so many world results, at least one being the World Championship in the 28 gauge at San Antonio at the World Championships. **He shot the first and only 400 straight by a South African in the four gauges: 410, 28, 20 and 12 gauges, 100 straight in each.**



[all photo credits : Werner Steyn]

Pieter (pictured above) was at Wattlespring Sport Shooting Club for the CTSASA Central Gauteng Standard Championships in February 2021 and finished second in the NSSA Skeet Doubles after a three way shoot-off where he ran them, 14 straight from the centre stations.

What happened to number one, Markus Bonsma, the Western Cape's own teenage phenomenon? He beat Pieter by one clay for High Gun. He also shot a solid 96 and 97 in the NSSA Skeet Championship.

It takes a full year to adapt to a new shotgun

It has been said that when you change to a new gun it takes a full year to adapt to that new gun. Pieter's handicap was that he had left his gun in America where he is on a shooting scholarship and had to use his father's gun here in South Africa.



Karel Mestdagh (FS)
The "new Sheriff in town"

Who is the new Sheriff in town? And the new Deputy-in-Waiting

But who is the new kid on the block, the new sheriff in town, the future of South Africa? **Fifteen year old Karel Mestdagh.** He has both a skeet and sporting range on his farm and trains with Ricky Rodrigues, one of South Africa's top shooters year in and year out for the past 20 years. There is no question that Karel reaps the benefits of one of the tried and true SA greats.



Ewan Holtzhausen (WC)
The "Deputy in Waiting"

I received a 'phone call from Ricky when Karel shot his first 100 straight at the KZN Standards. The way Ricky carried on, I thought for a minute there HE had shot the 100. Now if Karel is the new sheriff in town, then **Ewan Holtzhausen is the deputy in waiting.** Ewan went head to head with Karel a year ago and beat him at

the SA National Championships for "Colt" Gold. Karel took it to a new level but shot on the same squad as Ewan at Wattlespring and they tied for Junior first, Karel



The Clay Target Shooting Association
of South Africa

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winning on a count back. The next day on the Sunday Ewan shot a very nice 95 on his way to qualifying for his Junior Colours, but Karel showed his true class and ran 100, his second this year. Both of these guys have tremendous talent, but at the moment there is no question who is the Wyatt Earp of Tombstone. Karel was also second high gun in skeet at the Chairman's Cup 2020 with a 147 X 150.

A walk down memory lane....

Whatever happened to the youth of yesteryear? Barry du Toit shot the Worlds in San Antonio in 2003 at age 16 and got his Colours. He has a skeet range on his farm and shoots the occasional standard championship. He still shoots to a very high standard and tied the current SA record of 180 X 200 at the SA National Championships circa three years ago at Al Thandiwe. I believe he had a 150 straight in there, maybe 175. He is always up there at the Chairman's. You will note that he shot a rock solid 96 and 97 at Wattlespring. **And what of the greatest of the old guard, Martin de Waal?** He also, I think, has a skeet range on his farm; these farmers are blessed with opportunities. Was the memory of Martin fading a little, together with his 150 straight at the Chairman's and his 250 straight at the World Championships? Not at all! Martin surfaced again with a 99 to tie with "Paul Bunyan" - Wynand Kotze, and "Gentlemen Jim" - Barry Cole, for first place. And now for the shoot-off. Wynand seemed to have no chance with his archaic pre-Todd Bender gun down style, but somehow he managed 13 out of 14 in the shoot-off doubles to beat Barry on 12 and Martin on 9. It was nice to see the golden oldies out there showing the youngsters how it's done.



