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Stefan Noto is leaving any perceived barriers in his wake, literally, as a shot at Paralympics glory shapes firmly in his sights.

And in honour of World Cerebral Palsy Day on Wednesday, October 6, a day where the World comes together to support some 17 million living with CP like Stefan, the gun clay shooter from South Australia is proud to take a shot at celebrating his achievements, and those of many others.

“It’s a day that gets more people involved in supporting Cerebral Palsy, so I celebrate it for what it is,” said Stefan in between jobs in his busy role of managing and coordinating on-site matters for a concrete curbing company.

“I’m all for it.”

When he’s not on-site after being headhunted for his current management role, the NDIS participant and former draftsperson and estimator, can be found on the water wakeboarding or driving his speed boat.

On dry land, Stefan can be found at the International Clay Shooting Club in Virginia, training for the Australian Para Clay Target team, which will hopefully culminate in achieving his dream in Paris for the 2024 Paralympics.

While Paris would signal a maiden Paralympics appearance for Stefan, the 27-year-old is no stranger to ticking off firsts in search of his goals despite a heavily impacted program due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Competing on the same range as Olympian and champion Australian trap shooter, Thomas Grice, in Adelaide in August, was a ‘pinch yourself’ moment for Stefan, who had set his alarm for an early wakeup to watch one of his heroes hit the range in Tokyo just weeks before.

However, it was Stefan’s turn for the spotlight, and he hit the bullseye, literally, in a performance which had Shooting Australia on notice.

“My aim was to have been shooting internationally this year, but I ended up shooting at the South Australian Titles, and took out first place in the event,” Stefan said.

“The event was also the first time para-shooters had been recognised in South Australia. I’ve had a couple of second and third placings interstate previously, but being the first off the rank at home, in what was also my first time getting a first, was a big achievement for me.

“Achieving goals like that, Shooting Australia is taking notice, and that definitely puts Paris more in the running for me now.”

Stefan’s cerebral palsy impacts movement on the right side of his body, in particular his arm. Modifications are necessary to achieve his goals, and years ago, he and his Dad came up with a unique way to modify a shotgun so he could operate the firearm.

Now with a new and modified weapon, and being the elite competitor he is, Stefan continues to leave no stone unturned in his pursuit of success. He recently enlisted a new mindset coach to ensure his mental approach provides that added edge.

Meanwhile, in the water, one of Stefan’s other goals, to drive his own speed boat in the five-day Mighty River Run charity event on the Murray River, was ticked off in 2020.

For the boat, a simple modification involving a speed control system needed to be made and Stefan’s NDIS plan funded the modification.

His funding also providing him with access to training with physiotherapists to strengthen his muscles to be able to stay up on his wakeboard.

For this year’s event on November 7-12, Stefan will once again be front-and-centre in assisting to raise money to help kids with disabilities, but unlike years past, he’ll be out from behind his own boat sharing the love.

“I love being out on the water, and this year, I’ve been sponsored… I’ll be boat hopping between other boats which will be a change,” Stefan said.

“There’s a few quite keen to get me behind the boats for knee boarding and wakeboarding, so it’ll be pretty fun.”

They say, “good things come in threes” and for Stefan, his third major goal if living independently materialised after he drew up the plans for his own home. He has also joined the board of NDIS provider, Community Bridging Services.

While his dream home has been put on hold, like Paris, it’s firmly on the horizon. Just like his planned new house will be built on a strong foundation, for Stefan, he says his own strong foundation has been the NDIS.

“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?’,” he said.

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

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