

Mark Elliott claims his second straight Australian winter biathlon masters title



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27 Sep 2017, 3:22 p.m.

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Inner drive: Two-time Australian winter biathlon masters champion Mark Elliott trains on roller skis when he can't get to the snow. Picture: Andrew McMurtry

Mark Elliott has come a long way in just three years, taking out his second straight Australian winter biathlon masters title.

The West Pennant Hills resident has been a downhill skier from as long as he can remember but started dabbling in cross-country skiing.

He tried a laser biathlon after entering a cross country event in Perisher – and the rest is history.

Winter biathlon mixes cross country skiing and shooting, with every shot important as it comes with a time penalty.

"It's this really multi-faceted approach where you have to be fit but you also need ski technique and be able to do target shooting and control your emotions," he said.

"You end up shooting under stress – your heart is pumping, your arms are tired, you're shaking a little bit but it also starts playing with your mind."

Competing at the Australian Biathlon Championships in August at Mount Hotham in Victoria, Elliott claimed two wins, taking out the individual masters and sprint masters title.

He won the sprint title by just two seconds after making a mistake on one of the shots and needing to make up 30 seconds.

This adds to his individual victory in 2016.

Elliott, 43, said it was a great feeling to be two-time national champion.

"At my age, you can easily think you're past it and that you're not going to win anything but it's good to know that I can still win a national title," he said.

"If someone told me five years ago that I was going to be a national champion, I would have thought it was impossible and never going to happen.

"So it's cool to be able have that masters category to compete, let alone win, at that level."

Elliott said it had all been uphill since his first attempt at nationals, which he called "a complete disaster".

He made several mistakes, including entering the race without ammunition and not realising until the race started.

For Elliott, shooting has been the hardest discipline. But after a few years of practice, he finds it meditative.

"If you do it on a Friday night and you've finished your week and you're focusing on this little target, it's actually really relaxing," Elliott said.