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LADY SHOOTER *LifeStyles*

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EDITOR | *One With Nature*

BY BRANDY ELROD
HOMESTEADING BEFORE IT WAS COOL



When I think of summer, the first memory that comes to my mind is my grandmother's house. I was fortunate to spend every summer during my childhood at my grandmother's house. My entire childhood in southern Alabama was spent outdoors on the river, at the beach, in the garden, or in the woods. I was definitely blessed to call the outdoors my playroom and have the ultimate outdoors woman as my teacher.

My grandmother had her main house on a substantial amount of acreage that backed up to woods as well as the "Creek House" on the Tensaw river. At her main house she had the "Deer Field" where my grandparents planted food plots across ten acres. I learned at a very early age about wildlife conservation and whitetail deer management. I would sit in the deer stand with my grandpa (with my coloring

books, of course) for hours and occasionally my grandmother would join us. She was not an avid hunter but every now and then would harvest a deer. I grew up in a very "old school house"—I was taught gun safety as soon as I was walking since shotguns and rifles were openly left in corners of rooms. I knew not to touch the firearms unless we were outside and my grandparents were helping me.

By the age of three or four, I had an obsession with helping process the whitetail deer. After a big hunt my grandpa went on with friends and family, everyone had deer on racks processing them outside of what we called the "Goat Shed". On this particular evening I was ill and told to stay inside while everyone was processing the deer as it was a cold, wet day. Well I was also a bit of a fearless child and was always going on an "adventure". I had decided to venture outside without permission. I was running through the

"goat shed" and a family friend was carrying his skinning knife out to the side as he was headed to the sink to wash it, adventurous young me ran through the knife as I was not paying attention and put a nice gash under my left eye. That was the first time I had become "one with nature" as this knife was covered in deer blood. I was told I did not even cry, my grandmother did of course and I was rushed to the emergency room for stitches, all while my grandmother kept telling me my mother was never going to let me come back to Alabama.

After that year, I continued to spend every possible day out of school at my sanctuary in Alabama until I graduated high school. I learned to chase squirrels away from the bird feeders with a sling shot my grandpa made me...do not worry he gave me 18-wheeler ball bearings, that launch quite far, they also knocked windows out too, but I am not saying I ever did that...I also terrorized the occasional bird when my grandmother was not watching. My grandmother truly was the epitome of an outdoors woman. She taught me to hunt and fish, how to process wildgame, cook any critter imaginable that you could chicken fry or grill, back a boat into the water (I started at the age of ten) as well as how to live off of the land as she always had a massive garden. I was homesteading before homesteading was a trend. As we move into summer, I hope that you have someone in your life that helped you become an outdoors woman or you are that inspirational person helping someone. ■

As always happy reading!

Brandy



Texas Women's Outdoors, LLC

HOW IT ALL STARTED—AS TOLD BY FOUNDER KELLY GODFREY



FREEDOM!!! I miss the freedom and adventures I had before my children. I have always loved the outdoors and before I became a stay-at-home mom, I was a Natural Resource Specialist (Park Ranger) for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. Prior to becoming a Natural Resource Specialist, I graduated college with a bachelor's in Wildlife Management and a minor in Biology.

Since I was just a kid I have grown up in the woods or on a lake somewhere in Texas. My dad was a single dad of two children and from the time I could walk, I was his bird dog. In August of 2011, I lost my dad to cancer. He was my best friend and the only consistent person in my life at 28. He taught me everything I know about the outdoors; camping, hunting, and fishing. I know how to throw a cast net to catch live bait and can also field dress and quarter up deer because of him. My life was flipped upside down. The only way I could learn how to be happy again was to keep moving forward and enjoy the outdoors as much as I could. So as you can see nature is my happy place.

Texas Women's Outdoors, LLC was founded by accident in 2021. I became a stay-at-home mom after giving birth to our son (March 2018). In October of 2019, I gave birth to our daughter. Being at home with two young kids is never easy. Especially when all you have done your entire life is work and be independent. I'm a mom of two young children close in age and needed a break.



The camaraderie among the women is the most enjoyable part of the TWO adventures.



ADVENTURE! I wanted to travel somewhere different and meet women. As I talked to my husband about my dilemma he was totally supportive of my mission. But, how am I supposed to meet new friends that enjoy the outdoors? My first step was to ask on my personal Facebook page if anyone would be interested in joining me on an outdoor adventure. I was surprised by the number of responses I received. I put together a Facebook group (TWO) and then shared it on my personal Facebook page and asked ladies to share it and invite other like-minded ladies to it. Our group hit 100+ quickly. As I was trying to decide what our first adventure would be, I figured we would do something simple, not expensive, and easy. How about a campout? So I made camping reservations at Whitney Lake, Texas, and threw it out to our group and we had six ladies show up for our first trip. It was so fun and everything I needed and wanted. When I got home from that camping trip I realized this is what I needed in my life! I felt rejuvenated. I met some amazing women and heard the stories of their past and what is happening in their lives. We all shared stories, ate well, and had the most enjoyable time.

WHAT IS YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE?

After we all returned home from our tent camping trip some of the ladies shared pictures

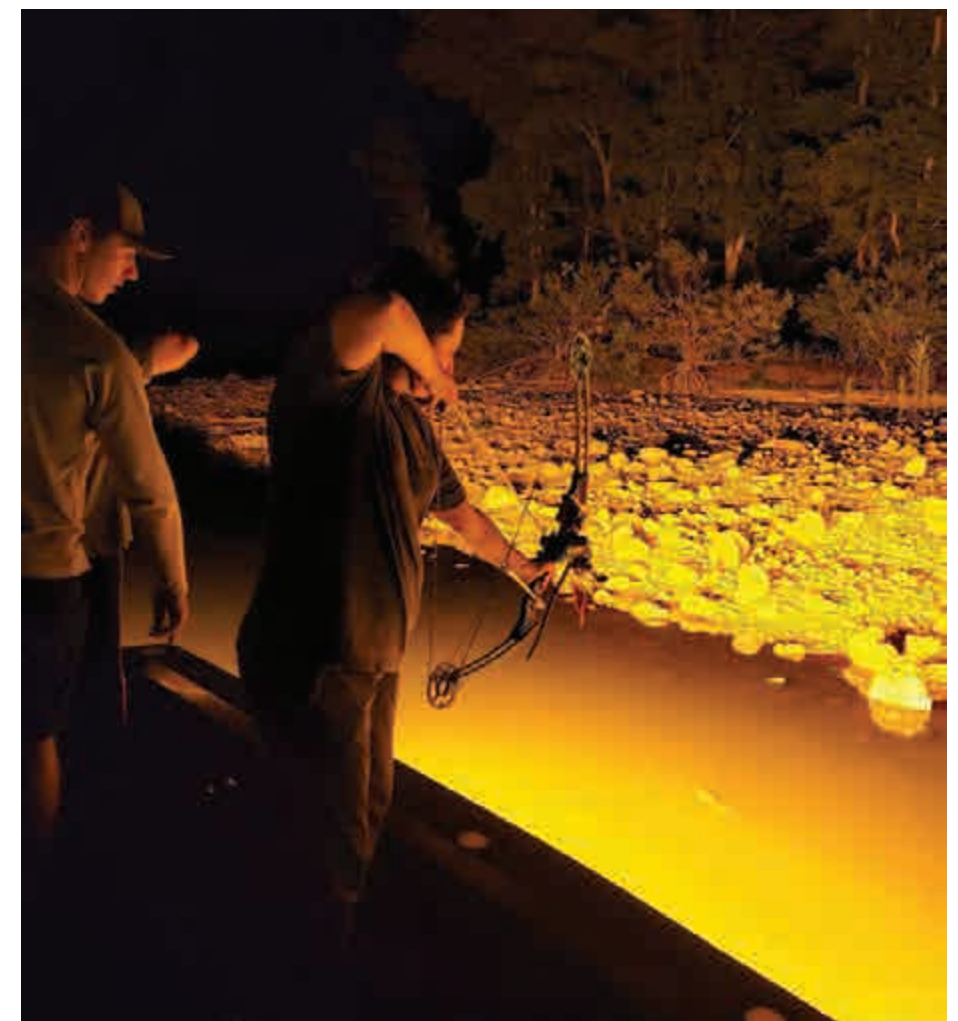
FRIENDSHIPS

After having our daughter I suffered from postpartum depression. I didn't realize the loss of people and true friendships I had in my life before becoming a mom. Loneliness, postpartum depression, and COVID all hit at the same time. I was looking for a way to escape and get some fresh air. My world had shut down around me and the friends I thought I had were not reaching out or willing to meet up to do things. I was desperate for real friendships and hoped to stay happy and healthy for my family. I knew I had to get away and find new people that were like-minded and not afraid to meet new people as well. I also needed ladies to go out with since I am happily married and with two brand new babies, I did not need to hang out with a bunch of dudes. I was talking to my husband about my situation and how I needed a break from the house (being a wife and mom). However, I did not have friends that would be willing to participate in the outdoorsy things I wished to do. I wanted an



and their personal stories of our weekend. As ladies shared their experience of the weekend on their Facebook pages more ladies wanted to get involved and do things with TWO. The Facebook community continues to grow. As of April of 2023, we now have 1,600+ members in our community group on Facebook, and continue to grow every day. Since our first camping trip TWO have now bowfished, duck hunted, sandhill crane hunted, gator hunted, pheasant hunted, participated in several hog hunts with rifles & hog dogs, and freshwater/saltwater fishing trips. We offer tons of education, mentored hunts and fishing trips, hiking and camping, firearms clinics, archery clinics, and an equine clinic. We have a website, social media, a Facebook page for the public, and our private ladies only Facebook group. We added merchandise as well as a team of Ambassadors and Coordinators. Our team's amazing support keeps TWO running. Having the support of our team and the support of all the ladies in our community group we will keep doing what we love and keep growing forward! Ladies, come join us on an adventure where you will meet some amazing women, make awesome memories, and leave with new friendships. We all come from different walks of life and different backgrounds, but we all have one thing in common and that's the love of the outdoors. What's your next ADVENTURE? ■

texaswomensoutdoors.com



HUNT LIKE A GIRL

*A contest. A journey.
An experience like no other.*



 BERETTA

BY
STACEY STEPHENS

PHOTOS BY
ASHLEIGH MALLARD
AND
TESS ROUSEY



An adventure.

We came from all over—Texas, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Maryland, Pennsylvania and California—11 women from the most diverse of backgrounds and professions. While one would expect some drama from that many women in one place, not an ounce of it was to be found. New friendships were formed as we were all there for one reason. These women were on a hunt - not for the biggest prize, or even a tangible reward. Instead, they sought something much more special and unique: camaraderie. We spent three full days learning, sharing stories of triumphs and challenges, celebrating successes (big and small), and finding joy in each other's company—that's what this group of inspirational women and the contest that brought us together was all about. A probation officer, a retired taxidermist, a teacher, a publisher, a gunsmithing shop owner, a realtor, an Olympian, a Beretta marketing director and a chef—plus their collective mutual love for discovering new perspectives—came together to create an inspiring atmosphere where anything was possible. This trip meant different things for the different woman, but I'm confident that we all came away with exactly what we were looking for.



This experience was made possible by the Shoot Like A Girl (SLG) organization and by BerettaUSA. SLG was established in 2008, and launched in 2009 with a mission to grow the number of women who participate in shooting sports by empowering them with confidence. The Hunt Like A Girl contest gives candidates an opportunity to submit a video of why they should be chosen as a participant on a seasonal hunt and once a contestant has been chosen, the hunt builds with industry supporting women and other SLG trained staff and facility guides. BerettaUSA partnered with SLG to provide the firearms and an exceptional gear package with items I use nearly daily over a year later.

This particular spring turkey contest in April of 2022 brought us to Midwest Whitetail Adventures in Clay Center, Kansas. The owner, Seth McGinn and his staff were the most welcome of hosts, providing fantastic food, entertainment of the friendliest of guides.



Karen Butler, founder of Shoot Like a Girl





Shoot Like a Girl Staffers (l-r) Ashleigh Mallard, Suzi Greenlee, Melanie Bolke and Lisa Causey



Kim Rhode calling with Jona Cole

FEATURE

This entire experience was well documented with the help of our wonderful photography/videography team, Ashleigh Mallard and Tess Rousey. They somehow managed to rotate amongst all the pairs of hunters/guides and be exactly where they needed to be to get the most gorgeous photos of each turkey that was harvested. Since it was many of the ladies' first times harvesting a turkey (or any animal), the photos serve as a permanent replay of not only the harvest, but of the entire journey during our time at Midwest Whitetail Adventures. From beginning to end, we have our entire experience memorialized forever, whether it was as we familiarized ourselves with the Beretta A400 before going out to the blind in the mornings, or as we received our gear package and apparel picked specifically for us, or during our lengthy and entertaining training sessions on how to use all the various turkey calls. As a side note, everyone should have the opportunity to sit in a blind with Olympian Kim Rhode. Not only is she a fantastic shot and just an all around wonderful human being, she's a great turkey call, no tools required!

As nearly everyone in our group was able to harvest a turkey, appropriately, two of the largest toms were harvested by our two contest winners Shawn and Cierra.

Photographers (l-r) Ashleigh Mallard and Tess Rousey



FEATURE

Shawn Hareke

Shawn is a fourth grade teacher from Franklin, Pennsylvania. As a wife and mother of two teenage boys, she'd recently started shooting a compound bow with her son Ethan after years of him begging her to do so. Her love of shooting with Ethan led her to archery hunting with him and her father, where she fell in love with the peace that the woods brought her.

Shawn feels absolutely honored to have been selected for this hunt with Shoot Like a Girl and Beretta Guns. Turkey hunting has long been a dream of hers and she couldn't think of a better group of ladies to experience it with.

Since the hunt in April of 2022, Shawn has been able to bring her skills learned in Kansas home to Pennsylvania. The next week, Shawn and her father helped Ethan harvest his first turkey. In the fall, with her father, Shawn harvested her first doe ever, and with her compound bow! And in December, as a family outing with Ethan, her husband and father, she harvested a small seven point buck very special to her.

This past April, Shawn was given the opportunity to return to Midwest Whitetail Adventures with SLG. She brought a friend along to share her love of the outdoors and hunting experience. Her friend, Rinda Miller, was recently retired from the school district Shawn teaches at and would frequently tag along with her husband when he would go hunting. Shawn wanted to share her experience with Rinda so she would become more comfortable with a firearm and could return home to hunt with her husband rather than tag along. Rinda was able to harvest a beautiful bird on the trip and was absolutely floored by what a positive impact the experience had on her life.

This past May, Shawn was able to bag her first Pennsylvania bird.

DID YOU KNOW...

THERE ARE BEARDED HENS

The beard is made of modified feathers. Male turkeys, called gobblers – and some female turkeys, called hens – have beards.

Only about 10 to 20 percent of hens grow beards, and it's likely a genetic mutation. Depending on where you live, it is not super rare to see bearded hens. You will find beards on anywhere from 3% to 20% of the hen population.





Stacey Stephens and Suzi Greenlee



Sharon Hawke

FEATURE

Cierra Black

Cierra Black, from Springfield, Tennessee, has a Bachelors degree in Criminal Justice, works as a Probation Officer, and is currently attending grad school. Cierra loves to hunt, fish, and shoot! She has been going rabbit and squirrel hunting with her father since she was a kid. That was the only type of hunting he had ever taught her until recently when she took it upon herself to learn about the different type of hunts such as deer, and turkey.

Cierra has had the opportunity to go deer hunting before but had never gone turkey hunting before. She'd heard about how amazing and rewarding it is and was excited to be able to learn more about it, learn to call one in and get one. She was so happy and thankful for this opportunity that gave her the ability to learn from this great group of ladies and just to be around other women who also love to hunt and shoot, and be in the great outdoors.

After attending the event, the next spring, in 80° weather, Cierra was able to use the Beretta A400 she bought from the event to harvest her first Tennessee turkey. With a 10.5" beard and 1" spurs, Cierra said her experience at the Hunt Like a Girl event in 2022 definitely paid off. Cierra also credits her dad for her success as none of her accomplishments would have been possible without his support and encouragement.



DID YOU KNOW???

THERE ARE SIX DIFFERENT SPECIES OF TURKEY!

 The Eastern can be found in 40 of 50 states & Canada.

 The Merriam turkey is found in the Rocky Mountain region.



Kim Rhode giving trap shooting tips to Cierra Black

 The Rio Grande turkey is located from Texas to Kansas & some have been spotted in Mexico.

 The Gould turkey prefers the deserts of Arizona, New Mexico, as well as Mexico.



