

I've been part of the Ashburton Pistol Club since leaving school, starting out by competing in the McMillian Cup—an inter-school Olympic air pistol competition. What began as a simple interest quickly grew into something much more. I went on to try IPSC, a fast-paced and exciting shooting sport that combines accuracy, speed, and problem-solving. Every match is different, with unique stages that feature a mix of target types—from paper targets to falling steel and even moving targets—making it a sport that's always challenging and rewarding.

One of the great things about IPSC is how accessible it is. Whether you're starting with a standard pistol or progressing to more specialised equipment, there's a place for everyone. The sport caters to all skill levels, and improvement comes quickly with regular practice and support from other members. The club offers regular training sessions, and there's always someone willing to give advice or lend a hand, which makes it easy to learn the ropes and build confidence as you develop your skills.

Not long after getting involved, I attended my first national event, placing 6th and moving up to B grade. Later that year, I had the opportunity to train with a visiting world champion, and soon after, I won the South Island Championships—earning promotion to Grand Master grade, which I've held ever since. Achievements like these are made possible by the strong sense of camaraderie and encouragement within the club, where everyone celebrates each other's progress and successes.

Since then, I've represented New Zealand internationally, competing in six overseas events and meeting people from all around the world. It's an experience I never would have imagined when I first joined the club. The friendships and connections made through these competitions have been just as rewarding as the shooting itself, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

What stands out most, though, is how quickly new shooters can progress. On a recent trip to South Africa, our team of twenty included several members who had only been competing for two or three years. Their rapid improvement shows that with dedication and the right support, anyone can reach a high level in a short time.

If you're thinking about giving it a go, I'd highly recommend it. You don't need any experience to get started—just an interest and a willingness to learn. The club is welcoming, supportive, and a great place to pick up a new skill, meet like-minded people, and challenge yourself. Joining has been one of the best decisions I've made, and I encourage anyone curious to come along and see what it's all about.