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Stefan Noto is a young man on a mission. At 25, he doesn’t waste a waking moment.

”When I achieve a goal, I think, OK, what’s the next thing, I don’t like to be bored,” he says, smiling.

Based on Stefan’s track record, there’s not much chance of that.

When he’s not working as a draftsperson and estimator, Stefan is on the water wakeboarding, driving his new speedboat, or at the shooting range, training for the Australian Para Clay Target team.

Stefan, who was born with cerebral palsy and has had more surgeries than he can remember, qualified for the team last year, and is the only South Australian to compete in shotgun class at a national level.

He now has his sights set on international competition and hopes to join the next Paralympics squad.

“One of my goals is to head international and compete overseas and I hope to reach my benchmark soon,” he said. “Even though you are competing against other shooters, really you’re competing against yourself, and I do like that. I like to push myself harder.”

Meanwhile, Stefan also achieved another goal last year—to drive his own speed boat at a charity event on the Murray River to raise money to help kids with disabilities.

Stefan joined the NDIS in 2016 and he’s been setting and achieving goals ever since.

“The NDIS helped with setting up these goals, by planning and connecting me with providers, who say, right, you want to achieve this, what steps do we need to take for you to achieve this goal?” said Stefan.

“From my very first plan, I’ve used it really well and it’s been a godsend. My life improved with NDIS.”

Already competing at an elite level in clay shooting, Stefan turned his focus to the challenging sport of wakeboarding.

“I love being out on the water, I’ve always loved my swimming, and I had grown up watching my cousins wakeboard and I thought, you know what I want to give this a real go,” he said.

Through his NDIS plan, Stefan started training with physiotherapists to strengthen the muscles he would need to stay up on the wakeboard. NDIS provider Novita connected him with SA

School of Wake president Dani Lambert, who offered to teach Stefan.

“Dani said, OK, I’ll get you up. However, she did not anticipate the challenges involved with the cerebral palsy. It took a while to work out my balance and the coordination seemed to have a mind of its own. But with sheer determination and endless persistence, seven months later I was up, a little bit longer than Dani thought it would take,” said Stefan, laughing.

Having learnt to wakeboard, Stefan decided to buy his own speedboat. With his Dad behind the wheel, he spent most of the summer wakeboarding.

He wakeboarded in front of crowds at the 2018 Mighty River Run fundraising event. And then he set himself another challenge.

“So, they asked me to go in the 2019 Mighty River Run and I’m like, well, how am I going to drive this boat? I thought, right, I need some modifications for this boat, because the controls are all on the right side,” he said.

Stefan’s cerebral palsy impacts movement on the right side of his body and,modifications are necessary to achieve his goals

“It felt amazing to be behind the steering wheel of the boat, driving around and in full control,” he said. “I was really ecstatic and you couldn’t wipe the smile off my face.”

Stefan says he’s particularly grateful to his parents who insisted on early intervention and accessing support services when he was a young child.

“I can’t thank my parents enough really, without their support, I wouldn’t be where I am today,” he said. “I would probably be in a wheelchair today if it wasn’t for them.”

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