Jona Cole



Kim Rhode working with Sharon Hawke and the group

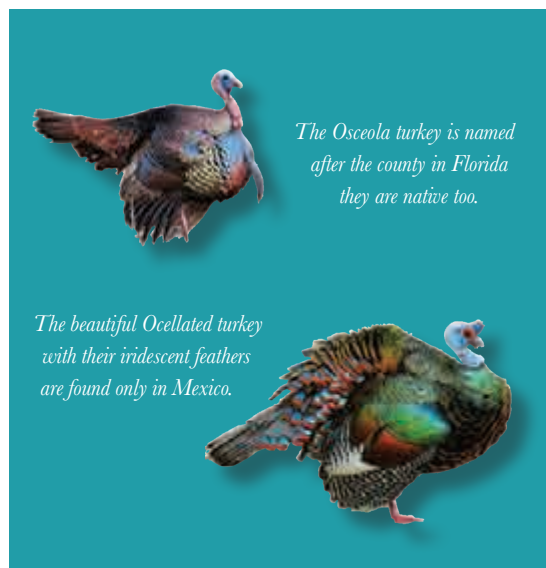




Melanie Bolke, SLG staff and retired taxidermist



Trang Dam, BerettaUSA Marketing



The Osceola turkey is named after the county in Florida they are native too.

The beautiful Ocellated turkey with their iridescent feathers are found only in Mexico.



Kim Rhode, Olympian and turkey caller extraordinaire



Victoria Loomis, Chef @thegatheringgirl

FEATURE

Outside of our fantastic harvests during the trip, there were some other activities that took place as well. Olympic skeet shooter Kim Rhode showed us the ropes in competitive shooting, showing us how it's done on the trap field. All the ladies took turns breaking targets and getting tips from Kim.

Chef Tori took some of the ladies' donated meat and whipped up a special demonstration dinner of Wild Turkey Breast - Sous Vide with Jezebel Sauce, roasted vegetables and potatoes and spinach salad with raspberry vinaigrette. Absolutely delicious. Tori "grew up around hunters, but it wasn't until [she] began hunting that she realized the extreme disconnect that often exists between what we eat and where it comes from...Growing and harvesting [her] own food has been...empowering and humbling."

While Tori was dressing the turkeys that were to be donated and not mounted, retired taxidermist Melanie Bolke, of the SLG staff, demonstrated how to prepare, preserve and mount the turkey's fan and tail feathers so we could take those skills home and display our experience.

At the end of the event, each woman took home a fantastic set of gear and knowledge they didn't arrive with—but more importantly, every woman went home with memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. The experiences gained during this trip meant something different for each woman. For myself, as a non-hunter up until this event, it wasn't about the hunt or the harvest. It was about the time in the blind. The pure silence in the blind was an excellent time for reflection and there is nothing quite so special as listening and watching as the natural world around you wakes up.

Thank you to Shoot Like a Girl and BerettaUSA for investing in women. ■

At SLG, they don't just talk the talk. Starting with archery and adding the shooting sports later, they've been putting bows and guns in the hands of women since 2009, and they aren't slowing down. In over 12 years, their program has helped over 27,000 women find their shooting confidence – from total beginners to seasoned pros! So if you're looking for a way to dip your toe into the sport or take your skills to the next level – come join us in discovering why so many ladies are falling in love with shooting sports. We can guarantee it's an adventure you won't regret. Let's shoot like a girl together!



Shawn Hawke and Trang Dam with their harvests



♂ *A Man's World?*



...*Not Necessarily* ♀

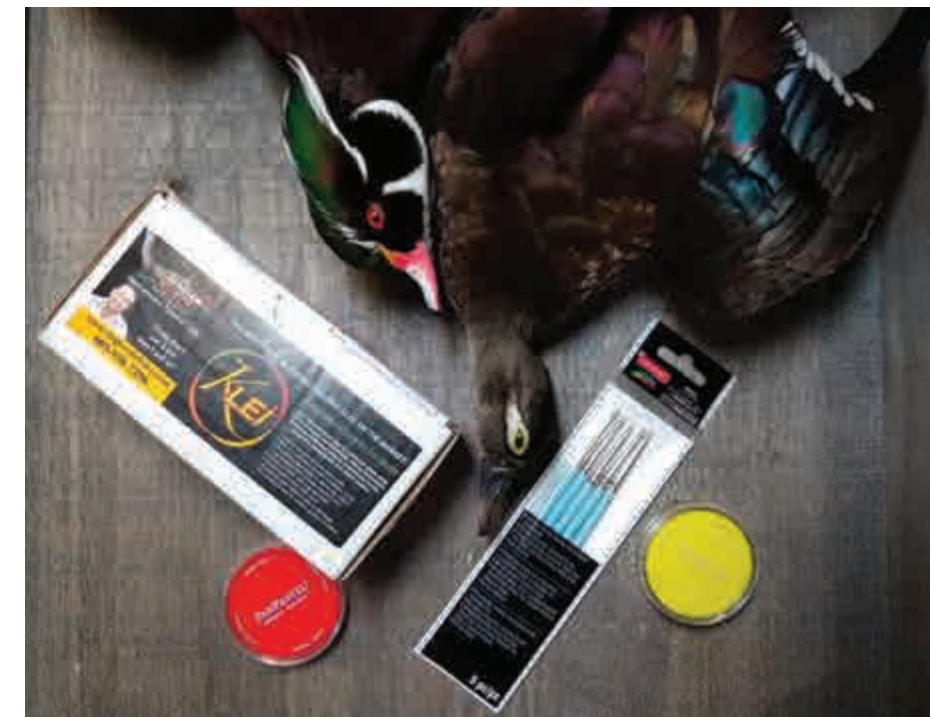
BY CHERYL GAY

When I was a little girl, and someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I used to tell them I was going to be a mom and have 100 kids. My grandma would tell me I'm not going to be allowed to bring them all to her house at the same time. Sometimes my answer would change, and I would give answers such as a teacher or a nurse, something I thought were "girl" jobs. Never would I have thought when I grew up, I would want to be a taxidermist. I can't imagine many little girls even know what that is, unless you grew up in a house with a hunting family (which I did not). The world is changing, and women are venturing into areas that are not typically thought of as female careers.

NICOLE'S NATURALS BIRD TAXIDERMISTRY

I had the privilege of speaking with one such woman, Nicole Griewahn, owner of Nicole's Naturals – Bird Taxidermy in Onaway, Michigan. Nicole is first a wife and mother of 2,

which is her full-time priority. Taxidermy is a part time career for Nicole that started as just a way to challenge herself with something different. Nicole



earned both a bachelor's and master's in biology specializing in fisheries, ultimately teaching at Northern Michigan University. In 2011 Nicole decided she needed to do something to challenge herself outside of fisheries and thought she would try her hand at taxidermy. She attended the American Institute of Taxidermy in Wisconsin with a specific emphasis on birds. She wanted to focus on something unique from what everybody else did, such as fish, deer, and other mammals. She was not a bird hunter but her husband hunts birds, both upland and waterfowl. Nicole prefers to watch the dogs work and be out in nature participating in the experience and making hunting memories.

Taxidermy started as a hobby, giving her something to challenge herself, she stated that she wasn't even sure she would like it but was ready for a change from fisheries. Within the first year after taxidermy school, she knew she had found something she enjoyed and took every opportunity to learn as much as she could to

become better at the craft. It was a couple years before Nicole began thinking she could pursue bird taxidermy as a business and not just a hobby to keep for herself. This required her to obtain a taxidermy license from the state of Michigan and because she would be working on some migratory birds, she also must maintain a license from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Along with maintaining both licenses Nicole must also know all of Michigan’s regulations as it pertains to the harvesting and possession of both migratory and upland bird species.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO A CUSTOM-BUILT SHOP

This hobby turned business began in Nicole’s home with a very understanding family not minding her work being done in the kitchen and at the dining room table. With excellent attention to detail and the desire to preserve someone’s memory and the beauty of the bird Nicole’s Naturals – Bird Taxidermy took off and began outgrowing her personal home spaces. During the pandemic Nicole and her family moved from Gwinn in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to Onaway where she had herself a shop built to meet her taxidermy business needs.

Nicole was able to have a spacious walk-in freezer installed which helps her maintain meticulous records and inventory, cataloging what she is in possession of, while maintaining the integrity of the bird. There is room for what Nicole refers to as the “dirty” station where the cleaning and fleshing, which is a tedious process of removing everything from the skin that can

delicately to not damage the skin. She uses Dawn dish soap to clean the birds as it is gentle and does not damage or leave any chemical residue on the skin or feathers. Although fleshing is not her favorite part of the process it does lead her to her favorite task.

Nicole loves after the bird has been properly cleaned and dried and is at its “fluffy” stage before being attached to the foam mold. This is done in the clean area with a bench for her materials and tools for the mounting process. There is also ample storage space for many different types of items needed for the habitat design and things needed to properly secure the bird to its foam and base. Nicole shared that the eyes are pretty difficult to get right, but she takes great pride in her ability and attention to detail that delivers such beautiful memories for her customers.

AWARD WINNING ARTIST

Nicole has entered her work in several

competitions chose to exhibit is perhaps the most difficult bird to mount, an American woodcock. Her most recent accolade of Best Professional Upland Bird was taken with her fully displaying mount of a ruffed grouse. Nicole says the competitions are fun and a nice opportunity to get together with others in her field and see new ideas and talent from all over. But the competition alone is not what drives her to deliver such beautiful work. Her most important goal when she is commissioned to mount someone’s trophy is to honor the bird and provide her customer with a unique work of art to preserve a story or memory for a lifetime. Nicole uses mounts that she has finished for customers to be judged at contests she enters. She takes extreme pride knowing that she is winning awards with work she completes for her customers, and not just work done with competition in mind.

Nicole’s foray into taxidermy spawned other interests in conjunction with and parallel to taxidermy and the bird hunting world. She started making jewelry as another hobby, utilizing feathers from non-migrating species of birds as well as diving headfirst into wild game cooking and cuisine. Her jewelry is available upon request as it is primarily a hobby, most of which is donated to various conservation organizations and banquets. She articulated a love for cooking



decompose, is done. Fleshing is one of Nicole’s least favorite parts of the process, not because of the messiness, but rather because it needs to be done so

competitions over the years. As testament to her extraordinary talent, Nicole took home a; first place in habitat, a public choice award and third place bird overall in her first ever competition with the Michigan Taxidermist Association. The bird she

wild game to feed her family clean and organic meals of marvelous protein.

WHAT TAXIDERMISTS WISH HUNTERS KNEW

I asked Nicole what are some things that we as hunters should know if we are thinking of getting a bird mounted. Her first thought was the customer needs to be flexible. She elaborated that what she means is, sometimes the picture a customer has in their head of what they want may not be what can realistically be accomplished. Sometimes a particular pose is not possible because of pin feathers (undeveloped feathers), which tend to fall right out of the skin during the washing process. If the customer is flexible, the taxidermist can use their talent to best position the bird in a way that hides the imperfections.

The best piece of advice for anyone possibly wanting to have a bird mounted is to do your homework. Talk with a taxidermist, look at different taxidermy work. Know what kind of storage will be available to you, where you are hunting, and prepare accordingly. Invest in a quality cooler that will be large enough to



frozen. Dry ice could be very beneficial to ensure your trophy is intact for the taxidermist. The ideal way to store the bird is with its head on the back of its body with wings tucked in kind of looking

store the bird to minimize potential damage. Depending on where you are and how long before you can get your bird home to your own freezer or to your taxidermist, you need to be prepared to keep the bird like a football, then placed in a Ziplock style bag that can be sealed. If the bird is larger, you can double up heavy-duty garbage bags, making sure it is properly sealed to prevent freezer burn. Most importantly though, you must have each bird tagged with the date it was harvested, and the county and state in which it was taken. The taxidermist cannot accept your bird without that information if they are interested in staying compliant with state and federal regulations.

So...YOU THINK YOU MAY WANT TO TRY TAXIDERMISTRY?

Nicole’s advice for anyone interested in possibly becoming a taxidermist is to start out talking to



Pin feathers



Best in Category, Professional Class



Owls completed with Educational Permits

people in the industry. Go to taxidermy shows and expose yourself to the different types of taxidermy that is out there. Do your research, there are a ton of free resources online from schools that offer taxidermy classes, along with how-to videos on YouTube. Also research your state's requirements. Some states require a person to test in order to obtain a taxidermy license, and to receive payment for work done. Talk with local taxidermists, some may be willing to provide training and exposure such as job shadowing or apprenticeships. The biggest piece of advice is to not be afraid. For something that used to be typically thought of as a man's job, Nicole has broken through that stereotype with a stack of blue ribbons confirming a woman can do it just as well (and sometimes better). ■

You can find Nicole on at:



Nicole's Naturals – Bird Taxidermy



nnbirdtaxidermy



THE SPORTING LIFE IS FOR EVERYONE.

We are passionate about the shooting sports and are driven to help women become involved in the great outdoors. Our goal is to provide the equipment and knowledge that make the experience more enjoyable and less stressful. This is our mission.

For more info visit SyrenUSA.com or call 410-901-1131



A Woman's Best Friend

AS TOLD BY MACY COOK

Dogs are a man's best friend and a hunter's favorite tool. For centuries, our 4-legged friends have hunted alongside man in every aspect of the sport. Chasing down wild boars was a job for the Great Dane, the English Foxhound was designed to pair perfectly with a horseman on a fox hunt, and the French dubbed the poodle "caniche," which translates to "duck dog."

It is somewhat of an unbreakable bond between man and dog, and today we see this bond becoming more vital. Ethical breeding practices, advancements in veterinary medicine, and a better understanding of how our dogs think allow us to get the most out of our hunting dogs while seeing them as more than tools.

For most, when you hear gun dog, the first breed to come to mind is the Labrador Retriever. Often viewed as one of the most versatile breeds, the Lab has been at the top of the American Kennel Club popularity charts for nearly 50 years. Lovable, athletic, loyal, and outgoing describe the Labrador through and through. While these fun-loving dogs will romp in the yard



*British Labrador Retriever*

back but have a hard-working side that shows itself when hunting with their person.

Where the Labrador Retriever may be a household name, the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever is a lesser-known but versatile gun dog. As one of the smallest retrievers, these medium-sized dogs are highly driven athletes who love to work. Their owners need to be just as adventurous and vigorous to keep up. Known as the “Decoy Dog” and “Little River Duck Dog”, tollers were meant to do just that - toll or lead ducks in. Waterfowl often saw these little feathery red-colored dogs as a fox on the bank, then, fascinated, they would fly right into the honey hole. The Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever is not only used in this method of waterfowl hunting, but they also excel in the uplands flushing birds and burning energy all day. Intelligent and eager to please a toller can get the best of their owners if they aren’t mentally and physically stimulated. Their eagerness and athleticism make them not only great hunting partners but also great family dogs. Tollers can keep up with active children and thrive in an outdoorsy lifestyle.

For some, a gun dog is a must-have for the blind or in the field; for others, it’s just an added perk and another chance to hang out with their furry best friend. Whichever side you fall on, you know that seeing your dog thrive in his environment is the best feeling. ■

with you, snuggle on the couch, and share a snack, you’ll see them thrive when you put them to work. With retriever in their name, it’s no shock that this breed will naturally go after downed birds, whether in the duck blind or a grassy field. Their double-coat, webbed feet, medium-to-large stature, and otter-type tail make the Labrador an ideal candidate to join you in a cold, wet duck blind.

Today, not all Labradors are created equal. You’ll want to find a breeder specializing in what you’re looking for out of a new companion. There are primarily two lines of Labradors in terms of sport; American labs and British Labs. American labs have thinner builds, higher energy, and stamina, and excel in the field. British-bred Labradors are what we picture when we think of the All-American family dog. Blockier builds, these brick house dogs are fun-loving and laid

*Toller puppies*

The Syren Julia

Field

20 GAUGE*
FIELD MODEL
AS TESTED BY
GAYLA COOPER

SPECIFICATIONS	
MODEL:	SYREN JULIA FIELD
Gauge:	20 GAUGE
	*(28 GAUGE AVAILABLE)
BARRELS:	28"
LOP:	13.9"
DAC:	1.5"
DAH:	2.5"
CAH:	.25"
CAT:	.5"
PITCH:	7 DEGREES
GRIP LENGTH:	4"
WEIGHT:	6LBS 9OZ
CHOKES:	5 NICKEL-PLATED, FLUSH-FITTED CHOKES
WARRANTY:	LIFETIME LIMITED
SUGGESTED RETAIL:	\$6,250



As someone who has shot 200,000+ clay targets throughout the years, I have done so with a variety of shotguns. Though I am not an avid hunter I have shot quail before, and I certainly understand what I want in a field shotgun. When I received the phone call to try this shotgun, I thought, absolutely, why not? I love trying different shotguns and the only Syren I have had the opportunity to shoot was the Syren Tempio 12 gauge during a demo workshop.

FIRST THOUGHTS

The shotgun receiver is beautiful. A woman’s face engraved with a floral motif is definitely fitting since the shotgun is named after Caesar’s daughter Julia who was known for her beauty and grace. I was a little afraid to take it out of the case. By the way, the case was very secure and well thought out to protect the shotgun. It took a moment to put the shotgun together, however, after a little effort, I soon figured it out and felt the gun lock together securely. The shotgun’s weight is spot on. It would be suitable for a long upland hunt that required a lot of walking. This shotgun

can easily be thrown over your shoulder causing no fatigue.

