

Outstanding young shooting talent from Wandoan

Outstanding young Australian smallbore shooting prospect Thomas Versace has plenty of room for practice on the family cattle property at Wandoan.

Thomas, who has just turned 18, is the current Australian open rimfire champion and has his sights set on the 2010 Olympics in London.

He added the Queensland 50 metre prone title to his growing trophy list at the Belmont Shooting Complex in Brisbane at the weekend.

He came from behind to beat top Brisbane shooter Jack Barnes in a strong field at the Queensland Target Sports State Championships. The blue ribbon event comprises 120 shots at 50 metres fired over two days.

The 10 metre air rifle championship went to Brisbane shooter Dane Sampson. John Patwzald won took out the precision bench rest championship from Thomas Versace with both shooters members of the Toowoomba Small Bore Silhouette Rifle Club.

Ladies champion was Janelle Rossister from Brisbane.

More than 50 competitors from around Queensland and northern NSW took part in the championships which were shot for the first time on high tech electronic targets.

Spectators were able to follow scores shot by shot on a big screen as the State's best rimfire shooters went head to head on the first batch of 20 electronic targets installed on the Jim Smith Range.

The traditional paper target now serves just as an aiming mark with the bullet trajectory picked up by four sensors and the score instantly flashed up on an individual monitor beside each shooter.

Thomas Versace will cap a meteoric rise through the shooting ranks as one of six Queenslanders in the Australian team to compete in the Oceania Championships in Sydney in early December.

This will be his third international event, having come fourth in a competition in Germany earlier this year and third in the Singapore Open.

He works on the Wandoan property with his parents Arthur and Rosa after leaving school in Toowoomba, but has spent little time at home this year between shooting commitments which have included intensive training camps for elite juniors and the national titles in Adelaide.

Thomas plans to start seriously competing in another shooting discipline, 300 m full bore, when he takes delivery of a new 6mm rifle.

Pioneering western grazier Ashley Adams was also in action at the State Championships. Wheelchair-bound Ashley represented Australia in the Beijing Paralympics, and is a top ranked Australian open competitor in 50 metre prone rimfire shooting. He will shoot in the Oceania Championship in Sydney.

Ashley has pioneered commercial scale use of tender beef genetics on his property Darracourt near Blackall.

The Charleville Open in May next year will be a special event with the inaugural shoot for a perpetual shield honoring the late Doug Weare. His wife Joy, who has been competing herself for more than 50 years, took delivery of the trophy donated by Queensland Target Sports at the State championships at the weekend.

Shooting captions:

Queensland air rifle champion Dane Sampson from Brisbane showed his skill in the precision 10 metre event where the bullseye is about the same diameter as a rifle pellet.

Top shooter Jack Barnes of Brisbane was able to follow his scores on a monitor with electronic targets used at a major championship for the first time.

Toowoomba shooter John Patzwald shooting prone at the Queensland small bore championships. He won the precision bench rest State title.

Young Wandoan shooter Thomas Versace added the Queensland rimfire prone championship to his growing list of titles in Brisbane at the weekend.

Charleville shooters competing in Brisbane at the small bore championships, Joy Weare, Clinton Sondergeld and Ann Bruton.

Lismore shooters competing at Belmont at the weekend David Gaze and Ross Barnes.

John Wooldridge from Mundubbera was among a strong contingent of country shooters at the small bore championship.

Isis shooters Lesley and Anton Perk competing in the State titles.

Queensland Sports Minister Phil Reeves makes a presentation to the State small bore team captain Anne Budgen.

Ashley Adams travelled from his property Darracourt near Blackall to compete in the small bore championships at Belmont.

Brisbane shooter Janelle Rossiter was Champion Lady at the Queensland titles.