Now Barry is another story (pictured above), he qualified for the World Championships in 2003 and went to the Worlds in San Antonio, but he did not get his Colours that year. Eight shooters qualified but only five could get their Colours unless they shot 97% at the Worlds. The good guy did not rise to the top that year, but he went back in 2004 with Rob Ross and Guy Merkel, two of the five who earned their Colours in 2003, and was awarded his Colours, a very deserving skeet shooter. I shot in his squad in 2003 when he ran 100 straight at Riva Valley south of Durban. **That was the most difficult range in South Africa.** The cane fields on the hills along the coast were burnt black and the range faced to the east,

straight into the morning sun. The clays were shadowed on the front side with the sun hitting them on the back side. It was impossible to see them, but Barry ran the 100. At that time you could count the number of 100 straights shot in South Africa on one hand. Today everybody at the top level runs 100. Why? Why has the standard moved up? Todd Bender. He has his video teaching the Bender style and came to South Africa in 2005 to work with four shooters each from Durban, Bloemfontein, and Cape Town. He was like the greatest stud horse in history, Northern Dancer, and left a style and technique in South Africa that has allowed all of us to reach our maximum potential. When I was the first to shoot gun up, back in 2000, shooters would take the mickey as though I were half a man. They would rather shoot 98 gun down than to shoot 100 gun up. Today everyone except Paul Bunyan shoots gun up and look at the scores. The scores at Wattlespring are the highest ever shot in South Africa. I counted 41 guns who took part and 31 scores of Protea Standard 94 or better. All of you who shot at Wattlespring should pour yourself a drink and toast the greatest conglomerate of scores ever put up in skeet at an SA Standard shoot.

Don't forget the ladies!!

And what of the ladies? **Amelda Greyling (pictured below)** shot a 98 (in your face guys!) to win the ladies Skeet Gold. Everyone thought that Pieter inherited his acumen from his father Faan, but the lady also has the champion genes! She has shot 99 on two separate occasions in competition but so far that Holy Grail of shooting, the 100 straight has eluded her. Way back when, she took gold in Olympic trap at the African



Championships in Cairo to earn the African Olympic quota place. She is an excellent sporting shooter, but her heart is in the glamour discipline of skeet. She is also the only lady to have won the skeet team gold at the Chairman's Cup.



I had the pleasure of shooting with Yolandi (who won Ladies

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Silver at the CTSASA Central Gauteng Standard Championships) on her squad at Valley CTC and she was a pleasure, such a nice lady. She is well on her way to qualifying for her first World Championship and will do so in 2021. I was once shooting on range one with the big guy, Wynand (her husband), and she was running a straight on range two. **Now if there ever was a triumphant shooter, it had to be Yolandi (pictured above).** She ran that 25 straight and took her gun like a majorette wielding a baton and danced around skeet range one celebrating her achievement, while her poor husband had to live with his



bad round score. I had to laugh and cry at the same time. **Wynand (pictured above) is a man's man** and I would take a wide berth around him. However, being married to Yolandi shows his true personality of being just a big lovable teddy bear. He took on the best of the best ever at Wattlespring and came up Gold.

If I could relate a little story, I questioned why Karel had shot the 94 on the first day and thought that maybe it was nerves, but Sarah told me

that it could simply be a "downer" after having shot his 100 straight at the KZN. She told me how she had won the Ladies European FITASC Sporting Championship in 1991 in Germany and then **"couldn't hit a barn door with a banjo"** the following week at the next competition at home in England. It happens to the best of the best, including Etienne Cilliers, five times SA Shooter of the Year, who had shot so unbelievably well at the Grand in America and then came home to shoot a 76 at his next Standard shoot in SA. Maybe she is right.



We have to mention Peter Antak (pictured above) who won Veteran Silver on a 94 behind Martin de Waal's 99. Years ago, Peter was a force to be reckoned with, and he still shoots excellent scores even though he is on his way to 70 years old. I didn't get to see him shoot, but he always shot gun down and has a unique style that I always found amusing and use to imitate it over a beer at the bar.

A toast to South Africa ...

I'll propose a toast, **"Here's to South Africa and all her wonderful skeet shooters in the Glamour discipline of skeet".**

Doug Cherry

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