THE WOOD

At first glance, I felt the wood was appropriately figured and accentuated Julia’s phenomenally engraved side-plates. Gun enthusiasts have great appreciation for high-quality Turkish walnut with a semi-gloss finish to highlight the floral motif used to create the woman’s face on the side-plates. The stock has a Monte Carlo comb. This is imperative in a true “woman’s” shotgun to allow for the sightline height most women need over the top of the rib. The rose etched into the stock behind the receiver is a nice feminine touch to add elegance to the stock. The length of pull was an ideal fit for me as I am only 5 feet tall. I do feel it would be very easy to add a spacer to the stock for a taller female with a longer length of pull. The rounded grip was also the appropriate size for my smaller hands allowing me to reach the trigger easier. The checkering was well-balanced and definitely allowed something to “feel,” in order to keep my hand in the same place. The butt pad was not a pad at all but a 15 mm wood-

plate to give the shotgun a more traditional hunting appearance. The forend was very secure on the barrels once the shotgun was locked together. The Schnabel forend was slim for my ungloved hands, but I can see the added benefit of a smaller Schnabel forend, for someone that has smaller hands or for those who like to lightly cradle the forend in a gloved hand. I was very impressed by the forend release and functionality. The button was large and very easy to use. The forend wood equally matched the stock in grain, color, and finish.

THE METAL

The receiver side-plates are the most impressive part of the Julia. The 24K gold floral motif shaped into a woman’s face is absolutely stunning, and fitting for an Italian-made shotgun. The receiver side-plates are undoubtedly works of art and should be displayed. Floral engraving decorates the receiver and the oversized trigger guard, which is sized to facilitate a gloved shooter. The Julia comes with a manual single selective trigger and a tang-mounted safety with integral



barrel selector. Upon doing some research I learned there is also an option for an automatic safety that engages when the action is open. The lever was very easy to use, and the trigger was very light and easy to reach. Having a closer trigger to the grip is always a plus for someone with shorter fingers, and the Julia does not disappoint with this feature. The 28" barrels were very well made, and at 2lbs 11 oz keep the weight off the shotgun for a

Takeaway after shooting the Julia for a few hours. She definitely shoots where you look. If it was flying, it was dying. The Julia is very light, I was not fatigued after walking a mile carrying the shotgun and my gear. The recoil was tolerable for such a lightweight shotgun. Although I am used to a professionally fit shotgun, I had no bruises or soreness on my face or shoulder. If you want a lightweight shotgun that is stunning, and the envy of the hunt, the Julia is your girl. ■

quick mount while hunting. The solid mid-rib allows for an easy sightline over the shotgun. The Julia comes with a variety of factory flush chokes, everything you need for a successful hunt.

PUTTING THE JULIA TO USE

I shot the Julia at the American Shooting Center in Katy, Texas. I used RC T3 7/8 oz 1200 fps # 7.5 loads. I chose targets that were incoming, teal, and going away to simulate different types of upland birds. All the targets were varying distances and speeds simulating an actual hunt with varying terrain and background as well. I also walked to test carrying the Julia on a long hunt. I was a bit surprised, as I thought the Julia would have a heavy recoil due to the light weight of the gun and not having a rubber recoil pad. I was pleasantly surprised. The Julia had a tolerable recoil, it did not slap my face, and I mounted the gun quite easily due to how lightweight the shotgun is. A wider butt pad would allow for a more comfortable fit into the shoulder pocket, but it would also add weight and take away from the lightness. I was very impressed by the trigger. The Julia trigger was surprisingly quick, had great placement in relation to the grip, and was a short pull. You would not need to adjust the Julia trigger.

IT'S TIME TO SHOW WHO WE REALLY ARE.

GUN OWNERS CARESM

Gun owners care about the safety, preventing unauthorized access to firearms, bettering communities, helping those in need and conserving wildlife and wild places for generations to come.

You won't hear these positive stories about real gun owners and pro-gun advocates in the mainstream media. In fact, you're more likely to see insulting messages that try to shun or even shame gun owners due to some heinous acts of criminals. It's time for gun owners to tell their stories, to show how we're making a difference, to show that we don't fit under one identity and to keep others accountable for trying to villainize lawful gun owners.

We're calling on all gun owners to join us.

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT,
WE CAN DO THIS — TOGETHER.**

GunOwnersCare.org

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The Firearm Industry
Trade Association

Keeping It Fun

Lessons from Couples Who Shoot Together

BY MAGGIE KELCH



Ladies Night where instructors worked with women to learn and improve. We had finally found the clay target sport that we enjoyed together.

Over the past few years, I've seen more women shooters, and couples, at registered sporting clays shoots and fun shoots. Which led me to wonder: do couples who

compete together successfully have any tips that might help us and other couples? What works best for them? To find out, I spoke with two couples who

shoot together. Rosanne and Paul Prucka from Riverview, Michigan and Dave and Lynne Clements from Medina, Ohio (summers) and Sun City Hilton Head, SC (winters).

COUPLES ADVENTURES

The Pruckas have been shooting sporting clays together since they met in 2006. While Rosanne had been pheasant and quail hunting before she met Paul, she had not tried any clay target sports. They started out shooting skeet together and tried trapshooting. But, after shooting some fun shoots and practicing at Michigan Shooting Centers, they found that sporting clays was their sport.

"We travelled to Tunica, Mississippi on a



gambling junket and learned that the casino had a sporting clays facility. This was my first taste at travelling and shooting outside of our area which later developed into a thrill of "claycations" for us," Rosanne said. Paul is currently a Master class shooter and Rosanne is in AA class and working to move up to Master class. They consider the Monroe County Rod & Gun Club, where they first started shooting, to be their home club.

Dave and Lynne Clements began shooting sporting clays in 2002 after they joined Hill 'n Dale Club, their home club in the summertime. During the winter, they shoot at Forest City in Savannah, GA. Dave is a Master class shooter and an NSCA Level II instructor. (He is one of the volunteer instructors at Hill 'n Dale's Ladies Night.) Lynne is a C class shooter and an NSCA Level I instructor. Though she does not compete at this time because of some health issues, Lynne achieved her accreditation as an instructor so that she and Dave could work with couples together. In addition to shooting sporting clays, the Clements also hunt upland game together.

Both the Pruckas and the Clements said that shooting sporting clays together has been a fun experience for them. Dave explained, "It's a nice way to spend time together doing something we both enjoy. And besides we only need one cart!" Paul added, "We do everything together and enjoy the comradery. It's a mutual hobby."

The Pruckas always shoot together on the same squad and find that it is beneficial for them. "Yes, we always shoot on the same squad. It's what we enjoy doing together and want to be squadded together. We talk between stations about the targets and how we read them. We help





each other with our shooting. We also make sure that we engage with the rest of the squad. We like to take squad photos, so we have a memory of the shoot. We enjoy having fun on our squad,” Rosanne said.

The Clements, on the other hand, do not always shoot together as there are sometimes shoots that Dave will enter and Lynne will not. Lynne said that shooting on the same squad with Dave does benefit her. She explained why she enjoys being squaddied with him. “His consistency in his pre-shot routine, and the great target sight pictures on how to shoot a certain presentation that he offers fellow shooters. I like having someone with a sound basic firearms knowledge as a squad member,” she explained.

Paul said that they find shooting on the same squad helps them to be better shooters. “It’s a benefit because we push each other to better our game,” he explained. Lynne explained that shooting with Dave benefits her as a competitor because he challenges her to achieve skills that she might not try on her own.

MARRIED TO MY COACH

Rosanne said that they often work together to analyze targets and help each other improve. “Yes, Paul helps me when I’m struggling with a target. During practice, he may point out that my hold point is off or suggest I break the target in a different location. He does an excellent job with coaching. During a tournament, he may say that I’m behind it or “give it some more” or “too much lead.” For the most part though, we do not

This is especially true for couples who shoot together. The Clements said they generally leave the order up to the referee. But, Lynne added, “If possible, I would try to shoot immediately after my husband for a good sight picture since he is a Master Class shooter; but we usually would shoot whatever the rotation calls for.”

Rosanne explained, “Generally, when the trapper asks what order we would prefer we just leave it up to the trapper, but we do like to follow each other. I used to prefer to follow Paul because it helped me with my confidence, watching him go first. But now I realize that Paul tends to break certain targets a lot faster than me, so I must keep in mind when I’m watching him that this may or may not be my break point or even my hold point. I also don’t get to watch the path of the bird as long as I would like to if he is shooting them faster. I have a hard time seeing around him on some shots.”

Both the Clements and the Pruckas said that they have taken lessons from instructors in the past and would recommend it for other couples. When asked what advice she would give to women who are just getting started, Lynne said: “Get lessons from a qualified instructor: men and women perceive things differently. Get a gun you like, that fits you properly. Kindly tell him this is something you want to enjoy with him but need



to become proficient at for yourself - you need to become confident in your shooting skills and abilities!”

Rosanne had similar advice for women. “Go practice a few times, find a gun that fits. It doesn’t have to be expensive and pretty, it just has to fit. Find ammo that doesn’t beat you up and seek out someone that is good with gun fitting so that you don’t waste your money on guns that don’t fit. It is frustrating shooting a gun that you don’t realize is not the right fit for you and you’re missing targets because of this,” she said.

HOW TO GET HER INTERESTED...IN SHOOTING

What advice did these couples have for men who want their wives/partners to shoot with them? “Don’t try to teach her unless you are a level II or III instructor. Get her lessons from a qualified instructor that you can develop a relationship with,” Dave said. Paul added: “Make sure that the spouse is comfortable. Try to find a gun that fits reasonably well. I would recommend a semi-auto. Try to make it enjoyable – not painful. Too many times spouses put their wives into a gun that does not fit very well, causing the wife to get rocked by the gun – not fun.

I asked these seasoned shooting couples if they had any advice for couples that are considering shooting together. Both the Pruckas and Clements focused on fun. Lynne said, “Definitely try it - it’s a fun process to enjoy together!” Rosanne added, “First of all, have fun. If you are not a shooter, give it a try. Don’t jump right into competition, go to some local clubs and practice at your own pace. Then try a fun shoot or a fundraiser. If you continue to enjoy shooting, sign up with the NSCA and shoot a small registered shoot and take it from there. Most of

“...keep the competition between you and the targets not between you and your spouse.”

all, be patient with your spouse. If shooting becomes something you both enjoy, make a vacation out of it. Find a tournament out of state, meet new people, visit new places. Also, read up on the sport – books, magazines, podcasts, internet.”

Finally, I asked if they had any last words of advice or encouragement for new (or even seasoned) shooting couples. “There are so many great people that you meet along the journey. Get out to a local gun club or sporting clay range and enjoy the sport,” Paul said. Perhaps Rosanne summed it up best. “Enjoy, have fun. If you get into shooting tournaments, keep the competition between you and the targets not between you and your spouse. Work on things together to improve your game. Couples that shoot together, enjoy life more!” she said. ■



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NO VEHICLES

Tungsten Makes the 28-Gauge Mighty

BY
MATTHEW
GAY

The mandatory transition to non-toxic shot for shotgun ammunition used to hunt waterfowl in all instances, and on certain public lands for all hunting pursuits, initially spawned one option: steel shot. This initial limited choice of non-toxic shot required high velocities in large bore shotguns, larger shot size and heavier payloads to supplement the shortcomings of steel as a shot material. As time went on and dissatisfaction with steel as an efficient alternative spread, ammunition manufacturers developed new non-toxic options which performed in a manner more closely to that of lead. Some of these products have actually proven to exceed the performance of lead, one of which is tungsten alloy.

HISTORY

In 1959 a gentleman by the name of Frank Chapman Bellrose published a paper highlighting the losses of waterfowl because of lead toxicity due to ingestion of lead pellets from hunting ammunition. This was the beginning of a journey that led to a ban of lead ammunition for waterfowl throughout North America. The same conversation is now taking place because of losses in the raptor population. These lead exposures are assumed to be from the ingestion of land-based carrion containing lead, originating from hunting ammunition.

The United States initiated the move away from lead ammunition for waterfowl starting in 1986, culminating in a complete ban of lead shot for waterfowl in 1991. This is conveniently or inconveniently, (depending on one's perspective) the first year I hunted waterfowl as a young waterfowler, never having had the opportunity to take waterfowl in the good ole days of lead.

Over the past decade and a half, the industry has responded with new offerings utilizing new technologies, materials and alloys which have continued to evolve into non-toxic ammunition that performs very well when compared to traditional steel shotshells. Without getting into specific brands, almost universally manufacturers have waded into the non-steel, non-tox shotshell market. Cost was initially an issue in the early days of this new non-tox ammunition, with some costing upwards of \$5 per shell. As more manufacturers and new technology fuel increased efficiency, the costs have come down considerably with some manufacturers.

WHY TUNGSTEN IS EXCITING FOR LADY HUNTERS

While most shooters routinely utilize 12-gauge shotguns for hunting and clay target shooting, ammo used for wing shooting in a 12-gauge, and even three-inch 20-gauge magnums can be a bit



stout. The prospect of a 28-gauge with tungsten shot, approaching, or exceeding the performance of a 12-gauge with steel, is very exciting for those





who seek excellent terminal performance without the punishing recoil. This technology also opens the door for young lady hunters to use more effective equipment while learning the sport.

As a test for this hypothesis and confirmation of the advertised performance, I hand loaded a box of BPI TSS-18 in number seven shot. Following the loading manual to a tee, I utilized Fiocchi hulls and primers, the TPS 28 wad from Ballistic Products, 28 grains of Lil Gun powder and one ounce of the TSS shot. I hand loaded each round, being careful to weigh each powder and shot charge precisely before moving to the press to make the crimp. Although the loading manual required one FC 41 filler wad in the base of the shot cup, I found that two filler wads were necessary to get a good crimp. According to the

manual, this recipe produces a velocity of 1290 feet per second at a pressure of 8,230 psi with one ounce of TSS 18. This is relatively mild in comparison to the allowable pressures in a modern 28 gauge. After carefully loading a box of these little dynamos, the proof would be on the prairie, so to speak.

**NORTH DAKOTA TESTING
LABORATORY... AKA A POTHOLE IN THE
PRAIRIE**

Our annual pilgrimage to North Dakota would be a combination trip for upland birds and waterfowl. The first test came on a beautiful morning watching the sun come up over the horizon sitting on a Waterfowl Production Area

in the Kulm district. Being mid-way through the season, our quarry would be resident birds mixed in with migrators. This particular piece of water holds everything from Green-Winged Teal to Canvasbacks. Shortly after shooting time started, a group of Blue-Winged Teal decided to buzz our heads at Mach 3, then made the mistake of returning to investigate the decoy spread. Although a test of terminal performance on wild game, this initial shot was only around 25-30 yards. The shot performed well, and the double of Teal were down without a problem.

It was good to put the theory to the test, but the alleged lethality at distance was what I was really aiming to flesh out. A little later in the day, a pair of Red Heads decided to investigate our spot from a more significant altitude. I normally



prefer to take birds at a closer range, due to the limitations imposed by steel shot, but this was tungsten and I wanted to see if the hype was worth the cost of the components. From what I would confidently state was a minimum of 50 yards up, presenting as a driven target overhead, I accelerated in front of the bird and pulled the trigger once it registered that my barrel had exceeded the speed of the target. The handsome Red Head immediately folded and dropped to the high ground just behind our blind.

Upon investigation of the bird, no shot was to be found. This tungsten load passed through the bird with excellent efficiency and humanely dispatched the fowl. The advent of this type of shotgun ammo is revolutionary, in that, this same shot would be right at the limit of my comfort when using steel shot. The revelation of course was that this little 28-gauge just proved it can equal a 12-gauge in terms of effective range and terminal performance, with far less felt recoil.

The second leg of the trip took us further west to familiar upland ground where we had hunted many years before. The wily Ringneck pheasant was the targeted species and is plentiful in this area. I held onto five of these shells to evaluate their performance on wild roosters, which are as tough as nails. On the first day, my English Springer, Festus, indicated that there was hot scent ahead. His excitement pushed him out a little, to about 40 yards, then he launched as the

bird flushed. A rooster took off heading straight away in a slightly clumsy manner. I pulled up, just above the crown of the bird's head, and pulled the trigger. This rooster immediately folded and fell to the ground awaiting Festus' eager jowls. The results of my post-mortem on this rooster were consistent with that of the Red Head.

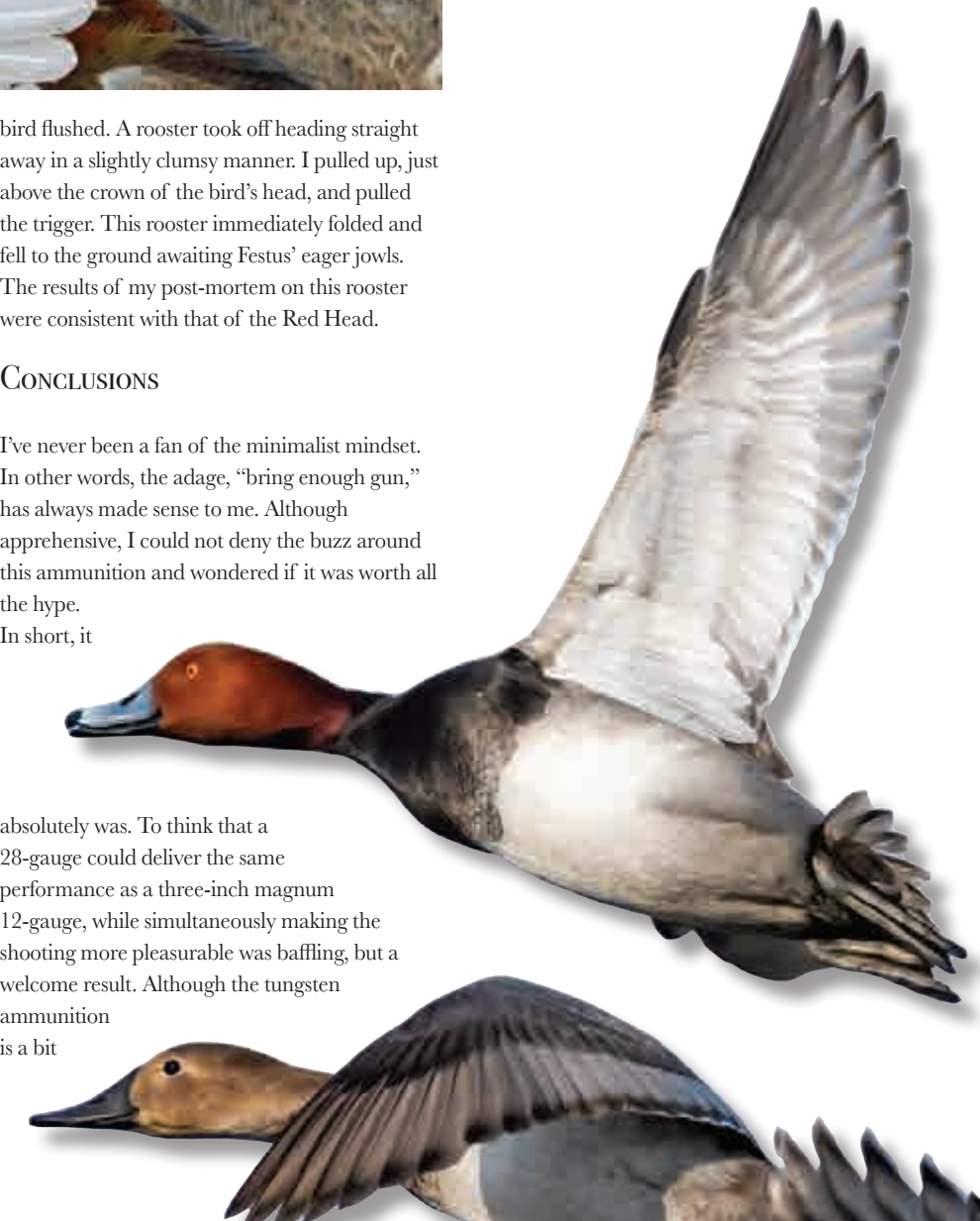
CONCLUSIONS

I've never been a fan of the minimalist mindset. In other words, the adage, "bring enough gun," has always made sense to me. Although apprehensive, I could not deny the buzz around this ammunition and wondered if it was worth all the hype. In short, it

absolutely was. To think that a 28-gauge could deliver the same performance as a three-inch magnum 12-gauge, while simultaneously making the shooting more pleasurable was baffling, but a welcome result. Although the tungsten ammunition is a bit

pricier than the bargain steel shells, the benefit of confidence and comfort is well worth it. For those inclined to hand load their own shells, there is nothing more rewarding than harvesting a wonderful animal with ammunition crafted by one's own hand. The experiment turned this writer from a skeptic into a believer. Tungsten shotshell ammo is a game changer.

Many commercial ammunition manufacturers have excellent factory loads available for consumers, but they command a premium price. For anyone interested in more information on purchasing and loading their own tungsten ammo, Ballistic Products carries everything you need and publishes excellent reloading data. You can find them at ballisticproducts.com ■





Follow Micaela's journey on Instagram @MJ.Velasquez17

The Future

WITH SHELBY SIVADON

Micaela Velasquez is a young, talented athlete that excels in many disciplines of shotgun. However, she has shown immense talent as an Olympic trap shooter. I got the opportunity to interview her with a few questions to get some insight into who she is and what shooting sports is for her.

■ Micaela said that Olympic bunker trap would be her favorite discipline. She likes the challenge of the extreme target angles and how the targets come out of the trap at an average speed of 68mph.

■ Micaela's favorite shooting bag item is her Müller stainless steel competition chokes. With them being interchangeable chokes she can change them easily depending on what discipline she is shooting.

■ Her favorite shotgun is her Beretta DT-11 because it has been an overall successful competition gun for her.

■ When she is not shooting, Micaela likes to ride her longboard. Which is similar to skateboarding, but longer than a skateboard.

■ A fun fact about Micaela is that she is a left-handed shooter but ironically she does everything else right-handed.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Shelby is also a left-handed shooter but does everything right-handed



Shelby was also an FFA officer in high school

Jayden Schoppe is a fifteen-year-old athlete who excels in hunting and shotgun sports. I previously shot with her for two years of my high school career as well. I have seen her develop into the talented young athlete she is today. Hunting has always been something she enjoys.

■ Jayden's favorite animal to harvest is an aoudad because she shot him while he ran up a mountain. She said it was a very exciting hunt!

■ Jayden loves her trusty binoculars! They are definitely her favorite thing to have with her when hunting because without them she would be unsure of her shot.

■ She shoots a Weatherby 308 rifle which has always been the most ideal gun for her hunts.

■ Outside of hunting and shooting Jayden likes to show livestock through FFA. Currently this year she is raising and showing a steer, a goat, and a lamb.

■ Jayden says a fun fact about her is her huge passion for the FFA association and believes in the Future of Agriculture. She serves as an officer of her high school's FFA chapter and just finished serving on the District FFA officer team. ■



Follow Jayden's journey on Instagram @jaydenwade880



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Adjusting her aim down the sights, Laura's target is the size of the period at the end of this sentence. She is in complete control. Slowly pulling the 2-stage trigger of her Walther air rifle, the flathead pellet travels 33 feet down range. She scores a 10.9, the highest possible score in the Olympic/Paralympic 10m air rifle discipline. Her father, Tom, is ecstatic and shares Laura's wide smile as she proudly looks back at him. Laura was born with a congenital limb difference called ectrodactyly. There are many physical formations ectrodactyly can take, and Laura was born with two fingers on each hand and wide-shaped feet. To others, she's an anomaly, but to us at NubAbility Outdoors, she's an average camper doing what she loves at our camps for limb-different youth.

NubAbility Outdoors is an extension of the NubAbility Athletics Foundation. Founded on the mission to bring more limb-different youth into outdoor sports, NubAbility Outdoors hosts shooting sports, archery, hunting, and fishing camps throughout the United States for limb-different youth between the ages of 4-17 (9-17 when involving a firearm). We only use accomplished limb-different adults as our coaches that have at least competed at the high school varsity level. However, many have competed at the collegiate or professional level. We define limb difference as someone who has experienced limb loss congenitally or acquired an amputation(s). Additionally, we include invisible limb differences such as frozen limbs and the brachial plexus.

As the Program Director at the NubAbility Athletics Foundation, I am also a competitive



WITH NUBABILITY
PROGRAM DIRECTOR
SAM RUDLOFF

shotgun athlete starting with my days in American skeet at Lindenwood University. I am passionate about sharing shooting sports and outdoor experiences with other limb-different youth. I was born without a left hand in Seoul, South Korea. I was adopted by a family in a "bring your tractor to school day" town called Washington, Missouri. I remember the first time I shot a shotgun. When I was in middle school, my neighbors convinced my non-hunting and no-guns-in-the-house parents to come out to their



land and shoot clay birds off a step thrower. I dusted that orange disc on the first shot and accidentally hit the barn behind it. I was hooked! I joined the Lindenwood University American Skeet Colligate team and shot for them from 2013-2016. I found myself on the USA Para-Trap Team in August 2021. Since then, I've traveled the world representing the USA in Para-Trap. My dream is to represent the USA at the LA 2028 Paralympic Games in Para-Trap.

We believe in developing our campers holistically with an emphasis on mental and physical strength. Many of our campers have never met a similar age peer or adult with a similar limb difference. By bringing limb-different adults as our coaches, we help build vision and



Our editor, Brandy, was born with a Brachial Plexus Injury to the right shoulder resulting in about 30% mobility of her right arm

confidence in these campers. It's at these moments that the campers know that even with their limb differences, they can engage in fishing and hunting. They can also safely operate a bow and firearm just like anyone else. Our coaches are valuable resources to campers and families by

sharing their techniques and resources related to their limb difference. These include things such as shooting stance, holding a firearm, reeling in a monster bass, tying your shoes, and more.

Our camper Laura and three other limb-different campers attended our first Intro to

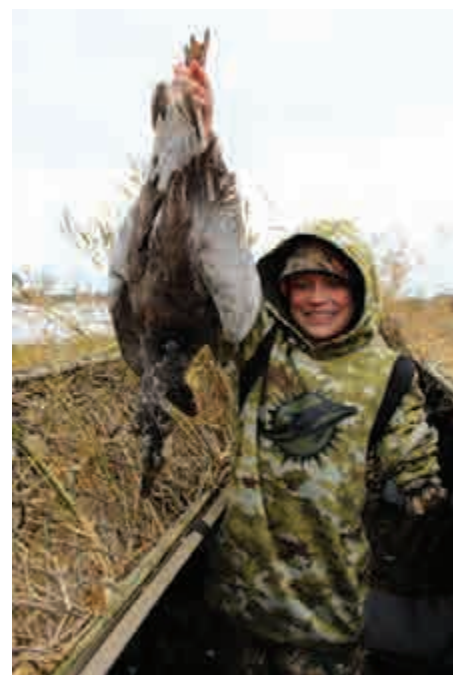




Competitive Shooting Camp at the Hill Country Shooting Sports Center in Kerrville, Texas in January 2023. Through the help of USA Shooting and our sponsors, we were able to provide the facility and equipment for these youth to learn about Olympic/Paralympic air rifle/pistol, and shotgun sports. The other limb differences we worked with include a camper who lost part of his leg to cancer. One was born with a limb-different arm, and one was born with no arms. We started with basic firearm safety training taught by our certified coaches. Our coaches paired up with the same limb-different

camper and delved further into details about safely operating a firearm.

On the first day, we concentrated on shooting air rifles followed by air pistols. For our no-arms camper, we used a gun tripod to steady the rifle and he could use his shoulder to adjust his aim to the target. Attached to his trigger was a zip tie that was tied around the trigger. He would simply pull the zip tie end to shoot the air rifle. On the second day, we taught the campers how to safely shoot a shotgun. By adding a Picatinny rail under the forestock of our shotgun, we added a foregrip for our campers to use. This was to help shoulder the shotgun more securely and reduce recoil. Our coaching staff for this camp included Brandy Elrod - USA Para-Trap athlete, Kevin Nguyen – USA Shooting Para-Air Rifle athlete, Barbie Thomas – long time NubAbility upper limb-difference coach and fitness bodybuilder, and help



from Brenda Silva - USA Shooting Para-Team Manager.

Our 2023 NubAbility Outdoors season includes an Intro to Competitive Shooting Camp in Texas, Wild Boar Hunting in Arkansas, Snow Goose Hunting in Arkansas, 3D Archery Camp in Nashville, Deep Sea Fishing Camp in North Carolina, Whitetail Deer Hunting in southern Illinois, and an Equestrian Camp planned for the end of 2023. NubAbility Outdoors Day will occur on July 13th this year at our All Sports Camps in Du Quoin, IL. This is our biggest camp and we estimate that over 160 limb-different youths and 80 limb-different coaches will be in attendance. Campers will have a variety of outdoor activities to participate in throughout the day, such as fishing, rifle shooting, shotgun shooting, water sports, golfing, swimming, and more.

NubAbility Outdoors is always looking for coaches, campers, and hosts for their camps. You can learn more about camps or donate to support these programs at NubAbility.org ■



Be a True Inspiration



BY TAMMY STEIN

How does one become an inspiration to someone? We never know when, who, how, or why we can inspire someone. Life just somehow lines things up and then you are in the right situation to be there for someone else for a brief time.

IT ALL STARTED WITH JROTC

In 2015 my oldest daughter was in Junior ROTC at her high school that year. During the summer I was one of the parents helping with all kinds of roles in their JROTC program. We helped get new students involved with the different teams of the Junior JROTC at the Highschool. I had a mother involved in the EF program speak to me about being a host family for incoming foreign exchange students. This was for the upcoming school year. I had no prior knowledge of the EF Exchange student program, so I became curious, asked many questions, and wanted to learn more. This mother explained that the EF program had already approved for so many students to come to Texas. They needed a family to host the students so they could attend to the high school where my daughter attended and learn about the United States of America. WOW, I thought that sounded neat, daring, and a true challenge for a young teenager. So of course, I started talking to my husband about this wild opportunity that presented itself that day. After many discussions with my husband and our daughters, we said yes. At the time our oldest was in her second year of Junior ROTC and always wanted an older sister as she was the oldest; so we decided to accept a student from Germany. Here is what interests me: I had been teaching and training with firearms for a while by 2015. I did not know at that time that other countries did not accept firearms the way the United States did. I grew up knowing about firearms. My grandparents talked, taught, and showed me that it is a tool, how to respect firearms and understand their importance.



If your child is interested in JROTC, reach out to your school counselor to see if this program is available

ADVENTURE AWAITS

My eyes started opening up to others from different parts of the world the day we traveled to pick up our exchange student at the airport. On the drive to our house, we asked what is on your bucket list for this coming year of adventure that awaits you. She stated, “I want to learn to shoot a gun.” I started asking questions because I did not know Germany’s stance on firearms. I was taken by her answers as I assumed everyone had the same luxury as we have in the United States. She explained she wanted to shoot a real pistol or rifle. She had never tried and had the atypical stereotype of Texans that we all ride horses everywhere and shoot firearms. My entire family was excited as well as our exchange student—she’d found a place to host her during the school year. that would allow her to be exposed to firearms in a safe environment and someone willing to teach and train her.

Before the school year began, I took her to the range. We talked about gun safety, what is a firearm, the different types of actions, and what people use them for, whether it be hunting, sport, self-protection, or just collecting them. The most impressive part was she was open to learning, curious as to why Americans owned them personally and the freedom we had as a country. I began falling in love with my country even more being able to talk about the history of how firearms are a part of our culture and heritage.

You may be thinking that’s it, right? Not long after, she had her cousin who was an au pair for a family in the States come to Texas for a visit. She wanted to visit different cities in Texas but also wanted to learn how to shoot a firearm. They both saw things from different viewpoints about



firearms and American culture. During Spring Break her parents traveled from Germany and wanted to learn about firearms as well during their visit to Texas. Her parents explained that firearms are not something they have seen or used being from another country.

ONE CONVERSATION IS ALL IT TAKES...

I was delighted that such an innocuous conversation of asking one person to live with you for a year brought so many challenges and opportunities. This ignited a true understanding of what is a firearm and why so many Texans own them. To teach someone from another country about gun safety, personal protection, and sporting opportunities using firearms was very enjoyable. One simple conversation at a Highschool Junior ROTC summer event opened the doors for someone. What about you? Will you be ready to share and teach others about this amazing gift we still have in the United States? We are very lucky to have organizations such as the Texas State Rifle Association that let us know about firearms in Texas. We also know the stories, the events, and the topics pending before the Legislator in Texas. ■



||| How will you get involved?



How Much Training Do I Need?

WITH INSTRUCTOR **CRYSTAL DUKE**

This is a question that comes up a lot with my students. The short answer is that it depends; Training and practice are both needed, and they are two different categories. Both are needed on a regular basis to maintain skills as shooting is a perishable skill. It is much better to shoot 30 rounds a month than 100 rounds once every three months. Accuracy really suffers if practice sessions are spread far apart. If you are a golfer, how well could you play a round of golf if you only touched your clubs a couple of times a year? Professional athletes practice their sport every day. So, the answer is somewhere in between. And training is fun or at least it should be!

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT PRACTICE!

A class or private lesson is training. Shooting at the range and working on those newly acquired skills on your own time is practice. A competitive match is a practice, not training. A lot of people

approach a pistol match as training. At a match, you are putting into practice your fundamentals of sight picture, grip, stance, draw stroke, and movement when necessary. Those skills should already have a foundation before going to a match, hence it is practice. To perform well at a match, a lot of regular practice must be done. Dry firing is a great way to get a lot of repetitions on your draw stroke without having to go to the range.

STOP
When dry firing any firearm always triple-check to make sure the firearm is unloaded.
The safest course is to have your ammunition in another room.

WHERE DO I START?

The first question I usually ask my students is “What are you trying to accomplish?” On many occasions, it is just to be competent with a home defense weapon. Often, it is to be more proficient with a concealed carry pistol. A small pistol requires more practice to be very accurate because the sight radius and barrel are very short. Other answers are to pass the shooting qualification to obtain a handgun license. In all these cases, it takes several private lessons or classes to achieve good shooting fundamentals in grip, stance, sight picture, and trigger control. Once those fundamentals are established, it’s time to build in the draw stroke from concealment. Later you can layer drawing from a seated position or from an unusual shooting position such as behind a cover like a barricade. As each step gets layered in, the practice becomes more complex, and the shooter becomes much more competent as one skill is mastered at a time. Especially in a concealed carry situation the shooter must practice and maintain their skill level as it’s a huge responsibility and we are all responsible for every bullet that leaves our gun.

MASTERING THE PISTOL VERSUS OTHER FIREARMS:

A pistol has different mastery than a shotgun or precision rifle. In the case of shotgun sports, the target is always moving which means you must shoot in front of where you think the target is going to be. In order to be competitive in the sporting shotgun arena, you not only need to practice regularly, but you also need a coach! A coach in this discipline is indispensable to your future success. In rifle sports, the distance being



shot increases the complexity of what needs to be done correctly. One small mistake in your sight picture gets magnified a lot over distance and the shot can miss the target completely. Do you only want to hunt with your rifle once a year? Then the types of training you need include: how to use your scope, zeroing distances, how a different shot distance needs to be compensated for, and how to take the shot effectively to get an ethical kill so the animal does not suffer. Do you want to be good at long-range precision shooting? That takes special skills, equipment, and considerations such as a range that can accommodate those long distances. Programs for all these special disciplines exist and you will have to travel to acquire that learning curve knowledge as well as apply those skills in competition.

INVEST THE TIME

To really be competent at your chosen activity will take training and lots of practice. Cooking takes practice, learning to drive takes practice, learning to golf, ski, sew, knit, woodwork, etc. all have a learning curve and take special tools to be efficient and do the job well. A shooting interest is no different than any other pastime. Invest in yourself by training regularly and practicing often. Once you understand AND apply the proper shooting fundamentals consistently then shooting is a lot more fun! And you can participate in more complex or advanced activities. It isn't just shooting though. If you want to compete in run & gun, for example, you need a certain level of physical conditioning on top of your shooting skills. 3-gun is another discipline where the shooter must move through the stages



as quickly as possible. Some matches have quite a distance between where stages take place. Tactical games involve all sorts of physically challenging tasks and shooting. In competition, the answer is you must train and practice continually often incorporating physical fitness.

Run and Gun is a two-gun competition that requires both shooting proficiency and physical fitness.

In short, there is no one-and-done solution in shooting regardless of the goal. It will take a tremendous amount of training and practice to get where you want to be. My personal goal is to be a student for a minimum of 100 hours/year. That number is always exceeded! Your goal doesn't have to be that high but have a goal. Register for interesting classes in areas of the shooting world that interest you. Try something new from time to time. There is always something to be learned that can be applied across all disciplines and make you a better shooter. And you will meet some of the nicest people you will ever come across in those classes and practice sessions. ■



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Small Hands



Big Wood

You are shouldering a shotgun, whether it be in a gun shop, from a spouse, a friend, or a family member and your hand just simply does not fit around the grip. You then notice your finger barely reaches the trigger, your cheek is sitting low on the stock, and you have trouble getting the gun into your shoulder because it is too long. Well ladies, you are a victim of small hands and too big of a piece of wood. Otherwise known as poor gun fit.

AM I AVERAGE?

Production shotguns are manufactured for the average; 5'11" male weighing 180 pounds. One of these off the shelf shotguns usually has a 14.5" length of pull, bulky grip, no comb, and no adjustable butt pad. When searching for the perfectly fit shotgun for you, know that it does not exist and a trip to a gun fitter is necessary. Yes, there are shotguns made for women, but they too may not fit correctly and will need modifications. Do your research on gun fitters and determine

BY BRANDY ELROD

who could best serve you and your shooting goals. A gun fitter that understands fitting a shotgun to a woman is quite difficult to find. It's important that the shotgun is to fit you, not the other way around. I have a very experienced gun fitter that I have had the pleasure of working with: Larry Feland of Feland's Gunsmithing in Texas. There is a difference between a gun fitter and a gunsmith. A gun fitter understands how to make a gun properly fit a person, a gunsmith focuses on the mechanics and aesthetics of the gun.



Sometimes you get lucky, and your gunsmith is also a great gun fitter. A great gunsmith who is also a competent gun fitter is, like having a perfect

recoil than a 12 gauge, they are lighter and thus the weight



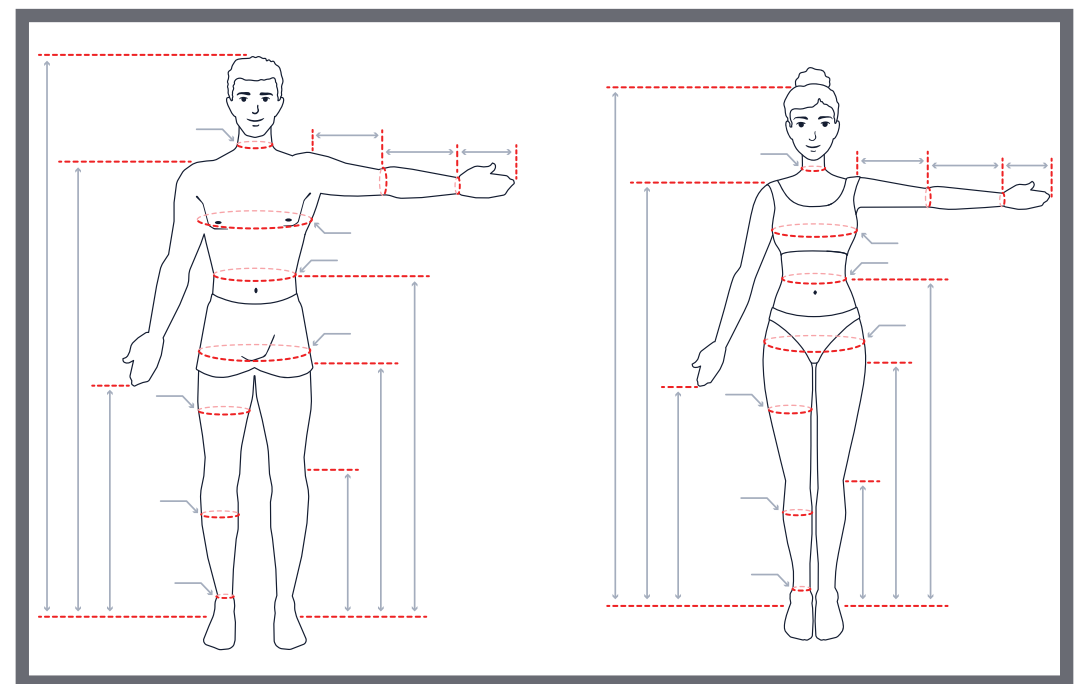
pair of jeans. They covers all of the blemishes, fit like a glove, and make your butt and stomach look like you work out all day, every day.

T-REX ARMS AND HANDS

Women tend to have shorter arms, smaller hands, longer necks, higher cheekbones, and the most obvious, larger chest structure. All of these body differences make having that perfectly fit shotgun a more pleasant shooting experience. I introduce a lot of youth and adult females to shotgunning every year and their number one apprehension about shotgun sports is the shotgun they shoot before coming to me was too big, too heavy, or "kicked". Women also have the misconception that they need to shoot a 20 gauge or a ladies model shotgun. You do not need to shoot a 20 or 28 gauge, let me repeat that, you do not need to shoot a 20 or 28 gauge. One of the biggest misconceptions is that a 20 gauge has less recoil than a 12 gauge. Every 20 gauge I have ever shot has more

difference causes a heavier recoil. Another misconception is that you need a lady's model. Most of your professional female shooting athletes shoot standard models that have gunsmithing

modifications to fit them. Just because it is a ladies model does not mean it will actually fit you properly. I have made all of the mistakes, I started



with a 20 gauge, then I switched to a ladies model 12 gauge, and then finally after trial and error switched to a standard Blaser F3 and Beretta A400.

Ladies, having that perfectly fitted shotgun is like having

should also have two to three fingers in width between your thumb on the stock of the shotgun and your nose with the gun mounted. If the

really does matter. To achieve a shorter length of pull the stock of your gun will need to be cut. A longer length of pull, spacers may need to be added to the stock. There are also many options for aftermarket



your best friend in the form of a shotgun. You will know when you find her, because she fits like a glove in your hands, she feels amazing against your cheek, she fits snugly into your shoulder, and your eye sits straight over the top of her rib. Yes, I keep saying her; I am fortunate enough to be on Team Blaser, so I shoot Sparkles the Blaser F3 Vantage with a Precision Fit Stock, and thanks to Texas Arsenal and Precision Fit Stocks (Target Shotguns), Lacey the Beretta A400 with a custom Precision Fit Stock.

A LIFETIME PURCHASE

I always tell my students to purchase the best gun their pocketbook can afford. A shotgun can be a lifetime purchase, and, in my opinion, you get what you pay for. I am now five shotguns into my shooting career and every model that I have owned has required extensive gunsmithing to get the gun to feel right in my shoulder and comfortable on my cheek. When mounting the gun, it should fit snugly into your shoulder and should not feel like you are reaching for the trigger. The length of pull is measured from the center of the butt stock to the center of the trigger.

shotgun is too short, your nose is likely touching your thumb and you are feeling more recoil from the gun. My length of pull is currently at 14” but I’ve had female students anywhere from 12.5” to 14.5”. Length of pull is very important in order to keep that shotgun in your shoulder, as well as keeping your head down on the gun. Yes, length

into your shoulder, can you see over the top of your rib? You should be able to, even if you are wearing your favorite pair of luxurious eyelashes. The typical drop of a shotgun stock is 35 mm at the comb and 54 mm at the heel, and women tend to sit low on the rib because they have longer necks, and higher cheekbones than men. The drop measurement can affect the shot pattern, making it higher or lower. Sitting low on the rib will cause you to lift your head which leads to a series of problems. One, you will shoot over the top of your targets, and two, lifting your head can cause a slap to your face from the stock from recoil, and subsequent bruising. I have learned that no amount of concealer can cover up a stock bruise.

So how do you fix this? There



PHOTO CREDIT LARRY FELAND

How do you know if the gun is too long? You are mounting into your arm, and not into your shoulder pocket. You

An Adjustable comb allows you to increase the height of the comb as well as to move the comb right or left to tune eye alignment. At Feland’s Gunsmithing, they can make you a beautiful cheek riser in



stocks, such as the TSK, ERGO Stock, or my favorite the Precision Fit Stock. I prefer the extreme adjustability and recoil reduction of the Precision Fit Stock.

IS IT MY EYELASHES?

Now that you have the shotgun sitting snugly

any color or pattern you can dream of, that can be added to the stock of your gun. I currently have purple cheetah and snakeskin. A Sheikh and Prince while I was competing in the UAE, recently told me that my gun was the coolest gun they have ever seen, so do not be afraid to add a little sparkle to your comb or cheek riser. The cheek riser sits on top whereas an adjustable comb is actually cut into the stock. Your choice depends on how adjustable you want your gun, and where your eye sits over the rib. You can also have the stock bent in order to achieve this, or if you own a Semi-automatic sometimes changing the shim will correct eye alignment issues.

WHICH WAY AM I LOOKING?

Your shotgun is fitting snugly into your shoulder, your eye is over the top of your rib, but you notice your eye is not centered on the rib. Looking down the right or left side of the rib can cause you to shoot to the left or right of the target. Cast influences your shot pattern, causing lateral deviation, to the right or left. Cast is measured from the central line of the shotgun and the central line of the butt of the stock. Your shotgun is measured as either “cast on” or “cast off”. “Cast on” is when the butt of the stock is left of the shotgun’s central line and “cast off” is when the butt of the stock ends up being to the right of

are numerous options out there but the most common is an adjustable comb or a cheek riser.

the central line. Cast is to ensure that when your gun is correctly mounted your eye sits centrally over the top of the rib. Changing your cast can be



achieved with shims if you have a semi-automatic or having your stock bent by a reputable gunsmith. Also, installing an adjustable comb on your shotgun that did not already have one can fix this issue. Ladies, it is ok if your stock is a little crooked. Other things in life can be as well and we do not judge them.

CIRCUMFERENCE MATTERS

Your shotgun is fitting snugly into your shoulder, your eye centered is over the top of your rib, but you notice you have a slight tilt to the barrels, and you cannot reach the trigger comfortably with your index finger. Tilted barrels are called canting and is very common among women because we have these body features that can get in the way called breasts. Women tend to have larger chest profiles than men. Consequently, the way the butt of the stock sits in our shoulder pocket can cause our barrels to cant. You can solve canting by: Having an adjustable butt stock that allows for

pull. Women tend to have shorter fingers and smaller hand width. If you are like me, I have child-sized hands which presents a challenge wrapping around the wood of a standard stock and reaching the

trigger. The height, length, and circumference are all important factors in a grip and to determine if you need to make adjustments (ladies get your mind out of the gutter I know where your mind drifted too). I personally have a custom-molded leather-wrapped grip for both stocks on my Blaser F3 made by Feland’s Gunsmithing as well as a custom wood grip for my PFS stock on my Beretta A400.

MY FOREVER BEST FRIEND

A correctly fitting shotgun is the most important part of shotgun sports and is vital for you to have a great shooting experience. Ladies, you are potentially making that forever purchase so you want to make sure it is one that you can live with. As I stated before, your shotgun is like your best friend, you will have her for years and you will go on many adventures with her. When deciding what gun to purchase, talk to a seasoned gun fitter that understands how a shotgun should fit a woman, shoulder a variety of guns, and see what feels right to you. Remember a professional gunsmith should make the gun fit you, not you fit the gun. ■

right to left (or vice versa) movement or having your stock bent by a reputable gunsmith. Having a comfortable grip is important in your trigger



Fires, Horses, and Pistols

A Glimpse into the Life of Carrie Wilburn

BY KARLA HARRISON

Pale rays of early spring sunshine filtered through the canvas cover of the Kentucky Cowtown Arena as mounted cowboy action shooters prepared to compete nose-to-nose near Williamstown, Kentucky. In the parking area, cowboys and cowgirls were among their horse trailers and pickup trucks. Horses stood patiently as riders, such as Carrie Wilburn, began the careful process of grooming and prepping for a full day of competition. Carrie Wilburn is currently ranked third in her home state of Kentucky among other Cowboy Mounted Shooters. This particular weekend of riding and shooting, she took home third overall (on Saturday) and was within the top ten on Sunday. She was awarded the overall Cowgirl Championship and the Ladies' Double AA Division winner.



The balloons are replaced after every shooter



Mounted Shooters use .45 caliber single action revolvers like those used in the late 1800's

PISTOLS AND HORSES

Cowboy mounted shooting is an exciting type of shooting discipline where riders race through a pattern of barrels and cones with balloons attached...think of it like barrel racing at a rodeo, only with each rider armed with pistols that propel black powder. Pushing for the fastest possible time while weaving through the pattern (patterns change for each round) riders fire their pistols at the balloons. Any balloon left unbroken adds time to their final score. Riders are divided into divisions based on their number of qualified wins. Carrie is currently competing in Division #4, midway to the top Division #6. In 2019, she was the Overall High Point earner for her club, the Kentucky Sharp Shooters and Ladies' High Point for Kentucky; in 2022, she earned the Ladies L4 Tennessee State Champion's title; and in 2023, she claimed the CMSA Spring Extravaganza Ladies L4 Reserve Cowgirl award. Currently, she is sponsored by M Sport 6

Apparel, Impact Gel Saddle Pads, and Cheata Tactical as she represents her local club and her own Lucky Lightning Ranch.

Highly decorative western wear is worn by not only the participants but by their horses as well. These steeds are bred to run and trained for years before entering competitions. While most of the horses are beautifully tall and muscular, Carrie's horse, registered as Shesa Smart Too and lovingly called Smarty, was the smallest of the group. Agility is an advantage to a shorter horse but sometimes, size does matter. The long-legged strides of the larger animals awarded first and second-place finishes to two other cowboys. Carrie's third-place finish on Saturday was less than one second off the top time.

It was calm and quiet inside the arena at the beginning. However, once the riders lined up at the gate, you could feel the excitement and it was loud. One at a time, the horses entered the ring, held in check until the timer began. In their explosion of speed, hoofs pounded the dirt sending up a cloud of fine dust. Fellow shooters cheered on their competitors as shots were fired and balloons popped. Between each run, a swarm of youngsters ran to replace the balloons before the next horse was up for action. A total of 24 riders raced through four different patterns in Saturday's main pistol event. They shot with 45 caliber long-colt single-action revolvers. Three contestants returned with .410 shotguns to race through yet another pattern hoping to break all



The ammunition is a brass cartridge loaded with black powder

the balloons in the fastest time.

Riders can begin competing at age 12, with no maximum age limit. Many of the seasoned members share their knowledge and experience with the children. Such was the case with Carrie as she worked with a young cowgirl, Macy Stewart. From getting ready in the morning, to end of day care, before returning to the trailer for the ride home, Carrie walked her student through the finer points of mounted cowboy actions. Between each round, Carrie led Smarty, ridden by Macy, outside the arena. Carrie's willingness to educate youngsters is a reflection of who she is...



Riders wear chinks as part of the required attire

been called on many times when mishaps happen. She applied to the Lexington Fire Department and started fire recruit school in 2000 while completing her doctoral studies. Carrie juggled her psychology work for several years while serving as a full-time firefighter. She gained Level I and II Firefighter and Fire Instructor status. She became involved in rope rescues, swift water rescues, and cave rescues while in college due to her interest in rock climbing. She qualified as a certified Rescue Technician in these disciplines. At the same time, she started working for the Kentucky State Fire Commission as a fire-rescue instructor. In 2017, she acted as the Candidate Physical Ability Test Proctor for the Fire Department Commission. This prompted her to shift all her attention and time to the fire service.

Carrie was promoted to Lieutenant and served as a company officer on the fire line for a year prior to being accepted into the Arson Investigation Bureau. The bureau required attendance at the Lexington Police Academy. As a sworn law enforcement officer, she investigated fires to determine cause and origin; collected and processed evidence; and identified and arrested suspects. She was promoted to Captain and served as the Arson Bureau Commander during the last of her seven years with this division.



CHAD ROBERTSON MEDIA / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

THE TEACHER

The Lexington Fire Department Recruiting/Hiring Division was expanded in 2017. Carrie was selected for a new position where she implemented her past experiences to work with new recruits. She prepared them for the physical ability test and interview. Her efforts to set up a physical ability practice course and offer classes to prepare for interviews gave better access to non-traditional recruits, such as women and minorities, who were interested in joining the fire department.

She was promoted to Major in the Recruiting and Hiring Division, where she served until her 2022 retirement. However, her leisure time didn't last long...less than a couple of months! Compelled by frequent phone calls following her retirement from individuals seeking help navigating the hiring process in the fire service, she decided to create a career coaching company called Fire Recruit Prep. She now teaches recruits how to excel on written exams and interviews. Her workout programs help applicants pass the physical ability test. Working as a coach/personal trainer with FitResponder (a company that gives training/nutrition coaching for first responders) she helps clients from across the US and Canada get and stay healthy.

As a founding member of the Kentucky Cowntown Rangers club, Carrie is currently a member of the Kentucky Sharp Shooters. She serves as a representative on the Midwest Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association National Advisory Board. Whether Carrie Wilburn is

inside or outside of the arena, on a horse, or on the computer, you can be assured she is a blur of energy, doing what she has trained and worked so hard to accomplish...and just loves doing it all.

If you are interested in the CMSA visit their website cmsaevents.com ■





Competitive Archery Anyone?

INTRO TO 3D ARCHERY

LET’S LEARN WITH SARAH HALLGREN

Did you know 3D archery is an excellent way to enjoy archery in the outdoors and build proficiency in bowhunting?

Most 3D archery courses are set up out in nature with lifelike 3-dimensional animal targets made of foam. The score rings are imprinted into the target and lack colored concentric rings. People usually take binoculars with them to help see where they need to aim for the highest score ring. The targets are placed at varying distances with stakes indicating how close or far each class will stand when firing. So you may shoot at a deer target at 34.6 yards and then a javelina at 52 yards or a blesbok at 17 yards. You may use a rangefinder in known yardage classes, or shoot in an unknown yardage class and judge the distance with your mental skills. In most 3D archery organizations, you will shoot in a group of 3-5 people, and score your arrows together. Only one archer in the group will fire at the target at a time. The group will rotate who will shoot first each time and then score your arrows once everyone finishes shooting a target. Since it is a group sport, you can learn from others while shooting together. However, you will only compete against scores of other people in your class. Often you will be peer-grouped at larger events, but smaller local events will let you shoot with your friends or family, or put you in a group of people that can show you the ropes if you are a newbie to the sport.



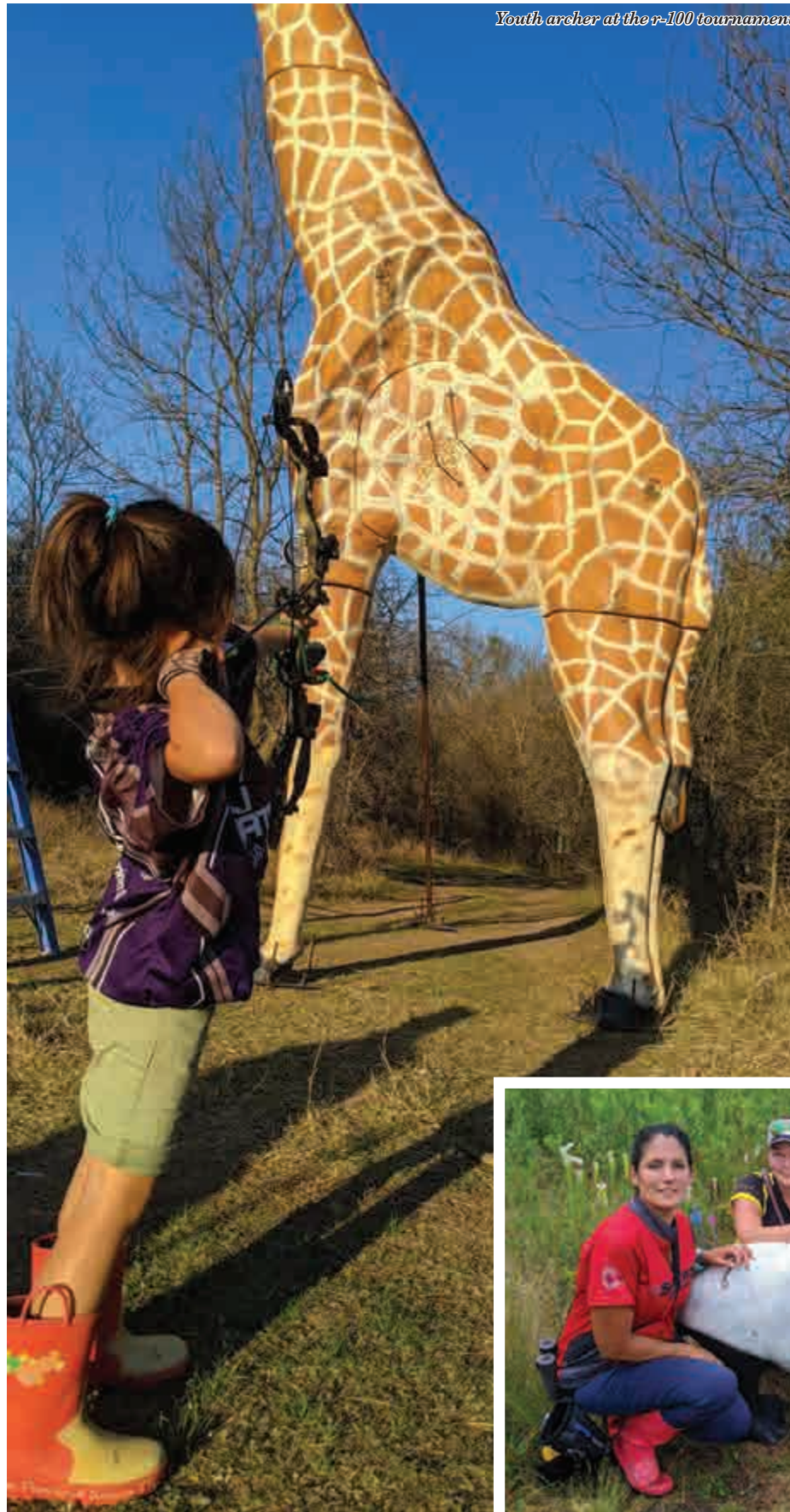
DID YOU KNOW?

Delta McKenzie and Rhinehart are the main brands used for competitive 3D archery targets

Archery is definitely a sport anyone can excel at, regardless of race, gender, age, or physique! The sport is divided into classes based on age, gender, skill level, and equipment. This means that archers will be peer grouped and shoot against people with similar abilities, so there are even classes available for beginners. Young children and seniors alike enjoy competing and many families travel to 3D archery events together to make a family event of the sport! Unlike most organized sports, archery does not require years of training to perform competitively (although most top professional archers have competed for many years!). Many pros were actually bow hunters before they started target archery, although there are plenty of target

archers who do not hunt as well. Participating in 3D archery helps you hone your archery skills in general and is an effective way to increase your accuracy if you are a bowhunter. A couple of the main 3D organizations in the United States are the Archery Shooters Association (ASA) and the International Bowhunters Organization (IBO). They run a series of events that usually start in February and go through August. Conveniently ending before deer season starts in most states! ASA and IBO have amateur and professional classes available to the public. ASA refers to their national events as “pro-ams” since they are open to all levels. Another organization to check out is Total Archery Challenge (TAC), which is not run for



Youth archer at the r-100 tournament

scores but has exciting and difficult long-range and steep-angle shots which are very valuable for expanding your skills and practicing for scenarios you might not have an opportunity to recreate.

If you'd like to try 3D archery, check your local archery clubs and contact them for more information about when upcoming tournaments will be held. Many states have their own state-level tournaments for ASA and IBO, which will have dedicated websites for each state, and clubs will host their own individual 3D events that are open to the public to participate in. Local tournaments will vary in participation depending on the area and may have 30 to 300+ shooters. The larger national competitions will often have over 2,000 competitors competing and booths set up by various bow manufacturers and archery equipment brands. This means there are opportunities to shoot new bows or try out the latest equipment and talk to experts.

These are just a few of the organizations running 3D archery events in the US. There are many more events run as standalone or in series. They all have different styles to provide a challenge or entertainment for anyone looking for an enjoyable experience shooting outdoors. Rain, wind, or shine, come on out and experience the outdoors with like-minded individuals while shooting your bow! ■



iboarchery.com



totalarcherychallenge.com



asaarchery.com





BY JOHN CAFFEY

BY AIMPOINT

GAIM SIMULATORS

As I continue to review the rising number of shooting simulators that is being fueled by ever increasing ammunition prices, I am amazed at the increased level of sophistication that they have achieved. One that has just been introduced into the market is the GAIM system that is now available in the United States. Thanks to Fredrik Sandberg, the North American Expansion Manager for GAIM Immersive Technology Group, ClayShootingUSA Magazine / TrapShootingUSA Magazine was given the exclusive opportunity to be the first to let the public know about this new innovation in Virtual Reality (VR) shooting simulators.

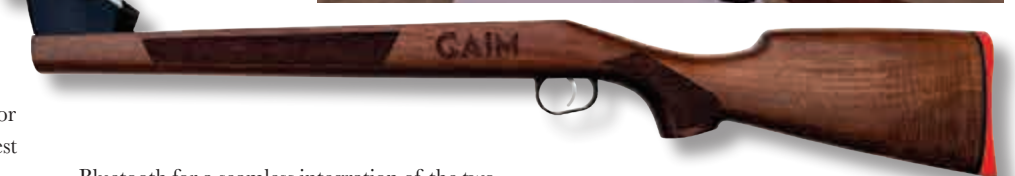
GAIM is a sister company of Aimpoint, the inventor of red dot optics. Some might be more familiar with Aimpoint from their television show Wild Boar Fever in which a few of their episode's featured their VR Hunting simulator which utilized the Oculus Meta Quest / Quest 2 Headset to help prepare hunters prior to their hunt.

In keeping with that technology GAIM has expanded their Virtual Reality Hunting software to include clays and sport shooting. Aimpoint is not new to shooting simulators. Their first was developed to showcase the performance of their red dot sight in a simulated VR environment. Aimpoint also has an extensive background in firearms training for the military and police. Their attention to detail has taken VR shooting to the next level in immersive technology training.

EQUIPMENT

The GAIM starting package includes one custom made GAIM wooden Rifle / Shotgun stock. GAIM worked with an Italian manufacturer to develop a stock that is unique to the GAIM system. The stock was hand crafted in Italy and assembled with the trigger components in Sweden. I was very surprised at the quality

and how close in weight the stock is to a semi-automatic shotgun. A program downloaded from the Oculus App Lab connects the GAIM stock and the Generation-Two trigger system to the handset on the stock, allowing the shooter to have realistic mounting and movement similar to that of a real shotgun or rifle. All of which occurs while connecting the Meta Quest headset via



Bluetooth for a seamless integration of the two. There is also a realistic pistol controller for use with their other software upgrades and VR modules when training for IDPA and IPSC.

SOFTWARE

Currently the clay target software includes American Trap, Skeet and Olympic skeet, five stand and sporting clays, as well as several bird and game hunting scenarios with more in development. The software is designed to be as realistic as possible. Within the trap and skeet training module the number of shots per station is limited as it is in real life. The 5-stand module comes with a seemingly unlimited number of station variations. The shooter is surrounded 360 degrees by clay throwers that are randomly activated with throwing presentations ranging from crossers and incoming targets to rabbits.

Depending upon your level of play you can adjust the difficulty by selecting either single



presentations, report pairs or true pairs. There is a module that helps you with the difficult shots. For instance, if you're having trouble on a particular shot you can go into the Sim Pro module and select the target that you're having difficulty with, then practice that target over and over until you master it. You click on "shot analyzation" and it will show a diagram of your gun movement and where you shot the target. You can even increase the size of the clay to 150% or 200% to help in getting a better sight picture.

There is also an option to choose a marked flight path to better facilitate your gun movement to the target. Think of all the times you have wished you could replay a missed target and how many shells that have been shot in an attempt to figure out what went wrong. Now the GAIM simulator does all that for you. The software has evolved from entertainment to a serious training tool by incorporating shot analysis which tracks the barrel's movement letting the shooter know if he or she is ahead of or behind the target.

I found the GAIM simulator to be a very good training tool for perfecting muscle memory. When shooting any of the clay programs the shot analyzer will not record chipped targets, only direct hits and it rewards a solid hit with black smoke. This forces the shooter to increase their level of concentration in order to elevate their level of performance. The user can select from several targets and choose speed, distance, and

the angle of the targets.

The simulator also offers the option to use a red dot for hunting and target shooting scenarios. Because of Aimpoint's real life training modules, the graphics are a step above those seen on other training simulators. The software developers consulted with veterinarians on the movement of animals as well as placement of vital organs. Experienced clay shooters were also consulted on items such as proper choke configurations used in the different clay disciplines and gives the shooter the ability to change the choke to match the shot.

GAIM believes that practice becomes instinct, instinct become decisions, and decisions become reality. The hunting simulator offers the experience of hunting moose, elk, wild boar, and bear, as well mallard ducks and pheasant. All this in an environment that coincides with the animal being hunted. The simulator also teaches and encourages safe hunting practices which allows it

to be utilized during certification for a European hunting license.

With the GAIM VR hunting /shooting simulator you can train in an immersive environment to make your shooting more efficient. There is also a module for handgun training and practice under the IDPA and IPSC training section. Switching from rifle to shotgun to pistol is as easy as choosing which you want to do and clicking a button. This training simulator can be useful for all levels of shooters, from beginner to advanced and it allows you to track your progress. With the GAIM simulator it is always sunny and 70 degrees while I'm shooting or hunting, no matter what the weather is outside, and the amount of ammunition saved could pay for the system.

To find out more or to order a GAIM Simulator you can visit their website at GAIM.com or email them at gaiminf@gaim.com ■



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An Urgent Word of CAUTION

Regarding Use of Earphones

for Hearing Protection While Shooting

BY GARRY G. GORDON, M.S.
AUDIOLOGIST/INSTRUCTOR
WWW.EARINC.COM

According to U.S. News and World Report, statistics from the National Heart Interview Survey show that from 1971 to 1990 hearing problems among young people ages 45 to 65 increased 26 percent, and among those ages 18-44 hearing deficiencies grew by 17 percent. Another study conducted in Alameda County, California over a period of three decades indicated hearing loss for men between the ages of 50 - 59 leapt by more than 150 percent. Finally, a study conducted by E.A.R. Incorporated, encompassing 852 shooters, discovered an overall average of 47% admitting to noticeable hearing loss. A secondary study conducted by Starkey Labs and E.A.R. Incorporated during an NRA convention, using audiometric equipment confirmed the incidence among shooters to be near the 50-percentile average. Similar results occurred with studies conducted by E.A.R. Incorporated during trade shows at Safari Club International, Shot Show and Single Action Shooting Society.

NEW PROBLEM

When it comes to the hunting and shooting sports, there have been numerous articles in addition to educational seminars that emphasize the need for adequate hearing protection. This includes the use of solid ear plugs, electronic ear plugs, electronic earmuffs, filtered plugs and protection that

enables the user

to listen to music. As a result of the latter option, a new problem has recently arisen for both industrial and recreational

applications, when using Air-Pod or similar devices as a hearing defender. It must be noted is the simple fact that the majority of these items were not manufactured nor marketed as ear protection. Even those that employ noise cancelation can be misleading since they don't provide the amount of attenuation required for impact noise levels produced by firearms. Continuous use of such items without proper modifications can significantly increase the risk of developing permanent noise induced hearing loss. This result is neither good nor necessary.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Possible modifications, when done properly and where possible, include the replacement of ear tips with a non-vented custom mold, or a certified foam or silicone tip which includes an appropriate Noise Reduction Rating (NRR). When properly inserted, these modifications will provide adequate attenuation to dampen backgrounds and allow the user to hear better, without increasing the intensity of sound coming through the earpiece.

Even with this consideration it is imperative to understand that many of these devices can produce sound pressures that exceed safe limits and should not be worn at maximum intensity. Other considerations might include the addition of a certified filter in the opening of the tip that enters the ear or seeking earpieces that are programed by the manufacturer with outputs that don't exceed safe levels. It is important to remember that gunfire is considered impact sound. Devices which include noise cancelation work best for continuous sound, not impact.

CONCLUSION

Of all the recreational activities people can enjoy, gunfire is considered one of most

GUNFIRE NOISE LEVEL REFERENCE CHART



SHOTGUN NOISE DATA

.410 Bore	28" barrel	150 dB
	26" barrel	150.25 dB
	18 1/2 barrel	156.30 dB
20 Gauge	28" barrel	152.50 dB
	22" barrel	154.75 dB
12 Gauge	28" barrel	151.50 dB
	26" barrel	156.10 dB
	18 1/2 barrel	161.50 dB



CENTERFIRE RIFLE DATA

.223, 55 gr. commercial load	18 1/2" barrel	155.5 dB
.243 in 22" barrel		155.9 dB
.30-30 in 20" barrel		156.0 dB
7mm Magnum in 20" barrel		157.5 dB
.308 in 24" barrel		156.2 dB
.30-06 in 24" barrel		158.5 dB
.30-06 in 18 1/2 barrel		163.2 dB



CENTERFIRE PISTOL DATA

.25 ACP	155.0 dB
.32 LONG	152.4 dB
.32 ACP	153.5 dB
.380	157.7 dB
9 mm	159.8 dB
.38 S & W	153.5 dB
.38 Spl	156.3 dB
.357 Magnum	164.3 dB
.41 Magnum	163.2 dB
.44 Spl	155.9 dB
.45 ACP	157.0 dB
.45 COLT	154.7 dB

dangerous exposures without the use of adequate hearing protection. There are numerous options available that will meet and/or exceed the requirements for minimizing the risk of permanent hearing damage. Should the user prefer Air-Pod type configurations for listening to music or communications, our recommendations include the use of a modified custom mold or certified silicone or foam tip with a certifiable noise reduction rating. If the earpiece is vented, we would also recommend the addition of a filter where possible and a common practice of keeping the volume of sound at a low intensity. It's important to look for providers who will take the time to answer questions and provide options for the absolute best in hearing protection. Should you have questions about your hearing seek a hearing health care professional for an accurate assessment. ■





In the Kitchen with Holly Hearn

One of my favorite meals to make any time of the year but especially during summer is stir fry. Light and full of flavor, it's the perfect meal to throw together after a long hot afternoon of lounging by the pool or shooting a late afternoon round of sporting clays. One of the most appealing things about stir fry is that it comes together incredibly quickly. The combinations of proteins, sauces, vegetables, and starches are virtually endless. While not inherently technical to make there are a few techniques and tips you can use to help take your stir fry over the top.

The first thing we should discuss is protein selection and preparation. When it comes to selecting a protein for your stir fry just about anything will do. Being from Texas I tend to have an excess amount of whitetail and axis in my

freezer. However, I have had significant success with everything from wildebeest to Himalayan tahr. The key when incorporating wild game into your stir fry is to select a firm steak cut that you can thinly slice. If you opt for tenderized cutlets from your processor this is an excellent use for those. The cooking methods for this dish are fast and hot, which I find ideal for cooking wild game. One of the ways to ensure you get great results with your wild game stir fry every time is to employ a Chinese marination method called velveting. Velveting involves marinating thinly sliced meat in cornstarch, soy sauce, and a touch of rice wine and then cooking in extremely hot oil. The velvet serves as an extra layer of protection for the lean wild game and helps ensure that it doesn't become dry during the cooking process.

Once you have your meat velveting it is time to begin cooking. This brings me to the last topic I am going to cover which is oil selection. When making a stir fry you have to remember that you are typically cooking at relatively high temperatures, so it is imperative to select an oil that can accomplish this without burning. I love the flavor of coconut oil but if you are not a coconut oil fan avocado oil is an ideal alternative.

Keeping in mind the velveting technique and your oil selection, you have all the tools you need to make a delicious stir fry. Of course, my favorite recipe is included here! ■

Venison Stir Fry

ASIAN INSPIRED
VENISON, VEGGIES,
AND NOODLE
STIR FRY

Serves: 4
Total Time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound tenderized venison (thin sliced)
- 2-3 tablespoons of cornstarch
- 1 inch Grated Ginger
- 1 Package Ka-me Hokkien noodles
- 3 Tbsp + 4 Tbsp of LS soy sauce divided
- 1 Tbsp fish sauce (optional)
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 1- 2 tbsp brown sugar 1/2 tbsp chili paste
- 1 lime juiced
- 1 bell pepper julienned 1 onion julienned
- 4 baby bok choy chopped
- 6 garlic cloves minced
- Green onion for garnish

Cooking in extremely hot oil is imperative to a successful stir fry



DIRECTIONS

1. Combine venison, corn starch, splash avocado oil, grated ginger, 3 tbsp of soy sauce, and lime juice in a small bowl. Mix well and set aside for 15-20 minutes
2. After 15 minutes heat a good bit of avocado oil over medium high heat in a wok, fry venison in batches and set aside.
3. Sauté onions, and bell pepper until softened, add bok choy after the onions have become slightly translucent, add garlic and stir for 20 seconds
4. Once the garlic becomes fragrant add noodles to the wok and gently stir.
5. Combine remaining 4 tbsp of tamari with 1/2 tbsp chili paste, 1 tbsp fish sauce and brown sugar, to taste, in small bowl and whisk together.
6. Add sauce to the wok and gently stir for 2 minutes. Incorporate venison back into the stir fry
7. Remove wok from heat add 2 tsp of sesame oil and garnish with green onions

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How to Choose an Esthetician

BY LICENSED ESTHETICIAN NATALIA GONZALEZ

You might be asking yourself, why do I need an esthetician? I am a licensed esthetician and so is my mother; You could say it runs in my veins to be into skincare and wellness. I often wonder if I would ever be the kind of person that gets facials if I wasn't born into it. I don't get my nails done, I barely get my hair cut, and I don't color it, so facials seem like another extra luxury that falls pretty low on most people's radar. I see clients of all types, some come in with acne issues and once we work on a treatment plan and resolve the issue, I only see them on my Instagram feed. Others come for a special occasion and getting a facial is just a one-time thing because they have a wedding or graduation or something they want to have extra glowing skin for. Most of my clients however are regulars. They come in every 4-6 weeks like clockwork for their facial and other

services like eyebrow tinting and upper lip waxing.

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

What motivates these women to get regularly scheduled facials? Beauty, wellness, maybe a little healthy vanity. I always tell people I am a personal trainer for your face. In the same way that you would go to the gym and workout with a trainer to level up your workouts, you come to me or an esthetician like me to level up your skincare. Estheticians are highly trained and knowledgeable on what your skin needs to stay youthful, blemish-free, dark spot free, and glowing like the sun. Skin care at home is basically like your personal workouts. You don't go to the gym once a month and expect to see results, right? Just like training and shaping your

body to be strong, healthy, and carry you into old age, you must consider how you want your face to age. Some people are comfortable with the idea of plastic surgery, fillers, and/or Botox. Others prefer to age naturally. Both are candidates for regular facials. The frequency of your facials will probably depend on your needs and your budget. Even if you can only afford to see a facialist once a year, I recommend making this part of your personal budget. At the bare minimum, this will give you someone to work with on finding the right products to keep you doing your skincare at home. With the beauty industry being a multi-trillion dollar-per-year business there are thousands of options for skincare products. I know it can be overwhelming to choose what is right for you.

WHAT DOES MY SKIN NEED?

Now that you understand the importance of working directly with an esthetician let me give you some tips on what you are looking for in the services they will provide. Unfortunately, in the world of esthetics, there is no standard definition of getting a facial. I hear many horror stories from clients about their "nail salon facials" and how it was not worth the money but mainly did nothing to help their skin or even worse it made their skin break-out badly. You need to know what a good facial should consist of. But first know there are two kinds of facials. HydraFacial and traditional facial. It is important to understand which one you would prefer as they are both beneficial and accomplish mostly the same thing. As someone who has gotten both but practices the traditional facial, this article discusses and encourages you to find a traditional facialist. However, HydraFacial is a brand, it's a machine and when you get one, no matter where you get one it will always be the same procedure.



In my practice, I define a facial as having some very basic and standard steps:



FACIALS EXPLAINED	
HYDRA FACIAL	TRADITIONAL FACIAL
EXTRACTS ONLY BLACKHEADS AND CLOGGED PORES USING SUCTION AND EXFOLIATION AT THE SAME TIME (NOT SUITABLE FOR ACNE SKIN)	EXTRACTS ALL TYPES OF BLEMISHES INCLUDING ACNE AND MILIA (THE SMALL WHITE BUMPS UNDER THE SKIN)
THE ENTIRE FACIAL IS DONE BY A LOUD MACHINE THAT RUNS A SPECIAL SERUM THROUGH THE SUCTION WAND TO DO THE EXTRACTION, EXOLIATION AND HYDRATION ALL AT ONCE	COMPLETELY DONE BY HAND WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF MACHINES AT CERTAIN POINTS
THERE IS NO RELAXING, SPA-LIKE FEELING THROUGHOUT	A FACIAL MASSAGE IS ALWAYS DONE WHEN APPLYING THE SERUMS AT THE END OF THE FACIAL
PRICE RANGE \$150 - 300+	PRICE RANGE \$80 - 200+

- 1 A deep pore cleansing using steam and ideally an enzyme mask. This will start to break down the dead skin and make extractions of blemishes much easier and less painful.
- 2 Extractions. I find that most of my clients come to me having had facials before but never extractions. It is very important to extract blemishes of all types to refresh the skin and work towards a blemish-free face. Tools and lancets or hollow needles are used for this process.
- 3 A surface-level chemical peel. I find that this is the most important part of the facial. This is going to give you the most instant and satisfying results. This type of chemical peel is not going to require any downtime and will not actually make your face peel. Its purpose is to neutralize oil, chemically exfoliate the skin and balance the ph level. I carry a large range of chemical peels made with different acids and or enzymes to accommodate every type of skin, including pregnant women.
- 4 A tailored mask for your skin type. This is where the facial feels less like a workout and more like a spa treatment. The purpose of the mask is to rehydrate your skin and address any specific concerns to leave the skin feeling balanced and calm.

5 Extras: I typically do a neck and shoulder massage with hot stones and then a scalp massage. I also massage the face after removing the mask to stimulate lymphatic drainage and it is the most relaxing part of the facial. My clients never want to leave. There are usually add-ons that are not necessary but beneficial and know that beyond steps 1-4, everything should be optional and its necessity discussed.

Now that you fully understand what it means to get a proper facial it's time to find a service provider. A licensed esthetician will either work in a spa setting or have their own stand-alone practice, and I hope you already know how I feel about any "esthetician" you find in a nail salon. I will say that you will typically pay 30% or higher at a traditional day spa vs. a solo esthetician.



SIR! I NEED A FACIAL!

Get on Google Maps and search "facials" and you will receive a list or map view of the places. If you live in a rural small town and there is no one locally choose the bigger town or city that you visit the most to run your search. Now that you have a list it is time to begin your research phase. I encourage you to read reviews. In the reviews, you will see people that took the time not only to

write a positive review or a negative review but also understand the volume of people being seen by the business. You will also find photos of the place, the environment you would be visiting and look for a place that you enjoy looking at.

Once you have found a place that interests you, go to their website or online price sheet and see if the prices and facial descriptions are what you are looking for. If you feel like you found a place that seems right for you, make a call and ask

all the questions you want to make sure that what you are looking for is what you will be getting.

When I travel and feel like treating myself, I go through this exact process. However, as my purpose is not to find someone to build a trusting relationship with, but rather a one-time visit to a relaxing spa, in those cases, I am searching for a spa. Based on your personal goals I feel confident that you are now equipped with the knowledge to find the best skincare and skin trainer possible in your area or when you travel.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me via social media or through my website. You can also find me on Google Maps in Tomball, Texas, and see the reviews my amazing clients have left for me to see what kind of reviews you want to see. Heartfelt, honest, and positive. ■



[@esthetician_skin](https://www.instagram.com/esthetician_skin)



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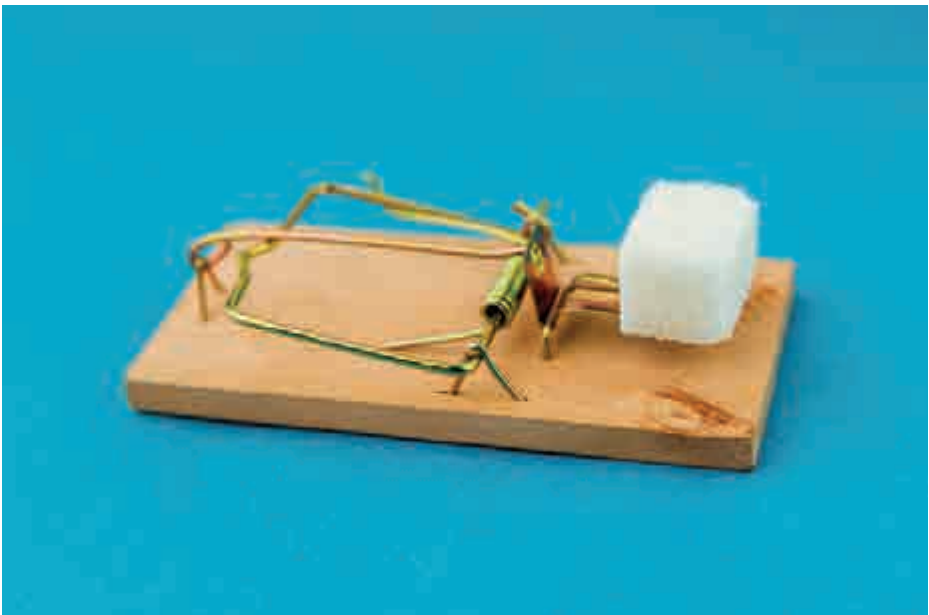
HEALTH

On Nutrition

HYDRATION WITH BRANDY ELROD

Nutrition is not one size fits all for athletes but one aspect does remain the same, nutrition is essential for all shooting sports. Shooting sports athletes have to deal with many factors that affect their shooting: hydration, eye health, and energy are the key to controlling their physical performance. What you eat leading up to, during, and after a match can affect your performance. Shooting sports can be very physically and mentally draining and you need to eat and drink to fuel your body properly to maintain peak performance throughout training or competition.

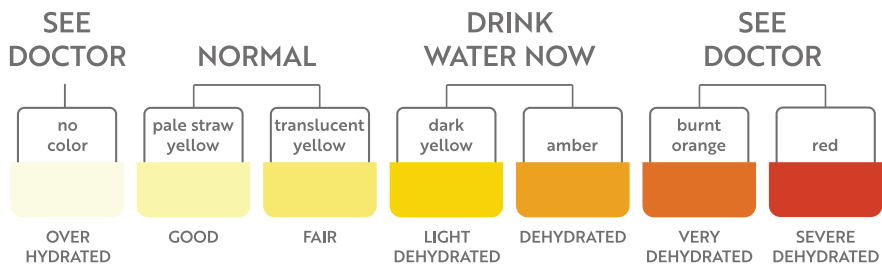
Hydration and peak performance go hand in hand. Dehydration can lead to a loss of sight, coordination, focus, muscle cramps & fatigue, and energy, as well as a decline in performance. If you feel thirsty, you are already in the beginning stages of dehydration. The best way to determine how much water you need to drink is through your own body. Urine is the best indicator of hydration. Maintaining a urine color of pale yellow or lighter is the best indicator you are hydrated. Many people think of dehydration due to hotter temperatures because of sweating, however, you can become dehydrated even in



colder temperatures. Drier, colder climates with less humidity can give a false sense of hydration and thus constant drinking of fluids is important. The type of fluids you drink is important, you do not want only to consume water, you do have to replace the salts (electrolytes) in your body. There are many popular sports drinks on the market but

beware of their sugar content. Choose a sports drink that has potassium, carbohydrates, and sodium to best replenish the loss of electrolytes in your body. Drinking 4-8 ounces of water every 15-20 minutes while shooting is a great way to maintain the hydration needed to endure a long match. You can also obtain hydration through fruits such as melons, strawberries, and grapefruits. These fruits make for great snacks before, during, or after a match or training session as well. The next time you step on the course or field, ask yourself if you are hydrated, have you been maintaining proper hydration even when off the course or field? ■

ARE YOU DRINKING ENOUGH?



HEALTH

Popping Bones

BY BRANDY ELROD & DR. AUSTIN HOYT

A New Series for Your Health and Wellness

Some people believe chiropractors are a waste of time, while some people visit a chiropractor religiously, multiple times a week. As a para-athlete with a birth injury that has affected my muscular and skeletal system. Chiropractic treatment is the only way I stay upright and am able to compete with minimal pain. I have finally found a chiropractor that understands how my body works as a shooting athlete. Dr. Hoyt, of Evermotion Chiropractic, is an avid firearms enthusiast and hunter. He and I have had extensive conversations about how chiropractic care can benefit shooting athletes both in training and competing.

DOC, IS IT BENEFICIAL?

Shotgun athletes can benefit from chiropractic care in many ways, such as improving flexibility, reducing muscle tension, pain, and joint restrictions. When competing, whether it be at the elite or beginner level, one always wants to maintain optimum endurance, flexibility, balance, and strength. Many elite athletes rely on proprioception, an innate function that allows for knowing self-awareness in body position and movement. If a reduction in active range of motion occurs, due to one of the factors stated above, the body will know, react, and affect one's performance. This could lead to poor technique, causing poor performance and hindering the athletes ability to perform at the desired level. Chiropractic treatment can aid in reducing restrictions in motion, decrease pain, and cause a reduction in muscle tension. This allows for less interference with endurance, flexibility, balance, and strength thus restoring the proper biomechanics for the required skill to be performed.



STRETCH IT OUT

Many regions of the body are in use while competitively shooting and it is important to make sure that they are working in collaboration, without restriction, and at their full capacity. Stretching, strengthening, and mobility exercises are essential to aid in reducing the abnormalities that may affect one's performance. Two main types of stretching are Static and Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF). Static stretching is sustained holds at an end range for between 15 to 30 seconds, while PNF is a contract-relax form of stretching. When it comes to areas that would be affected while, or from competitively shooting, we can apply these two forms of stretching.

The fingers, hand, wrist, forearm, pectoral and shoulder are all essential regions when shooting. A combination stretch would be most effective when wanting to be efficient. To achieve

this, the athlete would place their palm and fingers flat on the wall in wrist extension, arm at 90 degrees, perpendicular to the wall. Then, extend the elbow so that the arm is now as straight as possible, while gently leaning back with their body. To modify this stretch to activate additional areas of the arm and shoulder, the athlete can rotate the hand in a backwards motion. This being a static stretch, the athlete would hold each position for 15 to 30 seconds.

The hips and pelvic regions are essential as well when shooting due to standing and bracing for a sustained amount of time while competing. A PNF stretch of the hamstrings can aid in reducing tension and restrictions of the regions. This stretch works best with a partner, however can be performed individually as well. This stretch will be easiest when performed in a doorway or entryway. The athlete would lie on their back, one leg flat, while the other leg is at the desired angle of stretch. Then, the athlete

Chiropractic Care for Shooters



regions of the body by placing the ball over the affected area and applying pressure. For strengthening the body while at home, or while on the road, resistance bands would be an optimal choice. The bands come with various degrees of resistance and can be used by anchoring one end while the other is used for the desired activity.

If you are thinking about adding chiropractic care to your regiment, know that treatment plans are completed on a case-by-case basis. Some patients respond very quickly to treatments, while others may not, thus requiring further treatment. Patient education is a key factor in successful treatment. Educating the patient on proper techniques when carrying out daily activities and training regimen is essential in preventing or exacerbating symptoms. When it comes to athletes, many have specialized training programs set up to aid in all aspects of their sport and Chiropractic care can be added as an essential component. Make sure that you find the right chiropractor; do your research, if you are not starting to receive relief from your visits after 3-5 sessions, either that chiropractor is not for you or you have another underlying issue. ■



would gently contract their leg into the doorframe holding for 10 seconds. Once the time has been reached, slowly slide the body farther into the doorway allowing for an increased angle of stretch and repeat. Stretching before, during, and after training and competing can help an athlete's body relax as well as recover.

EQUIPMENT FOR QUICK RELIEF

Symptoms can strike at any time and when they do, one would want an easy yet effective way to remedy the exacerbation. When athletes are at home, office, or on the road it is essential to have some items that can alleviate the symptoms. A simple yet very effective soft tissue release item to use is a Tennis, Racquet, or Lacrosse ball. Each ball varies in density and depends on the degree of intensity desired. This can be used in almost all



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Glamour in the Shooting World

BY CHERYL GAY

Who says you can't feel pretty and be a shooter too? Thanks to Shootergirl Ammunition Jewelry based in Pinconning, Michigan, you can. Some of you may have seen her booth set up at shoots over the last few years and are aware of her special talent and beautiful creations. If you have never stopped by to see the unique pieces Tracy Polaski and her husband Steve make, you are missing out. There truly is something for everyone, even the men in our lives. I am excited to tell you a little about this wonderful wife and husband team that make up Shootergirl Ammunition Jewelry.

Steve Polaski is a retired military veteran who proudly served our country while his wife Tracy worked as a medical transcriptionist, maintained their home, and cared for their family. Tracy learned to shoot and hunt with her husband, so she is no stranger to the shooting sports and hunting world. While Steve was on active duty and deployed, Tracy took up jewelry making as a hobby which provided a type of therapy and distraction while her husband was away. Once Steve retired and there were no more deployments, he asked Tracy, "now what are you going to do with all this?" That would be the question that kicked started what is now

Shootergirl Ammunition Jewelry. Tracy decided to try selling her pieces at a few gun shows and the response was so positive that she pursued it as a business.

In the beginning they would follow the Sport Shows Promotions gun show circuit in Michigan. Shootergirl hit the big shows in places like Flint, Grand Rapids, Novi, Jackson, Houghton Lake and a few other cities in Michigan. Tracy started branching out and began setting up booths at hunting expos, including the big gun show held in Tulsa, Oklahoma and in other states like Texas, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Minnesota. The NSCA National Championship in San Antonio is where I was introduced to Tracy and her awesome jewelry. I enjoy going with my husband, who shoots



sporting clays, helice and flyers all over the country. I love accompanying him to these events just a little bit more when I find pretty things to bring home as a memory from the different places I have been.

Her jewelry making enterprise started in her home, but after a few years of learning how to market herself and get established on the social media platforms, Tracy had a shop built in her pole barn. She shared that it took her about three years to fully realize she could make a business out of her craft, and it continued to grow. They have been making pieces for Henry Repeating Arms for the last six years, they have a display at More of Michigan located in Able Safe in Pinconning, Cultured Pop in Sault Ste. Marie, F & T Fur Harvesters Trading Post in Alpena, Rapid River Knifeworks in Michigan's upper peninsula and even at J.M. Davis Arms &

All the jewelry is handmade by Tracy with assistance from her husband. Steve does the machining and cuts all the casings and antlers for other unique pieces. Tracy enjoys making something special out of spent casings, antlers, metal, and other recyclable items. She is always willing to discuss a custom design with a customer to give them that most special personal piece she can.

One of the many things I love about this company is that Tracy and Steve have been giving back from the beginning. She has donated to youth shooting fundraisers, women's events and more but to me the



money clips. Tracy can do custom and personalized orders also. She recently added a laser engraver which allows for even more personalization of her creations. Tracy loves the human connection of being at gun shows, hunting expos and shoots, so if you see her booth anywhere during your travels don't be shy, stop and say hello. If you don't think you will have a chance to see her in person, you are still in luck. Tracy has a shop on Etsy at: ShootergirlJewelry and you can find her on Facebook at: Shootergirl

Ammunition Jewelry, or for us Michiganders and those of you traveling to Michigan don't forget the stores mentioned that carry her jewelry. I would be shocked if you were not able to find at least one piece of custom handmade jewelry that you just can't live without. Personally, I

Historical Museum in Claremore, Oklahoma. A new location to be carrying Shootergirl Ammunition Jewelry is going to be Franks Great Outdoors in her home state of Michigan. The husband-and-wife team plan on keeping the business as a two-person operation. Tracy does not want to get to a point where she loses the personal connection she makes with her customers. This business keeps the couple busy enough to be profitable, but most importantly, it is something her and Steve do together. After 34 years of military service Steve is home now and the couple enjoy the closeness they share doing this business together. Tracy is not ready to give up the time with her husband or the wonderful people they meet, and stories heard during their travels together.

most impressive thing she does is for our military families. If you have a spent casing from a military funeral, contact Tracy and she will turn that casing into a special piece of jewelry at no cost. Tracy gets such joy being able to create something very specific that has sentimental meaning and learning the stories and memories that she is preserving for people.

Shootergirl Ammunition Jewelry sells earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, rings, keychains, and even some things for the men we love like cuff links, tie tacks, hat pins and





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The 2nd Amendment

Not Just a Civil Right, a Woman's Right

BY MATTHEW GAY

For movie buffs, the phenomenal 1997 drama, *The Devil's Advocate*, offered a star-studded cast of actors and actresses and focused on the human proclivity for hedonistic pleasures. One quote from that movie came from the character John Milton (Satan), played very well by Al Pacino. At the end of this thriller after so many crazy and terrible things occurred, he said, "vanity, still my favorite sin." This concept is so true in modern society and appears to be the favorite of so many policy makers, politicians, social media influencers and talking heads across the world.

Two troubling trends have emerged as a result. First, this concept of values signaling is not only absurd but extremely annoying and

disingenuous. People like to publicly announce their personal thoughts in an effort to place themselves on some self-imagined moral high ground. This phenomenon then pulls other individuals into the camp, out of fear of being labeled one thing or another if those individuals



articulate a different opinion. What is so concerning to me as a thinker is that people "jumping on the bandwagon," do so without reflecting or doing any critical thinking. It's pure mob mentality and tribalism at its roots, arising from vanity.

The second trend is the idea that feelings should supersede facts, data, and evidence. We have all witnessed this nonsense from individuals, politicians, and journalists on both sides of the aisle. There is no better example of these duplicitous trends of unintelligent talking points and values signaling, than when discussing the topic of the Second Amendment with those who oppose this vital civil right.

WHAT IS A CIVIL RIGHT?

A "civil right," is clearly defined as "the rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality." The first ten amendments in the US Constitution are commonly called the "Bill of Rights," and represent items the government "shall not infringe" upon. At its most basic level, the Declaration of Independence was conceived out of a demonstrable feeling that the King had ignored the most basic human rights of his subjects. This same sentiment was the impetus for the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution.

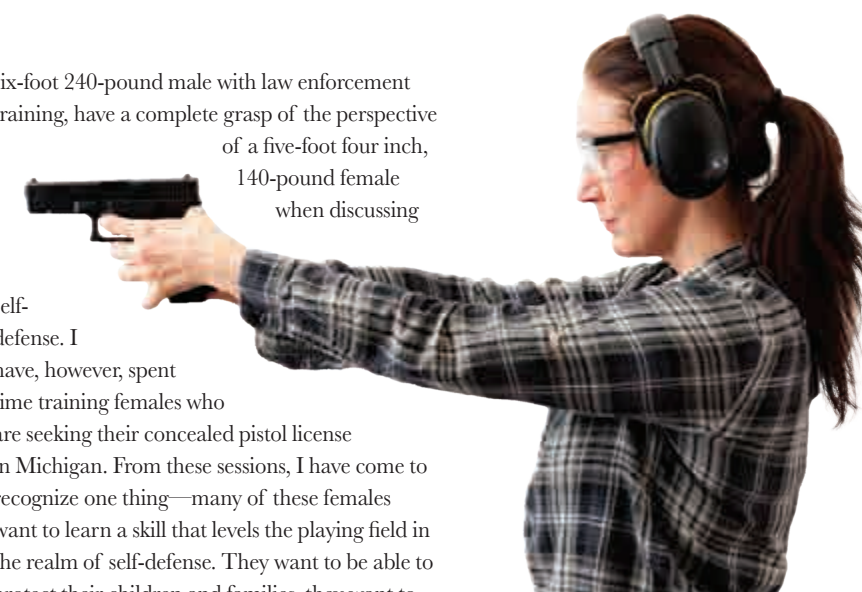
Historically speaking, some entities within local, state, and federal governments have not always upheld these principles, necessitating additional items such as the 19th Amendment (women's suffrage) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The founders believed it so important, based on their experience with the crown, that the right of individuals to keep and bear arms was second only to the freedoms of speech, religion, and the right to petition the government for the redress of grievances. This was due to their deeply held view that when a citizen is disarmed, they can too easily be made a slave by a tyrannical government.

The most basic and precious gift we as humans have been given is life. The pursuit of happiness mentioned in the Declaration of Independence means absolutely nothing if one loses the practical ability to defend that life. This is no more illustrative than when evaluating the effectiveness of self defense for female Americans. I would never represent that I, as a

six-foot 240-pound male with law enforcement training, have a complete grasp of the perspective of a five-foot four inch, 140-pound female when discussing

self-defense. I have, however, spent time training females who are seeking their concealed pistol license in Michigan. From these sessions, I have come to recognize one thing—many of these females want to learn a skill that levels the playing field in the realm of self-defense. They want to be able to protect their children and families, they want to learn a new skill and they are not plagued with preconceived notions of dominance or machismo.

In terms of a "civil right," the right to protect one's life and that of their family is paramount above all others. To be frank, if you are not alive, freedom of speech and freedom of religion is not relevant. Consequently, all the other civil rights are subordinate and dependent upon the citizen being "alive," which is solely dependent upon one's ability to defend themselves. When discussing this in the context of female American citizens, what could be more empowering and impactful to protection of one's life, than the freedom to use the most efficient and effective tool possible to secure one's safety. The Second Amendment is not only a civil right, but also a woman's right.



THE DATA

It's very easy for media types and politicians to tug on the heart strings of Americans who are uneducated on the use, history and statistics surrounding firearm types, and their purpose in American society. The deceitful monikers such as, "assault weapon," "weapons of war" and "common sense gun reform," are obviously focus group tested dog whistles, which elicit emotional responses from simpletons and the firearms illiterate.

To illustrate how this issue is twisted ad nauseam, one only needs to look at the FBI statistics which break down homicides from all causes. In the most recent FBI Uniform Crime Report, in table eight, the FBI breaks down lives taken by weapon type. In 2021, there were more people killed by "personal weapons, hand and feet" (462), than were killed by "rifles" (447). So-called assault weapons are classified as "rifles" for the purposes of this report. It is also important to know that this report includes suicide by firearm, as well as legal use of firearms in self defense by both law enforcement and individuals.

In terms of the manipulation of data to fit a chosen narrative, the numbers on this report, although accurate, do not paint the full picture, nor do these numbers provide context or nuance. For example, more than half (54%) of the deaths noted in the report are suicides. Unfortunately, although tragic, these instances are not relevant in a discussion about the impacts of firearms in the context of crime. Law enforcement shootings, nearly all of which have been adjudicated as justified, resulting in death, accounted for 1,048 in 2021. This leaves the total number of





homicides including both justified self-defense by civilians, and those in the commission of a crime at 5,675. What this means is the “actual” chances of death by a firearm for the average American is 0.0017 percent. By contrast, a recent study from Johns Hopkins University found that “more than 250,000 people die in the United States each year from medical errors.” Other estimates put that number as high as 440,000 individuals.

Deaths from vehicle accidents in the United States in 2021 stand at 46,980 individuals. Vehicle deaths are more than triple that of deaths from firearms, in all circumstances. From organizations to individuals, this manipulation of data to fit a narrative, combined with this illogical emotionally driven decision-making process, that seems to be en vogue amongst many nowadays, makes for non-stop demonization of an inanimate object that is statistically less deadly than “hand and feet.” Yes, it’s that ignorant.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

It’s really not too complicated, we need to educate. We need to speak with our friends, who have little or no exposure to firearms, about our lifestyle. We need to invite them to the range and



explain how important safety and training is. We need to use the above methodology to demystify firearms and their legal use. The Second Amendment is clear in its intent. The idea that “shall not be infringed,” can be read to mean “may be heavily regulated,” requires one to suspend all deductive reasoning and reading comprehension beyond the fourth-grade level. It’s

frankly as absurd as believing that some new law is magically going to get criminals to suddenly stray from their nature of criminality. It’s just dumb.

George Bernard Shaw said, “Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men fear it.” This sentiment rings true in the context of these sophomoric trends of values signaling and emotionally driven decision making, devoid of facts. Those Second Amendment detractors allow deceitful special interest groups to play on their

emotions and raise money on these tragedies, while ignoring data and fostering dissent amongst citizens. There can be no meaningful discourse or true introspection, without first relegating those who ignore reality to the abyss of frivolity where they belong.

As Americans, we need to defend the Second Amendment with the same fervor that we do the rest. Despite the alternate realities some live in today, the concept of efficient and effective self-defense is extremely important for those who may need a force equalizer, and in some cases a force multiplier. Meaning, the Second Amendment provides the most benefit to individuals who are least capable of engaging in physical combat to defend their lives. After all, and to reiterate, if you are dead, does it really matter whether you have freedom of speech or not? ■



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